



## **SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL**

*Balraj Krishna*

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### **ABOUT THE BOOK:**

SARDAR PATEL was one of India's strongest and most dynamic leaders.

This book examines the extraordinary contribution of Sardar Patel in the creation of a strong and united India. It details his unflinching support to Gandhi's satyagrahas, his role in overcoming challenges to Congress unity, his farsightedness in the formation of the Indian Administrative Service, the integration of over 560 princely states, and his visionary views on Kashmir, China, Tibet, and Nepal. The book also includes rare and unpublished correspondence with select top-ranking ex-bureaucrats and army chiefs to flash new light on the role of Patel in post-independent India.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Balraj Krishna began his career as a journalist with the *Civil & Military Gazette*, Lahore, in 1944. Post-Partition in New Delhi, he was with the Publicity Division of the External Affairs Ministry and British Information Services. He was a special correspondent with the *Hindustan Times* in Kashmir. His articles, book reviews, and photo-features appeared in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, the *Times of India*, the *Economic Times*, the *Hindu*, and *Frontline*, besides *Eastern World*, London.

## INTRODUCTION

Patel, along with Gandhi and Nehru, was a leading member of the triumvirate which conducted the last phase of India's freedom struggle. He was the "saviour" and the "builder". Non-violently, he demolished the princely order Lord Wellesley had created; and in January 1946, he had nearly buried Pakistan in Karachi. Post-independence, Patel was the creator of New India just as Surendranath Banerjea was the father of political consciousness to the newly educated class of Indians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and Gandhi, the father of mass awakening pre-independence.

**(a) Saviour:** Patel saved India from the machinations of the ruling British, and thereby did not allow large Hindu majority areas to fall into the hands of Jinnah. In 1946, in an undivided India, the Cabinet Mission was giving away to Jinnah a Pakistan comprising the whole of Punjab and Bengal, besides Hindu Assam, as fully autonomous parts of Groups B and C. Gandhi favoured the plan since it preserved India's unity. In his "paternal pride" as Congress president, Azad seemed totally committed, confident of securing Congress acceptance. He thought that it would not only keep India united, but also safeguard Muslim interests. Nehru, however, voiced his opposition to grouping, as it related to the NWFP and Assam. He even suggested that there was "a big probability" that "there will be no grouping". Patel was more blunt than others in telling Wavell that the mission's "proposed solution was 'worse than Pakistan', and he could not recommend it to Congress".<sup>1</sup>

India's partition, as conceived by Churchill in 1945 as Britain's prime minister, was implied in Attlee's policy statement of 20 February 1947. It clearly meant the creation of Pakistan in one form or other, but in a divided India. Under it, too, Jinnah was to get the whole of Punjab, Bengal, and Assam. Patel immediately countered it with a policy statement on behalf of the Congress, demanding a division of Punjab—and of Bengal by implication—thereby saving Assam for India. Assam was predominantly Hindu, whereas in Bengal the Hindus were 49% as against 51% Muslims.

**(b) Builder:** Attlee's statement of 20 February categorically stated transference of power to the princely states, simultaneously with India and Pakistan, thus making the princes completely independent on 15 August. This would have led to the creation of a "Third Dominion", comprising confederations of princely states, and thereby throwing open possibilities of some of the states going over to Pakistan, in "association", if not "accession". This book discusses some of the conspiracies hatched in that direction, which Patel scotched with rare boldness, backed by his towering personality that exuded unquestioning friendliness towards the princes. The states involved were major ones like Travancore, Hyderabad, Junagadh, Jamnagar, and Jodhpur, and some Central Indian states. Through his diplomatic manoeuvres, Patel secured "accession" of all states prior to 15 August, before they could be made independent on par with India and Pakistan, thereby gaining equal status. The exceptions were those of Junagadh and Hyderabad—Kashmir too, but it was under Nehru's charge.

On the ashes of a defunct empire, Patel created a New India—strong, united, put in a steel-frame. That frame was the Indian Administrative Service, which kept a subcontinent bound together as a single unit despite disparities of politics and economy. As saviour and builder, Patel played decisive roles that took India to new pinnacles of success and glory after centuries.

