

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru¹

Series II, Volume 23

TRIBAL AREAS NORTH EAST FRONTIER AGENCY

1. To Bisnuram Medhi²

New Delhi July 2, 1953

My dear Medhi,

I find that there has been some excitement in Assam about a proposal that we have considered here to appoint a Commissioner to assist the Governor for the North East Frontier Agency. I really do not understand why there should be any excitement or even any objection to an administrative measure of this kind. I suppose that the objection is due to the fact that Assam wants to incorporate these areas within its own territory. There is no question of that being done in the near future at least and we must make the best and the most efficient arrangements possible for the progress of these areas. If at any time any wider issue is raised, the presence of the Commissioner will not come in the way.

I confess that I feel unhappy when these provincial considerations are put forward. I am quite clear in my mind that at present and for some considerable time to come, the North East Frontier Agency should be kept as a separate unit under the Central Government for a variety of political and other reasons appertaining to the frontier. If so, then we must improve

¹ Published by the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Teen Murti House, New Delhi

² JN Collection

the machinery of administration there and that is all that is meant by appointing a Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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2. To Bisnuram Medhi³

New Delhi July 9, 1953

My dear Medhi,

I am glad to learn about the general improvement in the situation in the Naga Hills.

I have your other letter also of July 7th in regard to the NEFA. At Agra I had a talk with the President⁴ of the Assam PCC and others and I believe they were satisfied with what I said.

What exactly does it mean to say that it is proposed to constitute the North East Frontier Agency into a separate State? It is at present a separate administrative unit under the Central Government. No change is going to be made to it and no addition is going to be made either. It will continue as it is under the Central Government. There is no proposal before us to add any other area to it or to put an end to it in its present condition.

You suggest that I should issue some kind of a statement to the Press about the gradual and progressive assimilation of this area, presumably to Assam. I cannot issue such a statement because I do not know what the developments in the near future are going to be. These areas are highly

³ JN Collection. Extracts

⁴ On 7 July 1953, at Agra, Nehru was reported to have told B.P. Chaliha, President of the Assam PCC, that the Government of India had decided to appoint a commissioner for the NEFA under the Governor of Assam who would administer the area in consultation with the Government of Assam.

important from the political point of view, being frontier areas. They are undeveloped and in order to develop them, large sums are necessary. If they were added to Assam, the burden on that State would be very great with no equivalent income. Apart from this, I do not quite understand what you mean by 'assimilation'. I am very doubtful about assimilating these tribal people into any other form of cultural life. They may, of course, partly assimilate themselves. They have very special customs and it is important that they should be made to develop on their own lines without any attempt being made to change them too much.

Yours sincerely
Jawaharlal Nehru

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3. To Bisnuram Medhi⁵

New Delhi July 14, 1953

My dear Medhi,

I am gradually dealing with papers which have accumulated. Sometimes I take them up not in proper order.

I have just come across copies of five resolutions passed by the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha⁶ at a meeting of its Executive Committee held on 16th June. I have read these resolutions with considerable surprise. What has amazed me is that this organization has called for demonstrations on the 16th July, which has been fixed as an "All Assam State Language and

⁵ JN Collection

⁶ Founded in 1926 by Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury, the Asom Samrakshini Sabha was later on christened as Asom Jatiya Mahasabha. The Mahasabha since its inception had put up a strong case for "Assam for Assamese".

Assam Integration Day".⁷ Even schools have been asked to join these demonstrations.

This is a serious matter. On me it has created an impression which is the very reverse of what the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha apparently intended. I have already written to you about this subject of the North East Frontier Agency. We have proposed no change in the status of the North East Frontier Agency, but we are intensely anxious to help that area to develop itself. With that object in view various proposals were considered by the Cabinet here and were subsequently sent to your Governor and you for your comments. I repeat no change in status was thought of. The North East Frontier Agency was to remain (is it is, that is, a unit under the Government of India. Instead of comments on the proposals that we had made and which were based on expert advice, I find this agitation in Assam, and demonstrations and threats. I just cannot understand what all this is about.

I do not know exactly whom the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha represents, but its resolutions indicate a mentality with which I have not the least sympathy. It is the narrowest provincial outlook against which I have been raising my voice all over India.

The North East Frontier areas, because of geography, must necessarily have close relations with Assam. But any approach such as is indicated in the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha resolutions makes it clear to me that the Frontier Agency should not be merged, as suggested. The whole outlook of the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha is completely wrong.

⁷ On 16 July 1953, the Assam Congress, the Praja Socialist Party, and the Assam Jatiya Mahasabha held a joint public meeting in Guwahati to protest against the changes in the administration of NEFA.

