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A Monthly National Review

May 2015



“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”
— The Mother

Year 6

Issue 2

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels

Year 6

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A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

– The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother 13, p. 124-25)

The History of Sino-Indian Relations and the Border Dispute Between the Two Countries (7)

III. The Post-Independence Relations Between India and China from 1947 to the Present

A. The Period from 1947 to 1954

B. The Period from 1955 to 1961

C. The Years 1962 and 1963

An Overview of the Period

India's infantile and most unfortunate Forward Policy, initiated in November 1961, was vigorously pursued during the first ten months of 1962 (MAP 5). Chinese attempts to arrive at some kind of sane understanding with India on the border dispute – unabated by persistent Indian rebuffs – continued throughout the first nine months of 1962 but ultimately failed due to Indian intransigence springing from an increasing pressure of public opinion on Nehru to take a line with them. The pressure of public opinion was effective because, during the whole course of events which should have induced any thoughtful person to seriously take stock of the whole situation, the Indian leaders (both civilian and military) portrayed no real grasp of the ground reality – the reality of India's extremely limited military capabilities as compared to that of the Chinese. As a result, India's Forward Policy became more and more aggressive as the persistent Chinese efforts for a peaceful settlement and avoidance of armed conflict was increasingly viewed by the Indian political and military leaders as Chinese weakness.

During the whole course of Sino-Indian relations beginning from the year 1950, the Chinese always seemed to have taken the view that a peaceful settlement of all mutual issues was the best course for the two countries and their one billion people. However, in the face of an increasingly aggressive pursuit of its Forward Policy by India, they were left with no choice but to get the Indians off their

backs by inflicting a decisive military defeat on them. The Chinese attack of 20th October 1962 only served to make the Indians even more intransigent. However, the overwhelming Chinese response in the third week of November 1962 to the Indian attack of November 14, made the Indians realize, once for all, that they could not achieve anything on the border issue except through peaceful negotiations.

(i) Chinese Moves of a Peaceful Settlement of the Border Dispute During the Early Part of 1962

“In January 1962, the Chinese suggested to the Burmese their terms for a settlement. The Indian also indicated their position. In February, Chinese embassy officials in New Delhi informed leftist journalists of a ‘formula’ which included a joint Sino-Indian use of the Aksai Plain road (Map 8), formation of a joint commission to demarcate the Ladakh border, and recognition by China of the McMahon Line (Map 7). Responding to the Chinese probes, Indian leaders insisted on various forms of Chinese withdrawals.

Nehru told President Prasad on 10 March that Peiping must meet three conditions before negotiations can be started: (1) agree to vacate posts found to be in the Indian-claimed territory after the December 1960 border experts meeting, (2) admit that the Aksai Plain road traverses Indian territory in Ladakh and agree to construct an alternate route, and (3) publish the full text of the border experts Report. Nehru said that these conditions had been communicated to the Chinese through informal diplomatic channels, and that he included in his formula permission for the Chinese to use the road ‘temporarily.’ Later in March, Foreign Secretary Desai responded to a Chinese overture made at the Geneva conference on Laos by repeating Nehru’s demand that the Chinese withdraw from the Plain.

As a gesture to show some amenability to compromise, the Chinese at Geneva had added a new proposal to their formula. They had told Foreign Secretary Desai there that in addition to giving up their map claim to the NEFA, they might give up the map claim to part of Ladakh, retaining ‘only’ the Aksai Plain — i.e., the area they occupied on the ground. Some Indian’s apparently viewed this

proposal as merely an opening gambit which reflected a basic Chinese willingness to accede to Nehru's demand for a significant pullback in Ladakh. When the new Chinese formula was reported to R. K. Nehru, he stated privately that by standing firm, the Indians would be able to compel the Chinese to cede some of the ground they held, enabling the prime minister to save face with the Opposition, the press, and the public."¹

"On 26 February 1962 Beijing delivered a lengthy and conciliatory sounding note to India. The note called for negotiations to reach a peaceful settlement of the boundary problem. India's reply came on 13 March. It reiterated India's standard position that the Chinese withdrawal from Aksai China was an essential precondition for negotiations.

A while later Mao met again with Lin Biao, then vice chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and minister of defence, Zhou Enlai, and Luo Ruiqing. Again the topic was the situation being created by implementation of India's Forward Policy. Zhou Enlai first reported on India's rejection of China's many diplomatic proposals for negotiations. Lin Biao then reported that Indian forces continued to set up outposts next to Chinese outposts, continued to dispatch patrols into forward areas, and continued to fire (sheji) on Chinese border defence personnel. Mao noted it would be hard to make Nehru change course: 'A person sleeping in a comfortable bed is not easily roused by someone else's snoring,' he commented. After discussion, the CMC decided that the PLA absolutely should not retreat before Indian advances. When Indian forces established outposts encircling Chinese positions, Chinese forces should build even more outposts counter-encircling the new Indian positions. In this fashion, Chinese and Indian positions would develop in an inter-locking, zigzag fashion. But Chinese forces were also to seek to avoid bloodshed. They were absolutely not to fire without orders from above. In this fashion a situation of 'armed coexistence' (wuzhang gongchu) would develop. Mao's comment on this situation was: 'Nehru wants to move forward and we won't let him. Originally, we tried to guard against this, but now it seems we cannot prevent it. If he wants to advance, we might as well (jiu zhi hao) adopt armed coexistence. You wave a gun, and

I'll wave a gun. We'll stand face to face and can each practice our courage (keyi liandanliang).'

Following this meeting further orders went out to the Tibet and Xinjiang military regions accelerating construction of new PLA outposts and roads. All levels of the PLA and frontier forces were ordered to report developments immediately, and it was reiterated that lower levels absolutely could not decide matters on their own. At all costs, troops and units were to avoid actions that would cause a further worsening of the border situation. Chinese forces were also ordered to conduct propaganda work toward Indian soldiers, calling out to them on encounters to urge them to stop their aggression against China, extolling the traditional friendship between China and India, and recounting the efforts of the Chinese government to achieve a peaceful resolution of the border issue.”²

(ii) The Militarization of the Border Conflict

By the end of 1961, the domestic criticism of his “soft” China policy made Nehru amenable to a new and bolder Indian arms strategy – called the Forward Policy – which aimed at establishing Indian posts around and behind the Chinese forward posts in Ladakh. This approach took concrete shape when new directives were issued for the implementation of the Forward Policy after the crucial meeting of 2nd November 1961 where, in addition to Nehru and Krishna Menon, Foreign Secretary Desai, Chief of Army Staff General Thaper, General Kaul and the director of the Intelligence Bureau B.N. Mallik were also present along with numerous other government officials. It was suggested in this meeting by the Army and the Intelligence officials that the Chinese move to occupy all the area up to their claim line could be countered by the presence there even of a small force of dozen or so Indian troops. Therefore, it was proposed that Army should quickly move forward and establish its presence in the area between the actual line of control of the two sides. If it was not done, it was believed that the Chinese were bound to occupy this space within next four months. It was believed that the Chinese were not likely to react to the establishment of Indian posts in the area of their claim

line except in diplomatic protests. They were, in no case, expected to respond by force.

By the end of December 1961, it was decided to proceed with the above line of action by the spring of 1962 when weather conditions improved in Ladakh. "The plan called for the establishment of five new Indian posts of 80-100 men each behind nine existing forward Chinese posts in Ladakh west of the 1956 Chinese claim line (Map 5); the posts were to be manned all the year round. Krishna Menon instructed the Indian air force to prepare a report on its capability to sustain a major air supply effort. (Two of the posts were to be set up close to the western part of the Aksai Plain road, but the Indians were unable to move anywhere near it in subsequent encounters.) Briefing cabinet subcommittee officials on the Nehru-approved plan in late December, Krishna Menon stated that the new posts would be positioned to cut off the supply lines of targeted Chinese posts; they were to cause the 'starving out' of the Chinese, who would thereafter be replaced by Indian troops in the posts. These points would serve as advanced bases for Indian patrols assigned to probe close to the road."³

Alert to the possibility of the new Indian move, the Chinese warned the Indians through various diplomatic channels that they would counter Indian moves effectively and even use force when necessary to push them back from Chinese territory. In the early part of 1962, the Chinese abandoned their earlier policy of withdrawing when they encountered new Indian posts, and their forces began standing their ground. For example, when some new Indian posts were established in Galwan Valley (Aksai Chin, Map 8) outflanking the Chinese posts, the Chinese countered by building their positions surrounding the new Indian posts and cutting off their supply routes.

"China's abandonment of the initial policy of withdrawal in face of Indian advances, in favour of the tougher policy of armed coexistence, 'clearly showed that the basic assumption behind the Forward Policy decision [that the Chinese would withdraw rather than use force] was no longer valid, and a serious reappraisal of the

new situation should have been undertaken by India. 'This reappraisal, however, never took place and the situation was allowed to drift,' according to the official Indian history. Instead of re-examining the assumptions of the Forward Policy, Indian leaders made that policy still more aggressive. Rather than merely seeking to pre-empt Chinese occupation of the vacant land, 'It was now decided to push back the Chinese posts they already occupied.'"⁴

Still believing that their moves would not provoke a major clash, the Indian army was ordered in early April, 1962, to flank Chinese forward posts and induce their withdrawal to the official boundary line claimed by India. The first planned Indian flanking operation was initiated in mid-April against a Chinese post in Chip Chap River (Ladakh) area (Map 8). The Chinese objected to these moves in their note sent to New Delhi at the end of April in which they charged that, in the period from 11th to 27th, the Indian troops had set up two posts around theirs.

To counter the Indian moves, the Chinese ordered their troops to resume patrolling along the Aksai Plain border sector from the Karakoram Pass to the Kongka Pass (Map 8). Responding to the alarm raised in some quarters due to the Chinese note of April 30, "...Nehru declared in Parliament on 3 May that there really was 'nothing alarming' in the Chinese note because it had been evoked by an Indian initiative: India had established a number of posts, some of which were 'behind' the Chinese post, causing the Chinese some 'annoyance' – 'Hence their note.' The Chinese leaders were provided with a further indication of Nehru's gradually increasing militancy when he stated publicly on 2 May that the Chinese note would not deter him from supporting the forward policy. 'We will stay where we are' and are 'prepared for them if they step up patrolling.'

The border dispute was in this way transformed by the Indians from a primarily political quarrel to a serious military confrontation."⁵

Beginning April 1962, India accelerated the implementation of its Forward Policy in the Eastern Sector (NEFA) also because it was believed that the situation there favoured India more. When Indians

moved into Longju (Map 7) across McMahon Line, the Chinese government in its stern note of May 19, warned that if Indian troops were not withdrawn from Longju, the Chinese government would not stand idly by.

Despite the warning in the April 30 Chinese note, Indian army was ordered on May 1 to immediately dispatch 1800 troops to Ladakh from Srinagar Command “to serve as a supporting force in any fighting resulting from the Chip Chap operation; they were given a ‘fight-to-the-death’ speech by Kaul and dispatched on 2 May. At the same time, Kaul wired instructions to those Indian border posts which were tactically well-positioned to ‘retaliate immediately’ if the Chinese wipe out any of the new Indian forward posts. Starting on 5 May, Indian troops began to move into the post at Dambuguru (Map 8) and on 6 May, active patrolling by troops of both sides was reported to American officials by the Chief of the General Staff, General Thapar.

More ominously than in April, the Chinese threatened to fight back. On 6 May, the Chinese chargé in New Delhi told an Indian contact that China, ‘shocked’ by India’s advances and establishment of new posts ‘at places deep within China’s territory,’ has no alternative but to resist: ‘I hope the Government of India realizes the consequences that are bound to follow. China wants no trouble, but if trouble is forced upon it, it will respond forcefully.’

On 19 May, the chargé stated privately that Indian troops, moving into Chinese territory, sometimes in full view of Chinese border forces, seem to be ‘spoiling for a fight.’ He warned that Peiping was aware that New Delhi was preparing a major military drive. The Chinese had already protested formally (note of 11 May) that Indian troops on 2 May had set up another new post in the area south of Spanggur Lake (Map 8) approximately 2.5 miles from the Chinese post at Jechiung (Jechitung), that two Indian soldiers had fired at the Chinese post on 5 May, and that ‘very serious consequences’ would have resulted if Chinese troops had not been alert, cool-headed, and restrained. This Chinese note was the first since late August 1959 in which they had charged that one of their posts had been fired upon.”⁶

“On May 2, 1962 the Directorate of Military Operations in India had suggested that the air force should be readied for use in NEFA and Ladakh. The Air Force was considered a feasible way to repel the unbalanced ratio of Chinese troops to Indian troops and the Chinese air force was assessed as only capable of limited strategic raids which could be countered by the Indian air force. Indian Air Force soon started reconnaissance flights over the NEFA border. On May 7, 1962 Chinese troops shot down an Indian Dakota plane in which young Officer B. P. Tiwari was lost. Following this incident, the Indian Air Force was told not to plan for close air support.”⁷

Nehru had proposed mutual withdrawal in his note of 14 May. “They refused to view Nehru’s proposal (14 May) for a mutual withdrawal in Ladakh on the basis of each other’s map claims as anything but a diversionary political move; they warned him (note of 2 June) that it was unacceptable, requiring a one-sided (Chinese) withdrawal and in fact intended to conceal India’s continuing drive ‘in setting up military strong points on Chinese territory...a border clash may touch off at any moment.’ That is, they indicated they would be guided in their decisions by Indian military advances more than by Indian political statements.

Possibly in May and probably in June, Indian advances convinced the Chinese leaders that they should begin planning for a major action to clear out the new Indian positions. There is some evidence that active planning in June resulted in practical steps taken in preparation for eventual military action.

Throughout June, however, the Chinese avoided moving against any of the new Indian posts. They apparently desired no clash with Indian forces at the time despite clear indications of New Delhi’s intentions.”⁸

(iii) China’s First Major Move in Response to India’s Forward Policy: The encirclement of India’s Galwan Post

“Chinese ‘self-restraint,’ repeatedly expressed in notes with increasing frequency since the mid-April Indian move ups, was

motivated throughout May and June primarily by Peiping's fear of a Chinese Nationalist invasion, across the Taiwan Strait."⁹

After the Chinese received assurance from the U.S. that it would not support a Nationalist assault, they turned with confidence to counter the Indian advances. "Their first major move of 1962 was in direct response to a new Indian move in Ladakh. They formally charged (memorandum of 8 July) that about 20 Indian troops on 6 July moved into the Galwan River Valley (Map 8), attempting to establish 'a new strong-point' and 'to cut off the only rear route' of a Chinese post located at the lower reaches of the river. On 9 July, they displayed considerable pique, complaining (People's Daily editorial) that Nehru three times in late June had 'boasted' in Parliament about India's new posts set up behind Chinese positions and that Indian officials are 'triumphantly bragging about the aggressive activities of Indian troops nibbling away at China's borders.' Implying that they would deny the Indians any further opportunity to continue flanking moves with impunity, the editorial warned:

'It seems that the Indian Government has taken China's restraint as weakness. But the Indian authorities are committing a big blunder if they think that the Chinese border units will submit to the armed Indian advance, that they will renounce their sacred duty of defending their fatherland and give up the right of self-defense when subjected to unprovoked attacks....

It is still not too late to rein in on the brink of the precipice. The Indian authorities had better think three times about this matter.'

The Chinese followed up their warning with a note (10 July), detailing a series of Indian flanking moves against six Chinese posts and citing Nehru's 20 June statement in Parliament as proof of Indian provocation.^a At the same time, they moved on the ground. On the

^aIn their note, the Chinese selected Nehru's remarks which most strikingly supported their argument: In his speech in Parliament on June 20, 1962, Nehru unwittingly let out the truth. He stated that to say that China had made 'a fresh intrusion' was 'hardly correct' and that it was due to the Indian movements 'sometimes going behind Chinese positions' and 'largely due to the movements on our (Indian) side that the Chinese had also to make movements.'

morning of 10 July, Chinese troops began to advance on a small Indian unit at 78° 38' E – 34° 40' N from the east, south, and west, positioning themselves at a distance of 20 yards from the new post. According to Krishna Menon's report to the Cabinet Defense Subcommittee on 12 July, the 20-man Indian unit had been ordered to open fire if the Chinese advanced any closer. Nevertheless, the Chinese had the superior force and could have destroyed the post without much trouble.

This three-sided encirclement apparently reflected the decision of the Chinese leaders to impress Nehru that they would now fight to stop his forward policy. Reluctance to fight, they apparently believed, had encouraged the Indians to make new advances and new public boasts; the Indians had not been deterred and China's prestige was being damaged. Verbal warnings had to be made real warnings by moving troops on the ground. Actually, the Chinese stopped short of launching an attack. They apparently calculated that flanking pressure at points of their own choosing would not be a risky policy. Chinese superiority in men and arms would be ensured, and pressure provided them with more control over the situation than an outright attack. They apparently believed that the numerically inferior Indian force would be withdrawn from the Galwan Valley post.

However, the Indian leaders viewed a pull-back under the circumstances as detrimental, providing the Chinese with a bloodless victory. They began to supply the post by air and moved more troops into the valley. They had no other plan of action for breaking the Chinese encirclement. Ambassador Galbraith received the impression from the MEA's China Division Director, S. Sinha, on 13 July that the 'strategy' of the Indian leaders was to hope that the Chinese would go away. Displaying some anxiety, Sinha stated that if Indian troops opened fire, many Indian posts in the western sector would also be vulnerable to Chinese retaliatory action. The Chinese tried to induce a withdrawal on 13 July by pulling their encircling force back 200 yards from the post, opening a line of retreat along the supply trail. At the same time (on the evening of the 13th), they

threatened the Indians with the consequences of any rash action stating that the Indian government should give 'serious consideration to the danger of the situation and not play with fire; he who plays with fire will burn himself.'

Within the Indian leadership, the views of the military prevailed with increasing vigor over those of the civilian chiefs. Nehru and his political advisers found themselves under stronger pressure than before to stand pat at Galwan and to continue the policy of advances elsewhere in the western sector.

Indian army leaders planned to continue the move ups throughout the summer, calculating that the Chinese would not react on a large scale and that any small-scale reaction could be localized. Thus Chinese encirclement of the Galwan post did not change Indian strategy; on the contrary, Kaul privately expressed confidence that the Chinese were not operating from strength. He told Ambassador Galbraith on 16 July that the Indian army viewed the Chinese as set in a 'mood' of weakness and that Indian policy was to take maximum advantage of this mood by establishing even more new posts. In contrast to the policy ambiguities of a year or two ago, Kaul continued, the Indian army 'is not now in a mood to be pushed around.' His remark about 'ambiguities' was directed implicitly against Krishna Menon, who had never been enthusiastic about a forward policy and was only driven to concur with the moves of spring-summer 1962 under threat of being called 'soft' on the Chinese as a result of his early contacts with them. Menon was made even more vulnerable to criticism after an Indian advance in the Chip Chap River area resulted in a sharp firefight on 21 July; Nehru himself was in effect compelled to approve Kaul's request that Indian troops on the border be given the discretion to open fire. Prior to the incident, border units had been instructed to fire only in self-defense, although Kaul and the army staff had been seeking such approval from Nehru and Menon for several months.

The failure of the Galwan encirclement to deter the Indians from their forward policy was indicated to the Chinese leaders in

several ways, the most open being a 17 July Times of India article. Displaying lofty disregard for Chinese sensibilities, it stated in cavalier tones: 'What has happened in the Galwan Valley is the consequence of the firm policy decision by India nearly ten months ago. The process of extending our physical presence on what we regard as our territory was begun after due consideration of the risk involved. Even at a much earlier stage than last week, the Chinese should have realized that physical confrontation between troops from either side was inevitable. We intend to go ahead with this process. If the Chinese accept this unpleasant fact, there may yet be a way out through negotiations after mutual withdrawal from the disputed area in Ladakh.'

This was tantamount to asking the Chinese leaders to permit Indian troops to push back PLA border forces. The Chinese maintained their positions around the Galwan Valley post and moved elsewhere in the western sector beyond the 1956 claim line (Map 8) up to the line they had shown Indian border experts in 1960. They warned New Delhi against making 'a fatal mistake if it should think China is flabby and can be bullied' (note of 16 July) and 'a wrong assessment of the situation,' gambling with the possibility of 'a war on two fronts facing China' (People's Daily article, 21 July). In short, their actions and warnings in July were more ominous than previously as they improved their tactical positions and as the threat from Taiwan receded."¹⁰

(iv) Some Further Efforts to Revive Political Negotiations for a Peaceful Settlement

"The Galwan Valley encirclement pointed up the logistic capability and the tactical facility with which the PLA could move to hold Indian posts as hostages. The encirclement had frightened certain key Indian civilian leaders, particularly R. K. Nehru and Krishna Menon. They worried about the vulnerability of all Indian border posts; as defense minister, Menon worried about his position and prestige."¹¹

"Even before the Galwan Valley Incident, these Indian civilian

officials had begun to recognize that the Chinese had established their forces in the Aksai Plain so securely that the army could not realistically expect them to evacuate holdings there as a prerequisite for talks.”¹²

R.K. Nehru approached the Chinese at the end of June (in New Delhi) for the initiation of political talks. The Chinese responded positively to R.K. Nehru’s initiative. “Ever since the Chou-Nehru talks of April 1960, the Chinese leaders without exception had been receptive to any high-level Indian exploratory approach to talks. Only after they had ascertained that the Indian representative was stating the same old position — that is, Chinese withdrawal as a precondition for negotiations — did they act to reject an Indian overture. Thus in early July, the Chinese responded by returning Ambassador Pan Tzu-li, who had been in Peiping since January, to New Delhi to make a personal determination of Nehru’s willingness to begin talks. Nehru advised the Cabinet Defense Subcommittee meeting on 12 July that during his meeting with Pan, the latter had suggested Sino-Indian talks be initiated. Nehru told the meeting that this suggestion would be turned down because the Chinese were capable of making further border advances under the guise of talks. President Radhakrishnan concurred, maintaining that no grounds for talks existed as long as the Chinese persisted in their refusal to withdraw first. Home Minister Shastri urged continuation of a ‘firm’ policy: ‘territory not actually in Chinese possession’, he said, ‘should now be occupied by Indian troops.’ The only dissenter, Menon, replied that the Chinese were complaining of Indian flanking moves precisely because of the ‘firm’ policy. He informed the Subcommittee that Ambassador Pan Tzu-li had discussed the matter of talks privately with him as well as Nehru and that he, Menon, saw no harm in beginning discussions with Chinese officials.”¹³

Krishna Menon, even without majority of Cabinet concurrence, continued his efforts on this front in co-operation with R.K. Nehru. “The talks he began with Chen Yi in Geneva in late July had not been discussed with the prime minister prior to Menon’s departure for the conference, according to a reliable source. Only after arriving in

Geneva did Menon cable Nehru; he received only reluctant approval to talk with Chen coupled with a warning to make no commitments to the Chinese foreign minister.^{a''14}

After his return from Geneva, "He advised cabinet members at a meeting on 25 July not only to repudiate the withdrawal precondition as unrealistic, but also to seek a settlement based on the Chinese claim line of 1956 — the only way toward a peaceful solution. This view corresponded precisely with the Chinese position. Menon had persuaded Nehru to accept this view prior to dispatching the 26 July letter to the Chinese.