Yet, the saviour and builder of New India was accused of responsibility for the partition of India; and the assassination of Gandhi. Patel never asked for India's partition. He and other Congress leaders were opposed to it. It was thrust upon them by the British through Attlee's policy statement of 20 February. He merely served India's interests by making partition conditional upon division of Punjab and Bengal. He could not have left the Punjabi and Bengali Hindus, as well as the Sikhs, to the cruel mercies of the Muslim League after the genocide of August 1946 in Kolkata. He also looked beyond, in gaining a free hand in the integration of over 560 States.

About Gandhi's assassination, General Roy Bucher, the British commander-in-chief of the Indian Army, wrote to the author in his letter of 24 July 1969: "From my knowledge, I am quite sure that Maulana Azad's charge that Sardar Patel was responsible for the murder of the Mahatma was absolutely unfounded. At our meeting in Dehra Dun, the Sardar told me that those who persuaded the Mahatma to suggest that monies (Rs. 55 crore) held in India should be despatched to Pakistan were responsible for the tragedy, and that after the monies had been sent off, the Mahatma was moved up to be the first to be assassinated on the books of a very well-known Hindu revolutionary society. I distinctly remember the Sardar saying: 'You know quite well that for Gandhiji to express a wish was almost an order'." It was on Gandhi's insistence that security had been withdrawn.

Gandhi commanded every Hindu's veneration, Godse being no exception. He had bowed to him in reverence thrice before firing the shots. Gandhi had exhausted the patience of even Nehru and Patel over two of his impossible demands. First, asking Mountbatten, at his meeting on 1 April 1947, "to dismiss the present Cabinet [interim government] and call on Jinnah to appoint an all-Muslim administration."<sup>2</sup> This would have killed Patel's dream of creating a unified India. He had publicly stated in 1939: "The red and yellow colours on India's map [representing provinces and states] have to be made one. Unless that is done, we cannot have *swaraj*."<sup>3</sup> In Nehru's case, Jinnah would have denied him the chance of becoming independent India's first prime minister—a historic opportunity Nehru could not have missed under any circumstance.

Gandhi's second demand was even more difficult. Addressing the All-India Congress Committee on 15 November 1947, he demanded that all Muslims who had fled India were "to be called back and restored to peaceful possession and enjoyment of all that they had had, but been forced to abandon while running away"<sup>4</sup> It would have amounted to making Hindu and Sikh refugees from Punjab and the NWFP vacate the Muslim houses they had occupied by restoring the same to the Muslims who were living in refugee camps the government had set up. It would have been a cruel double tragedy for the Punjabi refugees to suffer so soon after the Punjab genocide.

A year before Patel's demise, M. N. Roy, once a comrade of Lenin in Soviet Russia and a Communist of international fame, wrote: "What will happen to India when the master-builder will go, sooner or later, the way of all mortals? . . . Nationalist India was fortunate to have Sardar Patel to guide her destiny for a generation. But her misfortune is that there will be none to take his place when he is no more . . . when the future is bleak, one naturally turns to the past, and Sardar Patel can be proud of his past."<sup>5</sup> He was India's "Iron Man", who proved to be his country's "saviour and builder". Today's India is what he created and left behind.

### **Some of Sardar Patel's major achievements:**

1. Patel was the backbone of Gandhi's satyagrahas. During the Dandi March in 1930, he played the role of John the Baptist to Gandhi as a forerunner who "baptised" people en route. In a speech at Wasna, on his way to Dandi, Gandhi admitted: "I could succeed in Kheda [in 1918] on account of Vallabhbhai, and it is on account of him that I am here today."
2. In the Bardoli satyagraha in 1928, Patel played the role of a Lenin. The British-owned and edited *Times of India* wrote that Patel had "instituted there a Bolshevik regime in which he plays the role of Lenin".
3. As chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Board, Patel played the role of a strict boss in the conduct of the provincial elections in 1937. In that capacity he declared: "When the Congress roller is in action, all pebbles and stones will be levelled." He did not spare senior leaders like K. F. Nariman and N. B. Khare; not even the indomitable Subhash Chandra Bose. He was an uncompromising disciplinarian. That was a major contribution to the party's unity and strength.
4. Without Patel's support Lord Wavell could not have formed the interim government in August 1946, nor could Lord Mountbatten, in 1947, have implemented transfer of power smoothly and within the time-frame. In return, Patel got for India half of Punjab and half of Bengal and the whole of Assam. Patel also got termination of paramountcy, which enabled him to achieve integration of over 560 princely states. That was his master-stroke, which demolished Churchill's imperial strategy. What was that strategy? An account is given in the chapter *A Churchillian Plan: Partition of India*.
5. Briefly discussed is what would have been India's position in Kashmir, Tibet and Nepal had Patel's proposals been implemented. Kashmir had been taken away from Patel's charge by Nehru under Sheikh Abdullah's pressure, while Tibet and Nepal were foreign territories directly under Nehru's charge.
6. Philip Mason (ICS) has written in the *Dictionary of National Biography*: "Patel has been compared to Bismarck but the parallel cannot be carried far. Patel was courageous, honest and realistic, but far from cynical."