Surely any decision about the North East Frontier Agency will have to depend primarily on the good of the people there and their wishes as well as important military considerations. These cannot be overridden.

I presume that it is realized that the Frontier Agency is a heavy financial liability. It brings no revenue. It is all expenditure and heavy expenditure at that. How it will benefit Assam to be' saddled with this expenditure is not clear. .

I would like to know what exactly has happened to induce some people in Assam to talk in this utterly odd, illogical and narrow-minded way. To drag in schools in this is a very undesirable business.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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4. Changing the Name of Lushai Hills⁸

I think that we should change the name of the district. But I am not quite sure 'Mizoram' will be a suitable name. Perhaps 'Mizo District' might be better. I suggest that, before we put this up before the Cabinet, we might consult the Governor and the Chief Minister of Assam. I know that they have been consulted generally but they might be consulted specially also. I remember that, when I was in the Lushai Hills, some people did not like the idea of 'Mizoram' although they were agreeable to 'Mizo'.

2. About one thing I am quite clear. Whatever the name of the district might be, the hills should continue to be called the Lushai Hills. That is to say, we do not change the geographical name of the hills but we are prepared to change the name of the district.

⁸ Note to Cabinet Secretary, 16 July 1953. JN Collection

3. I have no particular objection to 'Mizoram' for the district, but I think it will be better to make sure about the point mentioned by me above.

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5. To Bisnuram Medhi⁹

New Delhi

20 July 1953

My dear Medhi,

I have your letter of July 15.

I have tried my best to understand the position that has arisen in Assam about NEFA.¹⁰ But I confess that I am completely unable to appreciate this.

I see no reason why I should issue a statement as suggested by you.¹¹

Such a statement would presumably mean the laying down of a certain policy for the future. We are not laying down any policy at all. We are only considering some administrative improvements in regard to the NEFA. I cannot say that the NEFA will be completely integrated with the State of Assam at a later stage. It may be so. But one of the principal considerations which we have to bear in mind is the frontier situation and the military responsibilities that have been cast upon us. If the State of

⁹ Bisnuram Medhi Papers, NMML

¹⁰ On 13 July, the Assam Tribune reported about a meeting presided over by B.P. Chaliha at which violent speeches were delivered against what was called a "diabolical move" of the Central Government, and some people even threatened to resign from the Congress because of this move

¹¹ Medhi, referring to the agitation in Assam for integration of NEFA area in Assam, pleaded with Nehru to make a declaration "as to the ultimate objective as envisaged in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution" in order to "allay the misconception in the minds of the people" regarding the "progressive assimilation and integration of the areas with India through Assam."

Assam is in a position to discharge these military responsibilities, then this difficulty need not arise.

But I just do not understand how all this question has arisen at the present moment. I can understand of course that quite inevitably the State of Assam has to play a great part in those areas because of geographical considerations and all kinds of cultural and other associations.

You refer to Chaliha saying that I would issue a statement.¹² I do not know what he means. I sent him and you a note on the interview I had with him in Agra. That is all the statement that I intended making. That note can be published if Chaliha or you wish it.

I have no recollection whatever of my having made any statement in Parliament as stated in the Assam Tribune.

We were considering a difficult frontier and political position and we had to deal with this in a special way from considerations of India's security, etc. Also we were considering how best to deal with the peculiar problems of tribal communities which vary greatly in their social structure and advance. We have highly developed and progressive tribal groups in Assam, chiefly in your autonomous areas, and we have very primitive people in some parts of the NEFA. These primitive people especially have to be dealt with care and friendliness and require expert knowledge which our average administrator does not possess. Hence the necessity for a specially trained cadre. That is what the Burmese are doing on the other side in their own way. This approach does not affect in the slightest the future relationship of this area with Assam. That continues exactly as it is today till circumstances indicate that it should be changed.

¹² Quoting a report from the Assam Tribune of 13 July, Medhi wrote that Chaliha expected "that the Prime Minister would make a statement on this issue very soon."

The proposed appointment of a Commissioner has been made much of.¹³ It is a simple administrative expedient which has nothing to do with any policy. We have not decided on such an appointment. It is a matter of convenience only just as we appoint any officer anywhere. That does not change the status of the NEFA at all. We may as well decide not to have the Commissioner. But we are quite clear that this question of backward tribes has to be dealt with in a particular way under expert guidance. If you wish to know how I view this question, you might refer to a speech¹⁴ I delivered at a conference held in Delhi a year or so ago. I send copies of this speech to you.

