



**NMML
OCCASIONAL PAPER
HISTORY AND SOCIETY
New Series
75**

Nehru and the North East

Sajal Nag

*Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Chair Professor in Social
Sciences, Presidency University, Kolkata.*



**Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
2015**

NMML Occasional Paper

© Sajal Nag, 2015

All rights reserved. No portion of the contents may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the author. This Occasional Paper should not be reported as representing the views of the NMML. The views expressed in this Occasional Paper are those of the author(s) and speakers and do not represent those of the NMML or NMML policy, or NMML staff, fellows, trustees, advisory groups, or any individuals or organizations that provide support to the NMML Society nor are they endorsed by NMML. Occasional Papers describe research by the author(s) and are published to elicit comments and to further debate. Questions regarding the content of individual Occasional Papers should be directed to the authors. NMML will not be liable for any civil or criminal liability arising out of the statements made herein.

Published by

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
Teen Murti House
New Delhi-110011

e-mail : ddnehrumemorial@gmail.com

ISBN : 978-93-83650-81-1

Price Rs. 100/-; US \$ 10

Page setting & Printed by : A.D. Print Studio, 1749 B/6, Govind Puri
Extn. Kalkaji, New Delhi - 110019. E-mail : studio.adprint@gmail.com

NMML Occasional Paper



Nehru and the North-East*

Sajal Nag

Jawaharlal Nehru's contact with the north-eastern part of India had three dimensions. As a scholar he was aware of the history of north east India vis-à-vis the rest of India; as a Congressman he had to deal with some of the issues concerning north east; and thirdly as a Prime Minister he had to actually tackle the intricate and complex issues of this region. His encounters with north east India therefore can be described as academic, theoretical, and actual. As a scholar his ideas about the region is almost entirely found in his *Discovery of India*. In 1937, he travelled parts of the north east to have a true glimpse of the region which changed some of his earlier ideas of the region and helped him develop new ones. But as Prime Minister of India, first as an interim arrangement and then as an elected premier of a newly liberated independent nation-state, he was called upon to actually handle some of the most severe crisis that was to shape the polity of modern India. In doing so, he proved to be a visionary, a statesman, and a system builder. Indeed he was also blamed for the ramifications of the policies and held responsible for the failure of these policies by his critics. But the comprehensions, empathy, and visions of Nehru were such that even after sixty years of independence the Indian State failed to evolve any alternative to Nehruvian vision for the north east which has seen enormous turbulence since then.

In *Discovery of India* his views on this part of India were general and merely academic. Even though the book was written after his tour of the north-east in 1937—as Congress president, campaigning for

* Paper presented at a Conference titled 'Rethinking the Nehru Legacy: The long twentieth century', held at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 17-18 November, 2014.

the upcoming provincial Assembly elections—only Assam figured prominently in the book. Though ‘frontier’ appeared in the discussion there was no specific history or mention of the frontier tribes. The discussion on Assam too was as a part of a civilization and its diversity. For example he wrote,

....the diversity of India is tremendous. It is obvious; it lies on the surface and anybody can see it. It concerns itself with physical appearance as well as with certain mental habits and traits. There is little in common to outward seeming, between the Pathan of the North West and the Tamils in the far South. Their racial stock are not the same though there may be common strands running through them, they differ in face and figure, food and clothing and of course language ... the Pathan and the Tamil are two extreme examples; the others lie somewhere in between. All of them have their distinctive feature, all of them have still more distinguishing mark of India. It is fascinating to find how the Bengalis, the Marathas, the Gujratis, the Tamils, the Andhras, the Oriyas, the Assamese, the Canarese, the Malayalis, the Sindhis, the Punjabis, the Pathans, the Kashmiris, the Rajputs and the great central block comprising the Hindustani speaking people have retained their peculiar characteristics for hundreds of years have still more or less the same virtues and failings of which old tradition or record tells us and yet have been throughout these ages distinctively with the same national heritage and the same set of moral and mental qualities. There was something living and dynamic about this heritage which showed itself in ways of living and a philosophical attitude to life and its problems.¹

On the question of diversity of languages of India he was aware of the multiplicity of small Tibeto–Burman language groups thriving in the Indo–Burmese frontier:

....the oft-repeated story of India having five hundred or more languages is a fiction of the mind of the philologist and the census commissioner who notes down every variation in dialect and every petty hill-tongue on the Assam–Bengal frontier with Burma as a separate language, although



sometimes it is spoken only by a few hundred or few thousand persons. Most of these so called hundreds of languages are confined to this eastern border tract of Burma.²

As far as race and religion were concerned, he was aware of undercurrents of Buddhism among the people of north east India who had marked Mongoloid features.³ He asserted that it was this religious current that brought India and China closer to each other, the historical details of which he provided in his work.⁴ This was his theoretical and general understanding of the region. The trip revealed another side of Nehru: the hard-core 'romantic' and perhaps it reminded him of his ancestry in the mountains of Kashmir which found some resonance in these hills.

His notes on his trip to the region in 1937 reflect a man fascinated by its geography, people, and above all its frontier character. It was characterized by pure romanticism. They reflect his longing for a life in the pristine hills, among its people, that was ill-concealed. He himself made it evident.

The call of jungle and the mountains has always been strong within me, a dweller of cities and plains though I am and I gazed at these forests and jungles, fascinated, and wondered what myriad forms of life and what tragedy they hid in their darkness. Bountiful nature or nature in red in tooth and claw—was it much worse in these forest recesses than in the cities and the dwelling places of men and women? A wild animal kills for food to satisfy his hunger. He does not kill for sport or for the pleasure of killing. The fierce fights of the jungle are individual fights, not the mass murder that man calls war; there is no wholesale destruction by bomb and prison gas. The comparison seemed to be all in favour of forests and the wild animals.⁵

It is interesting to note that during this very trip Nehru was also apprised of some genuine crisis that the people of Assam were facing which he was called upon to resolve. There was even a secessionist threat from certain Assamese organizations like the Asom Samrakshini Sabha and Asom Deka Dal headed by Nilmoni Phukan and Ambikagiri

Roy Choudhury, respectively. He came to realize that the three major problems that plagued the Brahmaputra valley were Sylhet, immigration, and opium. The Sylhet issue was a polarization between the Assamese and Bengalis which had been affecting not only the organizational strength of the Congress but even the day-to-day functioning of the legislature. Though Bengalis were mostly immigrants to the valley, the transfer of Sylhet district from Bengal to Assam in 1874 added to the demographic and political strength of the Bengalis in Assam. Both, the Bengalis as well as the Assamese, wanted Sylhet to be returned to Bengal. Similarly the immigration of farm settlers from East Bengal encouraged by the colonial state also added to the number of the Bengalis in Assam. It added another dimension. These immigrants were overwhelmingly Muslims providing the Muslim League a fertile political ground adding religious dimension. The Assamese leadership raised a hue and cry about the transfer of land resources to these immigrants apparently giving rise to land acquisition and land ownership issues for the indigenous Assamese. As a result, the Line System Policy was introduced in 1927 to impose restrictions on the settlement of immigrants to specified areas. Even this policy became a bone of contention. During Jawaharlal Nehru's tour, the Asomiya Samrakshini Sabha and Assam Deka Dal submitted strong memoranda seeking his intervention in saving the Assamese nationality from extinction from the threats from immigrants and threatened to secede from India if no initiative came from the central leadership.

Fresh from Europe filled and with new ideas of nation-making, Nehru was not happy with such internal bickering when the time was to organize and prepare for the final struggle for *swaraj*. World War was looming large. There was an election scheduled (1937) for which he was campaigning. He appreciated the problems Assam was facing. He said, '...I came up against particular problems affecting Assam and exercising the minds of the people of the province and yet all these were secondary before the major problems of India—the poverty of the people and this was terribly in evidence in the province.'⁶ He outlined that the problems Assam was facing were manifold; apart from opium, future of Sylhet, and immigration there was also the Line System, the tea gardens and its labour, and crude oil. The opium problem was more or less on the wane. In principle Sylhet was a



Bengal province and he was assertive that it should go back there. Immigration and Line System were however 'far more vital problems' which required expert handling. However he agreed that 'throwing the unoccupied land open to unrestricted immigration without planning or recognized end will be particularly unfortunate.'⁷ He suggested that

...land reform should move in the direction of large collective farms or State farms. "... Instead of just allowing odd people to get parcels of land and cultivate them as they will in individualistic way, it should start large State farms and try to develop collectives. Assam born people should be given preference in these but immigrants should certainly be accepted. The capital for these undertakings should be raised if necessary by loans.⁸ The Assam Government has a fine opportunity to work to this end."⁹

On the fear of the Assamese being swamped by the immigrants he felt that the

...very basis of immigration must be the assimilation of the immigrant. If he remains an alien and an outsider he is a disrupting force in the body politics ... though there is some reason for this apprehension I think this is exaggerated. Culture and individuality in a people do not depend entirely on numbers but on something more vital. Even small minorities, enveloped by alien and hostile peoples have retained their culture, language and individuality and even intensified them. If the Assamese have this vital element in them, as I believe they have, they will not be affected much by large bodies of immigrants coming in.¹⁰

In a public meeting at Judges Field in Guwahati his frustration was palpable, 'Frankly speaking neither Bengal nor Assam attracts me. You both are slaves of the provincial government. Even the formation of Congress ministries could not be possible in these two provinces.'¹¹ On the issue of Sylhet and immigration he said,

If you get excited over small affairs like this I shall take it that [you] do not worry your heads over bigger issues of the country ... though we have been able to form Congress



ministries in some of the provinces we cannot say that we have attained independence when the British Government is there. If we waste our energies over small things we should not think of independence.¹²

Nehru considered the problem of immigrants in Assam as one relating to measuring waste land and distributing it to the outsiders. He refrained from giving his opinion in detail considering it a question primarily for economists and experts. He saw the development potential of vast tracts of waste land and said that no land in any country should be allowed to remain vacant. For him some parts of the Census reports particularly where immigrants were compared to a ‘mass movement of a large body of ants’ as grossly exaggerated. He considered the Assamese fear that instead of assimilating the immigrants, the reverse might happen and they might be assimilated by the immigrants—as over blown and did not accept the argument of cultural division.¹³ In his Guwahati address he asked the people to look at the history of India as a whole whose culture had remained the same in spite of many foreign invasions. It was the foreigners who had been absorbed and not the other way round.¹⁴ His final word on the subject at this gathering was ‘if I had been the Government of Assam I would have divided the province on purely socialistic principle’.¹⁵ Publicly he stated in his Guwahati address,

...In my opinion, poverty on the part of the people of India is a great obstacle on their way. A war in the world is imminent. Will you then remain passive with the question of Sylhet and Line System? The Chinese war is before us. It is really a war of liberty. In the face of all these, is it fit that we should keep ourselves engaged with petty affairs?¹⁶

He wrote privately to Bishnuram Medhi, the Pradesh Congress President. ‘I want your committee and the Assam people to realize that we have far bigger problems ahead and big changes are coming in the course of next few years and not much bother about other matters which will inevitably be taken in hand as soon as we have greater power.’¹⁷ His public outbursts and private contemplation of the problems of Assam seemed quite contradictory. His plans for resolving these seemed appropriate and effective enough but were never



implemented even after independence. Ideas, those of resolving the Sylhet question, unrestricted immigration, and Line System, threat perception of the Assamese people, etc. were not off-the-cuff remarks. They bore strong imprints of his socialistic ideas which he had imbibed from the trip to Europe which took place just before his tour of Assam. The jotted ideas, by way of a long letter, were immediately conveyed for implementation to Gopinath Bordoloi, leader of the Assam Congress who was to take over the premiership of the ministry after election.¹⁸

Nehru felt there were more vital problems in Assam which the Assamese leadership did not really talk about. There were these lush green tea gardens carpeting the entire Brahmaputra valley. But he knew the ‘shine of the shoe is not the test of its fit or comfort it gives to the wearer’. He could see that the tea garden labourers had a