7. On his demise on 15 December 1950, the *Manchester Guardian* (now *Guardian*) wrote: “Without Patel, Gandhi’s ideas would have had less practical influence and Nehru’s idealism less scope.”

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### **COULD INDIA HAVE SAVED TIBET? Patel’s Historic Letter to Nehru**

New Delhi  
7 November 1950

My dear Jawaharlal,

Ever since my return from Ahmedabad and after the Cabinet meeting the same day which I had to attend at practically 15 minutes’ notice and for which I regret I was not able to read all the papers, I have been anxiously thinking over the problem of Tibet and I thought I should share with you what is passing through my mind.

I have carefully gone through the correspondence between the External Affairs Ministry and our Ambassador in Peking and through him the Chinese Government. I have tried to peruse this correspondence as favourably to our Ambassador and the Chinese Government as possible, but I regret to say that neither of them comes out well as a result of this study. The Chinese Government have tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intentions. My own feeling is that at a crucial period they managed to instill into our Ambassador a false sense of confidence in their so-called desire to settle the Tibetan problem by peaceful means. There can be no doubt that during the period covered by this correspondence the Chinese must have been concentrating for an onslaught on Tibet. The final action of the Chinese, in my judgment, is little short of perfidy. The tragedy of it is that the Tibetans put faith in us; they chose to be guided by us; and we have been unable to get them out of the meshes of Chinese diplomacy or Chinese malevolence. From the latest position, it appears that we shall not be able to rescue the Dalai Lama. Our Ambassador has been at great pains to find an explanation or justification for Chinese policy and actions. As the External Affairs Ministry remarked in one of their telegrams, there was a lack of firmness and unnecessary apology in one or two representations that he made to the Chinese Government on our behalf. It is impossible to imagine any sensible person believing in the so-called threat to China from Anglo-American machinations in Tibet. Therefore, if the Chinese put faith in this, they must have distrusted us so completely as to have taken us as fools or stooges of Anglo-American diplomacy or strategy. This feeling, if genuinely entertained by the Chinese in spite of your direct approaches to them, indicates that even though we regard ourselves as friends of China, the Chinese do not regard us as their friends. With the Communist mentality of “whoever is not with them being against them,” this is a significant pointer of which we have to take due note. During the last several months, outside the Russian camp, we have practically been alone in championing the cause of Chinese entry into the UNO and in securing from the Americans assurances on the questions of Formosa.

We have done everything we could to assuage Chinese feelings, to allay its apprehensions and to defend its legitimate claims in our discussions and correspondence

with America and Britain and in the UNO. In spite of this, China is not convinced about our disinterestedness; it continues to regard us with suspicion and the whole psychology is one, at least outwardly, of skepticism, perhaps mixed with a little hostility. I doubt if we can go any further than we have done already to convince China of our good intentions, friendliness and goodwill. In Peking, we have an Ambassador who is eminently suitable for putting across the friendly point of view. Even he seems to have failed to convert the Chinese. Their last telegram to us is an act of gross discourtesy not only in the summary way it disposes of our protest against the entry of Chinese forces into Tibet but also in the wild insinuation that our attitude is determined by foreign influences. It looks as though it is not a friend speaking in that language but a potential enemy.