There is a great deal of talk of integration. I do not quite know what this means. I am working for closer integration of all parts of India with each other. But integration does not mean imposition. It means the development of a common national psychology which holds together. It means a sensation of having much in common. It does not mean regimentation. I want to preserve the rich variety of India, and, at the same moment, to develop an inner unity. It is inevitable, if all goes well, for the State of Assam to have much closer affinities and association with the NEFA and the people there. But, in order to develop that, the attitude will have to be very different and not the hectoring one which some people in Assam are adopting at present.

¹³ At an all-party public meeting at Guwahati on 7 July presided over by B.P. Chaliha, a resolution was passed which said that the administration as conducted in the NEFA "is hampering the process of integration and the proposed appointment of a Commissioner, however well-intentioned it may be, will create further and more stubborn obstacles on the way to integration and will encourage separatist tendencies."

¹⁴ See Selected Works (second series), Vol. 18, pp. 370-377.

Barooah¹⁵ saw me today and had a talk with me. He will be going tonight to Assam and will no doubt see you.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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6. To Jairamdas Doulatram¹⁶

New Delhi

July 24, 1953

My dear Jairamdas,

In your letter of July 3rd you refer to Verrier Elwin¹⁷. I agree with you that we should utilize him to the best advantage. We should trust him in this matter. You make three proposals all of which, in their own way, are good and do not conflict with each other. I think he should be allowed to visit the tribal areas and even the frontier area. But I do not wish him to carry a troop of other people, notably Americans, with him.

In view of recent developments, you might inform Medhi of what you propose to do in this matter. If he is agreeable to Elwin being allowed to work in parts of the autonomous districts, this may be arranged. Otherwise, in any event, Elwin can go to the NEFA....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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¹⁵ Dev Kant Barooah. Member, Congress Working Committee

¹⁶ JN Collection. Extracts

¹⁷ A well-known British anthropologist who lent his services as adviser on tribal affairs in NEFA and other places in India.

7. To Bisnuram Medhi¹⁸

New Delhi July 29, 1953

My dear Medhi,

As I have indicated to you previously, I have been greatly disturbed by this agitation in Assam in regard to the NEFA. I am not worried by what the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha or any other organization might say. But when Congressmen associate themselves with this kind of thing, it is a matter for serious thought. The resolution passed by the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee deals with this subject almost as if I was in the dark and required to be defended.¹⁹ It is stated that since I have given various assurances, etc., the Committee feels that further agitation at this stage is unnecessary. Reference is made to what I said in Parliament on this subject.²⁰ I hold completely by what I said in Parliament, but I should like my statement to be read in full and not an extract of it torn out of its context.

It is very good of the Pradesh Congress Committee to come to my rescue, if I may say so. But, unfortunately, I have no feeling of being guilty or requiring a rescuer. On the contrary, I feel that Congressmen in Assam, not to mention others, have gone off the rails completely and have not advanced their credit or their interests in any way. I am always not only prepared, but eager, to consult the Pradesh Congress Committee in Assam

¹⁸ JN Collection. Copy was sent to the Governor of Assam also. Extracts.

¹⁹ On 22 July, the Executive Committee of the Assam PCC, meeting at Guwahati under the Presidentship of B.P. Chaliha, had passed a resolution stating that it was "glad to learn from the message of the Prime Minister .conveyed to the Chief Minister of Assam that there is no change in the policy followed by the Government of India in respect of the progressive integration of NEFA with Assam." It requested Nehru to make a public statement on the NEFA with a view to remove misapprehensions.

²⁰ The resolution also referred to the "earlier pronouncement of the Prime Minister in the House of the People made on July 11, 1952" laying down "the aforesaid policy."

and, of course, you and your Government, in regard to any affairs of the North East. But to be told that I must behave in future and accept all kinds of demands made upon me, whether I agree with them or not, is a novel experience. To be told further that for the present the agitation is discontinued, apparently waiting for me to make various public avowals, is not likely to produce the results aimed at. I propose to make no public statement except in the ordinary course in Parliament if I am asked, or perhaps at a Press conference. The public statement that I might make then, might not be wholly to the liking of the Members of the Assam PCC. There has been no thought in our minds of any basic change in the position in the NEFA. But there has been a good deal of thought about the methods we should adopt to develop that area from the political and frontier points of view and, more particularly, from the point of view of the good of the tribal people involved. Those are the basic considerations and they remain and everything is going to be judged by those standards. For the present and in the foreseeable future, the responsibility of the NEFA will remain with the Central Government because of the political and other reasons indicated above. We have made the Governor of Assam our agent for this purpose. If there is any conflict in this position or any agitation against any Governor of Assam undertaking this function, the only possible result is that our agent there will be somebody else than the Governor, so as to remove this sense of conflict. That would probably not be approved by you because that would lessen the field of consultation, etc. We do not intend to do that, but I am merely indicating that the type of agitation that has been carried on in Assam is likely to lead, if pursued, to completely different results from the ones aimed at.

