

Mr. M. R. Masani's speech in the Lok Sabha on December 23,
1967, in the course of a discussion on International Affairs

Listening to the Prime Minister's speech, I was reminded of what has been said about the British House of Lords and it struck me that the hon. Prime Minister was trying to emulate that august body about whom a poet has said that "they do nothing at all, but do it exceedingly well." I do not know to what extent the House thinks that the Prime Minister has succeeded in this effort. We all have our own ideas. But it did occur to me that her speech was nothing but a catalogue of generalities and platitudes, which has nothing to do with the kind of concrete situations that we are facing today.

I too could go round the world like her, casting my glance at the various parts of the world, but time is very short and, therefore, I shall resist this temptation and shall only focus attention on three or four peculiar things that have been happening during the past few months which have caused concern to us and which, in any event, do not appear to have anything to do with the policy of non-alignment which this Government professes.

Before I give some examples of these developments, all of which are in the direction of leaning over backwards to placate the Soviet Union, may I express the hope, Sir, that the Prime Minister and Government will see that the honour of this country is maintained in regard to what is done to that unfortunate Soviet youth, Aziz Ouloug-Zade, who has refused to go back to Soviet tyranny. This young man has made it perfectly clear to the Soviet Ambassador and to others who have been allowed to interview him that he does not want to go back to the Soviet Union because of his political objections. In the whole of the civilised world, there is the right of asylum and this right of asylum, Sir, we have so far respected. The last example was on the 29th March, 1963, in our own capital when a Delhi court ordered Tarasov, a previous defector from the Soviet Union, to be set at large from the Soviet Embassy which was trying to deport him forcibly and he was allowed to leave the country for wherever he wanted to go.

I should be glad to have an assurance from the hon. Prime Minister that no pressure will be brought on this young man to do anything that he does not want to do and that we wish that in perfect freedom he should be allowed to stay in our country or to leave for whatever country to which he wishes to go. I am sure, on this point, Sir, I reflect the overwhelming majority of this House.

I said that I would like to draw attention to some peculiar things that have been happening in our country during the last few months. The latest and the most glaring of these has been what has been described as the Novosti deal. Far from taking measures to protect our country from subversion and infiltration, our Government has gone out of its way to become a vehicle for Soviet propaganda in this country of which we have had such beautiful specimens in the John Smith articles and the broadcasts from the Radio Peace and Progress.

This agreement was signed in Moscow by a junior official of the Information & Broadcasting ministry on the 16th of September. The most interesting thing about it is its secrecy. Those who signed it were so ashamed of their action that for two long months they hid it under the table. It was as late as 30th November that an enterprising Press correspondent in the Hindustan Times broke the story. After a few hours or days of evasion and shuffling of feet, the facts were at last admitted. What are the facts?

First of all, what is NOVOSTI? Up to 1961, Sir, the press and propaganda activities of the Soviet Union were carried out by Tass and Sovinformbyuro. In February 1961, Novosti was brought into existence as a press news agency by several so-called "public" institutions which mean in Russia non-official institutions theoretically, among whom were the Union of Soviet Writers, Union of Soviet Journalists, Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship and Cultural Relations and the All Union Society for the Dissemination of Scientific and Political Knowledge. Later, other sponsors were added. The interesting thing is that Novosti took over from the Sovinformbyuro which was then shut down. The

entire staff of the Sovinformbyuro was taken over in Moscow and elsewhere by Novosti.

Like all other Soviet agencies abroad, Novosti has indulged in large scale intelligence and espionage activities both in this country and elsewhere. In this regard, it has a dishonourable record of expulsions of which I can only give a few. In November 1963, the Congolese Government arrested the Novosti correspondent, Benik Beknazar-Jouzbachev. In April 1966, Kenya expelled four Soviet officials, one of whom was Iouri Kouritsine, Novosti representative. In May 1967, the Republic of Colombia arrested Alfonso Monsalve Ramirez, the local Novosti representative, for faking passports, for fabricating passports. On June 6, 1967, Ghana expelled Alexei Kazansev, Novosti representative for espionage activities and the Ghana Press reported that the Novosti office had become "a spy centre."

So, Novosti's subservience to the Soviet official line - although it is claimed that a non-official organisation represents the people and not the Government - is shown by what happened to Mr. Khrushchev. When Mr Khrushchev was in power, he was being constantly flattered by Novosti news handouts. But when the late lamented Khrushchev fell from grace, he became an "unperson" so far as Novosti was concerned. They withdrew in India a booklet they had published on the visit of Dr. Radhakrishnan, our President, to the Soviet Union, in which Khrushchev had of course featured very largely. In the revised edition, Khrushchev became an unperson, and Dr. Radhakrishnan visited Moscow, but no Khrushchev was there to receive him! And what is interesting is that they reprinted the communique jointly signed by Khrushchev and Dr. Radhakrishnan, but Khrushchev's name disappeared and Dr. Radhakrishnan signed a joint communique with himself!

This disposes of the fiction that Novosti is different from Radio Peace and Progress or the Soviet dictatorship. This is the kind of fabricator of news and falsifier of history whom we are now holding out to the Indian press as a credible agency whose material should be made respectable by being kept available in the Information Department of our own democratic government.