In the background of this, we have to consider what new situation now faces us as a result of the disappearance of Tibet, as we knew it, and the expansion of China almost up to our gates. Throughout history we have seldom been worried about our north-east frontier. The Himalayas have been regarded as an impenetrable barrier against any threat from the north. We had a friendly Tibet which gave us no trouble. The Chinese were divided. They had their own domestic problems and never bothered us about our frontiers. In 1914, we entered into a convention with Tibet which was not endorsed by the Chinese. We seem to have regarded Tibetan autonomy as extending to independent treaty relationship. Presumably, all that we required was Chinese counter-signature. The Chinese interpretation of suzerainty seems to be different. We can, therefore, safely assume that very soon they will disown all the stipulations which Tibet has entered into with us in the past. That throws into the melting pot all frontier and commercial settlements with Tibet on which we have been functioning and acting during the last half a century. China is no longer divided. It is united and strong. All along the Himalayas in the north and north-east, we have on our side of the frontier a population ethnologically and culturally not different from Tibetans or Mongoloids. The undefined state of the frontier and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to Tibetans or Chinese have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselves. Recent and bitter history also tells us that communism is no shield against imperialism and that the Communists are as good or as bad imperialists as any other. Chinese ambitions in this respect not only cover the Himalayan slopes on our side but also include important parts of Assam. They have their ambitions in Burma also. Burma has the added difficulty that it has no McMahon Line round which to build up even the semblance of an agreement. Chinese irredentism and Communist imperialism are different from the expansionism or imperialism of the Western Powers. The former has a cloak of ideology which makes it ten times more dangerous. In the guise of ideological expansion lie concealed racial, national or historical claims. The danger from the north and north-east, therefore, becomes both communist and imperialist. While our western and north-western threat to security is still as prominent as before, a new threat has developed from the north and north-east. Thus, for the first time, after centuries, India's defence has to concentrate itself on two fronts simultaneously. Our defence measures have so far been based on the calculations of superiority over Pakistan. In our calculations we shall now have to reckon with Communist China in the north and in the north-east, a Communist China which has

definite ambitions and aims and which does not, in any way, seem friendly disposed towards us.

Let us also consider the political conditions on this potentially troublesome frontier. Our northern or north-eastern approaches consist of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, the Darjeeling [area] and tribal areas in Assam. From the point of view of communications, they are weak spots. Continuous defensive lines do not exist. There is almost an unlimited scope for infiltration. Police protection is limited to a very small number of passes. There, too, our outposts do not seem to be fully manned. The contact of these areas with us is by no means close and intimate. The people inhabiting these portions have no established loyalty or devotion to India. Even the Darjeeling and Kalimpong areas are not free from pro-Mongoloid prejudices. During the last three years we have not been able to make any appreciable approaches to the Nagas and other hill tribes in Assam. European missionaries and other visitors had been in touch with them, but their influence was in no way friendly to India or Indians. In Sikkim, there was political ferment some time ago. It is quite possible that discontent is smouldering there. Bhutan is comparatively quiet, but its affinity with Tibetans would be a handicap. Nepal has a weak oligarchic regime based almost entirely on force; it is in conflict with a turbulent element of the population as well as with enlightened ideas of the modern age. In these circumstances, to make people alive to the new danger or to make them defensively strong is a very difficult task indeed and that difficulty can be got over only by enlightened firmness, strength and a clear line of policy. I am sure the Chinese and their source of inspiration, Soviet Russia, would not miss any opportunity of exploiting these weak spots, partly in support of their ideology and partly in support of their ambitions. In my judgment, therefore, the situation is one in which we cannot afford either to be complacent or to be vacillating. We must have a clear idea of what we wish to achieve and also of the methods by which we should achieve it. Any faltering or lack of decisiveness in formulating our objectives or in pursuing our policy to attain those objectives is bound to weaken us and increase the threats which are so evident.

Side by side with these external dangers, we shall now have to face serious internal problems as well. I have already asked [H. V. R.] Iengar to send to the E. A. Ministry a copy of the Intelligence Bureau's appreciation of these matters. Hitherto, the Communist Party of India has found some difficulty in contacting Communists abroad, or in getting supplies of arms, literature, etc. from them. They had to contend with the difficult Burmese and Pakistan frontiers on the east or with the long seaboard. They shall now have a comparatively easy means of access to Chinese Communists and through them to other foreign Communists. Infiltration of spies, fifth columnists and Communists would now be easier. Instead of having to deal with isolated Communist pockets in Telengana and Warangal we may have to deal with Communist threats to our security along our northern and north-eastern frontiers where, for supplies of arms and ammunition, they can safely depend on Communist arsenals in China. The whole situation thus raised a number of problems on which we must come to an early decision so that we can, as I said earlier, formulate the objectives of our policy and decide the methods by which those objectives are to be attained. It is also clear that the action will have to be fairly comprehensive, involving not only our defence strategy and state of preparations but also

problems of internal security to deal with which we have not a moment to lose. We shall also have to deal with administrative and political problems in the weak spots along the frontier to which I have already referred.