You refer in your letter to the appointment of various officers, such as Civil Surgeon, Superintending Engineer, Agricultural Officers, etc., from outside the Assam cadre. I do not know about these appointments and I would, of

course, very much like to encourage Assamese to hold appointments not only in Assam, but elsewhere in India. But I am not agreeable to appointments in high places on provincial grounds. That would defeat the very purpose aimed at and reduce the level of administrative efficiency greatly. Assam at present is administratively rather low in the list of our States. No doubt it will improve. But a narrow outlook will not make it improve. A few appointments here and there will not lead to the development of Assam. I do not know who your present Chief Engineer is, but you might remember that I expressed my opinion about a previous engineer last year whom I considered completely incompetent.

At the present moment most of our engineers come chiefly from two provinces-the Punjab and Madras. They are spread out all over India, because they happen to be the best. Indeed, some of them have a world reputation. If, for provincial reasons, we choose second-grade men, then that province will suffer. The aim is not to provide a few posts to a few men, but to develop rapidly the whole apparatus of the State. A country or a State is judged ultimately by the quality of its personnel. If India is to go ahead, it will go ahead by quality and not by numbers of which we have far too many.

You mention the knowledge of historical background and of the mode of living and customs of the tribal people. I entirely agree. It is for this reason that we are convinced that people appointed to serve in such areas must be specially trained for that particular work which is completely different from other administrative work. Because of this we have suggested a special cadre of officers. In the normal course, this cadre should consist of many Assamese. But the test will be their capacity for this particular work as well as general quality, not a provincial test.

You refer to the Railways and Posts & Telegraphs Departments. I do not know anything about them, but if you have any suggestion to make, I shall

gladly pass it on to the Ministries concerned. Unemployment, unfortunately, is present all over the country, more especially among our college trained young men and young women. Probably there is much more of it in Calcutta and Madras than anywhere in India because more people are turned out of colleges there annually. However, it is right that each province should be fairly treated in this matter.

You refer to setting up a machinery for consultation in regard to the detailed administration of the NEFA such as appointments, educational policy, development schemes and the like. I do not see how this can be done with any advantage to any party. It would merely be a fifth wheel in the coach preventing all progress. In view of the agitation that has recently been 'carried on in Assam, this appears to me to be peculiarly undesirable. You will not expect me to take important steps simply to please some narrow-minded critics. The NEFA is the direct charge of the External Affairs Ministry here. So long as this is so, they must shoulder the responsibility. There can be no division of responsibility as such division is always unsatisfactory. Consultation about important matters with you as Chief Minister is certainly desirable. But the full responsibility for that must remain with the Government of India so long as the present structure continues....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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8. To Jairamdas Doulatram²¹

New Delhi August 10, 1953

My dear Jairamdas,

²¹ JN Collection.

Your letter of August 7.

I am interested to learn of the impressions of the Tawang people. I have had a meeting with Medhi and I shall see him again before he goes. I spoke to him very frankly about what I thought about the Assamese agitation regarding the NEFA.²²

The proposal about the commissioner has not been dropped. It has not even been considered, much less dropped. I never attached too much importance to it. However, we shall examine it in due course when we examine the other matters.

I have also received your letter of August 6. I am afraid we are not at all excited about all this agitation in Assam. We shall consider these matters in due course and let you know what our proposals are.

Yours sincerely,

Jawaharlal Nehru

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9. Legislative Assemblies for Tripura and Manipur²³

I had a deputation today from a number of Members of Parliament, including Keishing²⁴ and Communist and Socialist Members demanding

²² In his talks with Bisnuram Medhi on 9 August 1953, Nehru informed the former that due to unwise agitation in Assam, the question of making NEFA a separate State, which was not in the contemplation of the Government of India or, as a matter of fact, in the mind of anybody, had been suddenly drawn into prominence as indicated by a large number of telegrams received by him.

²³ Note to Minister of States, 15 September 1953. IN Collection

²⁴ Rishang Keishing (b. 1920); founder-Member and Head Master, Christian High School, Ukhrul, 1949-52, and Phungyar High School, 1959-61; General Secretary, Naga Integration Council, 1968-72; Member, Lok Sabha, 1952-57 and 1962-67; Minister, Government of Manipur, 1974-77; Chief Minister, Manipur, November 1980 to February 1981, June 1981 to 3 March 1988, and December 1994 to December 1997

Legislative Assemblies for Tripura and Manipur. I told them that we did not think any such step was desirable at this stage and that probably it would lead to all kinds of difficulties. We must try to carry on with the Adviser regime which has recently been instituted.