...haunted look about them and fear peeped out of their eyes. They were poor of course ... they have no organization and are not allowed to have any ... outsiders are not encouraged to go to them or to their lines and they live more or less secluded lives ... this is a deplorable state of affairs and to remedy this utter helplessness is far more important than some paternal legislation to remove minor grievances.¹⁹

As far as the great ‘Empire of Oil’ in Digboi was concerned—despite all the oil pumped out of Assam—the state hardly benefited; the entire revenue went to the Centre. Moreover the price of petrol in Assam was the highest compared to other parts of India or even in London. This was a great discrimination which needed to be corrected.²⁰

His biggest concern was the tribal areas of Assam. It was during his trip to Assam in 1937 that he came to know that vast tracts of Assam are included in the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas. The people living there are cut off from the rest of India and very little is known about them. Curiously enough, the Government of India Act of 1935 had widened the gap and made them still more unapproachable. ‘...and yet these tribal folk and others need our sympathy and cooperation. I like these people and feel drawn to them and I hope the Congress organization and our Provincial Assemblies



will do everything in their power to remove their disabilities and to encourage education and industry among them. Here also investigation is needed. Some of the tribal people I met were obviously intelligent and given the right education and encouragement would go ahead.' In the Faizpur session (1936) where Nehru was elected the President of the party, the Indian National Congress had already condemned the legislation

...as another attempt to divide the people of India into different groups with unjustifiable and discriminatory treatment and to obstruct the growth of uniform democratic institution in the country ... the separation of these Excluded Areas and Partially Excluded Areas is intended to leave larger control of disposition of exploitation of the mineral and forest wealth in those and keep the inhabitants of those areas apart from the rest of India for their exploitation and suppression.²¹

What the authors of the resolution missed was that the devices were also to keep the tribals of the region from organizing themselves and participating in the growing nationalist movement of India. Recent researches have proved these beyond doubt.²²

The Vexed Issue of Threat to Assamese Nationality

Even though Nehru had developed an understanding of north east by this time he continued to concentrate on the plains of Assam. The hills had not posed much problem till then and hence Assam seemed to received all his attention. One of the major problems he was called upon to tackle was the issue of immigrants in Assam. Immigrants from East Bengal poured in large numbers during the colonial period and continued to flow even after independence. The dual impact of independence and partition created panic among most of the Hindus in the newly formed state of Pakistan and Muslims in India, but had little adverse impact on the Muslim immigrants in Assam. For them the two-nation theory did not have any meaning. It was land and livelihood that was much more important. They did not try to leave for the newly created Muslim homeland called Pakistan. They not only stayed put in their Assam where they had recently settled, but a flow of immigrants continued to pour into the Brahmaputra valley.²³ The erstwhile inter-



district migrants had now become illegal immigrants. There was certainly a movement of Muslim immigrants into the Brahmaputra valley even after independence although the number was not definitely known. Pressurized by the public opinion of his state, Bordoloi needed to do something to stop the immigration but had no mechanism to tackle it. In response to Bordoloi's helplessness to curb the flow, Nehru wrote to Bordoloi, 'The double immigration of Hindus [refugees] and Muslims into Assam must make difficulties for you. We are having similar difficulties here. There is no bar to individuals coming, but I think you would be justified in stopping large groups from coming unless they come with your approval.'²⁴ Nehru assured Bordoloi that the bi-lateral issues would be taken up in the Inter-Dominion Conference to be held between India and Pakistan in April 1948. But Bordoloi found the outcome of the Conference disappointing. He therefore turned to Home Minister Sardar Patel,

...the immigration of large number of Muslims in Assam is indeed very difficult to explain unless we read it in the perspective of what Pakistan is doing in Hyderabad and Kashmir and what Pakistan aspired after in respect of Assam before partition of India. We have therefore come to the conclusion that if Assam is to continue as part of India it must be allowed to exercise the power of restricting the ingress of people not only for avoiding an economic breakdown of the province but also for maintaining communal harmony which has so long been maintained in spite of Hindus and Muslims from outside trying to create a communal war.²⁵

Nehru subsequently even offered the Assam Government the grant of power of 'executive action' to tackle the influx issue. The idea did not elaborate the actual action to be taken. The state's Chief Secretary S.P. Desai examined and discussed the concept with district officers on the border and found there were a number of legal and administrative problems in enforcing such directions. Bordoloi suggested that 'unless some sort of pass or permit system is introduced the safety of Assam, both in political and economic sphere, will continue to be in jeopardy.'²⁶ In the meantime the Inter-Dominion Conference was held on 24 January 1949 which according to Nehru 'yielded substantial results and we are on the way to solving some of our conflicts with Pakistan'.²⁷ Nehru

appreciated the problem but without a mechanism at hand he could hardly do anything.²⁸ About the influx he wrote to Bordoloi,

...I am surprised to learn that you feel yourself helpless in dealing with the influx of Muslims into Assam. As you know we have a permit system between Western Pakistan and India. I do not think there is a permit system in regard to Eastern Bengal and Western Bengal and possibly no such system exists in regard to Assam either. I think you should discuss this matter with Mr Gopaldaswami Ayyengar. This really has nothing to do with the type of permit system that we have in the west. In a sense you have to face a somewhat different problem and surely we ought to be able to devise ways and means to deal with it.²⁹

The union home ministry and union external affairs ministry officials discussed the matter with the Assam chief secretary and came out with a proposal to have an ordinance to tackle the issue but was turned down by the union cabinet which preferred the old proposal of 'executive action'.³⁰ The Assam government had already found the concept ineffective as it did not invest Assam with any legal right to exercise this authority.³¹ On Nehru's advice Bordoloi met N.Gopaldaswami Ayyengar, the union minister for transport several times. The latter went to Assam in November 1949 to study the situation and since the problem was there in West Bengal too he subsequently discussed the idea of a permit system with the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Dr. B.C. Roy. Roy opposed the idea as he felt it would lead to a greater influx of Hindus from East Pakistan. Ayyengar therefore suggested an alternative measure of permit system which gives the Government of Assam authority to expel such persons from within their borders if it was satisfied that the particular situation justified such expulsion. Bordoloi agreed that the system would be beneficial to Assam but it was still less than what he was demanding. The result of the initiative was the enactment of the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950. It provided for the removal of all immigrants, except for the displaced persons—whose stay was detrimental to the interest of the general public in India or any Scheduled Tribe in Assam. The Ordinance was issued in January 1950 and a Bill to replace the ordinance was simultaneously introduced and passed in February and



received the Presidential assent only in March 1950. However, in the wake of widespread communal riots in March 1950 in which Muslim immigrants were targeted, the legislation was kept in abeyance from enforcement. It was feared the provisions of the Act would be misused. Nehru therefore advised Bordoloi not to use the law for the time being. In April the same year Nehru met the Pakistani premier Liaquat Ali Khan and signed the famous Nehru–Liaquat Pact which agreed to ensure equality of citizenship to Hindus and Muslims alike, constitute minority commissions, and provide minority representations in respective governments. The pact tried to halt the influx of immigrants by ensuring their security of life and assets in their own countries. This did not have the desired effect as the subsequent history proved. The year 1950 was also marked by an unprecedented flood in the region and a massive earthquake in addition to the refugee settlement and question of illegal immigrants. Sardar Patel wrote to Nehru on the dual problems of the flood and the earthquake victims on the one hand and the burden of fresh influx of refugees on the other. His suggestion was either return them or write to the Pakistan government.³² Nehru expressed his helplessness of the situation; ‘...there is no permit system and people can travel freely either way. The Assam government has no responsibility for them of any type and there are not many ways that they can adopt to discourage them [the immigrants].’³³

The Partition Displaced in Assam

The first influx of Hindu refugees in considerable number was in October 1946 following the Noakhali riots. The stream of refugees decreased after March 1947 reaching an all time low of 844 in May 1947. Soon after the Sylhet Referendum and the partition of Assam which gave the influx a fillip, as many as 12,297 persons came in August followed by 6,348 in September and 4,409 in October 1947. Thereafter there was a decrease in the refugee influx but it never fell below the 2,000 mark in any month except November 1948 and October–November 1949. By May 1949 the number of total refugees reached two-and-half lakhs increasing up to 2,74,455. The Assam government tried rehabilitation by distributing them over several districts—93,177 were settled in Cachar, 44,967 in Goalpara, 42,871 in Kamrup, 18,833 in Darrang, 13,965 in Lakhimpur, 7,541 in

Sivasagar, 5,990 in Khasi hills, and 5,072 in Garo hills.³⁴ Although these were partition displaced refugees, there was strong resentment against the settling of Bengali Hindu refugees in Assam.³⁵ To make matters worse, in May 1948 a riot broke out between the Assamese and Bengalis which soon spread to different parts of Assam. It became known as the *Bongal Kheda* (expel the Bengalis) movement. When it spread to Goalpara it took communal colours. The vernacular press in both Assam and West Bengal communalized the situation further. Outside Assam, it was seen as an anti-Bengali movement which was mixed up with illegal immigration, refugee influx, and the settled Bengalis of Assam versus the indigenous Assamese. There were all kinds of rumours and allegations. A saddened Bordoloi wrote in his diary 'the Assamese and the Government of Assam were condemned for their narrow-mindedness. This bad name is spread all over India.'³⁶ The allegation of unenthusiastic rehabilitation of Bengali Hindu refugees by the Assam government received sharp criticism. In 1949, a committee led by Mohanlal Saxena, Union Minister for Rehabilitation, came to Assam to enquire about the rehabilitation of refugees in Assam. Saxena was dissatisfied with the Assam Government's inability to provide land to the refugees for rehabilitation. Bordoloi explained to Nehru that land was not enough even for settling the landless peasants of Assam.³⁷ Nehru replied ,

... you say there is no further land available in Assam. This is a question of fact which can easily be determined. It is patent however that if land is not available in Assam, it is still less available in the rest of India which is very heavily populated barring the deserts and mountains. What then are we to do with the millions of refugees we have to deal with? ... where are those [refugees] to go to if each Province adopts the attitude that Assam apparently has done? Are we just to push them out of India or to allow them to starve and die out?'³⁸

It was also rumored that Assam preferred Bengali Muslim migrants rather than Hindu refugees. While the former were willing to assimilate into Assamese, the latter were unwilling and considered themselves culturally superior. Nehru was aware of the Assam government's willingness to accommodate the Bengali Muslims while not preferring



the other.³⁹ To persuade the Assam government in sharing the nation's burdens, one of which was the refugee problem, he wrote:

...the refugee problem is one of the two or three problems which we give first priority in India at present. This applies to the utilization of our financial resources also. Our development schemes are thought of in terms, to some extent, of refugees. If Assam adopts an attitude of incapacity to help in solving the refugee problem, then the claims of Assam for financial help obviously suffer.⁴⁰

While countering allegation of bias in favour of Muslim immigrants, Bordoloi justified the preference saying the Muslim immigrants were vote banks of the Congress.

... one has to admit that the Muslims of East Bengal settled in the province are becoming members of the Congress in large numbers and are falling in line with the schemes the Government has undertaken to improve the lot of the common man in the establishment of rural *panchayat* and the working of village trading co-operatives. They have adopted the regional language of the province and showing a desire to work together. There is yet time to form an opinion about their actual motive but to a Government which have to carry on the administration on non-communal lines, it cannot prefer any party because they belong to a particular religion. ... The Government is doing as good as any other province in India in spite of the variety and complexity of its problems.⁴¹

Bordoloi also explained that out of the 2,00,000 acres of waste land available outside the tribal belts, grazing reserves and hill districts, only 25,000 acres would be fit for heavy reclamation. He had settled 1,86,121 landless peasant families in these lands and if the government had to allot just 10 acres to each family, it would require 18,61,210 acres of land. Moreover there were 50,000 families, displaced by the devastating flood, who were also awaiting rehabilitation.

But just when the refugee influx was falling, came the communal disturbance of 1950 in East Pakistan. As a result, the number of refugees rose up again—nearly 9,500 in January 1950 and over 14,000

in February. It reached an all time high of 48,857 in March 1950 and 32,359 in April the same year. These two crucial months alone accounted for over 80,000 refugees out of a total of 2,74,555 who came to Assam. A majority of them are Censused in Cachar district. After the restoration of confidence through the Nehru–Liaquat Khan Pact of 8 April 1950, the flow of refugees on either side decreased and till February 1951 there were only 1,541 newcomers. Sylhet accounted for the largest number of East Pakistani refugees followed by Mymensingh and Dhaka.