It is, of course, impossible for me to be exhaustive in setting out all these problems. I am, however, giving below some of the problems which, in my opinion, require early solution and round which we have to build our administrative or military policies and measures to implement them.

- a) A military and intelligence appreciation of the Chinese threat to India both on the frontier and to internal security.
- b) An examination of our military position and such redistribution of our forces as might be necessary, particularly with the idea of guarding important routes or areas which are likely to be the subject of dispute.
- c) An appraisal of the strength of our forces and, if necessary, reconsideration of our retrenchment plans for the Army in the light of these new threats.
- d) Long-term consideration of our defence needs. My own feeling is that, unless we assure our supplies of arms, ammunition and armour, we should be making our defence position perpetually weak and we would not be able to stand up to the double threat of difficulties both from the west and north-west and north and north-east.
- e) The question of Chinese entry into UNO. In view of the rebuff which China has given us and the method which it has followed in dealing with Tibet, I am doubtful whether we can advocate its claims any longer. There would probably be a threat in the UNO virtually to outlaw China in view of its active participation in the Korean War. We must determine our attitude on this question also.
- f) The political and administrative steps which we should take to strengthen our northern and north-eastern frontiers. This would include the whole of the border, i.e. Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and the tribal territory in Assam.
- g) Measures of internal security in the border areas as well as the States flanking those areas, such as UP, Bihar, Bengal and Assam.
- h) Improvement of our communications, road, rail, air and wireless, in these areas and with the frontier outposts.
- i) Policing and intelligence of frontier posts.
- j) The future of our mission at Lhasa and the trade posts at Gyantse and Yatung and the forces which we have in operation in Tibet to guard the trade routes.
- k) The policy in regard to the McMahon Line.

These are some of the questions which occur to my mind. It is possible that a consideration of these matters may lead us into wider questions of our relationship with China, Russia, America, Britain and Burma. This, however, would be of a general nature, though some might be basically very important, e.g. we might have to consider whether we should not enter into closer association with Burma in order to strengthen the latter in its dealings with China. I do not rule out the possibility that, before applying pressure on us, China might apply pressure on Burma. With Burma, the frontier is entirely undefined and the Chinese territorial claims are more substantial. In its present position, Burma might offer an easier problem for China and, therefore, might claim its first attention.

I suggest that we meet early to have a general discussion on these problems and decide on such steps as we might think to be immediately necessary and direct quick examination of other problems with a view to taking early measures to deal with them.

Yours,  
Vallabhbhai Patel

**Prime Minister Nehru's Note on China and Tibet dated 18 November 1950**

[The note was obviously forwarded to Sardar Patel as it answered indirectly some of the matters raised in Sardar's letter of 7 November 1950.]

1. The Chinese Government having replied to our last note, we have to consider what further steps we should take in this matter. There is no immediate hurry about sending a reply to the Chinese Government. But we have to send immediate instructions to Shri B. N. Rau as to what he should do in the event of Tibet's appeal being brought up before the Security Council or the General Assembly.

2. The content of the Chinese reply is much the same as their previous notes, but there does appear to be a toning down and an attempt at some kind of a friendly approach

3. It is interesting to note that they have not referred specifically to our mission [at] Lhasa or to our trade agents or military escort at Gyantse etc. We had mentioned these especially in our last note. There is an indirect reference, however, in China's note. At the end, this note says that "As long as our two sides adhere strictly to the principle of mutual respect for territory, sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit, we are convinced that the friendship between China and India should be developed in a normal way and that problems relating to Sino-Indian diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations with respect to Tibet may be solved properly and to our mutual benefit through normal diplomatic channels." This clearly refers to our trade agents and others in Tibet. We had expected a demand from them for the withdrawal of these agents etc. The fact that they have not done so has some significance.

4. Stress is laid in China's note on Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, which we are reminded, we have acknowledged, on Tibet being an integral part of China's territory and therefore a domestic problem. It is however again repeated that outside influences, have been at play obstructing China's mission in Tibet. In fact, it is stated that liberation of Changtu proves that foreign forces and influences were inciting Tibetan troops to resist. It is again repeated that no foreign intervention will be permitted and that the Chinese army will proceed.