They gave me a note which I enclose.

But, apart from this question, such information as I get leads me to think that no progress has been made in Tripura and Manipur, They are completely static. In fact, they are almost the worst in India. Unless we show some results in both these States, it will be difficult to justify the present arrangements. Something has to be done. If the men in charge are not good enough, they should be changed.

When I was there last,²⁵ I sent some notes to the States Ministry.²⁶ In these notes I pointed out the lack of competent men there and suggested that immediate steps should be taken to do something about this. There was no proper engineer even. Money for development purposes lapsed. All this is very depressing and I think some kind of an active and even aggressive policy has to be pursued there.

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10. To Durgabai Deshmukh²⁷

New Delhi September 16, 1953

My dear Durgabai,²⁸

The Social Welfare Board²⁹ should carry on its normal activities fully in Assam. It should also give such help as it can in the North East Frontier

²⁵ Nehru visited the tribal areas of Assam, and Manipur and Tripura in October 1952.

²⁶ See Selected Works (second series), Vol. 20, pp. 170-171

²⁷ File No. 17(284)/53-PMS. Extracts.

²⁸ Member, Planning Commission.

Agency. In regard to the NEFA, we felt that some special considerations apply and we should help social welfare schemes there even more than elsewhere. It is a backward, undeveloped area right near our frontier and thus has a certain political significance also. Therefore: we want to pay special attention to it. Therefore, we have decided to have a Special Officer in charge there with a small Advisory Committee.

This does not mean that your Social Welfare Board should not give help there for welfare activities. It simply means that in addition to such help as you may give, we shall go further. Naturally, there should be full coordination and the help your Social Welfare Board gives should be through the agency of our Special Officer and his Advisory Committee there.

In addition to the money which the Social Welfare Board is going to spend, we have a certain sum of money (ten crores) which the Planning Commission has set aside for the development of the NEFA. All these various amounts that are available to us or such additional amounts as might be made available for the development of this area and for social welfare activities there, should naturally be coordinated to produce the best results.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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II. THE NAGAS

²⁹ The Board was inaugurated by Nehru in New Delhi on 12 August 1953. The elevenmember Board, under the chairmanship of Durgabai Deshmukh, had been set up to help the volunteer social organizations in the country in developing and expanding their existing programmes and welfare schemes and to integrate them with developmental programme being executed under the Five Year Plan

1. To Bisnuram Medhi³⁰

New Delhi August 23, 1953

My dear Medhi,

The situation in the Naga District had been improving, as you told me. But I find that there has been deterioration there now during the last ten days or so. As far as I can make out, this was due to the unwise order issued to schools and other places calling upon them to observe the Independence Day in a special manner.³¹ This was an unnecessary challenge and gave them an opportunity to demonstrate with the result that you had some trouble, and again the situation has gone back to what it was some time ago.

This shows how careful we must be in our dealings with these Naga people.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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2. To Rishang Keishing³²

New Delhi August 31, 1953

Dear Rishang Keishing,

I have your letter of the 31st August.

As you know I am greatly interested in the welfare of the Naga people and I try to keep in touch with developments there. I have been grieved that,

³⁰ JN Collection

³¹ On 15 August, some students of Kohima High School, in defiance of the orders of the headmaster, took an active part in meetings sponsored by the Naga National Council, at which resolutions were passed boycotting the Independence Day. Nineteen students of the school in a memorandum also threatened assault on teachers and students during the Independence Day.

³² JN Collection

after a period of comparative quiet, there were again unfortunate developments there during this month.³³ I cannot judge from here about every incident, but it seems clear that some trouble-makers there again misbehaved and then the Government had to take some action.

It is obvious that any continuation of an anti-national agitation in the Naga Hills can only do injury to the Nagas and come in the way of their progress which all of us so much desire. We have been giving constant thought to their advancement in accordance with their own ways and genius. We want them to be associated with their own affairs as much as possible. But all this is obstructed by the recalcitrant attitude of the Naga National Council. I know that there are many Nagas of goodwill who realize that the welfare of their people lies in cooperating with the Government and in taking their share in it. It is our desire to strengthen their hands. But they must also realize that they have to take a clear attitude in this matter and not allow themselves to be frightened by the activities of some people.