For a period of about three weeks, Nehru defended Menon's line. However, he viewed it less as a real step toward a settlement than as a device to buy time to gain a military standstill on the ground in Ladakh which would reduce the risk of clashes; meanwhile, India would be able over the next five years to strengthen its positions in Ladakh. Trying to buttress his argument for a peaceful settlement, Menon reported at a full cabinet meeting on 1 August that the Indian military position in Ladakh was 'untenable,' that the army had already pushed its plan of establishing new posts beyond the limits of military safety, that the Chinese were steadily bringing up supplies and equipment, and that the Indians would never establish a supply line in the Aksai Plain even roughly comparable to China's. He then made a striking estimate regarding the consequences of a major border clash: Indian forward posts would be wiped out immediately and the Chinese could, if they desired, push the Indians far beyond their 1960 claim (Map 8) without serious resistance. Menon's sobering remarks prompted the prime minister — whose ignorance of military matters made him dependent on Menon's estimate — to state that it was necessary 'now' for India 'to change' diplomatic tactics and to seek a de facto military truce based on the current border situation. Nehru called for 'a complete military disengagement' so that fighting could not possibly begin — a line Chou En-lai had been insisting on

^aLater, on 29 July, Nehru characteristically accepted responsibility for the actions of his long-time friend, publicly claiming that he had personally asked Menon to meet with Chen.

since late 1959. Once this was accomplished, 'discussions' on demarcation of the border could go on 'for five or six years.' Regarding the matter of domestic criticism such a drastic policy change would provoke, Nehru declared that it would be nothing compared to that which would be unleashed following a military catastrophe. In short, he and Menon showed considerable foresight by not underestimating Chinese military capabilities on the border."¹⁵

The Army did not support Menon's estimate of the military situation and both Thapar and Kaul denied that the situation was so unbalanced in favour of the Chinese. In fact Indian army leaders continued to believe in the fiction of Chinese weakness and felt that the Forward Policy should be vigorously pursued. Despite such opposition, Nehru tried to move forward on Menon's line favouring negotiations. However, the Chinese – obsessively concerned with the possibility of Indian duplicity and with avoiding any impression of weakness – by publicly insisting that there should be no preconditions for talks made things more difficult for Menon and Nehru. In fact the Chinese explicitness at this point effectually nullified their 4 August call for initiating discussions "as soon as possible".

"As word of Menon's new flexible line spread in Parliament and among journalists, Nehru was forced into a series of retreats in a last effort to defend it. Speaking to Parliament on 13 August, Nehru tried to conceal the fact that the Menon originated 26 July note had used language which implied an Indian willingness eventually to accept the 1956 claim line; on 14 August, he tried to justify talks with the Chinese by asserting it was 'childish' to insist on a withdrawal precondition and went on to take refuge in the distinction between 'talks' and 'negotiations,' saying that 'talks' were an essential preliminary to negotiations. On the same day, he demanded Parliamentary approval for 'freedom of action' so that 'we may — I do not say we will — have some talks.' The Opposition in Parliament at the time had no real alternative to giving Nehru this 'freedom of action,' as their earlier advice to evict Chinese troops 'by force' was

based on an unrealistic view of India's military capability. Yet uncertainty regarding Menon's motivations and uneasiness fed by suspicions that civilian foreign policy advisers might cede a large part of Ladakh continued increasingly to operate as factors restricting the prime minister's maneuverability. The small group of journalists and Parliamentarians who professed to be specialists on India's China policy gradually compelled Nehru to retreat further; on 22 August, he hinted in Parliament that talks with the Chinese now would be formally conditioned on his earlier withdrawal stipulation."¹⁶

Thus domestic politicians (both Congress and opposition) and the Indian Press assisted the army leaders in destroying Menon's flexible line. "His friend, Nehru, finally had been compelled to act on the proposition that it was more important (as prime minister) to be realistic about domestic politics than Sino-Indian politics. When, in mid-August, R. K. Nehru wrote a memorandum to Nehru urging him to offer publicly to go to Peiping to begin talks with Chou En-lai, Nehru told his foreign policy adviser that the proposal did not make sense in the current domestic political scene. Nehru complained that the Indian press had to a 'considerable extent' tied the hands of Indian diplomats in dealing with the Chinese. Nehru concluded that he wanted a military disengagement but differed with R. K. Nehru who was insisting it was urgent to begin negotiations for a settlement immediately."¹⁷

Here is what Kuldip Nayar has to say about Menon's effort to find a solution to the border dispute. "I recall that before hostilities broke out, a 'solution' of the border issue was suggested by Krishna Menon, but he was overruled by Pant. Menon has met Chen Yi, China's foreign minister at Geneva, and told him that India might accept Peking's suzerainty over the area in Aksai Chin as well as a buffer of 10 miles to the road. In exchange, China must officially accept the McMahon Line in the East and India's right to the rest of Ladakh.

China had reportedly accepted the idea but Pant stood in the way. He got the government to formally withdraw the offer through

a resolution in the cabinet. Even leasing out the Aksai Chin area was not acceptable. The fact was that Pant, like Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Nehru's sister, did not trust Menon and considered him an inveterate communist.”¹⁸

(v) The View from Beijing

“Egregious Indian miscalculation regarding China's willingness to resort to military force underlay the increasingly assertive Indian policies that unfolded between November 1961 and October 1962. There was a virtual consensus among Indian leaders that China would not respond with military force to Indian advances, or if it did, any military response would be extremely limited. A Chinese resort to large-scale military force was deemed impossible. This conclusion was established by Nehru and Defense Minister Krishna Menon, and became unchallengeable political orthodoxy. In spite of a clear Indian recognition of China's military superiority in the frontier regions, Indian leaders reached to the conclusion that China's superiority was irrelevant. If India demonstrated firm intent, China would back down. In the words of the Indian Chief of General Staff regarding the final order to Indian forces in September 1962 to drive Chinese forces from atop Thagla ridge (Map 6): ‘experience in Ladakh had shown that a few rounds fired at the Chinese would cause them to run away.’”¹⁹

The above mistaken view had a two-fold impact on China's thinking. “First, it deeply offended Chinese nationalist pride. China had ‘stood up,’ as Mao said when proclaiming the establishment of the People's Republic in October 1949. It would no longer be bullied by foreign powers. The PLA had fought the United States in Korea and performed creditably, at least in the judgment of China's leaders. Yet here was India acting as though the PLA would turn tail and run rather than fight to defend Chinese territory and honour. Apparently India had not yet learned the lesson that the Americans had learned in Korea – to respect the power of New China. The second implication of India's apparent disdain for Chinese power, was that a very strong jolt would probably be necessary to cause Indian leaders to acquire

a sober appreciation of Chinese power. The gradual hardening of China's response to India's forward policy – ceasing withdrawal when confronted by Indian advances and adoption of a policy of 'armed coexistence,' acceleration of China's own advance, building positions surrounding, threatening, and cutting off Indian outposts, steady improvement of PLA logistic and other capabilities in the frontier region, increasingly strong and direct verbal warnings, and by September 1962 outright but small-scale PLA assault on key Indian outposts – did not cause India to abandon its illusion of Chinese weakness. The final Chinese decision to inflict a big and painful defeat on Indian forces derived substantially from a sense that only such a blow would cause India to begin taking seriously Chinese power.”²⁰

When India's Forward Policy was gathering steam during the middle of 1962, Beijing received definite indications that its war with India would not draw in other great powers – the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. This factor played a very important part in the Chinese decision making process.

“Circa July 1962 Mao issued a ‘twenty character directive’ in response to India's ‘forward policy.’ The CMC later embodied Mao's directive in a decision that provided the ‘general direction’ (zong fangzhen) until several weeks before the October war. According to Mao's directive, the PLA should ‘absolutely not give ground, strive resolutely to avoid bloodshed, interlock [with Indian forces] in a zigzag pattern, and undertake a long period of armed coexistence’ (jue bu tui rang, lizheng bimian liu xie, quan ya jia cuo, chang qi wuzhang gongchu). To implement this new ‘general direction’, Luo Ruiqing issued to the Xinjiang military region orders specifying 22 measures which PLA front line troops were to follow. If Indian forces advanced on PLA positions, PLA forces would give warning and urge the Indian forces to withdraw. If the Indian forces did not heed these warnings, the warnings could be repeated 2, 3, or even more times. Only if Indian forces advanced to within 50 meters of PLA positions and Chinese forces ‘could not survive without self defence,’ would PLA forces ‘prepare for self defence’ (shi jun ziwei). If the enemy then

withdrew, PLA forces would not seek to block that withdrawal.

It is not clear whether Lou Ruiqing's 22 Measures authorized Chinese soldiers to fire on Indian forces closing in a threatening fashion within 50 meters of Chinese forces. Reading between the lines, Xu Yan's account implies that it did. But that is only implicit. It may be that PLA forces were ordered to prepare to fire, but not authorized to actually open fire unless first fired upon by Indian forces."²¹

During July, firefights on the Sino-Indian border intensified and repeated Chinese warnings did not cause Nehru to halt the increasingly vigorous pursuit of the Forward Policy. In September an increasingly tense armed confrontation at Thagla Ridge forced Mao and other Chinese leaders to reconsider in late September their earlier policy of armed existence. "The purpose of armed coexistence had been two-fold: (1) to use armed confrontation to prevent further aggression by Indian forces into Chinese territory, and (2) to prevent the expansion of the Sino-Indian conflict. Neither of those objectives had been achieved. The policy had not halted the Indian advance. Mao and other Chinese leaders now began considering administering a large scale and 'painful' military rebuff to Indian forces. Nehru had mistaken China's policy of restraint for weakness, they believed. A number of factors had apparently contributed to an Indian judgment that China would not 'counter-attack,' Mao and his comrades concluded. China faced internal economic difficulties. China-Soviet relations had soured. The center of Chinese security concerns were along the Pacific coast... On these grounds, China's leaders surmised, Nehru had concluded that China would not 'counter-attack' in response to India's Forward Policy, but would merely issue protests. In these circumstances, a sharp, major blow was necessary to disabuse Nehru and force him to stop his aggression against China."²²

"In early October (probably on the 6th) China's leaders met to review the escalating conflict with India. Deputy CMC chairman Lin Biao led with a briefing on the situation. Reports from both the Tibet and the Xinjiang military regions indicated continual Indian advance

and firings on Chinese outposts in both the eastern and western sectors. Ten Chinese personnel had been killed or wounded, Lin reported. Yet Chinese forces had strictly followed the principle of not firing the first shot, and 'have throughout not fired' (shizhong meiyou kai chang). Even more serious, India was concentrating military forces in both sectors and had deployed artillery to positions threatening Chinese outposts and camps. The situation was rapidly worsening, according to Lin. Reports by PLA intelligence units indicated that Indian forces might undertake on 10 October an attack on Thagla Ridge. After hearing Lin's report, Mao commented: 'It seems like armed coexistence won't work. It's just as we expected. Nehru really wants to use force. This isn't strange. He has always wanted to seize Aksai Chin and Thagla Ridge. He thinks he can get everything he desires.'

Then Mao declared himself for war: 'We fought a war with old Chiang [Kai-shek]. We fought a war with Japan, and with America. With none of these did we fear. And in each case we won. Now the Indian's want to fight a war with us. Naturally we don't have fear. We cannot give ground (rang bu), once we give ground it would be tantamount to letting them seize a big piece of land equivalent to Fujian province. ...Since Nehru sticks his head out and insists on us fighting him, for us not to fight with him would not be friendly enough (bu da jiu bu gou pengyou). Courtesy emphasizes reciprocity.'

Zhou signalled his concurrence: 'We don't wish for a war with India. We have always strove in this direction [of avoiding war]. We wanted India to be like Nepal, Burma, or Mongolia, and solve border problems with us in a friendly fashion. But Nehru has closed all roads (ba suoyoude lu dou sile). This leaves us only with war. As I see it, to fight a bit would have advantages. It would cause some people to understand things more clearly.'

Mao concurred: 'Right! If someone does not attack me, I won't attack him. If someone attacks me, I will certainly attack him.'

Apparently following this consensus among Mao, Zhou, and Lin, a larger meeting of military leaders was convened at Xishan (western

hills) on the western outskirts of Beijing. Participants included Mao, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, Lin Biao, Marshals Ye Jianying and Liu Bocheng, Chief of Staff senior general Lou Ruiqing, Vice Chief of Staff full general Yang Chengwu, head of the PLA General Political Department full general Shao Hua, head of the General Logistic Department full general Qiu Huizuo, commander of the Tibet military region lieutenant general Zhang Guohua, and commander of the Xinjiang military region major general He Jiachan. Mao opened by indicating that war had already been decided upon and that the purpose of the meeting was to consider problems associated with that projected war. 'The purpose of bringing all of you together today is to convene a military meeting,' Mao began: 'Our border conflict with India has gone on for many years. We do not want war and originally sought to solve it through peaceful negotiations. But Nehru is not willing to talk and has deployed considerable forces, insistently demanding a fight with us (ying bezhe yao he women da yi jia). Now it seems not to fight is not possible (bu da shi bu xingde). If we fight, what should be our method? What should the war look like? Please everyone contribute your thoughts on these policy issues.'

Mao then asked Chen Yi to brief the group on the 'diplomatic struggle.' Chen traced the problem to 1954 when India had published an official map showing the McMahon line as a definitive national boundary. At present, Chen said, India 'occupies or claims' 1,25,000 square kilometres of Chinese territory. Forty-seven Chinese personnel had been killed or wounded in attacks by Indian forces on the border. China had devoted considerable diplomatic effort to achieve a negotiated settlement, Chen said, but 'Nehru is not willing to sit down and talk, and moreover has adopted a provocative forward policy. ...It seems we can only meet him [Nehru] on the battlefield.'

Mao then placed the projected war in a broad historical context. 'A war between China and India is truly a most unfortunate event,' Mao said. He had recently been reading books on Indian history and was struck by the friendly, beneficial interactions between China and India in the 7th- 9th centuries... Two key points followed from this

history, according to Mao. First, the PLA had to secure victory and 'knock Nehru to the negotiating table.' Second, Chinese forces had to be restrained and principled."²³

"Mao concluded the meeting by warning that China would find itself internationally isolated during the coming war, but that this would not be the decisive factor. The United States and the Soviet Union would, of course, oppose China's action. So too would many other 'uninformed countries.' Chiang Kai-shek might 'adopt measures.' But China needn't fear this isolation, Mao said. As long as the front line troops fought well, 'We will be in an advantageous position. ...It's better to die standing, than to die kneeling.' If China fought successfully and in an awe-inspiring (wei feng) way, this 'will guarantee at least thirty years of peace' (qima yao baozheng sanshi nian de heping) with India."²³

"On 6 October Mao and the CMC decided in principle for a large scale attack to severely punish India. The same day the PLA Chief of Staff Lou Ruiqing received a directive from the CCP center and Chairman Mao authorizing a 'fierce and painful' (dalang da tong) attack on Indian forces. 'If Indian forces attack us, you should hit back fiercely (langlangde da ta yi xia) ...[you should] not only repel them, but hit them fiercely and make them hurt' (da lang da tong). The 6 October directive also laid out the broad directions of the projected offensive. The main assault was to be in the eastern sector, but Chinese forces in the western sector would 'coordinate' with the eastern assault.

The CMC staff was then directed to draw up detailed operational plans for a campaign to expel Indian troops from the area north of the traditional, customary boundary (that is, China's claim line at the southern foothills of the Himalayas) in the eastern sector. It was in the process of this staff work that the idea of terminating the war by a unilateral Chinese halt, ceasefire, and withdrawal was developed. In view of 'practical difficulties associated with China's domestic situation,' the operational plan developed by the CMC staff proposed that after achieving military objectives, Chinese forces

would quickly disengage and end the fighting as quickly as possible.”²⁴

“In deciding for war with India, Mao recognized many difficulties and dangers. Nehru enjoyed great international status. India was a leader of the non-aligned movement. India enjoyed great international prestige as an advocate of non-violence. Both the United States and the Soviet Union were courting India and Nehru. India saw itself as the leader of the ‘third force’ in the world. India’s military inferiority to China would play into Indian efforts to depict China as the ‘aggressor.’ (Indian military forces were about 1/6th of China’s, according to China’s calculations.) China could anticipate a negative reaction from both Washington and Moscow. Even among ‘some Afro-Asian countries’ there would be some ‘misunderstanding.’ These costs were more than offset, however, by the long-term gains of inflicting a severe if limited ‘war of extermination’ on India.

On 8 October the CMC ordered several additional divisions in the Chengdu and Lanzhou military regions to prepare to move into Tibet. All these forces were veteran, high quality units. Most had previously participated in anti-rebel operations in Tibet and were therefore acclimated to combat operations at high altitude. The PLA judged Indian forces inferior to the Chinese in combat and war-fighting capability. But uncertainty about Indian military strength led the CMC concentrated larger forces than might otherwise have been necessary.

Even as the PLA moved toward war with India, Mao continued to mull over vexing problems. Should China permit Indian forces to advance a bit further into Chinese territory under the Forward Policy, thereby making clearer to international opinion that China was acting in self defense? What should be the focus of PLA attack? The major piece of territory in dispute between China and India was Aksai Chin in the west. This suggested focusing the Chinese offensive there. But geographic circumstances for China were worst in the west. Roads to that region ‘were not Convenient’ for the PLA. India’s geographic situation in the west was also difficult, making it hard for India to

concentrate large forces there. The Chinese objective of inflicting a big, painful defeat on India that would cause it to sober up, meant that a 'Big Battle' was required. A powerful Chinese offensive that met only thin Indian forces would not fulfill the political objective. The east, where India could more readily rush in large reinforcements, better served Chinese objectives in this regard. It was also in the eastern sector that Nehru insisted the McMahon Line was an 'established fact.' Focusing the Chinese offensive there would hit at Nehru's 'hegemonist attitude' and compel India to accept the fact that negotiation with China was the only way to achieve a complete settlement of the territorial issue."²⁵

"According to Xu Yan, on the evening of 9 October over a hundred Indian soldiers crossed the stream flowing along the base of Thagla (Map 6), and closed on a Chinese outpost. The next morning Indian forces opened fire on the Chinese. In response a full PLA battalion (about a thousand men) assaulted the Indian advance force. Eleven Chinese soldiers were killed and twenty-two wounded in the firefight. The intensity of the Chinese response led Indian leaders to delay further offensive operations in the Thagla region, though not to alter the fixed policy of eventually driving Chinese forces from that dominating feature. In fact, on 12 October Nehru told the press that Indian forces were still under orders to 'free our country' from Chinese occupation – a comment embroidered considerably by India newspapers. Indian forces also continued 'aggressive Patrolling' and 'harassing fire.'

In Xu Yan's view, this Indian attack on 10 October signaled the beginning of relatively large scale fighting in the eastern sector. The fact that the Indian side 'shot First' created a advantageous political situation for China. Chinese leaders also noted that Nehru had made public comments on 12 October (just prior to a trip to Ceylon) about ordering Indian forces to clear Chinese forces from all 'Indian territory.' This too made clear Nehru's 'stubborn and war-mongering attitude' (ji wangu you haozhan de taidu), according to Xu."²⁶

On October 16, the Chinese Military Commission formally

decided to annihilate Indian forces that had aggressed against Chinese territory. “When China’s leaders made their second crucial 16 October decision for war, they had in hand indications of Soviet support. On 8 October, Beijing had formally notified Moscow that India might launch an attack on China forcing China to respond. On 14 October China’s ambassador in Moscow, Liu Shao, had secured from Khrushchev guarantees that if there was a Sino-Indian war, the USSR would ‘stand together with China.’ A neutral attitude on the Sino-Indian border conflict was impossible, the Soviet leader said. If China were attacked, it would be an act of betrayal to declare neutrality. Chinese leaders attributed this Soviet support and the stark reversal of earlier Soviet policy of neutrality in the Sino-Indian dispute it entailed, to a Soviet desire for Chinese support in the event of war with the United States over Cuba.”²⁷

“Approaching winter also forced China’s decision. The best time for military operations in the Himalayas was July-September. By October the weather was already becoming cold, and heavy snowfalls were possible. The Tibet Military district reported to the CMC in that once such snowfalls began the PLA would encounter ‘great Difficulties’ in moving supplies and reinforcements across the high passes to front line Chinese forces. Major PLA action would have to come soon, or be deferred to mid 1963. On the other hand, PLA intelligence made it apparent that the military balance in the front regions currently weighed heavily in China’s favor. In terms of number of troops, the number of heavy weapons, and logistic roads supporting front line forces, the PLA held a distinct advantage. Indian forces were short even of winter clothing and food. Were China to postpone the attack by six months, Indian forces might become better prepared.