Annual Arrival of Refugees in Assam in 1946–1951

Place of Origin	Year	Number
East Bengal	1946	8,593
East Bengal	1947	42,346
East Bengal	1948	41,740
East Bengal	1949	33,138
East Bengal	1950	1,44,512
East Bengal	1950 (Jan.&Feb.)	3,479
West Pakistan	-	647
	Total	2,74,455

Source: Census of India, 1951, Vol. XII, Part I (I-A), 353.

Having failed to persuade the Assam government to part with lands for the refugees, Saxena acquired excess land from Barak Valley tea estates without going through the government and managed to rehabilitate 3,500 families in agriculture. Ajay Prasad Jain, Saxena's successor as the Union Minister for Rehabilitation, continued the same policy of striking a deal with the Indian Tea Association to settle 12,000 families in their excess lands. But at an advanced stage of the deal, the Indian Tea Association backed out of the deal reportedly on the persuasions of Bishnuram Medhi the Assam Revenue Minister. Jain had to go back to the Assam government. As a result of the discussion in Calcutta between Nehru, Bordoloi, and Jain it was decided that 50 per cent of the land acquired from the tea estates would be used for refugee settlement on the condition that only local Assamese would



be absorbed in the industrial and co-operative societies. Meanwhile, Sardar Patel was not too happy with the machinations of Bishnuram Medhi and his parochialism on the land deal and expressed the same to Bordoloi.⁴² Bordoloi tried to defend his colleague but Patel was not convinced and accused Bordoloi of succumbing to local prejudice rather than understanding the humanitarian crisis that the refugee problems presented.⁴³ Patel went ahead and decided that 50 per cent of the land made available by the tea estates must go to the refugees and accordingly wrote to the Union Ministry of Rehabilitation, '...the Assam Government must discharge their responsibility to the full.'⁴⁴ Patel also sacked the Chief Secretary of Assam, S.P. Desai, as he was also found to be prejudiced. He wrote to Jairamdas Daulatram, the Assam Governor,

...I am afraid you will have to see to it that these lands (lying vacant, particularly in the Barpeta Subidivision in Assam) are not kept vacant merely for the Muslims to come at their leisure and occupy them but are allotted to refugees so that they can be brought under cultivation without loss of available food or jute crop to India. The Ministry cannot be allowed to carry their preference for local cultivators too far to the detriment of India's economy.⁴⁵

The trickle of refugees however continued. The Hindus were reluctant to leave their roots and migrate to an uncertain future. After the first batch of refugees migrated, the Hindus left behind in East Pakistan continued to stay with the hope that things would improve. But the migration of a large number of kinsmen had reduced their numerical strength and political voice. Other than communal riots, another menace was the neighbour's greed of the property left behind by Hindus. These neighbours felt that the Hindu property was up for grabs and they could be forced to leave for India by threats, violent assaults, and attack on the women. This resulted in further migration and by 1956 another 1.16 lakhs of displaced people were settled in Assam.

Total Displaced Persons up to 1956

State of Disposal	Number (lakhs)
Assam	3.90
Tripura	3.56
Manipur	0.02

Source: U. Bhaskar Rao, *The Story of Rehabilitation*, Government of India, New Delhi, 1974.

By 1961 about 2.10 lakhs more entered Assam and by 1968 another 4.5 lakh were reported to have entered and settled in Assam. During the Bangladesh war of 1971–72, the number of Hindu/Muslim refugees entering Assam and West Bengal totalled 10,000,000. Although after the war a part of this population returned, yet it is presumed that a large percentage remained and settled in these provinces. Therefore, this population in addition to the natural increase of the earlier refugee entrants totalled to a Hindu refugee population of about 15,00,000 by 1971–72.

Countering Naga Secessionism

Nehru's first encounter with the hill areas of north east was the crisis that Naga 'secessionism' presented. Exactly a decade later Nehru had to take over the Prime Ministership of the newly independent Indian nation, first as an interim government, then as the successor government, and finally as the first elected government in 1952. It was during the last phase that Nehru encountered real problems in the north east. The first major problem was a secessionist threat from a tiny tribal population of Nagas; second, developing a comprehensive policy, free from colonial prejudices towards the vast tribal population of north east about whom he did not really have much idea; and third, a volatile frontier ... with hostile neighbours ready to play mischiefs.

The most difficult was the demand of the tiny Naga tribal population's demand to be allowed to remain out of India. Already confronted with partition, secessionism of certain princely states, communalism, refugee crisis, finance, defence, and multiple problems



that he inherited, the Naga demand presented additional burden. The Naga demand awakened him to the possibility of minority nationalism within Indian nation-state for the first time but he felt it could be resolved by neutralizing aspirations of sovereignty by granting maximum autonomy. Nehru not only responded to the resolution of the Naga National Council (NNC) but also enunciated the general policy towards Naga aspirations, hopes, and apprehensions. Nehru's reply was immediate and comprehensive as far as his reaction and post-colonial India's policy towards the Nagas were concerned. While he pre-empted any secessionist idea saying that Nagas are too small a people to sustain as a sovereign political entity as they were sandwiched between two giants like India and China, at the same time he allayed all their fears and apprehensions promising they would be granted such autonomy which would be as good as full sovereignty. In fact, the content of this letter embodied the crux of his subsequent tribal policy; these were so profound that it was actually used as the basis of what was later known as the Fifth and Sixth schedule of India's Constitution. This is why this letter of Nehru to T. Sakhrie Secretary, NNC, is a very significant document though it has not been given its due importance so far. Unfortunately, some scholars saw Sakhrie's letter as 'negotiation of some moderate (non-secessionist) leaders',⁴⁶ whereas others did not find any importance in it⁴⁷ except one who asserted,

...this letter written before India became independent and much before Naga extremists thought in terms of independence proves that all the autonomy and statehood demand attained by the Nagas were not through or as a result of the violent underground movement but what was their due as a part of India and was realized and planned by India's great leaders. In fact the delay in achieving their aim was partly due to the violent upheaval in Naga areas itself.⁴⁸

The letter from T. Sakhrie, stated that

...a) the Naga National Council stands for the solidarity of all Naga tribes including those in the unadministered areas; b) this council strongly protests against the grouping of Assam with Bengal; c) the Naga Hills should be constitutionally included in autonomous Assam, in a free India, with local

autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of Nagas; and d) the Naga tribes should have a separate electorate.⁴⁹

It is significant that the NNC at this stage did not at all talk about a separate political existence. Nehru in his reply to this letter reproduced below not only promised largest possible autonomy to the Nagas but even anticipated the Naga demand for independence, which he asserted, was unviable both politically and economically.

By then Nagas had gone too far into the mode of secessionist politics. The success of Pakistan movement and the declaration of the lapse of paramountcy in the princely states had encouraged a faction led by A.Z. Phizo to entertain similar thoughts. The constructed separate nationhood for the Nagas invented the idea that they were never a part of India; it was the British and not the Indians who conquered them and hence with the exit of the British they had the right to revert to their pre-British independent status. When negotiation in the form of a nine-point agreement failed and the post-colonial Indian state refused to promise them complete sovereignty, they felt they could declare it unilaterally. After the initial round of petitioning and memorandum submission, the extremist leadership began to press harder.⁵⁰ This faction was led by A.Z. Phizo who became more insistent and militant after he was elected the president of NNC in 1950. In the last week of 1951 Phizo met Nehru who was campaigning in Assam for the ensuing election of 1952. Nehru told the delegation,

...I consider freedom very precious. I am sure that the Nagas are as free as I am; in fact more free in a number of ways. For while I am bound by all sorts of laws, the Nagas are not to the same extent bound down by such laws and are governed by their customary laws and usages. But the independence Nagas are after is something quite different from individual or group freedom. In the present context of affairs both in India and the world it is impossible to consider even for a moment such an absurd demand for independence of the Nagas. It is doubtful whether the Nagas realize the consequence of what they are asking for. For their present demand would lead them to ruin.⁵¹

Nehru by that time had realized the necessity of being categorical



in denying any possibility of Nagas being allowed to be sovereign. He realized that philosophical talk had given the Nagas hope that, if pressurized, India was going to concede the Naga demand. But at the same time he promised the Nagas ‘a large measure of autonomy in managing their own affairs. He promised that if Phizo submitted proposals for the extension of cultural, administrative, and financial autonomy in their land it would be considered sympathetically and if necessary the constitution could be changed. But independence was out of question’.⁵² Nehru tried to be reasonable with the Nagas because he realized that the Nagas were ‘a tough people who could give much trouble and there was danger in any hurried attempt to absorb their areas into standard administration’.⁵³ The thrust of his Naga policy was to grant them autonomy so that their traditions, customs, and culture should be protected and perpetuated but at the same time ensure their fullest development at par with the rest of India. Indian statesmen should not approach the Nagas superciliously but talk to them directly as the problem was more psychological than political. He felt any well-meaning approach will be appreciated by the Nagas which is why he planned to talk to the Nagas himself.⁵⁴ In fact, despite the trouble he was facing at home post-independence, he granted time repeatedly to talk to the Naga delegations even while they were campaigning internationally for independence. Nehru understood that ‘the movement for independence among the Nagas is entirely based on the assumption that Indians are foreigners ruling over the tribe. Our policy must be aimed at removing this impression’.⁵⁵ He was convinced that ‘if the government keeps its head cool and restrains its hand, the whole movement may gradually fizzle out’.⁵⁶ He instructed the provincial government accordingly that Naga demand for independence should be rejected categorically and it should be communicated that violence would not be tolerated under any circumstances.⁵⁷

Confronting the Uprising

In 1952 Nehru had gone to address the Nagas along with U Nu, the Burmese Premier, at a public meeting in Kohima. The Nagas embarrassed him by walking out of the meeting and even reportedly showed their bare bottoms. It created a huge controversy. Soon after this incident the district administration cracked down on the NNC

members as they were held responsible for the fiasco in Kohima. To cover the failure of the district administration in handling the prime minister's visit, the NNC members were tracked down and arrested. This prompted a number of Nagas to go underground. These Nagas took up arms, formed a Naga government in exile, and began to attack the symbols of Indian presence in Naga Hills. The army had to be called in to tackle the challenge. Thus began the first insurgency and counter insurgency in independent India.

The sudden recourse to violent methods by the Nagas left Nehru with few options. He was against military solution because he knew that 'the Nagas were a tough and fine people and we may carry on [fighting] for a generation without solving the problem'.⁵⁸ But confronted with an open armed rebellion by the Nagas in which a number of Indian officers and troops were regularly killed, the Government of India had to seek the assistance of the military to control the situation.⁵⁹ Although the army was called in, Nehru was still very cautious. He issued instructions to the army to deal with the Nagas as 'fellow Indians' and use 'moderate force'.

