

Letter from the Prime Minister of China to the Prime Minister of India, 23 January 1959

PEKING,
January 23, 1959.

DEAR MR. PRIME MINISTER,

I have received your letter dated December 14, 1958, forwarded by Mr. Ambassador Parthasarthi.

Thank you for the credit you gave the achievements of our country in economic construction. It is true that, through the joint efforts of the entire Chinese people, our country made in industrial and agricultural production in 1958 an advance which we describe as a "great leap forward". However, as we started from a very poor economic foundation, our present level of development in production is still very low. It will take us a number of years more of hard work in order to bring about a relatively big change in the economic picture of our country.

Our government heartily welcomes the sending by the Indian Government of two delegations to study our agriculture and iron and steel industry respectively. And as I understand, another delegation has already arrived in China to study our water conservancy and irrigation work. We welcome them to our country and will be glad to provide them with every possible convenience. We also hope to learn from them Indian experience in the respective fields. The exchange of such specialized delegations and the interflow of experience will undoubtedly be helpful to the economic construction of our countries. We too have always taken a great interest in the progress of India's second five-year plan, and wish it success.

We note with pleasure that, in the past year, friendly cooperation between China and India has undergone further development. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Chinese Government, to express thanks to the Indian Government for its efforts at the 13th session of the United Nations General Assembly for restoring to China its rightful place in the United Nations. We are also grateful to the Indian Government for its support to our country on the question of Taiwan and the coastal islands.

In your letter you have taken much space to discuss the question of Sino-Indian boundary and thus enabled us to understand better the Indian Government's stand on the question. I would also like now to set forth the views and stand of the Chinese Government.

First of all, I wish to point out that the Sino-Indian boundary has never been formally delimited. Historically no treaty or agreement on the Sino-Indian boundary has ever been concluded between

the Chinese central government and the Indian Government. So far as the actual situation is concerned, there are certain differences between the two sides over the border question. In the past few years, questions as to which side certain areas on the Sino-Indian border belong were on more than one occasion taken up between the Chinese and the Indian sides through diplomatic channels. The latest case concerns an area in the southern part of China's Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region, which has always been under Chinese jurisdiction. Patrol duties have continually been carried out in that area by the border guards of the Chinese Government. And the Sinkiang-Tibet highway built by our country in 1956 runs through that area. Yet recently the Indian Government claimed that that area was Indian territory. All this shows that border disputes do exist between China and India.

It was true that the border question was not raised in 1954 when negotiations were being held between the Chinese and Indian sides for the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India. This was because conditions were not yet ripe for its settlement and the Chinese side, on its part, had had no time to study the question. The Chinese Government has always held that the existence of the border question absolutely should not affect the development of Sino-Indian friendly relations. We believe that, following proper preparations, this question which has been carried over from the past can certainly be settled reasonably on the basis of the Five Principles of peaceful co-existence through friendly talks. To this end, the Chinese Government has now proceeded to take certain steps in making preparations.

An important question concerning the Sino-Indian boundary is the question of the so-called MacMahon Line. I discussed this with Your Excellency as well as with Prime Minister U Nu. I would now like to explain again the Chinese Government's attitude. As you are aware, the "MacMahon Line" was a product of the British policy of aggression against the Tibet Region of China and aroused the great indignation of the Chinese people. Juridically, too, it cannot be considered legal. I have told you that it has never been recognized by the Chinese central government. Although related documents were signed by a representative of the local authorities of the Tibet Region of China, the Tibet local authorities were in fact dissatisfied with this unilaterally drawn line. And I have also told you formally about their dissatisfaction. On the other hand, one cannot, of course, fail to take cognizance of the great and encouraging changes: India and Burma, which are concerned in this line, have attained independence successively and become states friendly with China. In view of the various complex factors mentioned above, the Chinese Government, on the one hand finds it necessary to take a more or less realistic attitude towards the MacMahon Line and, on the other hand, cannot but act with prudence and needs time to deal with this matter. All this I have mentioned to you on more than one occasion. However, we believe that, on account of the friendly relations between China and India, a friendly settlement can eventually be found for this section of the boundary line.

Precisely because the boundary between the two countries is not yet formally delimited and some differences exist, it is unavoidable

that there should be discrepancies between the boundary lines drawn on the respective maps of the two sides. On the maps currently published in our country, the Chinese boundaries are drawn in the way consistently followed in Chinese maps for the past several decades, if not longer. We do not hold that every portion of this boundary line is drawn on sufficient grounds. But it would be inappropriate for us to make changes without having made surveys and without having consulted the countries concerned. Furthermore, there would be difficulties in making such changes, because they would give rise to confusion among our people and bring censure on our government. As a matter of fact, our people have also expressed surprise at the way the Sino-Indian boundary, particularly its western section, is drawn on maps published in India. They have asked our government to take up this matter with the Indian Government. Yet we have not done so, but have explained to them the actual situation of the Sino-Indian boundary. With the settlement of the boundary question—which, as our government has repeatedly pointed out, requires surveys and mutual consultations—the problem of drawing the boundary on the maps will also be solved.

In recent years, there occurred between China and India some minor border incidents which are probably difficult to avoid pending the formal delimitation of the boundary. In order to avoid such incidents so far as possible before the boundary is formally delimited, our government would like to propose to the Indian Government that, as a provisional measure, the two sides temporarily maintain the *status quo*, that is to say, each side keep for the time being to the border areas at present under its jurisdiction and not go beyond them. For the differences between the two sides, naturally, a solution may be sought through consultations like those held on the Wu-Je (Hoti) question. As to the negotiations regarding Wu-Je, we also regret very much that no agreement has yet been reached, as we formerly thought a solution would not be difficult to achieve through negotiations and on-the-spot investigations. We still believe that this small question can be settled satisfactorily through the continued efforts of our two sides. The Chinese Government hopes that the above proposal about temporary maintenance of the present state of the boundary between the two sides will be approved of by the Indian Government.

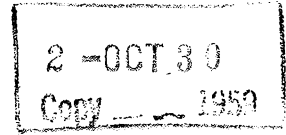
I need not reiterate how highly the Chinese Government and people value Sino-Indian friendship. We will never allow any difference between our two countries to affect this friendship, and we believe that India shares the same views. I hope that this letter will help you get a better understanding of our government's stand on the Sino-Indian boundary question.

With sincere regards,

(Sd.) CHOU EN-LAI,
Premier of the State Council
of the
People's Republic of China.



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NOTES, MEMORANDA AND LETTERS EXCHANGED
AND AGREEMENTS SIGNED BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENTS OF INDIA AND CHINA
1954—1959

WHITE PAPER

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

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