On 17 October the CMC cabled the appropriate orders to the Tibet military region. PLA forces were ordered to ‘exterminate the Indian aggressor forces.’ On 18 October, the CMC met yet again to give formal approval to the decision for a ‘self defensive counter-attack war’ (yi chang ziwei fanji zuozhan). Participants in the meeting included Mao, Zhou, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Lo Ruiqing, and

Marshals Liu Bocheng, He Long and Xu Xiangqian.

On 18 October Mao's decision for war was approved by an expanded Politburo meeting. In attendance were Mao, Zhou, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, He Long, Lou Ruiqing, Yang Shangkun (then Deng Xiaoping's assistant and in charge of organizational matters for the Central Committee), Tibet MR commander Zhang Guohua, General Wang Shangrong (professional soldier, Long March participant, then head of the Operations Department of the PLA), the diplomats Zhang Hanfu, Qiao Guanhua, and General Lei Yingfu. The meeting opened with a statement by Zhou that from many different aspects, it was apparent that China could not but launch a 'self defensive counter-attack' against India as quickly as possible. Mao seconded Zhou's 'opinion,' but warned of the need not to underestimate India's military forces. General Zhang Guohua, designated to command the upcoming attack, reassured Mao in this regard. Finally the PLA's war plan was approved. The attack was set for 20 October.

The PLA offensive launched on that day in the Tawang region (Map 2) continued for only four days, culminating in the seizure of strategically located Tawang on 23 October. In the western sector, the offensive continued until 27 October. Chinese forces then halted and a three-week lull followed."²⁸

"Was China's resort to war in 1962 prudent? Did it achieve its policy objectives at an acceptable cost to China? The official PLA history of the 1962 war stresses that 'quickly achieving peaceful, stable borders in the west' was the objective of the 1962 war (ba xibu bianjiang dichu xunsu wending xialai). This was the 'basic direction' of China's border policy to be achieved by inflicting a painful defeat on India thus demonstrating the futility and danger of aggressing against borders defended by the PLA, would force India to abandon the Forward Policy. Sharp military defeat would also 'compel India to again [sic] sit down at the negotiating table and solve the Sino-Indian border problem.' This too would 'achieve peaceful stability along the western borders.'

The harsh defeat inflicted on India in 1962 did, in fact, cause Indian leaders to look much more soberly and respectfully at Chinese power. India did in fact swiftly abandon the earlier policy of suing military force to challenge Chinese control over disputed territory. India abandoned the policy of attempting through military means to establish a new *de facto* line of actual control. The reality of Chinese power also ultimately led New Delhi to resume border negotiations with China still in possession of Aksai Chin – although it would take twenty-seven years for this to happen. After 1962 Indian leaders were, in fact, much more cautious in dealing with China and more respectful of China's power.

These Chinese gains were secured at significant cost. The PLA's drive to the southern foothills of the Himalayas had a profound effect on Indian opinion. China became a nemesis of India ranked only after Pakistan. Even forty-some years after the war this sentiment remains significant in India. The experience of 1962 made India deeply skeptical of Chinese professions of friendship and more wary of the expansion of Chinese security ties with South Asian countries neighboring India. What Indians view as China's 'betrayal' of India's desire for friendship in the 1950s has made India far less responsive to Chinese diplomatic friendship offensives, and more determined to keep China out of places like Nepal or Bangladesh. Fear of Chinese rooted in 1962 was a major factor impelling India to keep open its nuclear weapons options and then, in 1998, to openly acquire nuclear weapons. There exists in Indian military culture a desire for payback against China, which would someday erase the humiliation of 1962. The trauma of 1962 impelled New Delhi into close strategic alignment with the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s, a development 'encircling' China with Soviet power. Even in the 2000s when India began developing a military partnership with the United States, the defeat of 1962 was a remote but distinct factor in India's deliberations. India also began serious military modernization after the 1962 defeat, and this would eventually change the equation of military power between the two countries."²⁹

(vi) Events Leading to the Chinese Offensive of October 20, 1962

Throughout the months of August and September both sides continued to build their military outposts in Ladakh with the Chinese claiming that India had set up to 22 new and the Indians alleging that the Chinese had set up 34 new posts since May 1962. As the Indian Forward Policy continued, the Chinese leaders increasingly began to view Indian notes as merely diplomatic devices used to cover a military policy. In this light, the efforts of civilian leaders for mutual negotiations were increasingly viewed by the Chinese as motivated entirely by duplicity rather than sincerity. The Chinese suspicion of Indian duplicity “had been confirmed by Nehru’s own admission (in Parliament on 22 August) that on the border question, India was following a ‘dual policy,’ intending to make gains ‘by political pressure, military pressure, or other pressures.’”³⁰

Prior to September 1962, Chinese counteraction to Indian advance in 1961 and 1962 had been limited, with few exceptions, to the Western Sector as they were holding a strong counteraction in the Eastern Sector in reserve as their strong card in future negotiations. With the exception of Longju (Map 6), they did not protest the establishment of new Indian posts in this sector until the incident at Dhola in early September (Map 6).

“For the first time since November 1960, the Chinese engaged an Indian military detachment on the eastern sector when, on 8 and 9 September, approximately 300 Chinese took positions opposite the Dhola (Che Dong, Map 6) post manned by about 50 Assam Rifles.”³¹ Though the Indian forces had established the outpost at Dhola on the southern slopes of Thagla Ridge in June 1962, the Chinese did not move against it until September. The Chinese may have intended their move against the Dhola post to serve as a warning to the Indians that they could play the same game against them in the East as they were playing against them in the West.

“Indian establishment of the Dhola post was part of a major planned advance in the east laid on by army leaders in the spring of

1962. On 14 May, the Director of Military Operations had ordered the Eastern Command of the army to establish 25 additional posts along the McMahon Line. Indian army troops had moved into many of these posts in June, including the post at Dhola. Considerable anger was generated on both sides after the Chinese insisted in September that the post was north of the McMahon Line and the Indians declared it was south of their version of the Line (Map 6). The original 1914 map, upon which McMahon had drawn his line and which the Chinese used to support their case, was very small in scale and imprecise on the matter of the Tibet-Bhutan-NEFA trijunction where Dhola was located. Responding to Chinese charges, the Indians (note of 17 September) claimed that Dhola was on the southern side of the Line; subsequently, the dispute centered on pinpointing the exact location of the trijunction area Line (Map 7).

The Chinese rejected the Indian attempt to insert the watershed principle as the determining factor in the case. They stated (note of 6 October) that according to both the map on which McMahon had drawn his line originally in 1914 and the Indian official map of 1959, Dhola would be north of the Line. They also declared that Indian border experts in 1960 had agreed that the Line's western extremity was 27° 57' N – 91° 40' E, placing Dhola well north of the Line. The Indians, on the other hand, centered their case on the Thagla Ridge in the trijunction area. In their view, the Line should in fact correspond with the Ridge line, and because the Chinese had come down across the Ridge, it followed that they had come down across the McMahon Line simultaneously. They reminded Peiping (note of 10 October) that the Indian border experts in 1960 had urged the Chinese experts to exchange maps 'on a very large scale' in order to provide the fullest details and that this proposal had been rejected by the Chinese, who provided a map on the 'diminutive scale of 1 = 80 miles.' Peiping's reluctance to accept this proposal, the Indian note declared, indicated satisfaction that the boundary 'ran along the ridge.' As the quarrel developed, no fewer than three versions of the border near the trijunction were posited, two by the Chinese (depicted in People's Daily, 8 and 11 October) and one by the Indians (note of

10 October). Actually, Dhola was north of the McMahon Line by at least 400 yards as claimed by the Chinese and it was only by using the watershed principle — that is, the crest of the Thagla Ridge as the natural boundary — that the Indians could argue the matter credibly (Map 6 and 8).³²

“The Indian leaders, convinced that the Chinese military force had crossed the Thagla Ridge to encircle the advanced post at Dhola, decided that the Chinese should be compelled to pull back regardless of all risks. Home Minister Shastri, acting head of the government in the absence of the prime minister and the finance minister, told Ambassador Galbraith on 13 September that the Chinese would have to be ‘thrown out.’ He repeated this statement publicly on 16 September. On 17 September, Indian troops threatened to open fire on Chinese troops at the Che Jao Bridge south of the Thagla Ridge near the post, and on 20 and 21 September, they attacked the Chinese, apparently killing one officer at the Bridge and surrounding a small detachment in the vicinity. The situation worsened as the Chinese hit back on the 22nd; the Indians attacked again on the 24th. Foreign Secretary Desai told Ambassador Galbraith on 25 September that troops under the Eastern Command were now under orders to shoot when necessary; accordingly, he continued, they have been shooting and the Chinese have been ‘responding,’ leaving a handful of dead and wounded on both sides. Firing subsided by 29 September, when an MEA official claimed the Chinese had been completely cleared from the Che Jao Bridge. By that time, however, Indian advocates of the policy of expulsion had become dominant in the leadership and Krishna Menon, who had opposed the policy prior to his departure for New York on 17 September, left with the premonition that full-scale fighting would contribute to the cause of those Indians who desired his political death. Nevertheless, he had no practical recourse but to join other Indian leaders who were denouncing Chinese actions openly.”³³

In light of the above happenings, the Chinese began preparing the Tibetan populace for a possible Sino-Indian clash on the border. “Tibetans were being told by the Chinese in the period from 17-23

September that Indian troops had unlawfully intruded in Tibet at many points and that they (the Chinese) would recover them soon. Indian troops were said to be no match for the Chinese army. The Indians also reported on 24 September that a large number of vehicles carrying stores and equipment continued to arrive at forward posts in the western sector, but interpreted these moves as indicating the Chinese were stocking their posts 'for the winter.'"³⁴

"The Dhola confrontation stimulated Indian army leaders to press Nehru to approve an increase in strength and to bring pressure on the Chinese in the eastern sector. A new special corps was established on 4 October and its new commander, Lt. Gen. Kaul, departed for Tezpur headquarters (Map 2) on the 5th to direct operations against the Chinese. Following creation of the special corps — a move under active consideration ever since the early September incident — Nehru and Menon on 6 October approved an army headquarters plan for encircling Chinese troops in the Dhola area. The plan was reliably reported to have been conceived as a flanking operation, providing for a slow forward movement of Indian troops over a period of weeks and for crossing into the Chinese side of the McMahon Line, if necessary.^a In the army's view, India was 'now' committed to fight the Chinese all the way even if this meant full-scale war. Foreign Secretary Desai told an American embassy officer on 6 October that a steadily mounting 'squeeze' was being applied by the Indian troops to the Chinese at Dhola and emphasized that the Chinese must be ousted.^b The immediate result of this Indian initiative was the 9-10 October clash

^aThe army planned to make no official admission of this as policy, and so far as possible, any crossing by Indian troops of the Line was to be denied. The Indian air force had already violated the Line a number of times, and it was reportedly under orders to continue to do so when necessary.

^bThe Indians preferred to move the Chinese out with threats rather than force. The Director of the China Section, MEA, told an American embassy officer on 11 October that the Indian leaders were trying to give minimum publicity to developments while applying military pressure in order to provide the Chinese with the opportunity to withdraw 'without loss of face.' He deplored press headlining of military developments, as such publicity undercut this government policy.

near the Che Jao Bridge, during which, the Chinese claimed, 33 Chinese and 6 Indian soldiers were killed — the biggest and bloodiest clash on the Sino-Indian border as of that date.”³⁵

About this incident it is reported that the Chinese troops held their fire as the Indians retreated, and then buried the Indian dead with military honours as witnessed by the retreating soldiers. This attack had grave implications for India and Nehru tried to resolve the issue but failed because of the mounting pressure from the Army and the public for bolder action against the Chinese.

As the Army officers continued to insist on a more forceful policy, “Krishna Menon on 16 October finally accepted a proposal, long pushed by the Indian army, particularly by Kaul, that it should be official government policy to evict the Chinese from the Aksai Plain as well as the NEFA. Menon agreed to present this proposal personally to Nehru on the 17th and, upon the prime minister’s approval, the Indian army general staff would be permitted, he concluded, to formalize its operational plan for the entire border, Nehru apparently agreed; he informed Ambassador Galbraith on the 18th that the Indian intention to keep steady pressure on the Chinese now extends to Ladakh. The army general staff estimated that two or three years would be required for the army to implement fully this long-range operational plan; the forward posts constituted only a beginning. Nehru may well have had Indian army officers as well as Parliamentarians in mind when he informed the Ambassador of his discontent with those who had described efforts to avoid a real war as appeasement. Nehru and Menon apparently continued to refuse to permit the army to use tactical air support for ground operations because they feared this would provoke the counter-use of Chinese aircraft and thus increase the tempo of the fighting and extend its scope.^a As late as 19 October, just before the Chinese attack, Indian

^aEven if permission had been given, the use of tactical air against Chinese patrols in mountainous terrain, where ridges and spines are 13,000 feet, would have confronted the Indians with considerable difficulties. Even their air resupply effort was proving to be a failure, as the loss figure for air drops in the Dhola area was as high as 85 percent.

army headquarters is reliably reported to have opposed Menon's decision to tentatively pull army units out of the Galwan Valley, complaining that the defense minister was really motivated by a desire for appeasement rather than by any military considerations.

The caution some Indian army officers and many Indian civilian officials had shown in spring and summer 1962 seemed to have fallen away by fall. In speaking of moving against Chinese forces in the Dholu area, army and civilian officials in October discounted the probability of retaliatory action on any significant scale. For example, when, on 13 October, Foreign Secretary Desai confirmed to Ambassador Galbraith the army plan to 'evict the Chinese from the NEFA,' Desai stated that he did not believe the Chinese would attempt to reinforce heavily their troops on the Thagla Ridge in the face of 'determined' Indian action, as the Chinese had commitments elsewhere along the border. Moreover, Desai continued, there would be no extensive Chinese reaction because of their fear of the US — 'It is you they really fear.' This increasing confidence that the Chinese would continue to play the game of flanking and counter-flanking maneuvers with relatively small units apparently contributed to the reluctance of important Indian leaders to take seriously Chinese warnings of full-scale war."³⁶

(vii) The Chinese Offensive of October 20, 1962

"On October 20, 1962 China launched a major invasion against India in all the three sectors of the Sino-Indian border, with the main thrust in the NEFA and Ladakh areas. This changed the entire perspective of the Sino-Indian relations. The Chinese invasion was so sudden, calculated and supported by logistics that India's advance posts were suddenly overwhelmed, as were many of the defensive positions a few miles back. As compared to India, China's rapid advance was supported by a well established line of supplies and communications. The Indian troops were out-numbered and out-weaponed.

India was taken by surprise, and was not at all prepared for such a large scale of war. But on the other hand China was fully

prepared and had chosen its own moment to strike. It was China that first launched the offensive with infantry and artillery. India's retaliation to the Chinese offensive was weak, uncoordinated and poorly planned. On October 22, Nehru, in a broadcast to the nation spoke about the grave situation on the Indian frontier created by China, a 'powerful and unscrupulous opponent' who cared for neither peace nor peaceful methods. Stating that this was the greatest menace faced by India since its independence, he appealed to all parties and groups, 'to unite in this great enterprise and put aside the controversies and arguments, and present a solid united front before all those who seek to endanger our freedom and integrity', and declared that India will 'carry on the struggle because we cannot submit to the aggression or domination of others.'"³⁷

"On October 20th the Chinese Defense Ministry issued a statement which said that at 07.00 hours that morning the Indian troops has launched large-scale attacks, not only on the Namka Chu (Map 6) but also from their posts in the Chip Chap and Galwan valleys in the western sector (Map 8). 'In self-defence, the Chinese frontier guards were compelled to strike back resolutely, and cleared away some aggressive strong points set up by the Indian troops in China's territory,' the statement went on. There the Chinese took over the tactic of 'turning truth on its head' of which they had often – and with reason – accused India. The troops on the Namka Chu put in no attack on October 20th: they were in the process of reinforcing Tsangle (Map 6), which was certainly an aggressive move, but to say that 'under cover of fierce artillery fire [they] launched massive attacks against the Chinese frontier guards all along the [Namka Chu] and in the Khinzemane area (Map 6)' was simply to fabricate. To say that the Indian troops in the western sector 'launched a general attack' from their isolated and puny posts was grotesque.

In thus sacrificing truth to what was apparently considered propaganda advantage, the Chinese played into New Delhi's hands by obscuring what has actually happened. That the Indians had intended to attack the Chinese below Thagla ridge was by then known everywhere. Nehru's airport confirmation of October 12th had told

any interested government which had not already got wind of Operation Leghorn what was afoot. If Beijing had simply said that, rather than waiting for the Indians to deliver the attack they had so loudly heralded the Chinese Army had got its blow in first, it would have been hard for New Delhi to cry 'aggression' with any credibility: the doctrine of the pre-emptive strike is too widely accepted nowadays for any successful practitioner to be generally condemned. As it was, however, the Chinese charge that the Indians had 'launched massive attacks' rebounded from the general scepticism about India having the strength to attack China; and was almost immediately belied by Beijing's own announcement that the defensive actions of the Chinese 'frontier guards' were carrying them over successive Indian positions."³⁸

The PLA had launched two attacks, more than 1000 kilometres apart. "In the Western Sector, the PLA sought to expel Indian forces from the Chip Chap valley in Aksai Chin while in the Eastern Sector, the PLA sought to capture both banks of the Namka Chu river. Some skirmishes also took place at the Nathula Pass (Map 4), which is in the Indian state of Sikkim (an Indian protectorate at that time). Gurkha rifles travelling north were targeted by Chinese artillery fire. After four days of fierce fighting, the three regiments of Chinese troops succeeded in securing a substantial portion of the disputed territory."³⁹

(a) Eastern Sector

"Chinese troops launched an attack on the southern banks of the Namka Chu River (Map 6) on 20 October, 1962. The Indian forces were undermanned, with only an under strength battalion to support them, while the Chinese troops had three regiments positioned on the north side of the river. The Indians expected Chinese forces to cross via one of the five bridges over the river and defended those crossings. However, the PLA bypassed the defenders by crossing the shallow river instead. They formed up into battalions on the Indian-held south side of the river under cover of darkness, with each battalion assigned against a separate group of Rajput rifles.

At 5:14 am, Chinese mortar fire began attacking the Indian positions. Simultaneously, the Chinese cut the Indian telephone lines, preventing the defenders from making contact with their headquarters. At about 6:30 am, the Chinese infantry launched a surprise attack from the rear and forced the Indians to leave their trenches.

The Chinese troops overwhelmed the Indians in a series of flanking manoeuvres south of the McMahon Line and prompted their withdrawal from Namka Chu. Fearful of continued losses, Indian troops escaped into Bhutan. Chinese forces respected the border and did not pursue. Chinese forces now held all of the territory that was under dispute at the time of the Thag La confrontation (Map 6), but they continued to advance into the rest of NEFA.

On 22 October, at 12:15 am, PLA mortars fired on Walong (Map 7), on the McMahon line. Flares launched by Indian troops the next day revealed numerous Chinese milling around the valley. The Indians tried to use their mortars against the Chinese but the PLA responded by lighting a bushfire, causing confusion amongst the Indians. Some 400 Chinese troops attacked the Indian position. The initial Chinese assault was halted by accurate Indian mortar fire. The Chinese were then reinforced and launched a second assault. The Indians managed to hold them back for four hours, but the Chinese used sheer weight of numbers to break through. Most Indian forces withdrew to established positions in Walong, while a company supported by mortars and medium machine guns remained to cover the retreat.

On the morning of 23 October, the Indians discovered a Chinese force had gathered in a cramped pass and opened fire with mortars and machine guns, leading to heavy fighting. About 200 Chinese soldiers were killed and wounded in this action. Nine Indian soldiers were also killed. The fighting continued well into the afternoon, until the company was ordered to withdraw. Meanwhile, the 4th Sikhs made contact with the Chinese and subjected them to withering mortar and machine gun fire as the Chinese set off a brushfire and attempted to sneak forward. Sepoy Piara Singh tried to douse the

fire while fighting the enemy, but died after he was wounded and refused to be evacuated. The Chinese troops launched a three-pronged attack on Tawang (Map 1), which the Indians evacuated without any resistance.

Over the following days, there were clashes between Indian and Chinese patrols at Walong as the Chinese rushed in reinforcements. On 25 October, the Chinese made a probe, which was met with resistance from the 4th Sikhs. As some Chinese soldiers began to close in, Sepoy Kewal Singh charged them with his bayonet and killed a few of them in hand-to-hand combat, but he himself was killed. The following day, a patrol from the 4th Sikhs was encircled, and after being unable to break the encirclement, an Indian unit sneaked in and attacked the Chinese flank, allowing the Sikhs to break free.”⁴⁰

(b) Western theater

On the Aksai Chin front, China already controlled most of the disputed territory. Chinese forces quickly swept the region of any remaining Indian troops. Late on 19 October, Chinese troops launched a number of attacks throughout the western theater. By 22 October, all posts north of Chushul (Ladakh) had been cleared.

On 20 October, the Chinese easily took the Chip Chap Valley, Galwan Valley, and Pangong Lake. Many outposts and garrisons along the Western front were not able to defend themselves against the surrounding Chinese troops. Most Indian troops positioned in these posts offered resistance but were either killed or taken prisoner. Indian support for these outposts was not forthcoming, as evidenced by the Galwan post, which had been surrounded by enemy forces in August, but no attempt was made to relieve the besieged garrison. Following the 20 October attack, nothing was heard from Galwan. On 24 October, Indian forces fought hard hold to the Rezang La Ridge, in order to prevent a nearby airstrip from falling to the Chinese.

After realising the magnitude of the attack, the Indian Western Command withdrew many of the isolated outposts to the south-east.