You must remember that all the people of the area in which you are operating are fellow Indians. They may have a different religion, may pursue a different way of life but they are Indians and the very fact that they are different yet form a part of India, is a reflection of India's greatness. Some of these people are misguided and have take to arms against their people and are disrupting the peace of the area. You are to protect the mass of the people from these disruptive elements. You are not here to fight the people in the area but to protect them. You are fighting only those who threaten the people and who are a danger to the lives and properties of the people. You must therefore do everything possible to win their confidence and respect and help them feel that they belong to India.⁶⁰

In fact Nehru strongly vetoed a proposal to machine gun the Naga hostiles, from air.⁶¹ Nehru asked General Thimayya, the senior army commander to take charge immediately. He urged the army to act swiftly but not brutally.⁶² The overall objective of the army should be



to try and ‘win the hearts of the people, not to terrify or frighten them’. He also instructed the chief minister of Assam who was the head of the administration in the Naga Hills that military measure was only temporary, to be applied so long as rebels used arms

...but there is something much more to it than merely a military approach ... There can be no doubt that an armed revolt has to be met by force and suppressed. There are no two opinions about that and we shall set about it as efficiently and effectively as possible. But our whole past and present outlook is based on force by itself being no remedy. We have prepared this in regard to the greater problems of the world. Much more must we remember this when dealing with our countrymen who have to be won over and not merely suppressed.⁶³

The failure of the army to tackle the insurgency did not really harden Nehru: ‘It must always be remembered that if the Nagas are made to feel that have no alternative but to fight and die, they will prefer doing so.’⁶⁴

Nehru’s understanding of the Naga situation proved prophetic. However, the crisis generated a lot of debate. Nehru’s use of military was also criticized. Nehru responded by saying ... members have described it as a political problem and not a military problem. Well if we had treated it as a military problem only, the result would have probably been different. It is because we have not treated it as a military problem and have issued instructions, restrictions, limitations and inhibitions to our army that from the military point of view, peace has not been made as fast as it could have been. I believe that if we had treated it in a merely military way we would not have won the goodwill and cooperation of the Nagas ... it was our desire not to go too far militarily. That is what led us to send our army in aid of civil power. It was easy enough to declare martial law and hand over the whole area to the military but we did not do so because we have always been against treating this as a purely military problem.⁶⁵

Elsewhere Nehru stated that he was not aware of any instance

where a Government had acted with such friendliness to win over an insurrectionary group.⁶⁶

Alternative to Independence

Nehru was quite convinced of the inefficacy of the military measure. But a common Naga must be given an alternative to the concept of independence for him to be won over. ‘... We must give them (Nagas) a better alternative (to independence) ... This has not been done so far either by the Assam Government or by our military.’⁶⁷ Right from the beginning Nehru was willing to go an extra mile to pacify any aggrieved groups. This was not because he apprehended trouble from the Nagas in future but because it matched the apprehensions, fears, and hopes Nehru had for the tribals. As a political initiative, Nehru had already decided on the considerable autonomy to the Nagas. Initially of course he thought of an autonomous district of Naga Hills where ‘a sense of self-government’ would be felt and prevent the influence of dominant Assamese ruling class or control of its economy by outsiders.⁶⁸ Community project schemes to tribal areas followed by positive actions would indicate a friendly and constructive approach. Thus when the civil society group in Naga Hills united under the umbrella of Naga Peoples’ Convention which negotiated with the Government of India and brought about some kind of settlement which included the unification of Tuensang with Naga Hills and the creation of a Naga state under the Ministry of External Affairs, Nehru immediately set out to work on it. Prime Minister Nehru was willing to go any extent, short of sovereignty, to resolve the Naga impasse. In July 1960 the terms were discussed by Nehru with the Naga Peoples’ Convention leaders resulting in the 16-Point Agreement whereby he agreed to constitute Nagaland as the sixteenth state of India, even though he knew that it was ‘fantastic’ and ‘completely unreal’ to constitute ‘an area the size of a standard Indian district ... to be converted into a state’.⁶⁹ Simply, because it would make ‘the Nagas [feel] a real part of India’.⁷⁰ But Nehru faced opposition in his endeavour to grant Naga Hills statehood even with the nomenclature Nagaland, but he agreed to it as he understood that for the Nagas, the nomenclature ‘Nagaland’ was vital for their identity and identification of their habitat.

Statehood did not resolve the Naga problem and despite his well-



meaning approach when the Naga situation deteriorated Nehru admitted,

I feel that we have not dealt with this question of the Nagas with wisdom in the past. We must not judge as we would others who are undoubtedly part of India. The Nagas have no such background or sensation and we have to create that sensation among them by our goodwill and treatment. We shall have to think how can we produce this impression and what political steps were necessary.⁷¹

The movement of the Indian army to suppress the rebellion and the consequent encounter between the underground Nagas and security forces continued bringing havoc to the Naga social fabric which activated the Naga civil society. A large body of the Naga people decided to rescue Naga Hills from this devastation and bring a semblance of stability while another section of the Nagas continued their struggle against the Indian state. A perturbed Nehru had to re-order the army to march into Naga Hills. The feature of Nehru's Naga policy was to accord the Naga problem on high priority and not ignore it just because it involved a tiny population in a remote corner of India. But after Nehru the Indian statesmen failed to address the issue with the prominence that it demanded. They preferred to ignore it, leave it to the army and when fatigue set in to the movement, initiated a process of dialogue. Despite having so many crisis that the post-independent Indian state confronted, Nehru gave deep thought to it, had discussions with the Naga leaders frequently and also with his own colleagues in the party and the government. He was concerned about the campaign by Phizo as well other human right activists, about India's image being affected internationally as an oppressor of a small nation, and was willing to go the extra mile to resolve the problem. At the same time he was emphatic and categorical in asserting that Naga Hills were a part of India and ruled out granting independence to the Nagas. Nehru refused to treat the Naga leaders as leaders of another country, as demanded, and enter into a treaty with them. He stated that he was willing to talk with the Nagas if they did not talk of independence. He asserted that there was no question of prestige when dealing with his own countrymen.⁷² At the same time he was not apologetic about sending the army as the situation required military intervention. But he

was cautious of army excesses and regretted incidences of human rights violations. He repeatedly asked the army officials not to treat the situation like a war but as a rescue effort of civilians from hostiles. The key word of his policy was to win over the Nagas who *were not with 'us'*, and not *who are with 'us'*. This is again contradictory to his successors who tried to reward the moderates and isolate the extremists. Nehru desired to resolve the Naga question by 'winning them over' but it evaded him to become the longest crisis that the Indian state faced after independence. His successors did not innovate anything major in Indian state's Naga policy; rather continued largely his policy of carrot of autonomy with the stick of military measures which became a standard policy of dealing with such minority nationalisms in not only India but by other post-colonial states in South Asia as well.

Treating the Tribes

Nehru's familiarity with the tribal issues of India was not a static. His ideas about the tribal population of India continually evolved as was his outlook towards them. It was only from the 1930s that the issue of tribals began to concern him. His early ideas about the tribals were primarily derived from the tribes of the plains living along the eastern, central, and south Indian parts of the country. In 1937 he came to know about the hill tribes of north east India. He then realized that the tribes of India were not a homogeneous group; they were as diverse as possible. He also realized the discriminatory manner in which the British tried to administer them and keep them isolated from the rest of India. Though he appreciated the necessity of restriction on the influx of people in the tribal areas he deplored the device of Excluded Areas and Partially Excluded Areas by which tribals were deliberately kept isolated from the mainstream of Indian life.⁷³

But it was only after his tour of north east in 1952 that he really was able to comprehend that the problems of hill areas of north east were completely different from that of the plains of Assam. This trip was a 'rediscovery of India' according to Nehru's own words.⁷⁴ He elaborated the nature of this 'discovery' as,



I do not know what ideas most people in India have about tribal fold (of north east India). My general impression has been largely derived from such people as the Bhils, Santhals and Gonds etc. For my part I liked these somewhat backward or even primitive people but I recognize they are primitive in the normal ways of life. Given the opportunity however some of them can make good in other ways also. During my visit to north east frontier I had to change my conception of tribes. I found a great variety of them differing from each other very greatly. Some of them were undoubtedly rather primitive but many of them were remarkably developed and advanced. Indeed it is quite absurd to call them backward. An average crowd of some of these tribes would probably be more advanced in many ways than an average crowd elsewhere in India ... the Khasis struck me as very advanced as well as attractive people. So, also the Lushais. Their women are intelligent, attractive and hardworking. Generally speaking, many of them have been educated in missionary schools and can speak English. Indeed the proportion of people speaking, English was higher than I would find in most other parts of India.⁷⁵

The colonial policy towards the tribes was shaped mainly out of fear. The colonial state was quick to realize that right from the beginning of their rule most of the resistance to their regime came from the tribals and that too through violence, a tactic which the British modern military failed to contain mainly because these were sporadic and dispersed. Quelling one uprising in one area only fueled yet another in some other area. They also sensed that most of these violent uprisings resulted from interference in their society and economy by outsiders, be it colonial officials, or moneylender-contractor-land grabber or Christian missionaries. As long as the tribals, either in Indian mainland or in north east India, were left alone to manage their affairs they did not react and there was peace. Hence they evolved a policy of non-interference. The Scheduled District Act of 1874 was one such act which stipulated that laws enunciated in India would not automatically be applicable to the tribal areas. In these areas the responsibility of administration lay with the Governor and not elected governments. Financial allocation for these areas was therefore no subject to voting in legislatures. The policy was carried through the Backward Areas of

1919 Act and Excluded Areas of 1935 Act. Nehru wanted these acts to go once he was aware of the motive.⁷⁶ The idea was to keep the tribes as far away from the nationalist movement as possible as under the latter influence could reignite the violence among the tribal irreversibly.

Three important texts which have to be read to understand Nehru's outlook in shaping the tribal policy in independent India was his letter to T. Sakhrie, Secretary, NNC, his notes on his travel to north east in October 1952, and his address to the Conference of Scheduled Tribes and Areas held in New Delhi in June 1952. In his letter to Sakhrie he not only wrote about his understanding the fear and apprehensions of Nagas in particular and tribals in general but also shared a mechanism by which these apprehensions could be allayed. He visualized a kind of autonomy granted to all the tribal regions of north east India, which was tried before, through the concept of District Council subsequently. These ideas were incorporated in the NNC–Akbar Hydari Agreement of 1947.⁷⁷ Sir Akbar Hydari the then Governor of Assam had convened a three-day conference of Hill Officers from 12th to 14th June 1947 to discuss the policy formulation towards the tribes and had sent the deliberations of the meet to Nehru for his perusal and guidance. Nehru in his reply to Hydari dated 5th July 1947 wrote,

One has to steer a middle course between tribal autonomy and the gradually integration of the tribes into the province. I would hate to come in the way of tribal customs, more especially when many of them are of democratic nature. I do not want the tribes to feel that anything is being imposed upon them from above without their consent. They must grow according to their own genius. At the same time it is obvious that they cannot be treated as isolated units and have to be integrated into the larger life.⁷⁸

Similarly, his address to the Scheduled Tribes Conference '...though given on the spur of the moment came to be looked upon as some kind of statement of policy in regard to the tribal areas ... this speech has thus assumed an importance which it was not originally meant to be'.⁷⁹ Realizing this, Nehru himself read the text again and '...found that it did represent fairly clearly a certain approach to this



problem of the tribes and that my new experience in the north east frontier (subsequent travel to the north east in October 1952) confirmed my previous views'.⁸⁰ Because the speech assumed such importance as a statement of government policy as far as tribal policy of the new Indian state was concerned, Nehru circulated it along with his tour report on the north east frontier.

He wanted the tribals to grow according to their own genius and the State should provide them security, safety to their life and resources, and at the same time provide them modern amenities so that they could develop at an equal pace with the rest of the country. Protection, perpetuation, autonomy, and development were the key words of his principle. The tribal question was already being debated in the 1940s by the assimilationist group headed by G.S. Ghurye and isolationists led by Verrier Elwin. The assimilationists saw the tribal people of India, though backward, as part of the Hindu culture and civilization and hence should not be allowed to drift and assimilation was the best way to keep them integrated into the culture.⁸¹ Verrier Elwin, the Christian missionary turned anthropologist, who relentlessly worked among the Indian tribals, felt it was the Hindu collaborators of the colonial state who as landlords, moneylenders, and contractors were responsible for the economic degradation of the tribals in mainland India. They needed to be left alone to ensure the perpetuation of their lives and culture.⁸² Although Nehru was close to Verrier Elwin and later appointed him as Advisor on Tribal Affairs on 31st December 1953, he disagreed with both the approaches.

... so far we have approached the tribal people in one of the two ways. One might be called the anthropological approach in which we treat them as museum pieces to be observed and written about. To treat them as specimens of anthropological examination and analysis is to insult them ... the other approach is one of ignoring the fact that they are something different requiring special treatment and of attempting forcibly to absorb them into the normal pattern of social life. The way of forcible assimilation or assimilation through the operation of normal factors would be equally wrong.⁸³

Rejecting both the approaches, Nehru urged for an approach in which ‘people progress in their own way’ where there was no imposition or compulsions from outside with measures for progress ‘worked out by tribals themselves’.⁸⁴ Apart from his basic liberal and humanist approach, and an underlying socialistic principle, there were elements of respect for minority culture and concern for their equi-development. He not only wanted that they develop according to their own inherent strength but also ensured the necessary political autonomy for it.

