

The Current, July 19, 1969

Chinese Eyes On Nathu La

Sir,

I wish to draw your attention to the article entitled "Chinese Eyes Focussed on Strategic Nathu la" which appeared in the issue of June '69. The article is a complete distortion of facts and displays poor understanding of military matters.

Unfortunately few in India except the military men themselves, have any real understanding of military matters. From the contents of the article it would appear that your correspondent also falls in this category. I am no soldier myself but due to my life-long association with the Army (being an Army Officer's daughter and an Army Officer's wife) I feel it my duty to correct the wrong impression that this article is likely to create.

I am unable to confirm whether the Chinese actually constructed the three bunkers at Nathu la about which your correspondent is so alarmed, but it would suffice to say that construction of bunkers is a very normal thing in defence and will continue to be constructed by either side for the sake of adjustment and improvement of their respective defences. We have not yielded an inch of Sikkimese territory to the Chinese at Nathu la. The Nation is proud of the fact that the wire that was laid at the cost of so many lives by our gallant soldiers to demarcate the Tibet-Sikkim boundary at Nathu la, still stands and is treated with respect by the Chinese after the military duel that followed.

It is totally incorrect to say that our Jawans are not well fed or well clothed in comparison with the Chinese. Your correspondent is not the only one who has visited Nathu la. It is also incorrect to say that letters from home take months to reach the troops. We the relatives of the troops, know that the Army Post Offices are highly efficient.

Furthermore nothing can be farther from the truth than to say that our troops do not know the cause for which they have to fight. China and Pakistan need to explain special reasons to their soldiers to induce them to fight because they fight as aggressors but the Indian soldier fights for his hearth and home, kith and kin.

Your correspondent subsequently concedes that it was the high morale and valour of our troops that resulted in the Chinese failure at Nathu la in September 1967. If he would also concede that earlier in 1965 it was this very morale and valour of Indian troops that sent the Pakistanis back with a bloody nose, then there would be little for the nation to worry about regarding the morale of our Army.

What sort of security risk your correspondent is visualising in the visit of foreigners to Nathu la is difficult to guess. Leakage of any information that helps the enemy, means death for the soldier. Therefore, even if he is too careless to worry about the security of his defences for the sake of his country, he must meet the needs of security for his own survival. We are confident that our troops at Nathu la are doing what they ought to do with regard to their security.

The story of some Tibetan labourer signalling to the Chinese from within our territory and the Chinese conducting attacks on the basis of these signals would appear fantastic to anyone who has an iota of knowledge of military science. Such spy stories may adorn some Indian films but they would appear ridiculous when related in context of a live battle.

(Mrs.) Brahma Singh Calcutta

(Madam, construction of bunkers by the Chinese may seem to you a “a very normal thing” but to us it amounts to a hostile act. To you the story of Tibetan labourers signaling to the Chinese may seem “fantastic” and “ridiculous” but this country cannot afford to be careless any more. The Red Chinese betrayed us in 1962. And we don’t wish to be a victim of their cunning once again. Our correspondent though not an “amateur military strategist” like you, has certainly seen things for himself in that sensitive area which you have not. – Ed.)