I am keeping in touch with the Government of Assam and I shall again address them on this subject. You will appreciate, however, that they have to shoulder this responsibility and have to decide, from time to time, what should be done and what should not be done. It would be improper for me to lessen that responsibility which is theirs.

If any Members of Parliament wish to go to the Naga Hills, there is nothing to prevent them from doing so. But I do not see any advantage in a deputation proceeding there for the purpose you have mentioned.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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³³ Keishing wrote that since Nehru's visit to Kohima in March 1952, a section of the Nagas in the Naga Hills, under the guidance of the Naga National Council, was agitating for an independent Naga Hills State.

3. To Jairamdas Doulatram³⁴

New Delhi September 5, 1953

My dear Jairamdas,

It is proposed that this Special Recruitment Board should consist of representatives of the Ministry of External Affairs, Defence and Home Affairs and a specialist in tribal affairs. It has also been proposed that there should be a representative of the Governor of Assam on it. I am not quite sure if that is necessary or desirable. I should like you in your capacity as Governor to keep apart from this selection so as not to rub the Government of Assam, the wrong way.

A suggestion has been made that the Government of Assam should be asked to nominate a representative on this Special Recruitment Board. There are reasons for and against it. On the whole, we were inclined to think that this was not desirable. But we have an open mind on this subject. What is your advice? The Government of Assam, of course, will be very happy if we included their representative.

The Special Recruitment Board will function in Delhi.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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4. To Bisnuram Medhi³⁵

New Delhi September 17, 1953

My dear Medhi,

Two or three days ago, I sent to your Governor copy of a note of a conversation which our Embassy people in Rangoon had with the Burmese

³⁴ IN Collection. Extracts

³⁵ JN Collection

Commissioner³⁶ who had accompanied us to Kohima when I was there last.³⁷ This was an interesting report³⁸ of first impressions. It was not quite correct, but the man is supposed to be very good and has had to deal with Nagas for a long time.

In the course of this report, he had mentioned his own impression that the then Deputy Commissioner of Kohima³⁹ did not appear to him to be a very suitable person for that place.⁴⁰

That has been my own opinion, and I think I wrote that to you soon after my return from Kohima. It was perhaps not advisable to transfer him soon after the incident there, but I think it would definitely be desirable to send another person there now. Your Deputy Commissioner may be quite good in some other place, but he did not fit in there at all. I hope you will give thought to this matter because it is of the utmost importance that the right person should be sent to these tribal areas.

It has been suggested to me here in my Ministry that one of your Deputy Commissioners who is I think an Anglo-Indian-Carvalho⁴¹ by name-might fit

³⁶ M.J. Carrott, Commissioner, Sagaing Division, Burma

³⁷ March 1953

³⁸ Apprehending an armed revolt by the Nagas within three years, especially by the Angamis and the Kanoma tribes, Carrott felt that the unrest was the definite result of the British policy before independence, which not only isolated the Nagas from the Indians but also created hatred among them for the latter. He suspected the missionaries' role in the Naga agitation against the Indians. According to Carrott, even the Government of India distrusted the few Nagas who were in Government service as they were kept away from Naga areas.

³⁹ S.N. Barkataki

⁴⁰ Carrott thought the Naga boycott of Nehru's meeting at Kohima might have occurred "due to lack of tact on the part of the D.C., Kohima," who appeared to him to have little understanding of the psychology of the Nagas

⁴¹ S.J.D. Carvalho, IAS, replaced Barkataki as Deputy Commissioner, Kohima. He held this post from 1953 to 1957

in at Kohima. He is an ex-army man, and our Ministry people came in contact with him in the War Services Selection Board. He produced a very favourable impression on them from this point of view specially. I met him also during my brief visit to Si1char where he was Deputy Commissioner, and I was generally struck by him as a competent man.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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1. Trade Across the Tibetan Border⁴²

While in Ranikhet, I have met Dr Weber⁴³, the FAO expert, who is working here on behalf of the UP Government. I find that he is doing good work there to develop horticulture and the preservation of fruit. He told me that the UP Government had wanted him to go to the Bhutias, who live near the Tibetan border, to help them develop fruit-growing, etc. The Bhutias are a problem for the UP Government and for us. There are about fifty thousand of them. Previously, they lived a hard life, but carried on somehow with some trade across the border. They took foodgrains and brought back wool. All this has been upset and their life has become even harder.

2. From the political point of view, even apart from the humanitarian, it is rather important that we should help them to better themselves and to find some work. There is the question of our making some arrangement for a barter of wool with some foodgrains. I have written to you about that separately.