The other contribution of Nehru in tribal policy was his notion of development. The thrust was on protection and development of tribal people as well as their integration in the national society.⁸⁵ On development of tribal areas he said,

...it is not a question of opening so many schools and so many dispensaries and hospitals. Of course we want schools, hospitals and dispensaries and roads and all that but that is rather a dead way of looking at things. What we ought to do is not merely to put up a school building but somehow to develop a sense of oneness with these people, a sense of unity and understanding. That involved a psychological approach after achievement of independence the basic problem of India taken as a whole is one of integration and consolidation. Political consolidation is now complete but that is not enough...the greatest problem of India today is psychological integration and consolidation...⁸⁶

He also realized that the tribals are backward because they live in a backward area which was so because it has no communication link with the rest of the country. Frontier was not just a territory lying in the border but indeed a far away land, both physically and conceptually. Despite repeated efforts, Nehru’s aircraft could not land anywhere. In fact his aircraft lost way and returned to the base station and hence Nehru’s desire of visiting Tawang remained unfulfilled. However the fact of not being able to reach the place and that it could take several weeks to reach the place by road was a discovery for him not just for the north east India but also frontier areas in general.⁸⁷ He realized that these places were indeed ‘...cut off from the rest of the world...’,



and can only be reached normally by long marches along the mountains. Supplies are sent to them by air and dropped from the aircraft. As early as 1952 he recognized that perhaps the worst developed areas lie in the Lushai Hills but this applies to other parts (north east India) also. While in other regions of India people were demanding separate states and industrial units, people in these areas lacked basic amenities and were demanding only those. In the North Eastern Frontier Areas people repeatedly asked Nehru 'for schools, roads and dispensaries'. In Lushai hills too people 'begged for roads, post offices and schools'. In many remote areas of both NEFA, Khasi Hills, and Lushai Hills people demanded landing strips for aircraft and had offered to prepare it themselves if need be and hand them over to the government. As far as development model for the tribal areas was concerned, apart from communication infrastructure, Nehru wanted region-specific development. He cited the example of Bihar and Orissa and Damodar Valley saying that in some regions certain resources were available and hence certain large industries could be built but in other regions where no such natural resources were available, there were attempts to create large dams out of rivers to satisfy the energy demands of the country. The idea was to not to make 'only one state develop but to see that all other states also make progress. Each of the states [should develop] according to its physical features.'⁸⁸

Once the rights and entitlements were enshrined in the Constitution Nehru set out to implement them. The appointment of Verrier Elwin, who had deep understanding of tribal life and culture, resulted in his enunciating five cardinal principles towards the close of the 1950s for tribal development. They came to be known as *panchsheel* of tribal development and was published in his foreword to Elwin's book entitled *A Philosophy for NEFA*.⁸⁹

He also realized the political dimension of the tribal problem. The frontier was not only remote but also its proximity to neighbouring countries resulted in certain problems which he admitted were political and had to be dealt with carefully. 'Because of the frontier and because these people are culturally related to the people on the other side of frontier, e.g., Tibetans or Burmese... is full of these mixed racial types with a Mongolian element present in greater or lesser degree. The

languages they speak are numerous. They have no written script and it was the missionaries who taught them the Latin script and wrote grammars and dictionaries for them.’⁹⁰ Advocating special attention for north east, he said, ‘I would say that all this north east border area deserves our special attention, not only of the governments but of the people of India. Our contacts with them will do us good and will do them good also. They add to the strength, variety and cultural richness of India.’⁹¹

Nehru’s Critique on Sixth Schedule

Nehru was often hailed wrongly as the maker of the Sixth Schedule which was patronizing as far as the tribals of north east India was concerned. At the same time Nehru was also blamed for the problems arising out of the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. He was held responsible for the volatility of the region particularly after the fiasco of the Chinese invasion in 1962 and more so after his death when insurgencies started in Manipur and Mizoram.

...the rapid success of the Chinese in moving from the frontier practically up to the Assam plains was for us and more specially for the tribals a traumatic experience and there arose a feeling in some sections of the country that this would not have been possible if our policy vis à vis the tribal people had been more realistic and not concentrated so much on ‘hastening slowly’ and respect for their culture and tribal institutions ... there was outcry against Verrier Elwin for allegedly having misguided the Prime Minister into believing that there should be no interference in the tribals’ way of life and that their development in terms of communications, schools, industries and so forth should be accelerated.⁹²

Nehru himself admitted that he was no expert on tribal affairs. He followed his humanitarian instinct and rational concern for the upliftment of a marginalized people in formulating a set of ideas for them. ‘My ideas were not clear at all but I felt that I should avoid two extreme courses: one was to treat them as anthropological specimens for study and the other was to allow them to be engulfed by the masses of Indian humanity. These reactions were instinctive and not based on any

knowledge or experience.’⁹³ What is significant is that despite the uproar and condemnation the truth was quite different. Indeed, neither Nehru nor Elwin was responsible for the making of the Sixth Schedule. Constitution expert Professor V. Venkata Rao was emphatic that ‘Nehru did not play any role in the framing of Sixth Schedule.’⁹⁴ Similarly ‘Verrier Elwin had nothing to do with the framing of the Constitution.’⁹⁵ Nehru had not even participated in the Constituent Assembly debates on the Fifth and Sixth schedule.⁹⁶

Following the Cabinet Mission provisions, the Constituent Assembly set up an Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities, Tribal, and Excluded Areas under the chairmanship of Sardar Patel. To assist the Committee, a Sub-committee was constituted, whose purpose was to report on the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas. The then chief minister of Assam, Gopinath Bardoloi was appointed as its Chairman. This Sub-committee, known as the Bardoloi Sub-committee, was to work under the Advisory Committee. Other members were Rev. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy, Rupnath Brahma, A.V. Thakkar (appointed as the Chairman of the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas [other than Assam Sub-Committee]), and Mayang Nokcha, who was later replaced by Aliba Imti Ao (who, however, was not present in the final meeting to sign the report). Formed on 27th February 1947, it toured the districts of Khasi-Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Lushai Hills and Naga Hills, and the sub-divisions of North-Cachar and Mikir Hills (then part of Nowgong and Sivasagar districts). It could sense the anxiety of the hill people regarding their land and identity. There was also a fear of exploitation by the non-tribals, particularly moneylenders, and influx of people in these areas. It was felt that normal laws that would operate in other parts of the country would be unsuitable for the tribal areas.

The Sixth Schedule was indeed conceived by Rev. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy and Gopinath Bordoloi. Nichols-Roy’s participation in the political developments before and after 1947 was noteworthy, not only for the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, but for the entire north east region. As an elected member of the Constituent Assembly that framed the Constitution of independent India, it was his vision for the hill tribes of the Assam that led to the birth of the Sixth Schedule, aimed at safeguarding their identity

and interests. The Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission) Report concluded that the hill tribes in the north east should be excluded from the new legislative reforms and be put under paternal rule, as it was felt that they needed special treatment to eradicate backwardness. Nichols-Roy was against this 'exclusivist' policy of the British rule. He was instrumental in bringing the hill tribes together to actively participate in the modern political process. Gopinath Bardoloi was concerned about the well-being of the tribal people. He asserted that the lack of interaction between the hill tribes and the plainsmen existed because the latter showed ignorance and indifference towards the people of the hills. He was vocal about integrating the plains and hills people. He felt that it was vital to understand the tribal mind and to safeguard their interests and identity. He was in favour of granting autonomy to these areas and cooperation between the Centre and the State of Assam in taking the process of autonomy forward. Both Rev. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy and Gopinath Bardoloi may be considered to be the chief architects of the Sixth Schedule. But Nehru made indirect inputs. The concept of autonomy to the tribals in the form of District Councils was a contribution of Nehru. He was impressed with the Soviet concept of autonomous regions and political autonomy given to ethnic minorities and the effort to preserve their languages and culture and wanted to implement the same in India. He had already hinted at a similar kind of autonomy to the Nagas in his letter to T. Sakhrie in 1946. The Akbar Hydari–NNC Agreement agreed upon such autonomy. Both the texts were consulted while preparing the Sixth Schedule. However, while defending the concept of District Councils, Ambedkar and Bordoloi were at a loss in explaining the concept. Ambedkar compared the autonomy and reservation of Indian tribal in the Sixth Schedule with that of American aborigines in the Constituent Assembly.

The positions of the tribal of Assam whatever may be the reason for it, is somewhat analogous to the positions of the Red Indians in the United States as against the white emigrants there. Now what did the United States do with regard to the Red Indians? So far as I am aware what they did was to create what are called Reservations or Boundaries within which the Red Indians lived. They are a republic by themselves. No doubt by the laws of the United States they are citizens of the United States. But that is only a nominal



allegiance to the Constitution of the United States. Factually they are a separate independent people. It was felt by the United States that their laws and modes of living their habits and manners of life were so distinct that it would [be] dangerous to bring them at one shot so to say, within the range of the laws made by the White people for White people and for the purpose of White Civilization.⁹⁷

Bordoloi however defended it in another way,

...During the war, the then rulers and officers developed in the minds of these tribal people a sense of separation and isolation and gave them assurance that at the end of the war they will be independent states managing their affairs in their own way. They were led to believe that the entire hill areas would be constituted into a province ... you might have possibly read in the papers that plans were hatched in England in which the ex-Governors of Assam evidently took part to create sort of Kingdom over there ... people of these areas were already suffused fully with these ideas of isolation and separation. The most important fact that presented itself before this Committee was whether for the purpose of integration the methods of force should be used or a method should be used in which the willing co-operation of these people could be obtained for the purpose of governing these areas. The point therefore that presented itself to us was whether we should raise in them a spirit of enmity and hatred by application of force or whether we should bring them under the broad principle of government by good will and love ... if therefore Gandhian methods are to be followed, there is no alternative but to adopt the course which we have thought was the best method.⁹⁸

In its report submitted to Sardar Patel, the Sub-committee mentioned various aspects of tribal administration and development including special features of legislation and judicial procedures as well as land and forest etc. The Advisory Committee looked into the matter on 7th December 1947 and 24th February 1948, and forwarded the same to the President of the Constituent Assembly. It suggested two amendments: (i) that the Assam High Court should be given the power

of revision in cases of failure of justice or where the authority of the District Councils was without jurisdiction; and (ii) from Schedule 'B' of the areas, recommended for inclusion in the Schedule by the Sub-committee, the plains portion were to be excluded. Before discussions on the Report began, the Constitutional Advisor, Shri B.N. Rau, who had prepared the first draft of the Constitution in 1947, included the recommendations in the Eighth Schedule in his draft. The President of the Drafting Committee Dr. B.R. Ambedkar considered this in 1948. Amendments in the draft were minor. However, the number of the schedule became Six from Eight. Following this, the draft of the Schedule was submitted to the President of the Constituent Assembly on 21st February 1948. The draft of the Schedule was also sent to all concerned. Following their comments and criticisms, certain amendments were made. The Constituent Assembly finally considered the matter on 5th, 6th, and 7th September 1949. With the adoption of the Constitution prepared by the Constituent Assembly on 26th January 1950, the Sixth Schedule too became operational.

The Sixth Schedule aimed at providing the tribal people with a simple and an inexpensive administration of their own, by which they could safeguard their own customs, traditions, and culture, etc., and to allow 'maximum autonomy' in managing their own affairs. Equally vital was to protect these areas from penetration and exploitation by the plainsmen coupled with the preservation of their traditional self-governing institutions which had efficiently managed their affairs. The Bardoloi Sub-committee in its report underlined the need for a separate model of administration for the tribal areas of Assam. It also took note of a general apprehension amongst the people from these areas regarding their identity and future with respect to those from the plains.

