

Premier Chou En-lai's Letter to Prime Minister Nehru

November 7, 1959

Peking, November 7, 1959

His Excellency Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru
Prime Minister of the Republic of India
New Delhi

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

Your Excellency's letter dated September 26, 1959, has been received. It is most unfortunate that subsequently another unexpected border clash took place on October 21 within Chinese territory in the area south of the Kongka Pass. Regarding this clash, the Chinese and Indian Governments have already exchanged several notes, including the November 4 note of the Indian Government to the Chinese Government. Most regrettably, this note of the Indian Government not only disregards in many respects the basic facts of the question of boundary between the two countries and the truth of the border clash, but adopts an attitude which is extremely harmful to the friendly relations between the two countries. Obviously, it is in no way helpful to a settlement of the question to take such an attitude. Under the present circumstances, I consider that the most important duty facing us is, first of all, to take effective steps, speedily

and without hesitation, to earnestly improve the disquieting situation on the border between the two countries, and work for the complete elimination of the possibility of any border clash in the future.

As the Sino-Indian boundary has never been delimited, and it is very long and very far or comparatively far from the political centres of the two countries, I am afraid that, if no fully appropriate solution is worked out by the two Governments, border clashes which both sides do not want to see may again occur in the future. And once such a clash takes place, even though a minor one, it will be made use of by people who are hostile to the friendship of our two countries to attain their ulterior objectives. There is a history of long-standing friendship but no conflict of fundamental interests between our two countries, and our Governments are initiators of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. We have no reason to allow the tension on the border between our two countries to continue.

Your Excellency's letter of September 26 contains many viewpoints to which the Chinese Government cannot agree. Regarding these, I would like to state my views on another occasion. I am glad, however, that this letter reiterates that the Indian Government attaches great importance to the maintenance of friendly relations with China and agrees to the view consistently held by the Chinese Government that the border disputes which have already arisen should be settled amicably and peacefully, and that pending a settlement the status quo should be maintained and neither side should seek to alter the status quo by any means. In order to maintain effectively the status quo of the border between the two countries, to ensure the tranquillity of the border regions and to

create a favourable atmosphere for a friendly settlement of the boundary question, the Chinese Government proposes that the armed forces of China and India each withdraw 20 kilometres at once from the so-called McMahon Line in the east, and from the line up to which each side exercises actual control in the west, and that the two sides undertake to refrain from again sending their armed personnel to be stationed in and patrol the zones from which they have evacuated their armed forces, but still maintain civil administrative personnel and unarmed police there for the performance of administrative duties and maintenance of order. This proposal is in effect an extension of the Indian Government's proposal contained in its note dated September 10 that neither side should send its armed personnel to Longju, to the entire border between China and India, and moreover a proposal to separate the troops of the two sides by as great a distance as 40 kilometres. If there is any need to increase this distance, the Chinese Government is also willing to give it consideration. In a word, both before and after the formal delimitation of the boundary between our two countries through negotiations, the Chinese Government is willing to do its utmost to create the most peaceful and most secure border zones between our two countries, so that our two countries will never again have apprehensions or come to a clash on account of border issues. If this proposal of the Chinese Government is acceptable to the Indian Government, concrete measures for its implementation can be discussed and decided upon at once by the two Governments through diplomatic channels.

The Chinese Government has never had the intention of straining the border situation and the relations between

the two countries. I believe that Your Excellency also wishes to see the present tension eased. I earnestly hope that, for the sake of the great, long-standing friendship of the more than one thousand million people of our two countries, the Chinese and Indian Governments will make joint efforts and reach a speedy agreement on the above-said proposal.

The Chinese Government proposes that in order to further discuss the boundary question and other questions in the relations between the two countries, the Prime Ministers of the two countries hold talks in the immediate future.

Respected Mr. Prime Minister! The peoples of our two countries desire that we act promptly. I think we should satisfy their desires and not let those who seek every chance to disrupt by all means the great friendship between China and India attain their sinister objective. I await an early reply from Your Excellency.

I take this opportunity to express to you my cordial regards.

(Signed) CHOU EN-LAI

Premier of the State Council
of the People's Republic of China