Daulet Beg Oldi was also evacuated, but it was south of the Chinese claim line and was not approached by Chinese forces. Indian troops were withdrawn in order to consolidate and regroup in the event that China probed south of their claim line. (For all the above places see Map 8)”⁴¹

(c) The Chinese Ceasefire Formula of October 24 and the Three Week Lull in the Fighting

“A statement released in Beijing on October 24th concisely recapitulated the course of the dispute with India, concluding with a reminder that three times in the past three month India had rejected China’s proposals for talks without pre-conditions, and that Nehru had been publicly ordering the Indian Army to ‘free Indian territory’. The statement then pointed the impossibility of settling the boundary question by force and the need to reopen peaceful negotiations; and set forth three proposals to that end:

(1) That both sides affirm that the dispute must be settled peacefully; agree to respect the line of actual control [as of November 1959]; and withdraw their armed forces twenty kilometers from that line. (Map 8)

(2) If India agreed to that, Chinese forces would be withdrawn to the north of the McMahon Line. (Map 3)

(3) The Prime Ministers should meet again, in Beijing or New Delhi, to seek a friendly settlement.

Chou En-lai included these proposals in a letter to Nehru the same day, the first communication between the Prime Ministers since they parted in New Delhi in April 1960. He urged that ‘we should look ahead [and] take measures to turn the tide’ rather than argue over the origin of the conflict, and appealed to Nehru to respond positively. The Chinese proposal was not new in any detail. It was the same as Chou put forward originally in his letter to Nehru of November 7th, 1959, altered marginally to take account of the fact that Chinese troops were now south of the McMahon Line. (On October 21st Beijing had announced that Chinese troops had been

told they could disregard the McMahon Line in their operations on the eastern sector – and that day the troops moved south of Hathung La (Map 6), the boundary feature according to China.) In effect, the Chinese proposals would have created a ceasefire line along the ‘line of actual control’, the term which Beijing had from the first used to describe the situation when the dispute came to a head in 1959. The Chinese would have pulled back over the McMahon Line, and Indian troops in the remaining forward posts in the western sector would have withdrawn to the line that the Indian Army had held before the forward policy was put into effect in 1961. Then to create a demilitarized zone along that line, the armed forces of each side would each pull back another twenty kilometers – civil personnel would not be involved in those withdrawals. There was no ambiguity in these proposals, although they were not stated in precise locational detail. Thagla ridge was not mentioned, for example, nor for that matter was the McMahon Line... (Map 8 and 3)”⁴²

Chou En-lai, in response to some clarifications sought by the External Affairs Ministry regarding some of the terms used in his October 24 proposal, clarified these in his letter of November 4, 1962. “The ‘line of actual control’ they referred to was basically the same line as he had proposed as the starting-point for mutual withdrawal in November 1959, he explained. ‘The fact that the Chinese Government’s proposal had taken as its basis the 1959 line of actual control and not the present *line of actual contact* between the armed forces of the two sides is full proof that the Chinese side has not tried to force any unilateral demand on the Indian side on account of the advances gained in the recent counterattack in self-defense.’ The Indian counter-proposal, with its provision for the return of Indian troops to their dispositions for attack on Namka Chu and to the forward posts in the western sector, he likened to ‘such as [is] forced on a vanquished party.’ ‘How can the Chinese Government agree to revert to such a position?’ Chou asked, and appealed to Nehru to reconsider the Chinese proposals.”⁴³

The acceptance of the Chinese proposals would have required

India to withdraw the posts it had set up in pursuance of the Forward Policy even from areas where they had not already been wiped out by the Chinese after the October 20 offensive. In the Eastern Sector it would have meant that Dhola Post could not be re-established.

“The Chinese described their proposals as equal, mutually accommodatroy and based on mutual respect – ‘not arbitrary and arrogant’ – and, seen objectively, they merit the description; but, of course, India could not see them objectively. To the Indians, the Chinese had simply added a new and more violent aggression to the long-standing aggression involved in the Chinese presence in territory India claimed in the western sector; and they were now seeking to confirm their criminal gains through diplomacy.

New Delhi rejected the Chinese proposals instantly – indeed without waiting to receive them officially, but going by the news agencies’ account of their contents. In its reply, released in New Delhi as a statement on October 24th, the Indian Government first claimed that it was ‘wedded to peace and peaceful methods [and had] always sought to resolve differences by talks and discussions... with China’; but, it went on, ‘India cannot and will not accept a position under which Chinese forces continue to commit aggression into Indian territory, occupy substantial Indian territories and use these as a bargaining counter to force a settlement on their own terms’.”⁴⁴

The counter proposal put forward by India stated, “(v) If the Chinese professions of peace and peaceful settlement of differences are really genuine, let them go back at least to the position where they were all along the boundary prior to 8th September, 1962. India will then be prepared to undertake talks and discussions, at any level mutually agreed, to arrive at agreed measures which should be taken for the easing of tension and correction of the situation created by unilateral forcible alteration of the status quo along the India-China boundary.

(vi) India is always prepared to resolve differences by talks and discussions but only on the basis of decency, dignity and self-respect

and not under threat of military might of any country however strong it may be.

(vii) India would be prepared to welcome the Chinese Prime Minister or any suitable representative of the Chinese Government on a mutually agreed date if China is sincere in its professions of peaceful settlement and accepts the constructive proposal made in point (v) above which is fully consistent with dignity and self-respect both of India and China.”⁴⁵

Neville Maxwell has called Nehru’s letter of October 27, “...remarkable for its mildness considering the context of what Nehru called ‘a Chinese invasion of India.’

Nehru was criticized in India for the civil tone of this letter to Chou and the weakness of its counter-proposal. After the Chinese attacks the mood in India equated any agreement to negotiate with surrender – one MP saying that the mere suggestion that India should agree to talk must be treated as high treason.”⁴⁶

“The defeat on the Namka Chu and his belief that India was at the beginning of a long, though undeclared, war with China had swept away Nehru’s resistance to accepting military aid. Only a few weeks before he had again roundly rejected the suggestion that India might seek arms aid, saying it meant becoming ‘somebody else’s dependent’: identifying the acceptance of military aid with ‘joining some military bloc’, he had declared he would never agree to this, ‘even if disaster comes to us on the frontier.’ But on October 29th when the American Ambassador called on Nehru offering any military equipment India might need, the offer was instantly accepted. That night, the writer reported to *The Times*: ‘The decision to accept American military assistance, reversing policies that India had cherished since she became a nation, was taken formally at a Cabinet meeting today; but Mr. Nehru had been convinced already by his service advisers that only with equipment in the quantity and quality that the United States could provide would the Indian Army be able to defeat the Chinese.’ Lists of India’s military needs had already been prepared and were handed to the Americans: the embassy in

New Delhi expressed dismay not only at the scope of the Indian requests, but also at the disorganization which the confusion of the indents displayed. The Pentagon, using its new, computerized stock-keeping methods, was quickly able to get the first supplies on the way, however; flown from West Germany in jet freighters, they began landing in India five days later.

Chou En-lai drew this to the attention of heads of the Afro-Asian governments: 'The Indian Government has openly begged military aid from the United States,' he said. The *People's Daily* described India's acceptance of American military aid, in addition to the economic aid she had long been receiving from the USA, as 'a development of historic significance': 'It points to the fact that the Nehru Government has finally shed its cloak of non-alignment policy. ...The more Nehru depends on US imperialism, the greater the need is there for him to meet the needs of US imperialism and persist in opposing China. And the more he persists in opposing China, the greater the need for him to depend on US imperialism. Thus he is caught in a vicious circle. His gradual shedding of his policy of non-alignment is precisely the inevitable result of his sell-out to US imperialism.'⁴⁷

"The diplomatic exchanges during the lull that followed the Chinese occupation of Tawang showed that New Delhi's approach to the boundary dispute had changed only to harden. The Indians were as adamant as ever that they would not negotiate a boundary settlement, and their insistence on return to their forward posts in the western sector, as well as to the Namka Chu, showed that the designs and assumptions which underlay the forward policy were unchanged. By smashing the puny threat that India had built up to the Chinese positions below Thagla, and by wiping out half the forward Indian posts in the western sector, Beijing gained nothing. The Indians, feeling that they had lost a battle but not yet begun to wage a war, were more confident than ever, and the political mood in India had now become almost unanimously bellicose. For China to keep her troops where they were would be to invite a long campaign of attrition, with the Sino-Indian boundaries becoming a running sore

while the Indians steadily built up the scale and determination of their attacks. To draw back over the McMahon Line, on the other hand, would be to invite the jeering interpretation that the Chinese Army had made discretion the better part of valour; that unless fortified by surprise and overwhelming numbers, the Chinese were chary of trading blows with India. It would, moreover, leave the boundary dispute unresolved. If this had been all Beijing had planned, the attempt to mesh military action with diplomatic manoeuvre so as to resolve the dispute with India once and for all, could have been written off as a fiasco.

But the Chinese conception had by no means been fully implemented, indeed it had only just begun to be put into effect. Before the October 20th attacks a senior minister in Beijing had been heard to say that China was going to have to advance well to the south of the points in local dispute, and then withdraw. The first attacks had been like the jab of a boxer which seemingly only jolts his opponent, but in fact sets him up for the knockout.”⁴⁸

(viii) The Events Leading to the Indian Attack of 14th November, 1962, and the Massive Chinese Response

“The initial reaction to the Chinese attack was one of the unfeigned astonishment and outrage. It was completely forgotten that the Indian Army had been about to take offensive action; ignored, that the Government had refused to meet the Chinese for talks. If the Chinese ‘had any claim they could have discussed it and talked about it and adopted various means of peaceful settlement,’ Nehru now complained. ‘Why, in the face of our patience, goodwill and obvious anxiety for settlement, have the Chinese persisted in this aggression?’ Ashok Mehta asked later, and the Lok Sabha put in formally in a resolution in which it affirmed the ‘resolve of the Indian people to drive out the aggressor from the sacred soil of India’: ‘This House notes with deep regret that in spite of the uniform gestures of goodwill and fellowship by India towards China ...China has betrayed that good-will and friendship ...and committed aggression and initiated a massive invasion of India.’ In the disapproval of China’s

use of force it was not always entirely forgotten, however, that India had intended something of the same. 'We are perfectly justified in pushing them and attacking them,' Nehru pointed out.

The reaction among the Indian political classes and, to some extent, among the urban masses was vigorous. Public meetings were held, every political party, including the Communists, condemning the Chinese. There was a rush on army recruiting stations: less constructively, students burned effigies of Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai, and pledged their dedication to the national cause in signatures inked with their own blood. The shops of Chinese in New Delhi and Calcutta, shoemakers or curio dealers, were mobbed, and their owners beaten up. Japanese diplomats plastered their cars with 'rising sun' emblems and identifications in Hindi lest a hasty mob mistake them for Chinese. The Government introduced an ordinance which empowered it to treat even Indian citizens of Chinese descent as enemy aliens, and several thousand were interned in camps in Rajasthan – they were later expelled to China. The Government announced its intention of forming a home guard and a national rifle association, and of enlarging the national cadet corps so that every university student could be enrolled. Schoolgirls drilled and marched, members of Parliament were photographed taking aim with rifles – in Punjab the ministers of the state Government decided to appear in the legislature in military uniform.

The great industrial and commercial house of Birla presented a miniature rifle range to the nation, so that citizens in New Delhi could learn to shoot with .22 rifles. Slit trenches were dug in the capital's gardens and sandbags piled at the doorways of Government offices. Morarji Desai, the Finance Minister, opened a national defence fund which would accept money, gold or ornaments – 'Ornaments for armaments' became a popular slogan – and floated an issue of defence bonds. He called for austerity and economy for all. It was announced that ordnance factories would be working extra shifts.

Such manifestations of popular commitment to the struggle with

China were acclaimed as proof that the signs of disunity and 'fissiparousness' which had been so worrying in preceding years, were in fact superficial; that beneath them lay an emotionally integrated nation. The Lok Sabha praised 'the wonderful and spontaneous response of the people of India to the emergency ...this mighty upsurge amongst all sections of our people.' More poetically, Nehru thanked China for an action which, he said, had 'suddenly lifted a veil from the face of India, [giving] a glimpse of the serene face of India, strong and yet calm and determined, an ancient fact which is ever young and vibrant'. This was matched from the Opposition front bench, where a Socialist invoked 'the blood of our martyred jawans, [which] is becoming the seed of a new, virile nation that is being born in our country.'

Ignoring the obvious gusto of the response to what was felt to be war, Nehru insisted still on the inherent and unshakable pacifism of Indians. In contrast to the Chinese, who, he said, were conditioned to war and seemed to 'think that war was a natural state of affairs', here were the Indians, 'disliking it, excessively disliking the idea of war – emotionally disliking it, apart from not liking its consequences'. Invoking Gandhi, he reminded Parliament that 'basically we are a gentle people', and expressed his fear that war would change all that. 'It alarms me that we should become, because of the exigencies of war, brutalized, a brutal nation. I think that would mean the whole soul and spirit of India being demoralized, and that is a terribly harmful thing. Certainly I hope that all of us will remember this.'"⁴⁹

"In contrast to the excitement and commitment that was being encouraged in India, in China the fighting was consistently played down, the conflict minimized. A Western correspondent in Beijing reported that 'newspaper coverage is more political than military and even Chinese successes have constantly been played down. There has been no attempt to make the reader keenly war-conscious. Rare and laconic situation reports are printed in guarded words of the New China News Agency.'

The Indian Government in its statements and rhetoric, on the

other hand, treated the border fighting as an undeclared war. 'We may not be technically at war,' Nehru explained, 'but the fact is that we are at war, though we have not made any declaration to that effect – it is not necessary at the present moment to do so, I do not know about the future.' Throughout, however, Nehru resisted strong pressure to break off diplomatic relations with Beijing and in the United States, which happened to be considering the perennial question of China's representation just after the fighting broke out, India maintained her support for Beijing, although no longer taking the lead in pressing the issue.

A state of emergency was declared, giving the central Government overriding powers and suspending civil liberties, and Parliament was called into session ten days earlier. (Nehru had resisted demands for an immediate emergency session.) By this time the shock of the Namka Chu debacle had worn off, to be replaced by something like euphoria – 'mafficking in defeat', it had been called. 'There has been a palpable growth of confidence in New Delhi that, whatever the Chinese intentions, they can be held and in due course beaten,' the writer reported to *The Times* at the end of October. The lull in NEFA was punctuated only by accounts of aggressive patrolling or artillery bombardments by Indian troops, the newspapers reporting 'heartening indications that after the initial reverses the Indian troops in NEFA were beginning to consolidate themselves into effective defensive positions, and were even initiating attempts to dislodge the Chinese from Indian territory'. This renewed confidence, with Krishna Menon relegated from the front benches to the rear, took the edge off Parliament's disquiet and anger when it convened on November 8th. Nehru, of course, still had a lot of explaining to do, but he was confident, and not at all apologetic."⁵⁰

"Rumours of the inadequate equipment and supplies of the troops below the Thagla ridge were circulating in the capital by now, and to meet them Nehru repeated at length the arguments, long familiar to Parliament, for relying on domestic manufacture of armaments. He was heard in attentive silence and with much of the old respect. Indeed, his stature in Parliament was for many members

and for the moment magnified by the feeling that he had become the country's war leader – one member who questioned his fitness for the role, Professor Ranga of the Swantantra Party, found little support. Nehru for his part was confident enough to snub a member who interjected a question about arms, 'It is really extraordinary that many persons here who know nothing about arms talk about arms,' he snapped. He was as if rejuvenated by the shock of the Namka Chu battle, and by the exciting atmosphere of resolute preparation for war. Some spoke of Dunkirk and Churchill, and perhaps Nehru savoured the associations. As was the case with Krishna Menon, the Prime Minister had on the question of armaments taken the heat out of Opposition's assault by conceding the heart of their demand. Since 1954, when Pakistan began to receive American military aid, and especially since the first boundary clashes with China in 1959 the Government had been urged to follow suit and accept whatever assistance was available to strengthen the armed services, and Nehru's refusal to thus jettison the independence that was the core of non-alignment was bitterly criticized. In the previous session of Parliament he had said that 'taking military help is basically and fundamentally opposed to a non-alignment policy, [it] means practically becoming aligned to that country.' But now American jet transports were landing in India at the rate of eight flights a day, each carrying about twenty tons of equipment – automatic rifles, heavy mortars, recoilless guns, et cetera. The British had been even quicker off the mark: their first loads of arms aid were landed in New Delhi the day Nehru accepted Kennedy's offer of help."⁵¹

"From the end of October the general optimism that the worst was over and that victories were at hand steadily grew, encouraged by official accounts of what was happening in NEFA. INDIANS ATTACK UNDER COVER OF ARTILLERY – HEARTENING FORWARD THRUSTS IN NEFA, the press proclaimed. A Congress MP who had been to the front reported that the morale of the troops was exuberant. He told the House that, disregarding all physical discomfort, 'they are simply shouting our Mahatma Gandhi's name and the Prime Minister's name to enthuse themselves.' Lal Bahadur Shastri told a public meeting

on November 12th that 'India was now strong enough to repulse the Chinese attackers and was building its military might to drive the invaders from Indian soil.' The Chinese in October and the beginning of November continued their methodical elimination of the Indian forward posts in the Western Sector, concentrating their troops and then softening the Indian positions with intense barrages before overrunning them with infantry – on one occasion, according to wireless reports from the post, the Chinese used tanks. But these continuing defeats in the Western Sector did not shadow the optimism that in NEFA the story would be different. Attention was focused especially on the Walong front (Map 7), and expectation that a big Indian victory was in the making, there was sharpened with headlines on November 16th – JAWANS SWING INTO ATTACK."⁵²

"The belief that the Chinese would not launch further attacks in NEFA, that with the debacle on the Namka Chu the worst was over, was shared in Army HQ, too, and permeated down the line of command. In several instances, orders given in the first shock of troops to move at shortest notice to NEFA were countermanded when the Chinese stopped their advance, and for three weeks after that there was little urgency in the Indian build-up around Se La (Map 1)."⁵³

In their approach to the problem, the Chinese were much more single-minded and urgent and this "was soon shown in reports from the forward Indian troops in their screen positions below Se La ridge. They could hear the blasting of explosives as the Chinese rushed construction of road from Bum La (Map 1) on the McMahon Line down the old trade route to Tawang, working twenty-four hours a day and steadily getting nearer. Early in November, aerial reconnaissance showed Chinese trucks moving in Tawang – the road was through. The Chinese then began improvements on the Indian road from Tawang to Se La. Meanwhile they were patrolling forward towards and around the Indian positions, and – although this was not yet known to the Indians – penetrating into NEFA by passes and trails to the north-east of Se La."⁵⁴

Even without adequate preparation, India planned to attack the Chinese at Walong in NEFA. November 14, being the birthday of the Prime Minister was chosen by Kaul as the day for the attack for it was felt that there could be no better present for Nehru on that special day than the report of Indian army's first major success against the invader.

"On November 14th, two companies of the 6th Kumaon battalion, supported by heavy mortars and some field guns that had been paraded to support the attack, moved into an assault on a commanding hill held by the Chinese, in what was believed to be company strength. The Kumaonis, stocky hill men from the foot-hills of the western Himalayas, had held the Chinese in a fierce action at Kibithoo; had had to retreat for two days to get back to Walong; had been put into another local attack about ten days before and had been in patrol action almost constantly – but they were used again for what became notorious in the army as 'the birthday attack'. They fought for six hours, under heavy fire from Chinese bunkers, but were still fifty yards from the crest when they stopped, spent. That night a Chinese counter-attack cleared the surviving Kumaonis off the hill, less than half of the attackers returning to their base. This was the action hailed by Indian newspapers on November 16th under the headline JAWANS SWING INTO ATTACK."⁵⁵

(ix) The November 14-20, 1962 War and Its Aftermath

(a) Eastern Sector

The Chinese resumed their military activities in NEFA hours after the attack at Walong by India. "A Chinese counter-attack cleared the Indians off the hill. The survivors (less than half the attacking force) returned to Walong. The Chinese followed the retreating Indians and penetrated the main Indian defences. Indian artillery could not assist the defense; all rounds had been used in the attack on the Chinese hill. Key defensive points were overrun, and a withdrawal was ordered at 10 a.m. on November 16th. But many of the Indian troops did not receive the order, and fought to the death

at their positions. The remnants of the Walong brigade withdrew down Lohit Valley (Map 7); even in withdrawal, many died either from ambushes or from privation (a state in which food and other essentials for well-being were lacking). The Chinese did not pursue the retreating troops further.

In the Se La-Bomdi La sector (Map 1, 2) of NEFA, a steady Indian build-up continued. By November 17th, Fourth Division had ten infantry battalions and some supporting arms mortars, artillery, and twelve tanks. Concentrated, it could have been a formidable defence; but the force was spread out over the 60 twisty miles of road between Se La and Bomdi La, with the commander and main defences at Se La. Five battalions were at Se La; three, at Bomdi La; and two were at Dirang Dzong, halfway between. The commander, Brigadier Hosair Singh, soon established his headquarters at the Dzong. Dirang Dzong was poorly suited for defences; but the Indians intended strong defences at Se la and Bomdi La, both of which were well surrounded by hill masses. The defence might have been more successful—if the Chinese had been limited to the road. But there were trails—most notably the Bailey Trail (Map 1, 2).

Captain F. M. Bailey had explored into Tibet in 1913; his work helped McMahon to draw his boundary line. Bailey had made his way from Tulung La to Lap, and thence through Tse La Pass and southward. The 1962 Indian forces soon came to realize that the Chinese could use the Trail that Bailey had used half a century before. If the Chinese did come down Bailey Trail, they would emerge at Thembang, between Dirang Dzong and Bomdi La. Such a Chinese move would cut off Dirang Dzong and Se La. Yet, despite this, there remained the underlying Indian faith that the Chinese would not attack (Map 2).

A few blocking forces were sent out in early November: a company to Phutang and a platoon sent up the Bailey Trail to Poshing La. As November advanced, more attention was given to Bailey Trail. Three more platoons — now making a company — were dispatched to Poshing La (Map 1, 2).