Immediately before and after independence, political leaders of the country were busy creating a firm foothold for the emerging State. The Sixth Schedule was incorporated in the Constitution of India keeping in mind the spirit of the 'Objectives Resolution' which was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru in the Constituent Assembly on 13th December 1946, and adopted on 22nd January 1947.⁹⁹ In addition to the declaration that India was to be a sovereign independent republic, it assured that adequate safeguards would be provided for minorities,



and backward and tribal areas. At the same time, the territorial integrity of India would be maintained. Though Nehru was not the architect of either the Fifth or the Sixth Schedule, one cannot ignore the 'Objectives Resolution' which he framed and which became the basic guideline for both the schedules. Even though Nehru showed sympathy for the tribal areas, he made it clear that any attempt to secede from the Indian Union was not acceptable or/and possible. It is interesting to note that earlier the Indian National Congress and Nehru himself criticized the creation of 'Excluded Areas' and 'Partially Excluded Areas' as instruments for segregating the tribal people from their brethren in the plains. They saw it as a divisive attempt on the part of the Raj with the aim of repressing their liberties and obstructing their progress. They regarded it as an impediment to the growth of uniform democratic institutions in the country. They opined that democratic and self-governing institutions should be applicable to all parts of the country without any discrimination. However, there was considerable change in their views as they supported the formation of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules and assured the tribals that their cultures, languages, and scripts would be protected.

Nehru's Critique of Sixth Schedule

If Nehru played any part in the Sixth Schedule it was critiquing the District Council concept and repeatedly asking for more power to them. He requested Assam Chief Minister Bishnu Ram Medhi that the District Councils might be endowed with more authority but without any success. The District Councils seemed to be satisfied with the power assigned to them. The Executive Members of all the District Councils in Assam met on 16th November 1954 at Shillong to discuss matters of common interest wherein Capt. Williamson Sangma made a passionate speech with conviction to the effect that the only way by which Hill Areas could develop was by having a hill state of their own. Some members of the meeting did not agree with Sangma but ultimately the meeting passed a resolution demanding that all the Hill Areas of Assam be separated from it and constitute a full-fledged state. The State Reorganization Commission rejected the demand but recommended some special treatment to the hill tribes of Assam. Nehru opposed the idea of creation of a separate state comprising of hill

areas and wrote to the Chief Minister of Assam to grant additional powers to the District Councils so that the tribals might feel that they had the freedom to manage their own affairs. But the chief minister was totally opposed to this idea.

Sensing the chief minister's hostility to the idea of more power to the tribals as suggested by Nehru, Bonily Khongmen, a Congress MP from Khasi and Jaintia Hills introduced a bill for the amendment of the Sixth Schedule in the Lok Sabha. Nehru was in a delicate situation. If the bill was passed it would embarrass the Assam chief minister though it would make the tribals happy. Nehru saved the situation by getting Bonily Khongmen to withdraw the bill on the promise that he himself would bring forth a comprehensive amendment to the Sixth Schedule. Nehru promised to undertake comprehensive legislation on the subject. It could not be done as Medhi resigned. When Chaliha took over as the chief minister Nehru saw to it that several tribal leaders were introduced in the cabinet. Sangma was made the Minister for Tribal Affairs. This calmed down the tribals for quite some time until Assam decided to forcefully make Assamese the official language of the state despite Nehru's advice against it.

Nehru also objected to the discretionary power of the governors to withhold extension of state laws to tribal areas within its jurisdiction.¹⁰⁰ He saw its flaws during his visit to north east in 1952. He wrote,

...the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution for the formation of autonomous districts and autonomous regions in the hill areas of Assam. This, if I may say so, was a very wise provision. It is quite essential that these tribal people should be given the largest possible measure of local autonomy. According to the constitution, there should be six autonomous district councils. Five of these have been formed but the sixth in the Naga Hills district has not been formed because of the non co-operation of Nagas there. They demand an independent state which is rather absurd. But they have another grievance. According to them the understanding arrived at on their behalf with Sir Akbar Hyadari, the then Governor of Assam was not given effect to in the Sixth Schedule. In so far as

this is so we should be prepared to honour that understanding and even to vary the Sixth Schedule to some extent. That question however does not arise at present though I should like to consider the grant of further powers to the District Councils.

The Constitution lays down that each District Council for an autonomous district shall consist of not more than 24 members of whom not less than three-fourths shall be elected on the basis of adult suffrage. The stress thus is on election and on a limitation of nominated members. In effect however this has been interpreted as limiting the elected members to three-fourths only. This system of nomination gave rise to trouble in one district (Khasi and Jaintia Hills) where demonstrations took place against nominations and firing had to be resorted to. In the other autonomous districts no particular objection has been raised to the system of nominations. I do not think the system of nomination is good or any rate that it should extend to one quarter of the total members. As we have to produce a sensation or real autonomy, we should reduce this nomination to the lowest figure, if we keep it at all. It may be necessary to reserve a right to appoint one or two competent persons who might not be elected or to give representation to some minority group. I should imagine that it is enough to have two nominated members for this purpose or at the most three.

The real problem of the District Councils however is that of finance. They have very little money and everywhere I was asked for more financial assistance. The Assam Government has given Rs 30,000 to each DC for initial expenses. This does not go far and it is difficult for these people to raise much money from their own resources right at the beginning. It is very important that this experiment of DC should succeed. Their members are anxious to justify themselves and to do something but they cannot do much in existing circumstance for lack of money. The success of DCs would be a tremendous factor in this area. It would affect immediately the Naga areas also where thus far no such Council has been constituted.

The Khasi District Council raised a question of a sum of about Rs four and a half lakhs which had been kept in a separate account for them previously for the development of these areas. This sum however was taken over by the Assam Government. This caused a good deal of resentment because the money was really earmarked for that area. I mentioned this matter to the Chief Minister of Assam and he informed me that there were legal difficulties because that money had automatically become a part of the consolidated fund of the province. It is obvious however that any legal difficulty can be go over if necessary the money can be given as a grant by the Assam Government. The Chief Minister appreciated this argument and the demand was inclined to view it favourably. I hope that this money will be given to the Khasi Hills District Council. That would solve their immediate difficulties. The other District Councils will however remain still in an impecunious state and something will have to be done for them. They are even prepared to take loans. There is also the question of their annual revenue from some kind of taxation. In many of these areas there is no land revenue system and there are no many possibilities of raising money and any rate to begin with. This matter might be explored.

The Assam government appears to feel that the tribes are the responsibility of the Government of India and hence perhaps they have not in the past paid quite so much attention to them as they might have. The Government of India undoubtedly has a certain responsibility but so has the Assam Government also.

The economic structure of the regions has been upset by the partition and is also inevitably undergoing a change because of other reasons. During this period of transition some help to them appears essential. ... owing to partition chiefly people living on the borders have suffered greatly and their resources have been completely exhausted. In fact our Secretaries Committee reported they had obviously become impoverished and had suffered from lack of adequate nutrition. Thus there is a lack of purchasing power and unemployment. An urgent request was made to me for some kind of relief work



especially in the Khasi areas. This appears to be desirable particularly in the form of roads.

He empathized with the predicament of the province of Assam which was regularly devastated by flood and earthquake but also by the partition of India.

... the Province of Assam is one of our difficult provinces. It is not only a frontier province with Pakistan, Burma and Tibet and China all round, it has vast tribal area and there are all kinds of difficult problems —communications are limited, earthquakes, periodical floods etc and it has been powerfully affected by the partition of India.¹⁰¹

In some of these areas there are some kinds of chiefs or *Syiems*. There is demand for their removal by the DCs. Legal opinion was taken and I believe that this could not be done without payment of some kind of compensation to them for the income in kind they used to get. The sum involved I think was Rs 8 lakhs and it was proposed that this should be paid in installments. It is obvious that the DC is in no position to do so even though this might be in the form of a loan advance to them which might be gradually paid off.¹⁰²

The Scottish Pattern of Autonomy

When the aggrieved hill leaders of the north eastern region, dissatisfied by the hegemony and dominance of the Assamese leadership, formed a political party called the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) they met Nehru with a plan of creating a hill state for the tribals. Nehru suggested ideas known as Nehru Plan which offered them the Scottish pattern of autonomy. The Nehru Plan envisaged that the hill areas remain within Assam enjoying 99% autonomy of a state where the Sixth Schedule shall be retained and amended as per the recommendation of the Hill Areas Committee that was formed; the hill districts shall be represented by one member in Parliament and one MLA for every 40,000 people; the district councils and regional councils would be given more powers and finances; there

shall be a regional council for all the autonomous hill districts; no law affecting the interest of the hill areas shall be passed by the legislature without the consent of the regional council. The representative shall have direct access to the planning commission; hill people will have cent per cent control over certain departments; some subjects shall be common for both the hills and plains; English shall be the official language of the hills until it is replaced by Hindi; there shall be a separate university for the hill areas; the Assam cabinet shall consist of one member from the hill areas assisted by one state minister and two or three deputy ministers; in the selection of ministers the chief minister shall be guided by the recommendations of the Hill Areas Committee.¹⁰³ Accordingly, the Pataskar Commission was formed to look into the quantum of autonomy that could be given to them. The commission proposed 'no basic change' in the 6th Schedule' disappointing the hill leaders and making them raise the issue of separate hill state again. When the APHLC decided to boycott the 1967 general election, the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Shillong between 11th to 13th January 1967 and promised the reorganization of Assam. The strategic location and emerging tribal movements forced the Indian government to reformulate its internal policy on the north east.¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, the Government of India came out with a federal scheme in January 1967 to reorganize Assam and meet the aspirations of the tribals. But the proposal was rejected by both the peoples of the plains as well as of the hills. In order to break the impasse, the Government of India appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of Ashoka Mehta, then Union Minister for Planning. The Mehta Committee rejected the demand for creation of another hill state and suggested more autonomy to the hill tribals. The hill leadership boycotted the Ashoka Mehta Committee and remained firm in their demand for a separate hill state. The leadership of the APHLC organized a prolonged movement which, despite its militant mood, was peaceful without any threat to law and order situation. There was an undercurrent secessionist threat too. When their prolonged peaceful demand was not fulfilled to their satisfaction, sections of the Khasi youth threatened that they were going to East Pakistan for training in guerrilla warfare if their demand for a separate hill state was not fulfilled immediately.¹⁰⁵ In the winter of 1969, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took fresh initiative and declared the intention of the government to fulfil the long standing demands of the



hill tribals by providing them an autonomous state within the state of Assam. The concept of an autonomous state was completely unknown then and none of the parties involved, the opponents and the supporters of the movement, had actually demanded an autonomous state. They demanded a full fledged federal state. The concept of autonomous state came primarily as a mechanism to resolve the deepening political crisis in Assam's hills and plains. Under Article 244, three hill districts of Assam, i.e., Garo hill district, and Khasi and Jaintia hill districts became the first autonomous states of the Indian union. Thus autonomous state was a new experiment in the development of the Indian constitution.¹⁰⁶ The leadership which led the movement later and headed the new autonomous state government was adamant about securing full fledged statehood for Meghalaya and continued their struggle from the legislature and the cabinet. On the other hand, those who opposed the reorganization of Assam realized the futility of such opposition after the formation of Meghalaya as an autonomous state. After the formation of Bangladesh, the government of India declared its plan for further reorganization of Assam and gave full statehood to Manipur, Tripura, and Meghalaya. Moreover, the Mizo hill district of Assam was elevated to the status of union territory with a council of ministers and a legislative assembly. Arunachal Pradesh was renamed NEFA again with the provision for a council of ministers and a legislative assembly. The Reorganization Act of 1972 also provided for the creation of north-eastern council as a common organization to plan and coordinate development process among the states and union territories of north east India.

The Chinese Dragon on North East

Nehru as Prime Minister toured the north east between 18th and 25th October 1952. The prime minister's diary noted,

...I visited parts of the hills areas of Assam, the North East Frontier Agency, Manipur and Tripura ... I wanted to visit Tawang near the Tibetan border. This is a place of some importance to us as we had recently extended our administration to it some years back. It was on our side of the McMahon Line, but it had not been occupied by us and was practically under Tibetan control till then. In fact our

going there and occupying it led to protests from the then Tibetan authorities. It had thus some political importance. It was possible to land there as there was no air strip. To go by mountain path was many weeks journey. We had decided however to fly low over it and had announced the fact. We carried some flowers to throw over the monastery there. But we did not succeed in finding the place although we flew round about it for some time. Later we heard that hundreds of monks and nuns as well as the neighbouring village population and our Assam Rifles had gathered [in the] village just to see us in the air. They had come from long distances on foot and it was a great pity that we lost our way.¹⁰⁷

That the protest from Tibetan authorities that Nehru talked about could develop into a full-blown invasion from China was beyond anybody's imagination. But things did move in that direction from 1956 and more so from 1959 onwards. China has a border of 1,080 kms with north east India. China had never accepted the McMohan Line drawn by the British as the border demarcation between India and China. Nehru had hoped that the shared past of colonial rule would make these two giants of Asia grow together through mutual collaboration and co-operation. India was the first country to accord recognition to the new Peoples' Republic of China on 1st January 1950. Nehru also lobbied for Communist China's representation in the UN Security Council. In 1950, when China occupied Tibet without taking India into confidence, India was unhappy but did not question China's right over Tibet on the ground that in the past also China had subjugated Tibet many times. In 1954, India and China signed a treaty in which India recognized China's right over Tibet and the two countries agreed to be governed by the principles of *Panchsheel*. Difference over border delineation was discussed during this time but China maintained that it had not yet studied the old Kuomintang maps and these could be sorted out later. Despite this, relations continued to be close and Nehru went to great lengths to project China and Chou EnLai at the Bandung Conference. But right from the beginning the latter remained non-committal about settling the boundary issue. Nehru often talked about maintaining the status quo—as Himalayas was the natural boundary of India—and maintain the traditional alignment of territorial



boundaries. But China frequently trespassed the line of control, constructed roads through Aksai Chin, and pushed its boundary right into Indian Territory. Nehru showed restraint, perhaps realizing the military weakness of his new army. He felt the Naga problem was more important.

I am not sure of what China may do ten or twenty years hence. But to protect ourselves against possible developments, we have to do other things and not try to put up a useless Maginot Line. In particular we have to have peace, quiet and contentment on our side of the border. I am worried more about the Naga trouble from this point of view than about anything that Chinese may do.¹⁰⁸

In 1955, the Kham tribes started organized armed resistance against the Chinese in Tibet which gradually took the form of a full-fledged insurgency spreading from Chamdo to the Indo-Tibetan border. It was an unequal fight at the best of times, because the Khams received little or no support from the outside world, whereas the Chinese built up their forces in Tibet to more than 1,00,000 troops so that eventually they were able to crush the major centres of the insurgency though pockets of resistance continued to hold and harass for some years to come. Dalai Lama fled Tibet after the revolt along with thousands of refugees. He was given asylum in India though not allowed to set up a government in exile. The Chinese were unhappy at the Indian shelter offered to the Dalai Lama. The Chinese reacted by firing on an Indian patrol near the Kongka Pass in Ladakh in October 1959, killing five Indian policemen and imprisoning a few. Exchanges on resolving the crisis took place. Chou EnLai was even invited for talks in Delhi in April 1960 but no breakthrough was possible. These developments had a potential threat to the international border along the north east. China had already stepped up cartographical aggression by claiming almost the whole of NEFA as well as part of Brahmaputra valley and Bhutan as Chinese territory in their official maps.

On 8th September 1962 the Chinese forces attacked the Thagla ridge and dislodged an Indian troop. This was taken as an aberration. On 19th October 1962 the Chinese army launched a massive attack and overran Indian posts in the eastern sector in NEFA. ‘...Indian army commander fled without any effort at resistance leaving the door

wide open for China to walk in.’¹⁰⁹ In the western sector 13 forward posts were captured by the Chinese in the Galwan Valley and the Chusul airstrip threatened. There was a great outcry and a feeling of panic in the country. It was thought that the Chinese would come rushing in to the plains and occupy Assam and perhaps other parts as well. Nehru shot two letters to President Kennedy on 9th November 1962 describing the situation as grave and asked for wide ranging military help. He also sought Britain’s assistance. Twenty-four hours later the Chinese declared a unilateral withdrawal and pulled out as suddenly as it had invaded leaving behind a trail of devastation both in physical as well as emotional terms. Nehru could not take this betrayal and the already sick man succumbed to the shock in May 1964 but not before facing a fierce attack from political opponents, rightwing forces, and pro-western elements and had to sacrifice Krishna Menon, his long time associate and defense minister. They used the opportunity to block a constitutional amendment aimed at strengthening land ceiling legislation and affect the 3rd 5 year plan in which resources had to be diverted towards defense. The Congress lost three parliamentary by-elections in a row and Nehru faced the first no-confidence motion of his life on August 1963. Western critics blamed his ‘forward policy’ in the frontier for the Chinese attack on ‘self defense’ while the national media blamed his naiveté in trusting the Chinese. Neville Maxwell, who was known for his anti-India writings, advocated the theory that it was Nehru who shoved India into a war against China. The fact was there was betrayal of trust by China. There was failure of intelligence and military preparedness as the country had just emerged from two hundred years of colonial rule. The partition had devastated its military strength. Such a truncated army was used for integration of princely states, quell communal riots, mitigate natural disasters, quell invasion in Kashmir, as well as control insurgency in Naga Hills. India went into the disputed areas to establish its claim on the input of B.N. Mullick the Director of Intelligence Bureau to erect police posts ‘wherever we could’ so as to register ‘our claim on the territory.’ But these isolated posts manned by police with no backing by army were likely to fall like nine pins in the event of an attack from the Chinese. Out of the posts, 41 ran in a zigzag line. Few policemen against massive power of Chinese army were a ridiculously weak frontier.¹¹⁰ The Government initially tried to down play the reverses. But news of abject surrender poured in regularly. It also exposed India’s defense preparedness.



Nehru was shocked at the scale of attack as he thought that there might be occasional border skirmishes here and there but not an invasion of this nature. He erred in not anticipating the precise nature of the attack rather than in the foreign policy in pursued. A further mistake was the panic in appealing to USA and UK as next day the Chinese withdrew.¹¹¹ “The rapid success of the Chinese in moving from the frontier practically up to the Assam plains was for us and more specially for the tribals a traumatic experience.”¹¹²

As rest of the nation helplessly witnessed the almost certain advance of the Chinese to the plains of Assam, the army and civil administration were ordered to fall back to Guwahati and abandon the north bank. Nehru’s broadcast to the nation, ‘My heart goes out to the people of Assam’ was almost a farewell address to the people of Assam. The Assamese people have not forgotten how the rest of the nation and their Prime Minister had abandoned them at the mercy of the Chinese. The inability to resolve the Naga problem had saddened him and the Chinese invasion had killed him. Unfortunately both had a north east link. However, what stood out in this huge crisis of Chinese invasion was that the tribals of north east India steadfastly remained loyal to India. Immediately after independence there were apprehensions articulated by Sardar Patel that there might be a pan-mongoloid sentiment at work and at the event of a Chinese invasion the tribals of north east would collaborate with the Chinese.¹¹³ But it proved wrong. Nehru’s advisor in north east India, Nari Rustomji, recounted,

...there was a school of thinking that held that it would have been more politic and practical to settle the thinly populated hill areas with the martial races of India, such as from the Punjab so that firmer resistance might have been offered against the Chinese onslaught. It is my conviction however that it was mainly on account of our not having infringed upon the tribals’ rights in their land and forests that they remained loyal to the country, despite the fact that we had failed in protecting them during the time of need [Chinese invasion] ... this would not have been possible if our policy vis à vis the tribal people had been more realistic and ... respect for their culture and civilization.¹¹⁴



This was a tribute to Nehru's vision vis à vis the tribals of north east India. As far as Nehru was concerned, he could not take the betrayal of his conviction that Chinese invasion presented. The non-resolution of the Naga problem frustrated him; already a sick man, the Chinese attack killed him.

Endnotes:

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, Penguin, Delhi, 2010, originally published by The Signet Press, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 54–55.

² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘In the Surma Valley’, 9 December 1937 in his *Unity of India, Collected Writings, 1937–40*, London, 1948, p. 184.

⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘In the Valley of the Brahmaputra’, 9 December 1937 in his *Unity of India, Collected Writings, 1937–40*, London, 1948, p. 189.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Idem.*, p. 193.

¹⁰ See Fn 8.

¹¹ Assam Police Special Branch, B-2 (1)37II, 1937, Nehru’s Tour of Assam, Nehru’s speech on 28 Nov. 1937 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, *Gopinath Bordoloi, the Assam Problem and Nehru’s Centre*, Bhabani Print and Publications, Guwahati, 2010, p. 28. Also see, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 8, New Delhi, 1976–82, p. 494.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹³ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘In the Surma Valley’, 9 December 1937 in his *Unity of India, Collected Writings, 1937–40*, London, 1948, pp. 194–195.

¹⁴ Assam Police Special Branch, B-2 (1)37II, 1937, Nehru’s Tour of Assam, Nehru’s speech on 28 Nov. 1937 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, *Gopinath Bordoloi, the Assam Problem and Nehru’s Centre*, Bhabani Print and Publications, Guwahati, 2010, p. 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Nehru to Medhi, camp Jorhat, 1 December 1937, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 8, p. 486.

¹⁸ Nehru to Bordoloi, 17, Dec., 1937, released to the Press and published

under the caption, 'Three main problems; Pandit Nehru's Opinion; Text of a letter to Mr. Bordoloi, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 17 December 1937.

¹⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'In the Valley of the Brahmaputra', 9 December 1937 in his *Unity of India, Collected Writings, 1937-40*, London, 1948, p. 189.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

²¹ A.M. Zaidi and S.G. Zaidi (comp.), *Encyclopedia of Indian National Congress*, Vol. II (1936-38), New Delhi, S. Chand and Co., 1980, pp. 262-263.

²² Imdad Hussein, 'Resistance, Pacification and Exclusion: The Hill People and the Nationalist Upsurge', in A.C. Bhuyan (ed.), *Nationalist Upsurge in Assam*, Govt. of Assam, Publication Board, Guwahati, 1998, pp. 271-301.

²³ It was only in the wake of communal riot in Goalpara that a section of the immigrants moved to East Pakistan only to return at the time of peace.

²⁴ Nehru to Bordoloi 15 March 1948, Assam Secretariat Files cited in Nirode K. Barooah, *op.cit.*, p. 318.

²⁵ Bordoloi to Patel, 5 May 1948, Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. IV, document, 85, pp. 119-20 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, *op.cit.*, p. 319.

²⁶ Bordoloi to Nehru, New Delhi, 18 June 1948 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, *op.cit.*, p. 320.

²⁷ Nehru to all State Premiers, 24 January 1849 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, *op.cit.*, p. 320.

²⁸ Nehru to Bordoloi, 18 May 1949 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, *op.cit.*, p. 321.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Nirode K. Barooah. *Op.cit.*, p. 321.

³¹ Bordoloi to Nehru, 12 October 1949, cited in Nirode K. Barooah, *op.cit.*, p. 321.

³² Patel to Nehru, 29 September 1950, Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. IX, Document no. 231, pp. 247-8 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, *op.cit.*, p. 321.

³³ Nehru to Patel, 1 October 1950 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, *op.cit.*, p. 321.