5. All this is much the same as has been said before, but it is said in a somewhat different way and there are repeated references in the note to China desiring the friendship of India

6. It is true that in one of our messages to the Chinese Government we used “sovereignty” of China in relation to Tibet. In our last message we used the word “suzerainty”. After receipt of the last China’s note, we have pointed out to our Ambassador that “suzerainty” was the right word and that “sovereignty” had been used by error.

7. It is easy to draft a reply to the Chinese note, pressing our viewpoint and countering some of the arguments raised in the Chinese note. But before we do so we should be clear in our minds as to what we are aiming at, not only in the immediate future but from a long-term view. It is important that we keep both these viewpoints before us. In all probability China, that is present-day China, is going to be our close neighbour for a long time to come. We are going to have a tremendously long common frontier. It is unlikely, and it would be unwise to expect, that the present Chinese Government will collapse, giving place to another. Therefore, it is important to pursue a policy which will be in keeping with this long-term view.

8. I think it may be taken for granted that China will take possession, in a political sense at least, of the whole of Tibet. There is no likelihood whatsoever of Tibet being able to resist this or stop it. It is equally unlikely that any foreign power can prevent it. We cannot do so. If so, what can we do to help in the maintenance of Tibetan autonomy and at same time avoiding continuous tension and apprehension on our frontiers?

9. The Chinese note has repeated that they wish the Tibetan people to have what they call “regional autonomy and religious freedom”. This autonomy can obviously not be anything like the autonomy verging on independence which Tibet has enjoyed during the last forty years or so. But it is reasonable to assume from the very nature of Tibetan geography, terrain and climate, that a large measure of autonomy is almost inevitable. It may of course be that this autonomous Tibet is controlled by communists alone in Tibet. I imagine however that it is, on the whole, more likely that what will be attempted will be a pro-communist China administration rather than a communist one.

10. If world war comes, then all kinds of difficult and intricate problems arise and each one of these problems will be inter-related with others. Even the question of defence of India assumes a different shape and cannot be isolated from other world factors. I think that it is exceedingly unlikely that we may have to face any real military invasion from the Chinese side, whether in peace or in war, in the foreseeable future. I base this conclusion on a consideration of various world factors. In peace, such an invasion would undoubtedly lead to world war. China, though internally big, is in a way amorphous and easily capable of being attacked on its sea coasts and by air. In such a war, China would have its main front in the South and East and it will be fighting for its very existence against powerful enemies. It is inconceivable that it should divert its forces and its strength across the inhospitable terrain of Tibet and undertake a wild adventure across the Himalayas. Any such attempt will greatly weaken its capacity to meet its real enemies on other fronts. Thus I rule out any major attack on India by China. I think these considerations should be borne in mind, because there is far too much loose talk about China attacking and overrunning India. If we lose our sense of perspective and world

strategy and give way to unreasoning fears, then any policy that we might have is likely to fail.

11. While there is, in my opinion, practically no chance of a major attack on India by China, there are certainly chances of gradual infiltration across our border and possibly of entering and taking possession of disputed territory, if there is obstruction to this happening. We must therefore take all necessary precautions to prevent this. But, again, we must differentiate between these precautions and those that might be necessary to meet a real attack.

12. If we really feared an attack and had to make full provision for it, this would cast an intolerable burden on us, financial and otherwise, and it would weaken our general defence position. There are limits beyond which we cannot go, at least for some years, and a spreading out of our army on distant frontiers would be bad from every military or strategic point of view.

13. In spite of our desire to settle the points at issue between us and Pakistan, and developing peaceful relations with it, the fact remains that our major possible enemy is Pakistan. This has compelled us to think of our defence mainly in terms of Pakistan's aggression. If we begin to think of, and prepare for, China's aggression in the same way, we would weaken considerably on the Pakistan side. We might well be got in a pincer movement. It is interesting to note that Pakistan is taking a great deal of interest, from the point of view, in developments in Tibet. Indeed it has been discussed in the Pakistan Press that the new danger from Tibet to India might help them to settle the Kashmir problem according to their wishes. Pakistan has absolutely nothing in common with China or Tibet. But if we fall out completely with China, Pakistan will undoubtedly try to take advantage of this, politically or otherwise. The position of India thus will be bad from a defence point of view. We cannot have all the time two possible enemies on either side of India. This danger will not be got over, even if we increase our defence forces or even if other foreign countries help us in arming. The measure of safety that one gets by increasing the defence apparatus is limited by many factors. But whatever that measure of safety might be, strategically we would be in an unsound position and the burden of this will be very great on us. As it is, we are facing enormous difficulties, financial, economic, etc.