⁴² Note to Secretary-General, MEA, and Foreign Secretary, Ranikhet, 26 September 1953. JN Collection. Extracts

⁴³ E.B.C. Weber

3. Another approach is to develop horticulture there which, I understand, is quite possible. In fact, good results are obtained in these hills in developing horticulture. In view of this fact it would have been desirable for Dr Weber, the FAG expert, to be allowed to go there, accompanied by some UP official, to draw up a scheme of horticultural and similar development. Unless there is some special objection to his going there, I would permit him to cross the Inner Line for this particular purpose. I have informed the Chief Minister of the UP about this and suggested that if he wants Dr Weber to go to the Bhutias; we might be prepared to reconsider this matter and, if there is no special reason to the contrary, to allow him permission to go there. He would, of course, be accompanied by a UP official....

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CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

1. To K.N. Katju⁴⁴

New Delhi July 10, 1953

My dear Kailas Nath,

Maulana Azad has sent me the enclosed papers. Perhaps you have seen them already.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Bombay⁴⁵ will be coming to Delhi at the end of this month and I have given him an appointment. Among other things, he will no doubt discuss this question of evangelical work in India. I think it would be a good thing if you met him also.

⁴⁴ JN Collection

⁴⁵ Valerian Gracias

We can hardly take up the attitude that evangelical work is forbidden.⁴⁶ That would not only be against our Constitution, but also against our general policy. There has been a good deal of feeling in South India-Travancore-Cochin, etc-over this matter. We seem to forget sometimes that we have a very large indigenous Christian population.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

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2. Activities of Missionaries⁴⁷

7. I told the Cardinal that there had been no change in our policy of tolerance or generally in regard to Christian activities in India. The question had arisen because of certain happenings in the North East Frontier Agency and certain areas beyond the Inner Line. These were frontier areas and a new situation had been created on the north-eastern Frontier because of political developments on the other side. There was no doubt that certain British officials in the old days, helped by some missionaries, had tried to develop an anti-India sentiment there. Just as in Burma the Karen rebels had been helped by people of the Methodist Church, some similar attempt had been made, chiefly by Methodists, in North East India. We were not prepared to take any risk in that important region and hence admission to that region was strictly limited. Those who were functioning there as missionaries were allowed to remain there, unless there was something against any individual. But we did not want fresh centres of activity to be opened or for the present work to be extended to other fields in that area

⁴⁶ See Selected Works (second series), Vol. 22, p. 239.

⁴⁷ Note on interview with Cardinal Gracias, 30 July 1953. JN Collection. Extracts

beyond the Inner Line. Also we wanted to be sure that no political or like activities were indulged in there by any foreigner, including missionaries.

8. Apart from this, the question of other tribal areas was also considered by us and we felt that some special attention should be given to missionary activities there to avoid conflicts and trouble. We did not wish to stop such activities there, but only wanted to prevent anything that might lead to trouble and difficulty.

9. Elsewhere there was no question of our interfering with normal activities, but I would advise them to go a little slow about foreigners coming here because that led to certain reactions. I realized that evangelical activities could not be entirely separated from social activities and Christian communities might require ministrations which were not available locally. If this requirement was not there, there should be no difficulty in providing it even from outside. Also in regard to social, medical and like activities, there should be no difficulty.

10. I agreed with the Cardinal that it was not desirable for the police to be entrusted with this work of making enquiries from individuals. If any information was required, the Government concerned should write to the headquarters of that organization and they will supply it. Anything that savours of individual persecution was most undesirable and should be stopped.

11. In regard to visas, it was obvious that no satisfactory enquiry could possibly be made locally here about a foreigner. When visas were asked for the organization should send full particulars to the local government. If any further information was needed about anyone, this could be asked for from

the organization. In any event, the local policemen should, as far as possible, not be brought into the picture.

12. There were some other minor matters to which the Cardinal referred. He was particularly anxious that some statement should be made on our Government's behalf to remove this widespread feeling of fear and uneasiness that had spread over the Christian community all over India.⁴⁸ This had been caused not so much because of what we had said, but because of police activities everywhere. I told him that it might be possible to make our position clear at a suitable opportunity.

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3. To T.T. Krishnamachari⁴⁹

New Delhi August 1, 1953

My dear T.T.,

...Broadly speaking, I divide the problem of Christian Missionaries in India into three parts:

- (1) North East Frontier area.
- (2) Certain tribal areas in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, etc.
- (3) Other areas in any part of India.