On November 15th, the Chinese — probably a battalion — attacked the company at Poshing La. Radio reports indicated that the Chinese had wiped out the Indian force. But Headquarters could not believe that the Chinese could bring a full battalion down the mountain trail, and a second company from Bomdi La was sent up Bailey Trail. A third company was brought from Bomdi La to Dirang Dzong. By November 16th, the three battalions stationed at Bomdi La were cut to half their strength.

The second company sent to Bailey Trail dug in at Tembang (Thembang) on the morning of November 17th. A Chinese force of about 1500 attacked the company soon after midday. The Indians resisted for three hours, inflicting heavy casualties on the Chinese. But logistics problems struck again: the Indians began to run out of ammunition. With darkness falling, the Indian company began to withdraw. But in the darkness and in thick vegetation the orderly withdrawal soon turned into a chaotic flight. None of the company returned to Bomdi La; weeks later, stragglers began appearing on the plains to the south. Again the superior strength of the Chinese and the logistic problems of the Indians had led to another Indian defeat. But now, the Chinese had cut the road between Bomdi La and Dirang Dzong; about 10,000 Indian troops were northwest of the Chinese road block (Map 1,2).

There was a brief (and almost the only) bright moment for the Indians on November 17th. Simultaneous with the Bailey Trail action, the Chinese had launched an attack on Se La. But Se La was well defended; between dawn and mid afternoon, the Chinese launched five assaults on Se La, and five times they were repulsed. With five battalions plus artillery, the Se La force was strong — until its main supply route was cut off when the Chinese took Thembang.

Meanwhile, the Headquarters position at Dirang Dzong, poorly defended was in jeopardy. Brigadier Singh, commander at Se La, requested guidance from General Kaul. But General Kaul was still flying around the lost battle at Walong. General P. N. Thapar, Chief of Army Staff, and General Sen, Commander in Chief of Eastern

Command, were both at Kaul's headquarters. They both declined to give orders or guidance, deferring instead to General Kaul. An urgent operational decision was needed, but it waited until 7:30 p.m. when Kaul returned.

By the time General Kaul returned that evening (November 17th), there were reports that the Chinese had begun developing movement at Se La and threatened to cut the road between Se La and Dirang Dzong. After a half hour meeting of the three highest ranking officers of the Indian Army, General Kaul issued his order: all units were to pull back from Se La and Dirang Dzong to Bomdi La.

But immediate further discussions amongst the generals resulted in a modification to Kaul's order. The highlights of the new order were as follows: 'You will hold on to your present positions to the best of your ability. When the position becomes untenable I delegate the authority to you to withdraw to any alternative position you can hold. . . . You may be cut off by the enemy. . . . Your only course is to fight it out as best you can.'

The wording of this order hardly constituted a clear guidance. General A. S. Pathania, commander of 65 Brigade at Dirang Dzong, ordered a withdrawal to the plains to the south. Going through Phutang, he himself withdrew. He had hurriedly ordered his tanks to try to fight through to Bomdi La; if the crews could not, they were to abandon their tanks and head for the plains. But no one took command of the force — two infantry battalions, some tanks, some artillery, and headquarters personnel left Dirang Dzong. A few field grade officers (who did not know that withdrawal was ordered) attempted to organize the forces and fight toward Bomdi La. But Chinese forces and ambushes quickly ended the attempt. The survivors straggled southward to the plains. General Pathania would resign soon after the ceasefire.

Good control was maintained over the initial withdrawal from Se La; the Indians cleared the first Chinese found behind Se La. But ahead, the Indian column came under heavy machine gun fire. Attempts to knock out Chinese gun positions failed; the road was

impassable. Under heavy Chinese fire, the retreating troops headed chaotically south for the plains. In their retreat, many were killed or captured.

By mid-morning of November 18th, the 48 Brigade — six rifle companies at Bomdi La — was the only Indian Army force left in NEFA. The six companies were dug into defensive positions that had been designed for three battalions. They had artillery and mortars, and were expecting reinforcements.

But poor command, control and communications again struck the Indians. At 11 a.m., General Kaul — not knowing that Dirang Dzong was now abandoned — ordered a mobile column (at Bomdi La) to move out to reinforce Dirang Dzong. Brigadier Singh protested that such a move would weaken Bomdi La. But Kaul angrily ordered two infantry companies, with tanks and artillery, to move out onto the winding road to Dirang Dzong. Personnel support personnel — cooks and clerks — were ordered to aid in the defence of Bomdi La.

The Chinese attacked about ten minutes after the column left. The first attack was beaten off. The infantry in the column was quickly ordered back to their defensive positions; but these were already occupied by the Chinese, and the Indians were caught in the open. A second, stronger Chinese assault followed. Many Indian positions were overrun, and the Chinese brought fire onto the Brigade headquarters; attempts to counter-attack failed. By 4 p.m., Singh ordered a withdrawal to Rupa, eight miles to the south (Map 1).

The Brigade began to organize a defense around Rupa on the night of November 18th. Then, Singh received orders from IV Corps to withdraw to Foothills, just above the plains. As he began his withdrawal, he received orders from General Kaul to defend Rupa. Turning back, he found that the Chinese were already taking up positions around Rupa; thus, defense of Rupa was impossible. His 48 Brigade was then ordered to Chaku (Map 1, 2), the next defensible position down the road. The Chinese harassed the withdrawing troops, and then broke contact. The Brigade, now only one battalion in size, reached Chaku on the evening of November 19th. The Chinese

struck at midnight, on three sides. The Chinese had attacked an ammunition supply train, and burning vehicles illuminated the Indian defensive positions. The Brigade broken, scattered groups made their way southward to the plains. Remaining Indian command elements were headed far to the south.

With the disintegration of 48 Brigade at 3 a.m. on November 20th, no organized Indian military force was left in NEFA (or in Aksai Chin). Militarily, the Chinese victory was complete, and the Indian defeat absolute.”⁵⁶

By the 20th November the PLA penetrated close to the outskirts of Tezpur, Assam, a major frontier town south and nearly fifty kilometres from the Assam-North-East Frontier Agency border. The local government ordered the evacuation of the civilians in Tezpur to the south of the Brahmaputra River, all prisons were thrown open, and government officials who stayed behind destroyed Tezpur’s currency reserves in anticipation of a Chinese advance. The news of the Chinese announced ceasefire reached in time to save the Tezpur airport which, as planned, would have been blown up the next day.

“Indian army had specially formed 4 corps to drive the Chinese away from NEFA. 4 Corps under B.M. Kaul stood decimated and shifted its headquarters from Tezpur to Gauhati on 19 November 1962. The reverses so demoralized B.M. Kaul that he advised Army HQ to advise Delhi to get foreign armed forces to help stem the tide of the superior Chinese forces, adding it was not a counsel of fear, but of facing stark realities.”⁵⁷

By November 20, 1962 the whole of NEFA had fallen under the Chinese Control and they were knocking at the gates of Assam within seven days of the renewed fighting.

(b) The Western Sector

In this Sector, “Western Command, acting on its own initiative, had continued an urgent and heavy build-up, withdrawing troops from the ceasefire line in Kashmir and, by pooling all available transport, bringing them into Ladakh. The road from Leh to Chushul

had been completed in the first week of October and by mid-November Chushul was a brigade position. The village itself and the airstrip were outside the Chinese claim line, but some of the Indian defences to the east were across that line, and by this time were, in fact, the only remaining Indian positions in Chinese-claimed territory in the western sector. All the other posts had either been wiped out or withdrawn. Western Command, unlike Eastern Command and IV Corps at the other extremity of the borders, showed more concern for the survival of the troops than for ordering isolated units to 'fight it out' in useless and sacrificial gestures. When there was a tactical reason for ground to be held, the troops did fight it out, to the last round or the last man; but they were not, as so often in the eastern sector, left to hold tactically insignificant and indefensible positions until overrun.

Western Command had made Chushul vital ground, foreseeing that if the Chinese intended to take Leh then the Spangur gap (Map 8) between the mountains, in which Chushul lies, made their obvious route. Positions had accordingly been taken up on the hills to the east – just across the Chinese claim line. Some of these positions were more than 16,000 feet high (Chushul itself is nearly 14,000) and these altitudes, in winter, made grimly arduous conditions for troops. Frozen ground could not be dug and had to be blasted; the rarity of the air restricted even acclimatized troops to short bursts of physical activity; there was not wood for fuel or building bunkers, everything had to be carried up by the troops from the valley, and in small loads; mules were no good at these altitudes and although there were a few yaks in Chushul the troops could not manage them. Nevertheless, positions of some strength had been built up by November 17th.

Until then the only sign of Chinese had been of reconnaissance patrols, which had carried out close and open observation of some of the Indian positions – themselves still under orders not to fire unless attacked or menaced. But infantry in strength were seen moving up on November 17th; artillery bombardment of the Indian

outposts, airfield and brigade positions in the valley began in the small hours of the 18th, and at first light infantry assaulted the Indian in their hill positions. Heavy mortars, recoilless guns and rockets softened the shallow Indian entrenchments; beaten off in frontal attacks, the Chinese moved to envelop the Indian positions, taking them from the flank or rear after savage hand-to-hand fighting. Of one company of another Kumaoni Battalion (13 Kumaon), which had dug in on a ridge called Rezang La, three wounded reached Battalion HQ in the valley, five were taken prisoner; the rest of the company were still in their positions when an Indian party climbed to Rezang La (Map 8) three months later – frozen as they died, weapons in hand. Only the Chinese dead had been removed, and the evidence of battle showed that of those there had been many.

Five hours after the Chinese launched their assault the hill positions had all been overrun or evacuated as they became untenable, and the Indians concentrated on high ground around Brigade HQ in the valley. But the Chinese did not follow up. They stopped at their claim line and no attack was made on Chushul itself.”⁵⁸

(c) The Shock of Defeat and the Desperate Attempts to Turn the Tide of the Chinese Advances

The news of the fall of Walong and Se La on 19th shocked the whole nation. In the Lok Sabha Nehru not only confirmed the news of the fall of Walong but added that Se La too had fallen in the hands of the Chinese. “The House heard Nehru’s short statement in dead silence, but when he sat down, angry questioning and expostulation broke out from the Opposition benches. It grew into uproar, with the Speaker’s calls for order being shouted down or ignored. This was the sort of moment that until then had always brought the Prime Minister to his feet, his dry and sarcastic voice cutting through the din, reining the House in more effectively than could the Speaker because he carried, greater authority. But on this occasion of national crisis, which plainly called for calm and self-control in Parliament, Nehru sat silent. His old dominance of the House was gone for good,

and he must have felt it.

That night Nehru made a broadcast to the nation which did not help restore his position. The Churchillian flourishes which had touched his rhetoric during the three weeks of the phoney war were missing, his voice now was old and tired, and his words were dispirited and dispiriting. He had the fall of Bomdi La to add to the growing chronicle of disaster, and addressed himself particularly to the people of Assam: 'Now what has happened is very serious and very saddening to us and I can well understand what our friends in Assam must be feeling, because all this is happening on their doorstep, as one might say. I want to tell them that we feel very much for them and we shall help them, to the utmost of our ability.' The reaction to this speech in Assam was bitter; it was felt there that Nehru had been bidding a sad farewell to the people of the state in the expectation that they would soon be under Chinese occupation, and in tacit recognition that the Government could do nothing about it. Nehru went on: 'We shall not be content till the invader goes out of India or is pushed out. We shall not accept any terms that he may offer because he may think that we are a little frightened by some setbacks...'

Of this day, November 20th, the American Ambassador noted in his diary: 'It was the day of ultimate panic in Delhi, the first time I have ever witnessed the disintegration of the public morale.' Fear was now in the air, and rumours: that the Chinese were about to take Tezpur, even land paratroops in the capital, that General Kaul had been taken prisoner. Of this latter report President Radhakrishnan observed: 'It is, unfortunately, untrue.'"⁵⁹

On the 19th November Nehru wrote two letters to Kennedy. In his first letter he thanked him for his swift response to Indian approach for help and briefed him on the situation as it had developed during the month after the Chinese attack on 20th October. As the news of deteriorating situation in NEFA reached him, Nehru sent another letter to Kennedy to be delivered to him by the Indian ambassador in Washington. "The tone of the appeal was so abject,

the Indian ambassador in Washington later recalled, that he felt himself near tears of humiliation as he delivered it. The only copy of this appeal was kept in the Prime Minister's secretariat, instead of being sent to the Ministry of External Affairs in the usual way."⁶⁰

Nehru wrote, "Within a few hours of dispatching an earlier message of today, the situation in the N.E.F.A. Command has deteriorated still further. Bomdi la has fallen and the retreating forces from Sela have been trapped between the Sela Ridge and Bomdi la (Map 1, 2). A serious threat has developed to our Digboi oil fields in Assam. With the advance of the Chinese in massive strength, the entire Brahmaputra Valley is seriously threatened and unless something is done immediately to stem the tide the whole of Assam, Tripura, Manipur and Nagaland would also pass into Chinese hands.

2. The Chinese have poised massive forces in the Chumbi Valley between Sikkim and Bhutan and another invasion from that direction appears imminent. Our areas further North West on the border with Tibet in U.P., Punjab and Himachal Pradesh are also threatened. In Ladakh, as I have said in my earlier communication, Chushul is under heavy attack and shelling of the airfield at Chushul has already commenced. We have also noticed increasing air activity by the Chinese air force in Tibet.

3. Hitherto we have restricted our requests for assistance to essential equipment and we are most grateful for the assistance which had been so readily given to us. We did not ask for more comprehensive assistance particularly air assistance because of the wider implications of such assistance in the global context and we did not want to embarrass our friends.

4. The situation that has developed is, however, really desperate. We have to have more comprehensive assistance if the Chinese are to be prevented from taking over the whole of Eastern India. Any delay in this assistance reaching us will result in nothing short of a catastrophe for our country.

5. We have repeatedly felt the need of using the air arm in

support of our land forces, but have been unable to do so as in the present state of our air and radar equipment we have no defense against retaliatory action.

6. I, therefore, request that immediate support be given to strengthen our air arm sufficiently to stem the tide of Chinese advance.

7. I am advised that for providing adequate air defense a minimum of 12 squadrons of supersonic all weather fighters are essential. We have no modern radar cover in the country. For this also we seek your assistance. Our needs are most immediate. The United States Air Force personnel will have to man these fighters and radar installations while our personnel are being trained. U.S. fighters and transport planes manned by U.S. personnel will be used for the present to protect our cities and installations from Chinese air attacks and to maintain our communications. We should if this is possible also like U.S. planes manned by U.S. personnel to assist the Indian Air Force in air battles with the Chinese air force over Indian areas where air action by the I.A.F. against Chinese communication lines supplies and troop concentration may lead to counter air action by the Chinese.

8. Any air action to be taken against the Chinese beyond the limits of our country, e.g. in Tibet, will be taken by I.A.F. planes manned by Indian personnel.

9. Determined as we are to liberate all parts of our territory which may pass into the hands of the Chinese aggressors it is clear that sooner or later we would have to neutralize their bases and airfields by striking from the air. For this purpose I request you to consider assisting us with two Squadrons of Bombers of B-47 type. To man this indispensable arm we would like to send immediately our Pilots and Technicians for training in the United States.

10. The Chinese threat as it has developed involves not merely the survival of India, but the survival of free and independent Governments in the whole of this sub-Continent or in Asia. The

domestic quarrels regarding small areas or territorial borders between the countries in this sub-Continent or in Asia have no relevance whatever in the context of the developing Chinese invasion. I would emphasize particularly that all the assistance or equipment given to us to meet our dire need will be used entirely for resistance against the Chinese. I have made this clear in a letter I sent to President Ayub Khan of Pakistan. I am asking our Ambassador to give you a copy of this letter.

11. We are confident that your great country will in this hour of our trial help us in our fight for survival and for the survival of freedom and independence in this sub-Continent as well as the rest of Asia. We on our part are determined to spare no effort until the threat posed by Chinese expansionist and aggressive militarism to freedom and independence is completely eliminated.

With Kind regards,
Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru"⁶¹

In response to Nehru's help, "an American aircraft carrier was dispatched from the Pacific towards Indian waters; but the crisis passed twenty-four hours after Nehru made this appeal, and the aircraft carrier turned back before it reached the Bay of Bengal. Nehru had also asked for transport aircraft, and that part of his appeal was immediately granted with the dispatch to India of a squadron of C-130s, big turbo-jets.

That appeal was not the only step, taken in the shock of the debacle, to be quickly repented. Nehru from the beginning of the hostilities had been at pains to emphasize that India was not fighting Communism because she was fighting China. The distinction was necessary not only to the posture of non-alignment, but to cushion India's relations with USSR. But on November 20th orders went out from New Delhi to state capitals for the arrest of several hundred leading members of the Communist Party. The intention was to arrest only those who belonged to the left wing of the now practically

sundered party, putting behind bars those who had not identified themselves with the leadership's commitment to support of the Government. But, thanks to a muddle in the Home Ministry, the lists of names for immediate arrest, drawn from the files of the Intelligence Bureau, were sent to the state capitals without being vetted. The result was that many of the party's centrists as well as some of its pro-Moscow wing were gaoled. It was realized immediately that a mistake had been made; Nehru complained about it to Shastri, the Home Minister, and said it would give India a bad name in the Communist countries. But since simply to open the gaol doors and let them all out again would be to compound the embarrassment, it was decided to release those mistakenly imprisoned one by one, so that it did not look like a confession of error."⁶²

(d) The Ceasefire

On November 20th, Chou En-Lai publicly announced a ceasefire. "Actually, Chou had given the details of the ceasefire to the Indian charge d'affaires in Peking on the evening of November 19th (before India's request for United States air strikes), but New Delhi did not receive the report for over 24 hours. The ceasefire proclaimed that

'Beginning from . . . 0000 hours on November 21, 1962, the Chinese frontier guards will cease fire along the entire Sino-Indian border. Beginning from December 1st, 1962, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw to positions 20 kilometres behind the line of actual control which existed between China and India on November 7th, 1959. In the eastern sector, although the Chinese frontier guards have so far been fighting on Chinese territory north of the traditional customary line, they are prepared to withdraw from their present positions to the north of the illegal McMahon Line, and to withdraw twenty kilometres back from that line (Map 3). In the middle and western sectors, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw twenty kilometres from the line of actual control.'

Rather than the 'victor keeping the spoils,' Peking kept only what was strategically vital: the area surrounding her critical military road

in Aksai Chin. Chou's ceasefire dictum made it clear that the Indians would keep their troops twenty kilometers back from the ceasefire line, and that China 'reserved the right to strike back' if India did not do so.

On the NEFA front, the November 21st ceasefire was a formality. Organized fighting had ended two days before with the breakup of 48 Brigade at Chaku. The two sides had generally ceased to be in contact anywhere in the eastern sector, and there had been no Chinese followup after either Chaku (Map 1, 2) or Walong. Some Indian troops who had been outflanked by the Chinese had skirmishes, with casualties, as they withdrew to the south; these retreating soldiers had no knowledge of the cease-fire, and the Chinese may have ignored the ceasefire when retreating Indians fired on them.

In Aksai Chin, the ceasefire was more definitive. The Chinese had not advanced on Chushul, and all firing ceased at the given time. The Indian force at Chushul was still in a fighting posture, ready to defend if the Chinese advanced. The Indians even sent out some patrols. But there was no more fighting in Aksai Chin.

Indian troops in Ladakh remained in defensive posture. But on the plains below NEFA, the Indian Army was cautious. A new brigade there was ordered to keep back from the hills, to make no provocations, and to avoid patrol clashes. Indian survivors of NEFA battles emerged onto the plains for several weeks; the trek back was very arduous, and many died from exposure on the way back.

China clearly expected India to keep her forces twenty kilometres south of the lines of control specified in the ceasefire. Nehru could not admit defeat, and publicly would continue to refuse China's terms. But privately, Nehru told Chou that Indian forces would conform to the ceasefire.

The Chinese started withdrawing on December 1st, as per the ceasefire. In NEFA, they withdrew north of the McMahon Line. In Aksai Chin, they withdrew as agreed, but set up strong check points

and posts to ensure their position.

The Chinese then began repatriating Indians through Bomdi La. The sick and wounded were returned during December, 1962. Other prisoners of war were returned over the next six months. At one point, Nehru had announced that 6,277 Indian soldiers were captured or missing. India released no figures for wounded, but casualties were high. China released no casualty figures. India's casualties for the Border War were finally reported as:

Killed	1,383
Captured	3,968
Missing	1,696" ⁶³

"In India, and to some extent abroad, there was scepticism that China would fulfil her proclaimed intention to withdraw behind the McMahon line. But on November 30th the Defence Ministry in Beijing confirmed that the Chinese forces were about to begin their withdrawal, and punctually on December 5th the Chinese handed over some wounded prisoners at Bomdi La, and it was not until about a week later that they began to pull out from there. The Chinese had a lot of tidying to do, and went about the task with meticulous, even fussy, care. They made it a matter of principle, or pride, that all the equipment left behind by the retreating Indians should be handed back to them in as good condition as possible. Accordingly it was collected, stacked, piled or parked; cleaned, polished, and carefully inventoried-small arms, mortars, artillery, trucks, shells and ammunition, clothing, and all the other impedimenta of a defeated army. Among the equipment returned were a few American automatic rifles, the first instalment of American military assistance, captured at Se La before they could be uncrated and issued to the troops; and a Russian helicopter, in serviceable condition.

Beijing asked New Delhi to arrange for the material to be received, and Indian civilian parties were sent to take control of it, the Chinese checking off the items and taking receipts. China did not publicize this extraordinary transaction, and said later that there was no intention to do so. It was simply a gesture 'to further

demonstrate ...sincerity for a peaceful settlement.’ But although they co-operated by formally receiving the returned material, the Indians bitterly resented what they felt as an added humiliation, and denounced the Chinese gesture as a propaganda manoeuvre – thereby drawing attention to it.

The Indian Army did not return to NEFA on the heels of the withdrawing Chinese. Administration was taken over by civilians, who reached Tawang on January 21st, 1963; and it was many months before the first Indian troops moved back into NEFA. The ceasefire remained informal, Indian observation of it tacit, though careful. New Delhi ignored the Chinese demand that Indian troops be withdrawn twenty kilometres from the line of actual control in the western and middle sectors, and Beijing did not press that point. But in the eastern sector the Indians kept out of the territory between the Thagla ridge and the map-marked McMahon Line, and patrolling up to the McMahon Line was left to the Assam Rifles. The Army, its own tactical interests coinciding with the Chinese demand, now kept well back.”⁶⁴

(x) The Colombo Proposals

“In the aftermath of the ceasefire, the Indian Government found that among the Afro-Asian countries there was a marked inclination to give Beijing credit for a genuine attempt to return the dispute to the negotiating table. New Delhi felt itself under pressure to accept the Chinese ceasefire proposals, and resented it. ‘Those who do not understand the full significance of the deceptive Chinese proposals naturally ask why we cannot accept [them],’ the official spokesman in New Delhi explained at the end of November; and Nehru noted with some exasperation that the non-aligned countries were failing to grasp things that were obvious to India.

President Nasser of the United Arab Republic was giving the Indian Government no grounds for complaint at this time, however. The Indians found him ‘one hundred percent’ behind them, and prepared to act as their stalking horse by putting forward as the proposals of the U.A.R. suggestions in fact made by the Indian

Government. The U.A.R., with Indian encouragement, mooted the idea of convening a conference of Afro-Asian Governments to discuss the ceasefire and possible bases of bilateral negotiation. Mrs. Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Ceylon, agreed to convene the conference in Colombo, and six delegations met there on December 10th. Ceylon, the U.A.R., Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia and Burma were represented. The Governments concerned had previously been carefully briefed by special ministerial missions from New Delhi as to the minimal Indian requirements. In essence, this remained the restoration of the positions that obtained on September 8th: in other words, that the Indians should be permitted to return to the posts set up in the western sector under the forward policy, and to Dhola Post in the east.

Accordingly, the U.A.R. delegation in Colombo pressed for full restoration of the September 8th position; but as that would plainly be unacceptable to China, and was therefore resisted by the other conferees, a compromise was evolved. So far as the eastern sector was concerned, the Colombo powers proposed that the line of the actual control (i.e., the McMahon Line) could serve as the ceasefire line. This ignored China's stipulation that both sides should keep their armed forces twenty kilometers back from the line, but left the question of specific areas in dispute, each as that below Thagla ridge, for future discussion.

The nub of the Colombo proposals, as of the whole dispute, lay in the western sector, however. There, the Colombo powers proposed that China should carry out the twenty-kilometer withdrawal which she had proposed in the ceasefire announcement: but that there should be reciprocation on the Indian side, the Indians staying where they were. Then, 'pending a final solution of the border dispute, the area vacated by the Chinese military withdrawals will be a demilitarized zone to be administered by civilian posts of both sides to be agreed upon, without prejudice to the rights of the previous presence of both India and China in that area.' This passage of the Colombo proposals pointed to the return of the Indians to the area

they had infiltrated under the forward policy, and was thus the crucial concession from New Delhi's point of view. But, perhaps deliberately, and presumably in spite of the Egyptians' representation, the proposals were ambiguous at this point, and could be read to imply that the presence of Indian civilian posts across the line of actual control (i.e., the Chinese claim line) in the western sector had 'to be agreed upon' by China.

When Mrs. Bandaranaike came to New Delhi in January to submit the Colombo proposals, the Indians persuaded her to allow them to remove that ambiguity. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs drafted, and Mrs. Bandaranaike released, 'clarifications' of the original proposal. This was the key passage: 'The demilitarized zone of twenty kilometers created by the Chinese military withdrawals [in the western sector] will be administered by civilian posts of both sides. This is a substantive part of the Colombo Conference proposals. It is as to their location, the number of posts and their composition that there has to be an agreement between the two Governments of India and China.' Nehru then informed Mrs. Bandaranaike that India accepted the Colombo proposals, as thus, clarified, in principle. At the same time Chou En-lai informed Mrs. Bandaranaike that China accepted the proposals in principle, and it seemed that the two sides were for once in agreement.

But Chou stated what he called 'two points of interpretation which were in fact reservations. As 'clarified' by the Indian Government, the proposals looked to China's fulfilling most of the provisions of her ceasefire declaration, but exempted India from any obligation of reciprocity. Chou now suggested that in the east, as in the west, the Indians' military forces should stay where they were. But the crux, from the Chinese points of view, appears to have lain in his second 'point of interpretation'. He argued that the Indians should not be allowed back into the strip in the west into which they had infiltrated under the forward policy, either troops or civilian personnel. To allow this, Beijing maintained, would be 'tantamount to recognizing as legitimate the Indian armed invasion of this area

and its setting up of forty-three strong points there between 1959 and 1962'. Instead, Chou volunteered that China would pull all her posts out of that area, civilian as well as military. Chou suggested that neither his 'points of interpretation' nor reservations on the Indian side should delay the opening of talks. Such differences could be resolved in the talks themselves.

But the Indian Government was as resistant as ever to any kind of direct exchanges with the Chinese. 'We cannot have any kind of talks, even preliminary talks, unless we are satisfied that the condition we had laid down – about the 8th September position being restored – is met,' Nehru told the Lok Sabha.

The situation was as confused and apparently contradictory as ever. China was again urging the early opening of negotiations; India was refusing, and setting conditions even for limited official 'talks.' But the Opposition in Parliament was pressing Nehru for ever clearer undertakings that he would not talk to the Chinese until they had vacated every inch of Indian soil. While he was seemingly flouting those demands with reiterations of his old pledge to talk to anyone, at any time – 'even to an enemy in the midst of war'. Beneath the rhetoric, however the Indian approach was unchanged. They were seeking a way to avoid meeting the Chinese without seeming to rebuff the attempts of the Colombo powers. Beijing's reservations to the Colombo proposals gave the answer. On learning of these, the Indian Government promptly declared that it accepted the Colombo proposals, as clarified by themselves, '*in toto*', and declared that there could be no further step towards talks or discussions until Beijing had also accepted the proposals together with the Indian clarifications *in toto*. Once again, skilful Indian diplomacy had avoided negotiations by making physical concessions by China a precondition. And once again the onus for obstructing a meeting seemed to be left on China.

The general impression that it was India who was anxious to explore every avenue for peaceful settlement and China who was balking was strengthened by a reference Nehru made at this time to

the possibility of referring the boundary dispute to the International Court at The Hague. Previously Nehru had categorically ruled out any adjudication or arbitration on the main boundary dispute, but now he seemed to reverse that stand. He told the Lok Sabha: 'I am prepared when the time comes, provided there is approval of Parliament, even to refer the basic dispute of the claims on the frontier to an international body like the International Court of Justice at The Hague.' This was reported in the foreign press as a substantive Indian concession, while Nehru's gloss on this remark, a little later, went unnoted. The reference to the International Court was ill-received in the House, members objecting to the suggestion that a part of the motherland could be made the object of adjudication, and Nehru immediately backed away. It had been a casual remark, he explained, 'What I said was that if and when the time came for it, if the House agrees, if Parliament agrees, we might perhaps think of it.' In spite of the qualifications with which he had watered down his first reference to the International Court, Nehru later quoted it to Chou En-lai, citing this as proof of his sincere desire for a peaceful settlement. The gambit was safe, there was no possibility of Beijing's accepting it and submitting a question concerning China's sovereignty to adjudication – especially by a body on which China was represented by the K.M.T."⁶⁵

The Chinese, who had arrived at complete agreement on principle with Pakistan on the Sino-Pakistani border by the end of 1962, temporarily dragged their feet in January 1963 in talks with Pakistan hoping for talks with Indians on the basis of the Colombo Proposals. "Failing to gain Indian responsiveness, they resumed their move toward Pakistan. The Chinese formally concluded the border agreement with Pakistan on 2 March 1963, announcing simultaneously that border negotiations with Afghanistan would soon begin. They stressed the speed and ease with which the final agreement on the border alignment had been reached, leaving a joint commission to survey the China-Pakistan border for demarcation and to erect pillars. Chinese anxiety to furnish new 'proof' that India was the recalcitrant side in the Sino-Indian dispute provided the

Pakistanis with an opportunity to achieve a favorable border settlement. The Chinese apparently did not attempt to persuade the Pakistanis to give up any territory they already controlled and even conceded several hundred miles of valley grazing land on the Chinese side of the watershed. Although a major Chinese motive was to increase India-Pakistan contradictions, the Chinese were careful to deny this publicly in a People's Daily editorial on 4 March. The editorial stated in effect that the Chinese wanted to be fair about the matter: China takes the position of 'non-intervention and impartiality toward both sides.' After the Kashmir dispute was settled, it went on, either of the disputants would have the right to reopen negotiations with the Chinese Government on the boundary treaty to replace the agreement.'"⁶⁶

"Writing to Nehru in April 1963, Chou En-lai accused him of taking a dishonest approach, and of having no intention whatever of holding negotiations. India, he said, had exploited ambiguities in the Colombo proposals to interpret those as conforming to the Indian demand for restoration of the September 8th positions, and was now trying to convert them into an adjudication and force them on China. As for the reference to the International Court, that was 'plainly an attempt to cover up the fact that the Indian Government refuses to negotiate.' Chou reiterated China's readiness to open negotiations immediately on the basis of the Colombo proposals, which both sides had accepted in principle. But, he went on, 'if the Indian Government, owing to its internal and external political requirements, is not prepared to hold negotiations for the time being, [China] is willing to wait with patience.'

A year later Nehru said in Parliament that he would be willing to consider opening talks if the Chinese completely evacuated the twenty-kilometer strip on their side of the line in the western sector (implying that India would waive her insistence on the re-establishment of Indian posts in that zone). Chou En-lai had previously proposed exactly that compromise, and when the idea was put to the Chinese Government by two emissaries of Bertrand Russell, who

had discussed it with Nehru, the Chinese did not rule it out; but they said that the proposal, if seriously meant, should come from the Indian Government itself. New Delhi, however, instantly denied that Russell emissaries had been entrusted with any message from Nehru, and said only that if the Chinese evacuated the western strip, 'the new situation might merit consideration.' But by this time the Chinese Government had decided that it would be useless to open discussions on the borders with India unless there was evidence of a radical change of Indian approach. There was every reason to believe, Beijing said, 'that the Indian Government will not be prepared to negotiate the boundary question in earnest and bring about a settlement even if all its pre-conditions are fulfilled. It has always been the attitude of the Indian Government that it completely denies the existence of a boundary question between China and India. It arbitrarily holds that the alignment it claims is the fixed boundary between China and India; and at most it admits the existence of some minor 'differences.' Hence it holds in effect that Indian-occupied Chinese territory is not negotiable, that the question of Indian-carved Chinese territory is not negotiable either, and that negotiations, if any, must be confined to China's withdrawal or India's entrance. ...In these circumstances, it can be foreseen that no results will be obtained even though boundary negotiations are held.

The diplomatic exchanges, which New Delhi continued to publish, went on for years. The laurels of debating skill rested with the Indians, who continued to present themselves as the aggrieved party, and the Chinese as aggressive and recalcitrant. On the ground the position was reversed. There the boundaries had in fact already been settled by China's crushing victory."⁶⁷

(D) The Period from 1964 to the Present Day

(i) Incidents During the Later Part of 1960's and the Rapprochement in Diplomatic Relations During the 1970's

On 13th June, 1967, China expelled two Indian diplomats from Peking on the grounds that they were indulging in espionage activities

and put the entire Indian Staff of the Indian Embassy and their families in Peking under siege in the Embassy's walled compound. This act of the Chinese resulted in a serious deterioration of the Sino-Indian relations. India took the reciprocal actions by putting restrictions on the movements of the Chinese staff stationed at the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi. At last on 22nd June, 1967, China lifted the siege of the Indian Embassy in Peking and India reacted swiftly by lifting the restrictions on the movements of the Chinese staff and allowed the Chinese Secretary to leave New Delhi as a part of the reciprocal action.

In late 1967, there were two skirmishes between the Indian and the Chinese forces in Sikkim. The first one is known as the "Nathu La incident" the other as the "Chola incident" (Map 4). Nathu La at 14200 feet is an important pass on the Tibet-Sikkim border through which passes the old Gangtok-Yatung-Lhasa Trade Route. Although the Sikkim-Tibet boundary is well defined by the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 17 March 1890, the Chinese were not comfortable with Sikkim being an Indian protectorate with the deployment of the Indian Army at that time. During the 1965 War between India and Pakistan, the Chinese gave an ultimatum to India to vacate the Nathu La pass on the Sikkim-Tibet border. In response India refused to vacate Nathu La. Incidentally it is at Nathu La where Chinese and Indian forces were deployed barely thirty yards apart, closest anywhere on the 4000 km Sino-Indian border. Chinese hold the northern shoulder of the pass while Indian Army holds the southern shoulder. Two dominating features south and north of Nathu La namely Sebu La and Camel's back were held by the Indians. Artillery observation post officers deployed on these two features have an excellent observation into Chinese depth areas whereas from Northern shoulder, Chinese have very little observations into Indian depth areas. This factor proved crucial in the clash that ensued. At the time of the clash, 2 Grenadiers (The Grenadiers are an infantry regiment of the Indian Army) were holding Nathu La.

The daily routine at Nathu La used to start with patrolling by

both sides along the perceived border which almost always resulted in arguments. The only one on the Chinese side who could converse in broken English was the Political Commissar who could be recognised by a red patch on his cap. Sentries of both the forces used to stand barely one meter apart in the centre of the Pass which was marked as Nehru Stone by commemorating Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's trek to Bhutan through Nathu La and Chumbi Valley (Map 4) in 1959. Argument between the two sides soon changed to pushing and shoving and on 6 September 1967 a scuffle took place in which Political Commissar fell down and broke his spectacles. These incidents only added to the excitement.

In order to de-escalate the situation it was decided by the Indian military hierarchy to lay a wire in the centre of the Pass from Nathu La to Sebu La to demarcate the perceived border. This task was to be carried out by the jawans of 70 Field Company of Engineers assisted by a company of 18 Rajput deployed at Yak La pass further north of Nathu La. The wire laying was to commence at first light on the fateful morning of 11 September 1967.

On 11 September 1967 the engineers and jawans started erecting long iron pickets from Nathu La to Sebu La along the perceived border while 2 Grenadiers and Artillery Observation Post Officers at Sebu La and Camel's Back were on alert. Immediately the Chinese Political Commissar, with a section of Infantry came to the centre of the Pass where Lt. Col Rai Singh, commanding officer of 2 Grenadiers was standing with his commando platoon. The Commissar asked Lt Col Rai Singh to stop laying the wire. Orders to the Indian Army were clear. They were not to blink. An argument started which soon built up into a scuffle. In the ensuing melee, the Commissar got roughed up. Thereafter the Chinese went up back to their bunkers and the engineers resumed laying the wire.

Within a few minutes of this, a whistle was heard on the Chinese side followed by murderous medium machine gun fire from north shoulder. The pass was completely devoid of cover and the jawans of 70 Field Company and 18 Rajput were caught in the open and suffered

heavy casualties which included Col Rai Singh who was wounded. 2 Grenadier opened small arms fire on North shoulder but it was not very effective. Within the first ten minutes, there were nearly seventy dead and scores wounded lying in the open on the pass. Within half an hour, Chinese artillery opened up on the pass as well as in the depth areas but it was mostly prophylactic fire due to lack of observation and failed to do much damage. Meanwhile the artillery observation post officers asked for artillery fire, permission for which came a little later. Because of excellent domination and observation from Sebu La and Camel's back, artillery fire was most effective and most of the Chinese bunkers on North shoulder and in depth were completely destroyed and Chinese suffered very heavy casualties. The artillery duel thereafter carried on day and night. For the next three days, the Chinese were taught a lesson. On 14 September, Chinese threatened to use the Air Force if shelling did not stop. But by then the lesson had been driven home and an uneasy ceasefire came about. Dead bodies were exchanged on 15 September, 1962.

The situation again flared up twenty days later when on 1 October 1967, a face-off between India and China took place at Chola, another pass on the Sikkim-Tibet border a few kilometres north of Nathu La. On 1st October 1967, some Indian soldiers and their Chinese counterparts had an argument over the control of a boulder at the Chola outpost in Sikkim (then an Indian protectorate). Skirmish began after that triggering a fight that escalated to a mortar and heavy machine duel. Despite initial casualties, the Indians stood firm and on 10th October 1967 forced the Chinese to withdraw nearly three kilometres away to a feature named Kam Barracks where they remain deployed till date. According to the Indian sources, during both the conflict 88 Indians were dead and 163 wounded, while the Chinese casualties were 340 killed and 450 wounded.

"In 1967, Congress Party won the elections and returned to power with shrunken majority at the Centre. Tense situation at the Actual Line of Control, deadlock in Sino-Indian relations at diplomatic front, forced the leader of the ruling party to visualize the importance

of China. Owing to this situation, Government realized that it would be in India's interest to give up its rigid insistence on the Colombo Proposal and inject some flexibility in the situation. On 1st January, 1969, Mrs. Indira Gandhi at a press conference disclosed that the Government was prepared to 'try and find' a way of solving the dispute with China without insisting on its acceptance of the Colombo proposals as a precondition.

However, China did not respond to Indira Gandhi's offer for negotiations on border problem. In late 1970, informal diplomatic contacts between Indian and Chinese diplomats were established. Meanwhile, Indian attempts at rapprochement were brushed off by the turmoil of East Pakistan. India continued her efforts towards 'normalization' by explaining the situation in East Pakistan to China through its mission in Peking which ultimately resulted in less critical stand of China on East Pakistan problem. China invited India to participate in Afro-Asian Table Tennis Tournament which was scheduled to be held in November, 1971 at Peking. As a part of this gesture towards improving relations, India removed the Police Post maintained outside the Chinese Embassy. On 25th October, 1971, U.N.O. granted admission to China in the Security Council. India congratulated and expressed the hope that cooperation between India and China in the world body would lead to peace and progress in Asia. During the Indo-Pak war of 1971, China was less critical of India than in 1965 war. India's attempts were not in vain because Chinese were responding slowly and steadily towards normalization. Fresh efforts were not made to consolidate relations till the Janata Government came to power in 1977. Janata Government made a good beginning to improve India's relations with China. In that direction, the foreign Minister Mr. Atal Behari Vajpai visited China, but at the same time, China attacked Vietnam. Mr Vajpai reacted very sharply and left China without any discussion. After that no fresh efforts were made by India to improve her relationship with China.

After the death of Mao, China started reassessing its foreign policy of the Maoist era. Political power again changed in India in

1980 and Mrs. Indira Gandhi regained power as a Prime Minister and renewed efforts to improve India's relations with China."⁶⁸

(ii) 1980s – Border Negotiations and The Sumdorong Chu Valley incident (Map 2)

In June 1981 the Chinese Foreign Minister Mr. Huang Hua came to India for two days meeting with Mrs. Gandhi (Prime Minister) and Mr. Narasimha Rao, the Minister of External Affairs. During his visit no specific agenda was announced, but the two sides expressed common aspirations for the settlement of the Sino-Indian border problem and the development of relations between the two countries. After the Huang visit, India and China held eight rounds of border negotiations between December 1981 and November 1987.

(a) First Official Level Border Talk After 1962

"The First official level border talks were held in Beijing from 10th to 14th December, 1981. During the discussion, China offered a 'package deal' (Chinese recognition of the McMahon Line in the eastern sector in return for Indian acceptance of the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the western sector) as a solution to the border problem which India straightaway rejected and stressed 'sector-wise examination' as against the Chinese proposal. China thereafter suggested that the border issue be frozen and progress can be made in the fields of Science and Technology, trade, socio-cultural exchanges etc. India accepted this suggestion on the condition that while proceeding towards cooperation, at the same time, an attempt should also be made for settling the border problem. India rejected the offer of keeping the crucial border issue 'frozen'. Though the first official level talks failed to yield an acceptable solution, both the countries were determined to sign an agreement and also agreed to continue their efforts to resolve their differences on the 'boundary issue.

(b) Second Round of Border Talks

From 12th to 20th May, 1982, the second round of border talks was held at New Delhi. During the talks, the Chinese proposed that

they were willing to accept the present 'Line of Actual Control' in the Western and Eastern Sectors as a boundary as a solution to the border problem. India again rejected the proposal stating that it was nothing but the reiteration of the 'package deal' in different language. It meant that the Chinese had made no progress beyond the package plan. India reiterated its stand that the solution to the 'border problem' has to be found from beyond the package deal. Chinese very seriously and sincerely expressed their desire to resolve the border question at the earliest. During the discussion, both the parties suggested a set of guiding principles as a basis for Sino-Indian dialogue. Both the sides tried to narrow down their differences but no breakthrough was possible.

(c) Third Round of Border Talks

The third round of official border talks was held from 28th January to 2nd February, 1983 at Beijing. During the talks both sides repeated earlier and known positions. For instance, India raised the Colombo proposal to counter the Chinese five principles which they suggested during the second round of border talks as a basis for dialogue on solution of the border problem. India's position was that it would discuss the legality of the case as the legal positions of the two sides had been fairly well documented in the official reports of 1960. The Indian side was willing to make sure that it would seek some common ground without abandoning its legal position. At the conclusion of the talks, it was said, 'both sides were positive in their attitude in negotiation on the boundary questions and the air was friendly.' However, no progress was made towards the settlement of the border problem.

(d) Fourth Round of Border Talks

The fourth round was held at New Delhi from 25th to 30th October, 1983. India had adopted a new approach namely, to proceed with normalization in other spheres without permitting the border dispute to obstruct the process of normalization. It indicated willingness to compromise on part of India and thus this round enhanced the exchange in the field of media, arts, science and trade sectors.