14. The idea that communism inevitably means expansion and war, or to put it more precisely, that Chinese communism means inevitably an expansion towards India, is rather naïve. It may mean that in certain circumstances. Those circumstances would depend upon many factors, which I need not go into here. The danger really is not from military invasion but from infiltration of men and ideas. The ideas are there already and can only be countered by other ideas. Communism is an important element in the situation. But, by our attaching too great importance to it in this context, we are likely to misjudge the situation from other and more important angles.

15. In a long-term view, India and China are two of the biggest countries of Asia bordering on each other and both with certain expansive tendencies, because of their

vitality. If their relations are bad, this will have a serious effect not only on both of them but on Asia as a whole. It would affect our future for a long time. If a position arises in which China and India are inveterately hostile to each other, like France and Germany, then there will be repeated wars bringing destruction to both. The advantage will go to other countries. It is interesting to note that both the UK and the USA appear to be anxious to add to the unfriendliness of India and China towards each other. It is also interesting to find that the USSR does not view with favour any friendly relations between India and China. These are long-term reactions which one can fully understand, because India and China at peace with each other would make a vast difference to the whole set-up and balance of the world. Much of course depends upon the development of either country and how far communism in China will mould the Chinese people. Even so, these processes are long-range ones and in the long run it is fairly safe to assume that hundreds of millions of people will not change their essential characteristics.

16. These arguments lead to the conclusion that while we should be prepared, to the best of our ability, for all contingencies, the real protection that we should seek is some kind of understanding of China. If we have not got that, then both our present and our future are imperilled and no distant power can save us. I think on the whole that China desires this too for obvious reasons. If this is so, then we should fashion our present policy accordingly.

17. We cannot save Tibet, as we should have liked to do, and our very attempts to save it might well bring greater trouble to it. It would be unfair to Tibet for us to bring this trouble upon her without having the capacity to help her effectively. It may be possible, however, that we might be able to help Tibet to retain a large measure of her autonomy. That would be good for Tibet and good for India. As far as I can see, this can only be done on the diplomatic level and by avoidance of making the present tension between India and China worse.

18. What then should be our instructions to B. N. Rau? From the messages he has sent to us, it appears that no member of the Security Council shows any inclination to sponsor Tibet's appeal and that there is little likelihood of the matter being considered by the Council. We have said that [we] are not going to sponsor this appeal, but if it comes up we shall state our viewpoint. This viewpoint cannot be one of full support of the Tibetan appeal, because that goes far and claims full independence. We may say that whatever might have been acknowledged in the past about China's sovereignty or suzerainty, recent events have deprived China of the right to claim that. There may be some moral basis for this argument. But it will not take us or Tibet very far. It will only hasten the downfall of Tibet. No outsider will be able to help her and China, suspicious and apprehensive of these tactics, will make sure of much speedier and fuller possession of Tibet than she might otherwise have done. We shall thus not only fail in our endeavour but at the same time have really a hostile China on our doorstep.

19. I think that in no event should we sponsor Tibet's appeal. I would personally think that it would be a good thing if that appeal is not heard in the Security Council or the General Assembly. If it is considered there, there is bound to be a great deal of bitter

speaking and accusation, which will worsen the situation as regards Tibet, as well as the possibility of widespread war, without helping it in the least. It must be remembered that neither the UK nor the USA, nor indeed any other power is particularly interested in Tibet or the future of that country. What they are interested in is embarrassing China. Our interest, on the other hand, is Tibet, and if we cannot serve that interest, we fail.

20. Therefore, it will be better not to discuss Tibet's appeal in the UN. Suppose, however, that it comes up for discussion, in spite of our not wishing this, what then? I would suggest that our representative should state our case as moderately as possible and ask the Security Council or the Assembly to give expression to their desire that the Sino-Tibetan question should be settled peacefully and that Tibet's autonomy should be respected and maintained. Any particular reference to an article of the Charter of the UN might tie us up in difficulties and lead to certain consequences later, which may prove highly embarrassing for us. Or a resolution of the UN might just be a dead letter which also will be bad.

21. If my general argument is approved, then we can frame our reply to China's note accordingly.

J. Nehru  
18 November 1950