I consider the North East Frontier area purely from a political and military point of view and I am not prepared to admit foreigners in that area beyond the Inner Line. This has nothing to do with Christianity or any other religion. It is true that there are already some Christian Missions in that

⁴⁸ Gracias spoke of the widespread impression among the Christians all over India that the policy of the Government of India towards them had changed and suggested that something might be said on behalf of the Government "to allay these fears and to revert to the former position of trust and confidence."

⁴⁹ JN Collection. Extracts. Copy was sent to K.N. Katju also

area as well as in the Inner Line in the UP. They have been there for a long time, and, in fact, have often done good work from the educational point of view. It has also to be remembered that in the North East Frontier area Christianity was established more than 50 years ago and is part of the social fabric there. Any interference with it as such would not only be wrong but would give rise to trouble. Of course, we have no intention of interfering and existing Mission activities have to continue, though we should try to get foreign missionaries replaced by Indians. I do not think we can do that wholly in the near future, but I am against the establishment of any new Mission centre in these frontier areas whether in the North East or in the UP, and I would strictly examine the question of any new foreigner going there.

Oddly enough, much of the trouble has been caused by the Methodist Mission. Catholics generally and some Protestants are much wiser in the way they work.

In the second area, that is, the tribal areas in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, etc., there are rather aggressive Mission activities and there is even danger of conflict with public sentiment, which has been roused greatly by Jan Sangh, Hindu Mahasabha and other people. The State Governments are rather anti-missionary, and have recently put a great deal of pressure on them through police enquiries, etc. I should like to proceed carefully in these areas and not encourage extension of Mission activities.

In regard to the third area, I think we should interfere very little, except that we do not want hordes of foreigners coming to India. I would not interfere with educational, medical and like people coming for particular posts. Generally they should be replacements. There might, of course, be for medical or educational purposes a newcomer coming, and we should not come in his way if he is useful.

There is no doubt that some alarm has been caused among Christian establishments in India, partly by police activities and partly by general impression that Government is against them. Both from the point of view of general policy and our principles as well as from the political viewpoint, it is bad to give this impression and we should try to remove it.

As you know something about this matter, especially in the South of India, it would be a good thing if you have a talk with Katju.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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4. To Rajendra Prasad⁵⁰

New Delhi August 10, 1953

My dear Rajendra Babu,

In yesterday's Hindustan Times (dated 9th August) at page 4, there is a big headline: "Conversions by Foreign Missionaries". This refers to a meeting held at Rashtrapati Bhavan over which you presided and where, it is stated, the work of conversion of tribal people by missionaries who offered them material inducements was discussed at great length.

The Committee passed a resolution on this subject and decided to take a deputation to the Home Minister.

I have been rather disturbed by this piece association with such a meeting discussing the of news because of your proselytizing activities of missionaries.⁵¹ Quite apart from the merits or demerits of that subject, it is

⁵⁰ JN Collection. Also available in File No. 117(2)/53, President's Secretariat. A copy of this letter was sent to K.N. Katju

⁵¹ Rajendra Prasad, in his reply of 11 August, wrote that he recognized his position and was careful about his own conduct. "But if some members had any complaint against the missionaries of a particular religion, they could not help talking among themselves about it

clear that it is a very controversial one and indeed a controversy is going on about it in many parts of India. Christians from Travancore, Madras, Bombay, Central India, Bengal and Assam have expressed their grave uneasiness at certain statements made on behalf of Government and, what is more, by many local incidents that have occurred. The new Roman Catholic Cardinal was in Delhi recently because of this. Probably he saw you also.

The question is a difficult one. I have always distinguished the political activities of missionaries from others. So far as these political activities are concerned, I have no doubt in my mind that we should stop them. But so far as other activities are concerned, including evangelical activities, it is very difficult for us to say that we will try to stop them, unless they are conducted in the wrong way. I think it was unwise for the Adimjati Sangh⁵² to take up this matter officially and to give so much publicity to it. From a purely social service organization, they take a religious colour and thereby encourage prejudice against them in some quarters. It may not be so easy for Government to help them financially or otherwise if objections are raised.

But I am much more concerned with the effect that your association with this matter might have on a large number of Christians. The President, whatever his personal views and convictions might be, is above religion and is the Head of a secular State, which treats all religions alike. He is in fact the symbol of that secular State. If anything happens, that affects his position as such a symbol. It would no doubt create apprehensions in the minds of many of our citizens.

and bring the matter to the notice of the Government... I shall, however, see to it that I do not get involved even in such trivial and harmless things."

⁵² Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh was formally started in 1948 at the national level with Rajendra Prasad as founder-President. The Sangh had been engaged in tribal welfare activities since June 1946

It is because of these difficulties in my mind that I have ventured to write to you on this subject.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru