

TIBET AND PREMIER NEHRU

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THE abortive rebellion of the Tibetan serf-owners has turned into its opposite. Aimed at perpetuating feudal rule under foreign protection, it has accelerated the ending of feudalism in Tibet and removed the possibility of foreign interference in that region of China.

These things follow inevitably from the defeat of the rebels. Out of the farmland and livestock herds in area under the Dalai Lama Group, about 40 per cent are owned by the Kashag—the rebel local government. The remainder is about equally split between lamaseries and lay aristocracy. All Tibetan serfs, agricultural and pastoral, spend about two-thirds of their working time labouring for the ruling caste, apart from various *corvée* labour. An immediate result of the rebel defeat is that serfs formerly tied to the land and herds of the biggest rebels have been told that in future they themselves will enjoy the fruits of their work on those vast estates. Overnight these serfs have become free and—in Tibetan terms—rich. This will have a tremendous impact as the news spreads.

Those who think that rebel control of the Dalai Lama in India can be used as a bargaining counter to delay reform are deluding themselves. On the contrary, the self-imposed exile of rebels who have delayed reform for the past eight years leaves a social vacuum in which the swift liquidation of feudalism has begun and must spread. Those nobles who are willing to help the wheel of history turn, free their serfs and co-operate in developing Tibet's vast resources for the benefit of all Tibetans, will be adequately compensated for loss of their feudal privileges, as Chinese capitalists have been compensated. The cost of buying out the Tibetan aristocracy will be borne by the central authorities as with serf- and slave-owners in other minority areas I have visited. This is both just and necessary if both serfs and serf-owners are to escape, without destructive class conflict, from the bonds which have held them mutually dependent so long. As leader of the movement for peaceful reform, the Dalai Lama could play a valuable part: his absence will not impede it.

As the facts of the Tibetan situation clarify, it can be seen that some leading Indians, not excluding Prime Minister Nehru, have done a good deal to confuse world opinion, and have lent them-

selves to what the Calcutta paper *Swadhinata* described as 'a stupendous international deception'. Washington gave notice of its intention to preserve a 'strategic silence' over Tibet while encouraging Asians into anti-Chinese activities. Thus warned, the experienced Nehru could hardly have fallen into their trap; it might rather be said that he walked in. Rarely does a public figure so compromise himself as Nehru did by publicly casting doubts, without a scrap of evidence, on the Chinese Government's report that the Dalai Lama had written three letters appealing for help to get out of the hands of the rebels who were endangering his life. Nehru had to eat his words. While insisting that India must maintain friendship with China and that Tibet was an internal Chinese affair, the Indian Prime Minister still tried to instruct the Chinese how to deal with the situation and also spread the self-contradictory propaganda of the rebels in irascible and superior tones. As the Dalai Lama's three letters showed, as every student of Tibetan affairs believes, the Dalai Lama is powerless in the hands of his top feudal 'advisors', one of whom killed the Dalai's own father. By saying that the Dalai is 'free to go where he likes', Nehru is actually asserting that the young captive is really the leader of the rebellion. If that were so, surely it was most improper for the Indian Prime Minister to arrange such a welcome and pay a personal visit to the leader of a rebellion against a friendly neighbour.

Another example of Nehru wanting to have his cake and eat it was his statement that the Chinese Government had not respected Tibetan autonomy. He unwittingly contradicted himself by also stating that the Khamba revolt had been continuing for three years. But the People's Liberation Army put down the all-out rebellion in a few days; and the Khamba incidents were protracted precisely because the Chinese respected Tibetan autonomy and asked the Kashag (the rebels) to put down the Khamba bandits. The Kashag of course actually used its autonomy to mobilise the Khambas. If there was no respect for autonomy, why were there no reforms in Tibet? When I met the young Dalai Lama in Lhasa in 1955 he told me: 'I have come to the firm conviction that the brilliant prospects for the Chinese people as a whole are also the prospects for the Tibetan people; the path of the entire country is our path and no other'. The following year in India he told Nehru that he favoured reforms in Tibet. In his recent talk he told Nehru the same thing again. Not even the rebels dare force the Dalai into the intransigent position of publicly denying the need for reforms in Tibet. But still the reforms which freed China's millions and

gave the land to the tillers, by-passed Tibet. Nehru knows all this; he knows that only a minority even of the Tibetan nobles joined the rebellion; he knows that China exercised the greatest patience trying to win over the Tibetan nobility to policies which would gradually ameliorate the lives of the serfs under one of the most backward savage feudal systems left on earth. He knows, too, how difficult such a policy is.

When he was fighting British imperialism, Nehru said:

Economic interests shape the political views of groups and classes. Neither reason nor moral considerations over-ride these interests. Individuals may be converted, they may surrender their special privileges, although this is rare enough, but classes and groups do not do so.

That was Nehru writing in a British gaol. Now the leader of capitalist India, his political views are shaped by economic interests too. Nehru exactly mirrors his time: the duality of Indian capitalist interests confronting the aspirations of the mass of the poverty-stricken Indians for a better life. Recently free from British imperialism, desirous of developing their national economy, Indian capitalists are still capitalists in an age of moribund capitalism, still tied by countless bonds to imperialism, still relying on foreign capital. Capitalist India's major interests certainly demand friendship and trade with socialist China, but India's leaders fear the effect on India's peasants and workers of the great leap forward in economy and culture brought by socialism in China.

Nehru tries to convince Asians that the Indian way—'Democratic Socialism'—is better than the Chinese way. He has undertaken no easy task. India needs one million tons of grain extra each year, merely to maintain at its present near-starvation level her population increase. Last year's harvest was seven million tons lower than the previous year, whilst in similar drought conditions China doubled her harvest from one hundred and eighty-five to three hundred and seventy-five million tons. It is no accident that the Indian Foodgrains Enquiry Committee sidestepped the issue of land reform—it was under the Praja 'Socialist', Mehta, now pacesetter in the campaign of vilification of China.

But Nehru has said that India has every desire to maintain friendship with China and that Tibet is China's affair. China has said that her basic interests are the same as India's. Harmony between them can be restored. A democratic modern Tibet will be removed from the cockpit of international intrigue and that will be to everyone's advantage in Asia.