Chinese agreed with the Indian proposal of sector-wise examination of the border dispute for a comprehensive settlement on the basis of maps, historical usage, records, old claims, and legal and actual positions of the respective armed forces on ground. It was thus agreed that both sides will refrain from using force in the settlement of this issue. An attempt was also made to bridge the wide distance that separated the basic negotiating positions of two sides. This round proved fruitful and indicated a measure of compromise on both sides, more so on part of China. This development introduced both flexibility and purpose into the border talks without which they would have reached a dead end.

(e) Fifth Round of Border Talks

The fifth round was held at Beijing from 17th to 22nd September, 1984. During the talks, attempts were made to find words and phrases more acceptable to both e.g. India asked for recognition of the legitimate interest of both the countries which China rejected. Chinese objected because they thought legitimate implied legalistic which could, according to the Chinese, be misinterpreted by India who may insist on recognition of the McMahon Line. Contact had been made at high political level and the Chinese renewed their invitation to Mrs. Gandhi to visit Beijing. They were determined to make all possible efforts to achieve at the earliest, a solution of the 'border problems' and at the end of the Fifth round, declared that the 'differences had been narrowed down'. During this Round, China was prepared to settle dispute along the McMahon Line in the Eastern Sector with 'minor' concessions by India and discussed in detail the modalities but subsequently domestic politics led to an abandonment of this proposal, as Mrs. Gandhi was concerned about the forthcoming elections in 1985. Mrs. Gandhi did not wish to give an impression of India bargaining from a position of weakness. Thus India lost an opportunity to settle her crucial border dispute with 'minor' adjustment with China on account of 'political prestige'.

(f) Sixth Round of Border Talks

The sixth round of border talk was held in New Delhi from 4th

to 10th November, 1985. It was in many ways a negative turning point. Adopting a sector by sector approach, both sides explained their respective positions on the Eastern Sector. The Chinese side made a serious study of their historical claims south of the McMahon Line on the basis of the Chang dynasty records and they became more vocal about their claims in the Eastern Sector. The leader of the Chinese delegation once again offered a 'package deal' and described it as compromise settlement which was both just and fair. There was no counter proposal by the Indian side.

During the Sixth round, China introduced a new element i.e. demand for territorial concession by India in the Eastern Sector and showed no flexibility in the Western Sector from her side. It declared that the Eastern Sector is the biggest disputed territory and the Indians are in occupation of as much as 90,000 square miles of Chinese territory. It appeared to convey the message that they would cast off the negotiations if the Indians adopted an uncompromising attitude in the Western Sector (Aksai-Chin) for the settlement of the border problem. Thus instead of expecting progress, it brought both the sides back to square one.

(g) Seventh Round of Border Talks

The Seventh Round was held from 21st to 23rd July, 1986 in Beijing. Sumdorong Chu Valley incident was discussed in detail. During the discussions, India claimed that in mid June, 1986. Chinese personnel had intruded 7 kilometers in Sumdorong Chu Valley area of Arunachal Pradesh. China claimed that the area already belonged to them and there was no question of intruding in the Indian Territory by the Chinese personnel. The Sumdorong Chu Valley incident had clouded the Seventh round of Border Talk and the relations between the two countries were governed by acrimony, tension and drift and brought China and India very close to a major military clash after 25 years.

(h) Eighth Round of Border Talks

From 16th to 18th November, 1987, the Eighth Round of talks was held at New Delhi. During the Talks, the following points were

discussed:-

(1) Both the sides restressed the urgency to prevent military confrontation.

(2) Issues regarding economic cooperation and trade were discussed.

(3) Border issues including maintenance of peace and tranquility at the border area.

This Eighth Round of border talk ended without yielding an acceptable solution of the border issue. The Eighth Round of the border talk also failed to yield an acceptable solution because of differing views, opinions and stands towards the settlement of border issue.” **Pages 104-111, India-China Border Dispute: A Case Study of the Eastern Sector** By M. L. Sal

After her return to power again in 1980, Indira Gandhi ordered a general review of India’s security plans. In 1982-83, she approved a plan submitted by the Chief of the Army Staff, General K.V. Krishna Rao, to upgrade the sporadic deployment of forces along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Since the late 1960s, India had developed an elaborate plan to defend the Himalayan frontier with China. This involved the provision of screening defences at the LAC and the building of strong defence nodes at key points along the frontier. By the early 1980s, the nodes were not completed and the roads connecting these nodes were not built. Because of this Indira Gandhi took the decision to resume the construction of defence infrastructure in these areas.

Since 1962, India had not returned to the site of its major defeat — the Namka Chu (an east-west running stream which separates the Thag La and the Hathung La ridge to its south). However, after the 1980 review, it was decided by the military strategists that it is important to defend Tawang in a future conflict. The army made it clear that the only viable line of defence for Tawang would be along the Hathung La ridge (Map 6). In 1983, an Intelligence Bureau team went to the pasturage of Sumdorong Chu (Map 2) which is north-

east of the confluence of the Namka Chu and Nyamjiang Chu (Map 2). The defence forces stayed through the summer and returned in winter. This procedure was followed for two years. To their surprise in 1986, Indian forces found that the Chinese had preceded them and set up a semi-permanent structure there.

In Feb 1986, General K. Sundarji was appointed as the new Chief of Army Staff, who in fact was determined to press the decisions taken by General Krishna Rao. In addition, Sundarji sought government permission to conduct an exercise named Operation Chequerboard to see how quickly troops based in the Assam plains could take up their positions on the Sino-Indian border. As part of the exercise, towards the end of the year, the army landed a brigade of troops at Zimithaung, south of Hathung La using its new heavy lift MI-26 helicopters. These forces occupied the Hathung La, across the Namka Chu from Thag La. All this alarmed the Chinese forces in the region; they responded with alacrity and moved up their forces to take up positions all along the LAC. At points near this area — Sulu La, Bum La, etc. the troops were face to face with their Indian counterparts. This caused concerns for Sino-Indian clashes and brought China and India very close to a major military clash after 25 years. However, the forces did not engage in combat. By the summer of 1987, however, both sides backed away from conflict and denied that military clashes had taken place.

On 20th February 1987, India granted statehood to Arunachal Pradesh, which was an area claimed by China but administered by India. The Chinese government proceeded to protest. The military movements in Tawang, taken in conjunction with this political action were seen by the Chinese as provocative. To normalize the situation Indian Foreign Minister N.D. Tiwari arrived in Beijing in May 1987 en route to Pyongyang, North Korea. He carried with him messages from Indian leaders that there was no intention on New Delhi's part to aggravate the situation. The first formal flag meeting to discuss 'the freezing of the situation' since 1962, was held on 5th August 1987 at Bum La. Both sides decided to take up talks with renewed

urgency and the following year, Rajiv Gandhi visited Beijing.

Warming trends in relations were facilitated by Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in December 1988. The two sides issued a joint communiqué that stressed the need to restore friendly relations on the basis of the Panchsheel and noted the importance of the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to China since Nehru's 1954 visit. India and China agreed to broaden bilateral ties in various areas and agreed to achieve a "fair and reasonable settlement while seeking a mutually acceptable solution" to the border dispute. The communiqué also expressed China's concern about agitation by Tibetan separatists in India and reiterated China's position that Tibet was an integral part of China and that the anti-Chinese political activities by expatriate Tibetans were not to be tolerated. Rajiv Gandhi signed bilateral agreements on science and technological co-operation, on civil aviation to establish direct air links and on cultural exchanges. The two sides also agreed to hold annual diplomatic consultations between foreign ministers and to set up a joint ministerial committee on economic and scientific co-operation and a joint working group on the boundary issue. The latter group was to be led by the Indian foreign secretary and the Chinese vice minister for foreign affairs.

(iii) The 1990s

As the mid-1990s approached, slow but steady improvement in relations with China was visible. Top-level dialogue continued with the December 1991 visit of the Chinese Premier Li Peng to India and the May 1992 visit to China by the Indian President R. Venkataraman. Six rounds of talks of the Indian-Chinese Joint Working Group on the Border Issue were held between December 1988 and June 1993. Progress was made in reducing tensions on the border via confidence-building measures, including mutual troop reductions, regular meetings of local military commanders and advance notification of military exercises. Border trade resumed in July 1992 after a hiatus of more than thirty years, consulates reopened in Bombay (Mumbai) and Shanghai in December 1992 and in June 1993, the two sides

agreed to open an additional border trading post. During Sharad Pawar's July 1992 visit to Beijing, the first ever by an Indian minister of defence, the two countries agreed to develop academic, military, scientific and technological exchanges.

Substantial movement in relations continued in 1993. The sixth-round of joint working group talks were held in June in New Delhi but resulted only in minor developments. However, as the year progressed the long-standing border dispute was eased as a result of bilateral pledges to reduce troop levels and to respect the cease-fire line along the India-China border. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Premier Li Peng signed the border agreement and three other agreements, primarily dealing with cross-border trade and an increased cooperation on environmental issues, e.g. pollution, animal extinction, global warming, etc. A senior-level Chinese military delegation made a six-day goodwill visit to India in December 1993 which aimed at "fostering confidence-building measures between the defence forces of the two countries." The visit, however, came at a time when press reports revealed that, as a result of improved relations between the China and Burma, China was exporting greater amounts of military materiel to Burma's army, navy and air force and sending an increasing number of technicians to Burma. India got alert and concerned when the news came of the presence of the Chinese radar technicians in Burma's Coco Islands, which borders India's Union Territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Nevertheless, movement continued in 1994 on troop reductions along the Himalayan frontier. Moreover, in January 1994 Beijing announced that it not only favoured a negotiated solution on Kashmir, but is also opposed to any form of independence for the region.

Talks between the Chinese and the Indian diplomats were held in New Delhi in February 1994. The talks aimed at confirming established "confidence-building measures", clarification of the "line of actual control", reduction of armed forces along the line and prior information about forthcoming military exercises. During the talks China's hope for settlement of the boundary issue was reiterated.

The 1993 Chinese military visit to India was reciprocated by, General B. C. Joshi, Chief of Army Staff in July 1994. During the talks in Beijing, the two sides agreed that border problems should be resolved peacefully through “mutual understanding and concessions.” The border issue was again raised in September 1994 when the Chinese minister of national defence, Chi Haotian visited New Delhi for extensive talks with high-level Indian trade and defence officials. Further talks in New Delhi in March 1995 by the India-China Expert Group led to an agreement to set up two additional points of contact along the 4,000 km border to facilitate meetings between the military personals. The two sides were also “seriously engaged” in defining the McMahon Line and the line of actual control. Talks in Beijing in July 1995 aimed at better border security and combating cross-border crimes and the talks in New Delhi in August 1995 on additional troop withdrawals from the border made further progress in reducing tensions.

Sino-Indian relations hit a low point in 1998 following India’s nuclear tests in May 1998. Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes declared that “China is India’s number one threat”, hinting that India developed nuclear weapons in defence against China’s nuclear arsenal. In 1998, China was one of the strongest international critics of India’s nuclear tests and entry into the nuclear club. During the 1999 Kargil War China voiced support for Pakistan, but also counselled Pakistan to withdraw its forces.

(iv) The 2000s

The Indian President K. R. Narayanan’s visit to China in May, 2000, marked a gradual re-engagement of the Indian and the Chinese diplomacy. In a major embarrassment for China, Ugyen Trinley Dorje, who was proclaimed by China as the 17th Karmapa, made a dramatic escape from Tibet to the Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim. Chinese officials were in a quandary on this issue as any protest to India on the issue would mean an explicit endorsement on India’s governance of Sikkim, which the Chinese still hadn’t recognised. In 2002, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji visited India, with a focus on economic issues.

The year 2003 ushered in a marked improvement in Sino-Indian relations following Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's landmark visit to China in June 2003. In 2003 China officially recognised Indian sovereignty over Sikkim as the two nations moved towards resolving their border disputes.

The year 2004 witnessed a gradual improvement in the international area when the two countries proposed opening up the Nathula and Jeleppla Passes in Sikkim which would be mutually beneficial to both the countries. In April 2005, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited Bangalore to push for increased Sino-Indian cooperation in the field of high-tech industries. In a speech, Wen stated that "Cooperation is just like two pagodas (temples), one hardware and one software. Combined, we can take the leadership position in the world." Wen stated that the 21st century will be "the Asian century of the IT industry." The high-level visit witnessed several agreements which were conducive in deepening the political, cultural and economic ties between the two nations. Regarding the issue of India gaining a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, Wen Jiabao initially seemed to support the idea, but returned to a neutral position on the subject by the time he returned to China. In the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit (2005) China was granted an observer status.

A very important dimension of the evolving Sino-Indian relationship was based on the energy requirements of their industrial expansion and their readiness to proactively secure them by investing in the oilfields abroad i.e., in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. On the one hand, these ventures entail competition (which has been evident in oil biddings for various international projects recently), but on the other hand, a degree of cooperation too is visible, as they are increasingly confronting bigger players in the global oil market. This cooperation was sealed in Beijing on 12 January 2006 during the visit of Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, who signed an agreement which envisaged ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) and the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) placing joint bids for promising projects.

On July 6, 2006, China and India re-opened Nathula, an ancient trade route which was part of the Silk Road. Nathula is a pass through the Himalayas in the Sikkim region and was closed for 44 years. The initial agreement for the re-opening of the trade route was reached in 2003, and a final agreement was formalised on June 18, 2006. In November 2006, China and India had a verbal spat over the claim of the north-east Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. India claimed that China was occupying 38,000 square kilometres of its territory in Kashmir, while China claimed the whole of Arunachal Pradesh as part of the Autonomous Region of Tibet. In May 2007, China denied the application for visa from an Indian Administrative Service officer in Arunachal Pradesh. According to China, since Arunachal Pradesh is a territory of China, he would not need a visa to visit his own country. Later in December 2007, China appeared to have reversed its policy by granting a visa to Marpe Sora, an Arunachal born professor in computer science. In January 2008, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited China and met with the Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao and had bilateral discussions related to trade, commerce, defence, military and various other issues.

Until 2008 the British Government's position remained the same as had been since the Simla Accord of 1913: that China held suzerainty over Tibet but not sovereignty. Britain revised this view on 29th October 2008, when it recognised Chinese sovereignty over Tibet by issuing a statement on its website. The Economist stated that although the British Foreign Office's website does not use the word sovereignty but officials at the Foreign Office said "it means that, as far as Britain is concerned, Tibet is part of China."

In October 2009, Asian Development Bank formally acknowledged Arunachal Pradesh as part of India and approved a loan to India for a development project there. Earlier China had exercised pressure on the bank to cease the loan, however India succeeded in securing the loan with the help of the United States and Japan. China expressed displeasure at ADB for this.

(v) The 2010s

From 15th to 17th December 2010 the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao paid an official visit to India at the invitation of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. He was accompanied by 400 Chinese business leaders, who wished to sign business deals with the Indian companies. In April 2011, during the BRICS summit in Sanya (China), the two countries agreed to restore defence co-operation and China hinted that it may reverse its policy of administering stapled visas to the residents of Jammu and Kashmir state. This practice was later stopped, and as a result, defence ties were resumed between the two nations and joint military drills were expected.

It was reported in February 2012 that India will reach US\$100 billion trade with China by 2015. Bilateral trade between the two countries reached US\$73 billion in 2011, making China India's largest trade partner, but slipped to US\$66 billion in 2012.

In the 2012 BRICS summit in New Delhi, the Chinese President Hu Jintao told Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that "it is China's unswerving policy to develop Sino-Indian friendship, deepen strategic cooperation and seek common development" and "China hopes to see a peaceful, prosperous and continually developing India and is committed to building more dynamic China-India relationship". Other topics discussed including border dispute problems and a unified BRICS central bank. In response to India's test of a missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead to Beijing, China called for the two countries to "cherish the hard-earned momentum of co-operation".

A three-week standoff between the Chinese and the Indian troops in close proximity to each other in Jammu and Kashmir's Ladakh region was defused on 5 May 2013, days before a trip by Indian Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid to China. Khurshid in a press conference said that both the countries have the understanding that the border issue will not exacerbate or destroy the long-term progress in the relationships between the two countries.

The Chinese agreed to withdraw their troops in exchange for an Indian agreement to demolish several “live-in bunkers” in the Chumar sector.

Following Khurshid’s visit to China, the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang made his first foreign visit to India on 18 May 2013 in a bid to resolve border disputes and to stimulate economic relations. According to Mr. Li, there were three main reasons for his visit. First was to increase diplomatic co-operation, second to cement relations in trade and other areas and third to formulate strategy for common prosperous future.

From 17th to 19th September 2014, the Chinese President Xi Jinping, visited India. The Highlights of the meetings between the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Xi-Jingping are as follows:

(i) India and China signed 12 agreements, regarding transfer of technology, communications, defence etc.

(ii) China committed investments worth \$20 billion in India over the next five years.

(iii) Opening of a new road to Kailash Mansarovar via Nathula was agreed upon by President Xi Jinping and PM Modi.

(iv) India and China decided to initiate talks on civil nuclear cooperation.

(v) Clarity on the Line of Actual Control and the boundary question to be resolved soon.

(vi) China will set up one industrial park in Gujarat and another in Maharashtra.

During the Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit on September 17, a fresh transgression by the Chinese army was reported in the Ladakh region. According to the local officials China was objecting to the construction of an irrigation canal in the disputed area of Demchok, which lies 600 metres from the Line of Actual Control - the de facto border between the two countries. More than 200 soldiers of the People’s Liberation Army entered what India considered its territory. The stand-off in the disputed region of Ladakh began just prior to Xi’s arrival in India on 18th September. PLA troops crossed

the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that separates Indian and Chinese-controlled territory. The PLA troops were met by Indian forces; at the height of the stand-off, each side had about 1,000 troops in the area.

The stand-off continued until 26 September, when Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, met on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. After the meeting Swaraj told reporters that, "Both nations sat down and resolved it." The two sides agreed to withdraw their troops to their previous positions on either side of the LAC. Withdrawals began on September 26 and were wrapped up by 30th September. China's Foreign Ministry confirmed that the process had been completed as planned. "On 30th September, the frontier defence troops of the two countries completed simultaneous withdrawal according to the steps formulated by the two sides and restored peace and tranquillity in the area," the foreign ministry stated in a press release.

During 17th and 18th October, 2014 diplomatic level talks were held between the Chinese and the Indian diplomats. During the talks they discussed ways to prevent border incursions and reached a consensus on early implementation of several CBMs. After the talks, the external affairs ministry said the confidence building measures (CBMs) included regular interaction between the Army headquarters and field commands of the two sides, additional border personnel meeting points and more telecommunication linkages between forward posts of the two sides at mutually agreed locations. Held under the framework of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs, the talks focussed on issues pertaining to the maintenance of peace and tranquillity on the border. "These measures are expected to assist in the timely and effective management of the situations that may arise on the border," the ministry said and maintained that the talks were held in a frank and constructive manner.

(vi) Prime Minister Modi's China Visit

From 14th-16th May, 2015 Prime Minister Narendra Modi made

his maiden visit to the Peoples Republic of China. Although the two countries failed to get any breakthrough regarding the border dispute but Modi's visit to China was hailed as a great success in nearly every quarter of the country. Regarding the border the Prime Minister said that India and China must try to settle the boundary question quickly. The Prime Minister further said, "We both (Modi and Jinping) realize that this is history's legacy. India and China should settle boundary question quickly and without any prejudice."

The Prime Minister said, "Geography and history tell us that the dream of an interconnected Asia will only be successful when India and China work together. Asia's re-emergence is leading to a multi-polar world that we both welcome. But, it is also an unpredictable and complex environment of shifting equations. We must ensure that our relationships with other countries do not become a source of concern for each other." Further Modi tweeted, "Indo-Chinese partnership should and will flourish. And let us work together in mutual interest and for progress and prosperity of our great countries." In apparent reference to Pakistan, Prime Minister Modi said that both India and China face terrorism for which the source is in the same region.

After meeting with the Chinese President Xi Jinping in Xian and Prime Minister Li Keqiang in Beijing India and China signed a record 24 bilateral agreement worth over \$10 billion. On 15th May diplomats from India and China held bilateral talks in Beijing in presence of Prime Minister Modi and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang. The main highlights of the joint statement issued after the bilateral talks are as follows:

(i) Strengthening Political Dialogue and Strategic Communication

(ii) Enhancing communication through frequent exchanges at the leadership level.

(iii) To established a new Indian Consulate General in Chengdu and a Chinese one in Chennai.

(iv) The two sides affirmed that an early settlement of the

boundary question serves the basic interests of the two countries and should be pursued as a strategic objective by the two governments. Bearing in mind the overall bilateral relations and the long-term interests of the two peoples, the two sides are determined to actively seek a political settlement of the boundary question. They made a positive assessment of the important progress made through the mechanism of the Special Representatives, and reaffirmed the commitment to abide by the three-stage process for the settlement of the boundary question, and continuously push forward negotiation on the framework for a boundary settlement based on the outcomes and common understanding achieved so far, in an effort to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution as early as possible.

(v) The two sides will resolve outstanding differences, including the boundary question, in a proactive manner.

(vi) Cooperation on pharmaceutical field, stronger links between Indian IT companies and Chinese enterprises, and increasing services trade in tourism, films, healthcare, IT and logistics.

(vii) Cultural and people-to-people exchanges by establishing provincial partnerships.

(viii) The two sides agreed to hold negotiation on augmenting the list of traded commodities, and expand border trade at Nathu La and Shipki La.

(ix) The two sides agreed to work together with relevant parties to accelerate the preparation for establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to promote regional infrastructure and economic development.

On 16th May Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Indian community in Shanghai. His speech to the Indian Diaspora in China was energizing. He pleaded to the Indians living in China to help him to reduce the Trust Deficit between the Chinese and the Indian community. In short Modi's visit to China is seen as a positive step by both the countries in solving the long standing border issue and the re-emergence of the Asia in the global world forum.