- ³⁴ *Census of India* (Assam), 1951, Vol. XII, Part I A, p. 357.
- ³⁵ Nirode K. Barooah, op.cit., p. 386.
- ³⁶ Nirode K. Barooah, (ed.) *Bordoloi Dinlekha*, Vol. II 1948–50, entry for 3 May 1948, Guwahati, 2001, p. 73 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, op.cit., p. 392.
- ³⁷ Bordoloi to Nehru, 7 May 1949 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, op.cit., p. 392.
- ³⁸ Nehru to Bordoloi, 18 May 1949 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, op.cit., p. 321.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Bordoloi to Nehru, 29 May 1949 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, op.cit., p. 321.
- ⁴² Patel to Bordoloi, 11 June 1950 in Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. IX, Document no. 189, pp. 205–6 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, op.cit., p. 321.
- ⁴³ Patel to Bordoloi, 3 June 1950 in Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. IX, Document no. 191, pp. 207–8 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, op.cit., p. 418.
- ⁴⁴ Patel to A.P. Jain, 28 June 1950 in Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. IX, Document no. 192, pp. 209 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, op.cit., p. 418.
- ⁴⁵ Patel to Daulatram, 8 June 1950, in Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. IX, Document no. 185, p. 196 cited in Nirode K. Barooah, op.cit., p. 418.
- ⁴⁶ Ramchandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of World's Largest Democracy*, Picador, New Dehli, 2008, p. 263.
- ⁴⁷ Bipan Chandra et al., *India After Independence 1947–2000*, Penguin, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 114–5; Paul R. Brass, *The Politics of India Since Independence*, CUP, New Delhi, 1992; Asoso Yonou, *The Rising Nagas: A Political and Historical Study*, Vivek, Delhi, 1974; M. Horam, *Thirty Years of Naga Insurgency*, Cosmo, Delhi, 1990.
- ⁴⁸ Murkot Ramunny, *The World of Nagas*, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 1988, p. 19.
- ⁴⁹ NNC Resolution 19 June 1946; from T. Sakhrie and Sashaimeran Aier to Jawaharlal Nehru.

⁵⁰ See for details Sajal Nag, *Contesting Marginality: Ethnicity, Insurgency and Subnationalism in North East India*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2002.

⁵¹ Nehru to NNC delegation led by Phizo aboard S.S. Lusai (steamer) on River Brahmaputra, Silghat Assam, 29 December 1951.

⁵² *Times of India*, 1 January 1952, news heading 'No independence for Nagas: Plain speaking by Nehru'.

⁵³ S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 2, 1947–56*, OUP, Delhi, 1983, p. 207.

⁵⁴ Nehru to J. Daulatram, Governor of Assam and Bishnuram Medhi, Chief Minister of Assam, 2 February 1951 cited in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 2, 1947–56*, OUP, Delhi, 1983, p. 207. Most of the correspondences of Nehru cited below are from these sources (Vol. 2 & 3) unless otherwise mentioned.

⁵⁵ Nehru to J. Daulatram, 4 April 1952.

⁵⁶ Nehru to B.R. Medhi, 25 May 1951.

⁵⁷ Nehru to J. Daulatram, Governor of Assam and Bishnuram Medhi, Chief Minister of Assam, 2 February 1951.

⁵⁸ Note by Nehru, 9 December 1953 cited in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 2, 1947–56*, OUP, Delhi, 1983, p. 211.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Cited in Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland*, Shilong Govt. of Assam, 1961, pp. 60–61.

⁶¹ Nehru to Defense Secretary, 19 June 1956 in S. Gopal, op. cit, p. 212.

⁶² S. Gopal, op. cit, p. 212.

⁶³ Nehru to Bishnuram Medhi, 13 May 1956, Secret and Personal, no. 1116-PMH/56, New Delhi.

⁶⁴ Nehru to K.N. Katju, Defence Minister, 28 July 1956, S. Gopal, op. cit, p. 211.

⁶⁵ Nehru, speech in Lok Sabha, New Delhi during the debate on the Naga Hills Situation, August 23, 1956.

⁶⁶ Nehru's statement in Rajya Sabha debates, 28 August 1958, Vol. 22, pp. 1470–1474.

⁶⁷ Nehru to K.N. Katiu, Defence Minister, 28 July 1956.

- ⁶⁸ Nehru to Fazl Ali, Governor of Assam, 10 August 1954.
- ⁶⁹ Nehru's Note to foreign secretary, 5 March 1959, in S. Gopal, op. cit, p. 178.
- ⁷⁰ Nehru's speech in the Lok Sabha Debates on the Nagaland Statehood Bill, Vol. XLIV, 1–12 August 1960.
- ⁷¹ Nehru to Bishnuram Medhi 13 May 1956, Secret and Personal, no. 1116-PMH/56, New Delhi.
- ⁷² Nehru, speech in Lok Sabha, op. cit.
- ⁷³ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'In the Valley of the Brahmaputra', 9 December 1937 in his *Unity of India, Collected Writings, 1937–40*, London, 1948, p. 189; Letters written to Home Member, 23 September 1946 in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, series one, vol. 8, pp. 492–499.
- ⁷⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Note by the Prime Minister on His tour of the North Eastern Frontier Provinces, 18–25 October 1952*, published by Government of India, New Delhi, 1952, pp. 1-2.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ⁷⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'In the Valley of the Brahmaputra', 9 December 1937 in his *Unity of India, Collected Writings, 1937–40*, London, 1948, p. 189; Letters written to Home Member, 23 September 1946 in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, series one, Vol. 8, pp. 492–499.
- ⁷⁷ L. Jogeshwar Singh, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and Pollitical Reforms in North East India with special reference to Nagaland and Manipur', in T.S. Gangte (ed.), *Nehru and North East India*, S. Chand and Co., New Delhi, 1993, p. 147–168.
- ⁷⁸ Nehru quoted in Chintamani Panigrahi, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the North East', in T.S. Gangte (ed.), *Nehru and North East India*, S. Chand and Co., New Delhi, 1993, pp. 168–186.
- ⁷⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Note by the Prime Minister on His tour of the North Eastern Frontier Provinces, 18–25 October 1952*, p. 19.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid.
- ⁸¹ G.S. Ghurye, 'The Aborigines—so called and their future', Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, India Publication no. 11, 1943.
- ⁸² Verrier Elwin, *The Loss of Nerve: A Comparative Study of the Contact of Peoples in the Aboriginal Areas of Bastar State and Central Provinces of India*, Bombay, Wagle Press, 1941.

⁸³ Jawaharlal Nehru's Speech at the opening session of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Area Conference at New Delhi in June 1952.

⁸⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, Foreword to Verrier Elwin, *A Philosophy for NEFA* Shillong, 2nd Edition, 1959.

⁸⁵ Sanjukta Dasgupta, 'The Tribal Issue: 1964–1984', in Aditya Mukherjee (ed.), *A Centenary History of Indian National Congress*, Vol. V, 1964–1984, Academic Foundation, New Delhi, 2011, pp. 245–282.

⁸⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru's speech at the opening session of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Area Conference at New Delhi in June 1952.

⁸⁷ Nehru also could not visit Lushai hills in the same trip for similar reasons.

⁸⁸ Address delivered by Nehru on 4 April 1953 to Lushai Hills District Council at Reid House, Aizawl, on the invitation of Dr. Rosiama, Chairman of the Council published in *Nehru and the North East*, compiled by North Eastern Hill University, Mizoram Campus, NEHU Publications, Shillong, 1989, pp. 12–17.

⁸⁹ These five principles were

- 1) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture,
- 2) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected
- 3) We should try and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will no doubt be needed especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders in tribal territory
- 4) We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through and not in a rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.
- 5) We should judge results not by statistics or the amount of money spent but by the equality of human character that is evolved.

⁹⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'A Note by the Prime Minister on His Tour of the North Eastern Frontier Provinces', 18–25 October 1952, p. 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹² N.K. Rustomji, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Tribes: Romance and Compassion', in K.S. Singh, *Jawaharlal Nehru, Tribes and Tribal Policy*, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1989, p. 30.

⁹³ Jawaharlal Nehru, Foreward to Verrier Elwin, *A Philosophy for NEFA*, Shillong, 1st Edition, 1957.

⁹⁴ V. Venkata Rao, 'Jawaharlal and the Formation of States in North East India', in T.S. Gangte (ed.), *Nehru and North East India*, S. Chand and Company, New Delhi, 1993, p. 135.

⁹⁵ J.N. Choudhury, 'Two Visionaries Nehru and Elwin in the Context of India's Tribal Policy since Independence with special reference fo India's North East Frontier', in K.S. Singh, *Jawaharlal Nehru, Tribes and Tribal Policy*, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1989, pp. 33–53.

⁹⁶ Ibid see also N.K. Rustomji, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Tribes: Romance and Compassion', in K.S. Singh, *Jawaharlal Nehru, Tribes and Tribal Policy*, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1989, p. 29.

⁹⁷ B.R. Ambedkar, Draft Constitution, Sixth Schedule, *Constituent Assembly Debates*, p. 1025, cited in V.S. Jafa, 'Administrative Politicies and Ethnic Disintegration: Engineering Conflict in India's North East', *Faultlines*, Vol. 2, August 1999, pp. 48–115.

⁹⁸ Gopinath Bordoloi, Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, p. 1011, cited in V.S. Jafa, 'Administrative Politicies and Ethnic Disintegration: Engineering Conflict in India's North East', *Faultlines*, Vol. 2, August 1999, pp. 48–115.

⁹⁹ The 'Objective Resolution' was framed by Nehru as a philosophy and a set of principles on the basis of which the Constitution was to be framed. According to Nehru it was 'something more than a resolution. It is a declaration, a firm resolve, a pledge and the welfare of mankind'. See Durga Das Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, Lexis Nexis, Butterworths Wadhwa, Nagpur, 20th reprint 2012, p. 20.

¹⁰⁰ J.N. Choudhury, op. cit.

¹⁰¹ Nehru quote, by Chintamani Panigrahi, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the North East', in T.S. Gangte (ed.), *Nehru and North East India*, S. Chand and Co., New Delhi, 1993, pp. 168–186.

¹⁰² Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Note by the Prime Minister on His Tour of the North Eastern Frontier Provinces, 18–25 October 1952*, pp. 9–13.

¹⁰³ V. Venkata Rao, 'Jawaharlal and the Formation of States in North East India', in T.S. Gangte (ed.), *Nehru and North East India*, S. Chand and Company, New Delhi, 1993, p. 135.

¹⁰⁴ Monirul Hussain, 'Tribal Movement for Autonomous State in Assam',

Economic and Political Weekly, 8 August 1987, pp. 1328–1332.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Note by the Prime Minister on His Tour of the North Eastern Frontier Provinces, 18–25 October 1952*, pp. 1–2.

¹⁰⁸ Nehru to K.N. Katju, Defence Minister, 28 July 1956 in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol. 3, 1956–1964, OUP, Delhi, 1984, p. 34.

¹⁰⁹ Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, *India after Independence 1947–2000*, Penguin, New Delhi, 1999, p. 164.

¹¹⁰ Anirudh Prakash, ‘The Nehruvian Blunder’, in *The Shillong Times*, 22 March 2014, p. 6.

¹¹¹ Bipan Chandra, *ct. at./op. cit.*, p. 167.

¹¹² N.K. Rustomji, ‘Jawaharlal Nehru and the Tribes: Romance and Compassion’, in K.S. Singh, *Jawaharlal Nehru, Tribes and Tribal Policy*, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1989, p. 30.

¹¹³ *All along the Himalayas in the north and north east we have on our side of the frontier, a population ethnologically and culturally not different from Tibetan or Mongoloids. The undefined state of the frontier and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to Tibetans or Chinese have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselves. Recent and bitter history also tells us that communism is as good or as bad as imperialists or as any other. Chinese ambitions in this respect not only cover the Himalayan slopes on our side but also include important parts of Assam. They have their ambition in Burma also. Burma has the added difficulty that it has no McMahon line round which to build up even semblance of an agreement. Chinese irredentism and communist imperialism are different from the expansionism or imperialism of western powers. The former has a cloak of ideology which makes it ten times more dangerous ... our northern or northeastern approaches consists of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling, and the tribal areas of Assam. From the point of view of communication they are weak spots. There is unlimited scope for infiltration. Police protection is limited to a very small number of passes. There too our outposts do not seem to be very fully manned. The contact of these areas with us is by no means, close and intimate. The people inhabiting these portions have no established loyalty or devotion to*



India. Even Darjeeling and Kalimpong areas are not free from pro-mongoloid prejudices. Sardar Patel to Jawaharlal Nehru, 7 November 1950.

¹¹⁴ N.K. Rustomji, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Tribes: Romance and Compassion', in K.S. Singh, *Jawaharlal Nehru, Tribes and Tribal Policy*, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1989, p. 30.