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MAP 1



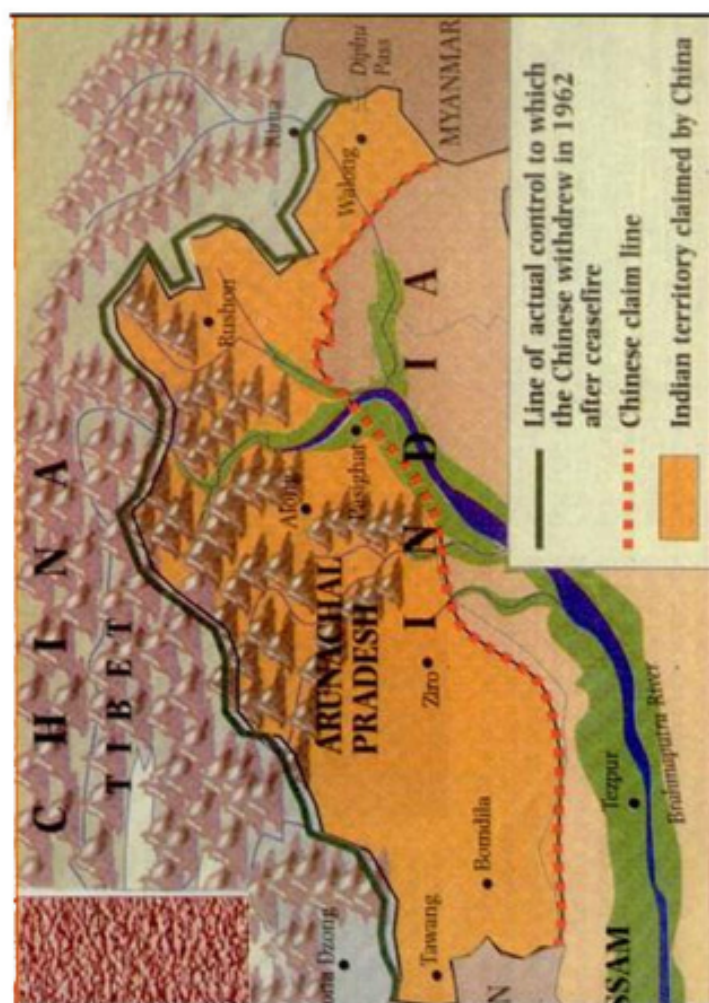
The Battle of NEFA

Source: *India's China war*, Neville Maxwell, Natraj publishers, Dehra Dun, 2013

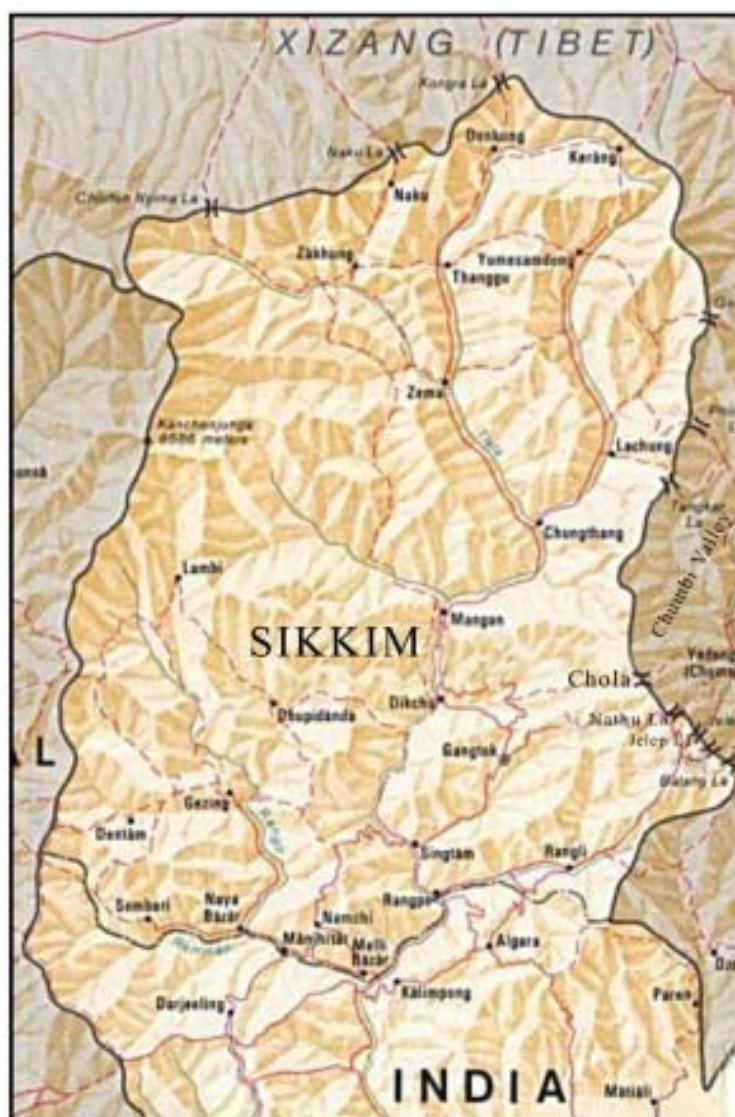
MAP 2 The Tawang Tract



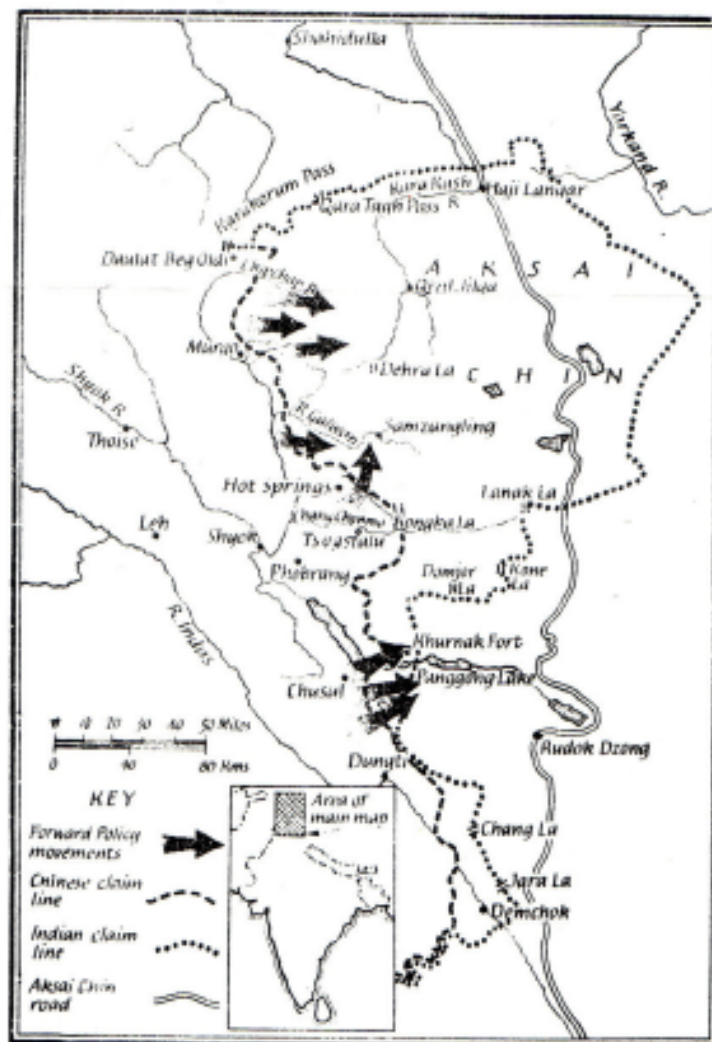
MAP 3 Chinese Ceasefire Line in 1962



MAP 4 Nathu La and Chola

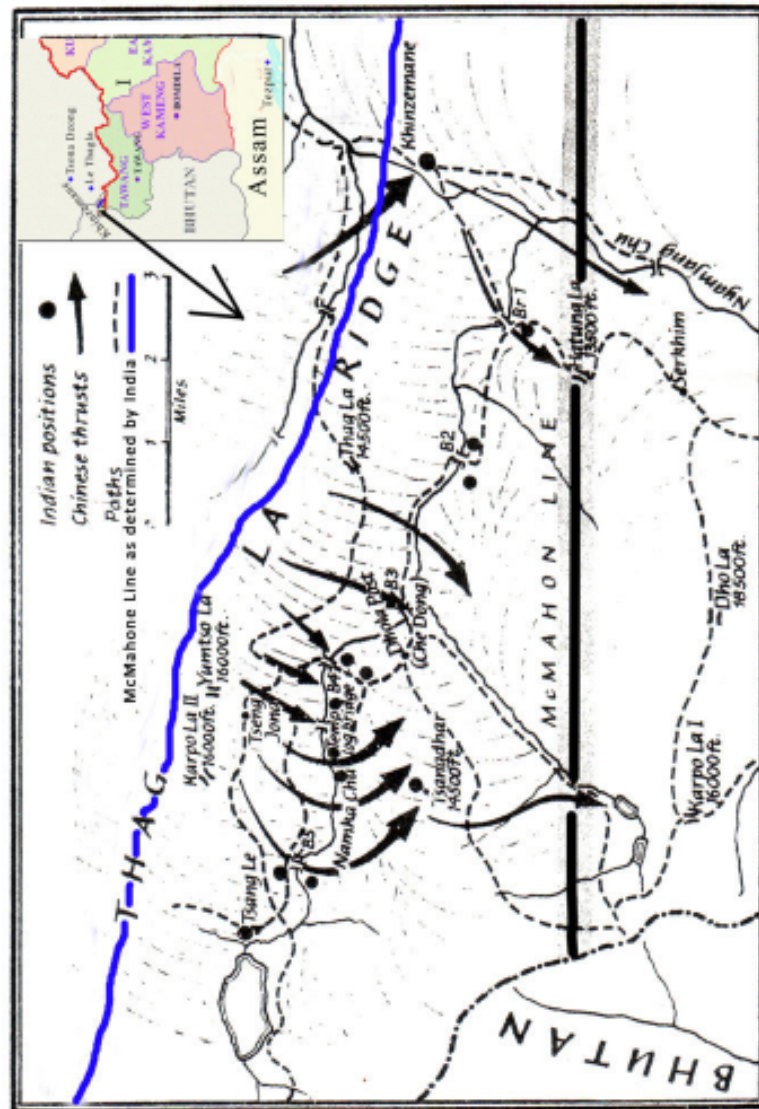


MAP 5
India's Forward Policy in the Western Sector

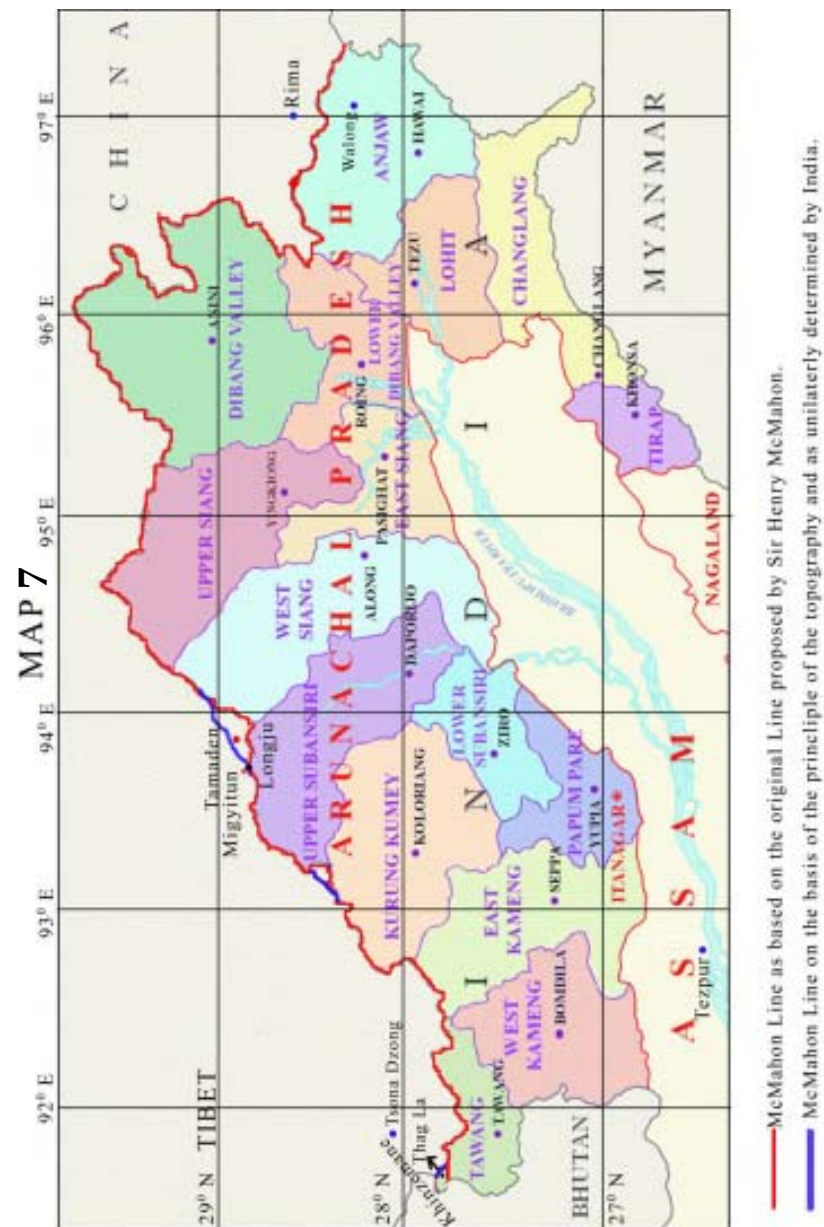


Source: India's China war, Neville Maxwell, Natraj publishers, Dehra Dun, 2013

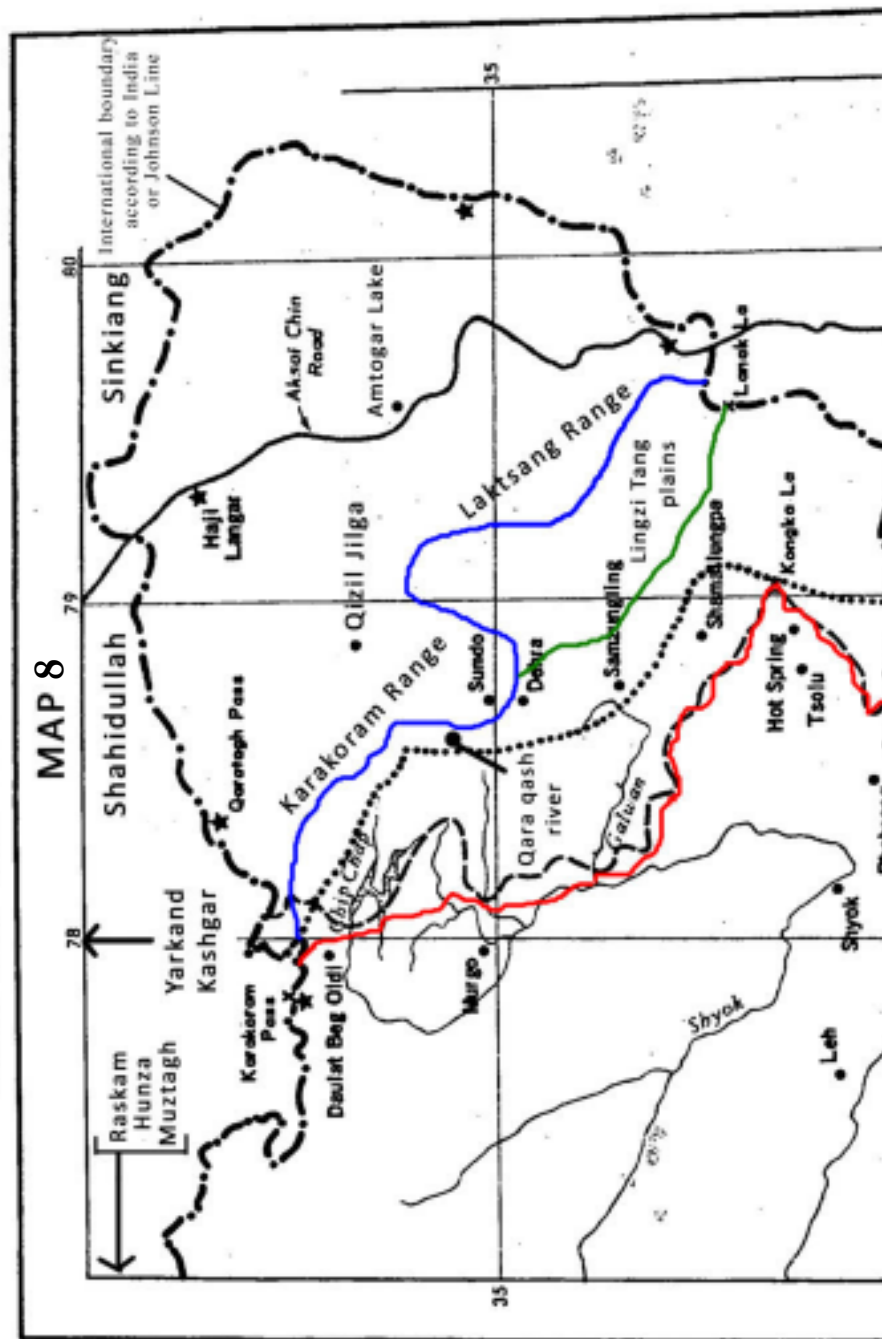
MAP 6 The Battle of Thag La Ridge

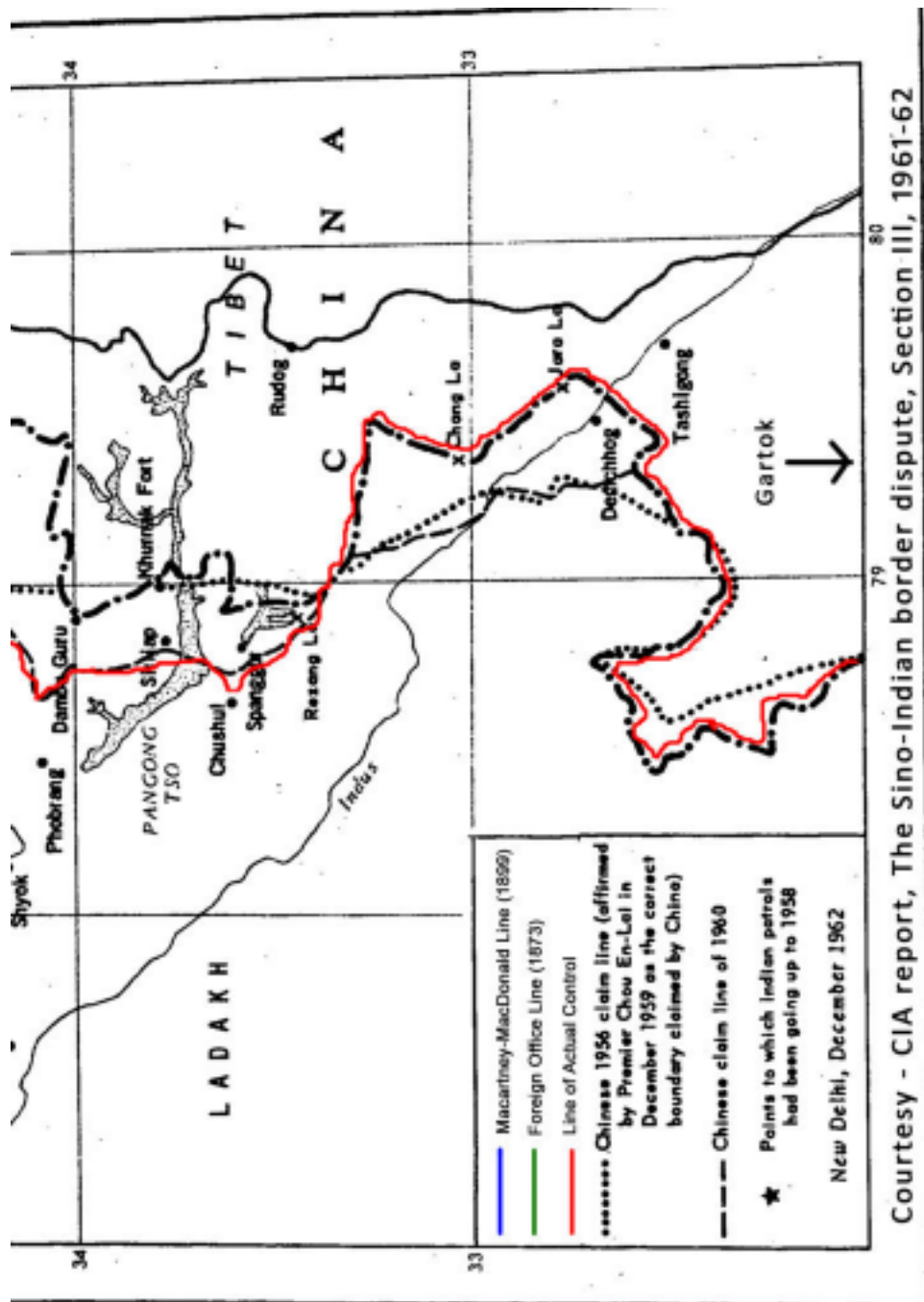


Source: *India's China war*, Neville Maxwell, Natraj publishers, Dehra Dun, 2013



SINO-INDIAN BORDER
Chinese Claim 'Lines' of 1956 and 1960 in the Western Sector





“Again and again, military men have seen themselves hurled into war by the ambitions, passions and blunders of civilian governments, almost wholly uninformed as to the limits of their military potential and almost recklessly indifferent to the military requirement of the war they let loose.

– Alfred Vagts”

India's China War by Neville Maxwell, p.329

“It was a game of Russian roulette, but the highest authorities of India seemed to feel that the one shot in the cylinder was a blank. Unfortunately for them and for the country it was not so. The cylinder was fully loaded.

– General J. N. Chaudhuri”

India's China War by Neville Maxwell, p.189