The hon. Minister of Information and Broadcasting two days ago made a pathetic attempt to stick to his silly statement that Radio Peace and Progress had nothing to do with Novosti. This is nonsense. Radio Peace and Progress was brought into existence in Moscow in July, 1964, and when announcing its formation, Novosti was mentioned as one of its co-sponsors. This fact has been mentioned on the floor of the House by a junior colleague of mine who had quoted the relevant announcements. I would only give the references in order to save time; and these are a Swedish language broadcast from Moscow by Radio Peace and Progress at 19.00 GMT on 26th January, 1967, and a German language broadcast on 19th October, 1967, at 19.00 GMT, where it was proudly mentioned that Novosti was one of the co-sponsors of the radio station itself.

The point is that all these are facets of the same dictatorship. Article 126 of the Soviet Constitution very frankly lays down:

"The Party is the leading core of all organisations.....
both public and State."

Novosti being a "public" organisation, the communist dictatorship is the core of Novosti as of everything else.

Now, what is the other party to the agreement? It is the PIB. The PIB is a bureau for serving the Indian press at home. It has no jurisdiction or functions outside our own country. It has no business to enter into any international agreements whatsoever. This is the role of the External Publicity wing of the Ministry of External Affairs, whose territory has been encroached upon by this agreement. Whether they are taking it lying down or privately having a war between the two Ministries I do not know. If they have any self-respect they will get this agreement cancelled as a vindication of their own position.

Now, what is the nature of the agreement? It says that this agreement is being brought about to bring about a "better understanding" between the two countries. This fabricator of news, this organisation that puts out the John Smith

letters and articles through Radio Peace and Progress, this is the organisation that is going to bring about better understanding between the Soviet Union and our country! I ask the Prime Minister in all conscience; Is this her idea of better understanding between the two countries? we agree also to make available material to be published by Novosti. Here again, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting has insulted the intelligence of this House. I shall read out the appropriate paragraph from the agreement. It says:

"APN will supply PIB feature articles, background material and photographs to be used as reference material and also to make it available to such newspapers and periodicals published in India which may request or show interest in such materials."

If the idea is to keep it on the table, what is the meaning of the words 'and also to make available'? After saying that it will be kept there, it goes on to say 'also to make available'. It must have some meaning. The meaning is very clear, namely, that if the National Herald or Blitz or some other fellow-travelling journal wants that material, the PIB will be under an obligation to mail it to them and to forward it to them from day to day. I think the Information and Broadcasting Minister owes an apology to the House on this point for persisting in his error when he could have easily corrected himself. The fact is that he has a guilty conscience and every attempt is being made to play down this agreement which was entered into by a junior official.

The Indian press has sized it up correctly, and thank God, we have a free press. The Times of India editorial called it a 'bad deal'; the Hindustan Times editorial called it a 'dubious deal', and the Indian Express has called it a 'scandalous business'. Mr. Mani, an editor in the other House, referred to it by saying that the Government of India had become "a broker of the Soviet Union."

The question is who authorised this agreement. I would like to ask the Prime Minister to tell us who authorised this agreement and on what date. The Minister of Information and Broadcasting has said that neither he nor the Cabinet had been consulted. He was the relevant Minister, and he says that he had approved of it afterwards. He said this on the floor of the house. It is there in the proceedings. I accept his word for it, that he is not trying to pass the buck and that he knew nothing about it. I take it also that the hon. Prime Minister also did not know anything about it; otherwise, surely, she would have consulted the Cabinet. If neither she nor the Information and Broadcasting Minister nor the Cabinet was consulted, who authorised this far-reaching agreement at such variance with our national policy? The answer is 'Nobody'! But then Mr Bharadwaj must have got some encouragement from somewhere. This petty official could not have dared to sign this agreement if somebody had not encouraged him. Who was the person or who were the persons who instigated Mr Bharadwaj to sign this agreement behind the back of our Government?

There is a report that an official of the Ministry of External Affairs who was consulted about the travelling arrangements declined to authorise or sanction the payment of the passage to Mr Bharadwaj to and from Moscow for this visit on the ground that this was contrary to the Government of India's practice. But in the end, this passage was paid for by the Soviet Government. Who overruled this responsible official of the Ministry of External Affairs? In what Ministry was that person overruled? I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister which other official overruled this official of the Ministry of External Affairs who was doing his or her duty. The Ministry of External Affairs, as far as we could understand, also were not a party to this deal.

All this brings one to the feeling which is irresistible that there must be individuals in the Information & Broadcasting Ministry and/or the Ministry of External Affairs who have allowed their excessive zeal in the Soviet interest to face their own government with a fait accompli. I would hesitate to call it a conspiracy, but if there was more than one person who was a party to it, then it becomes a conspiracy between certain officials to dictate to our Government to make a coup d'etat. I wonder if the Prime Minister will authorise an investigation into

the circumstances which led to the signing of the agreement.

Secondly, may I suggest that she and her colleagues cancel this agreement? Her own father set a good example in regard to the Voice of America deal. The ground on which that deal was cancelled -- I do not think that it was very accurately presented to us -- was that the Secretary to Government and the Minister had not consulted the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. Assuming that that was so, the deal was cancelled. The Minister was removed from office, and the Secretary to Government was transferred from his job. Mr. Nawab Singh was removed and punished and victimised for this reason. What is coming in the way of this agreement being cancelled and steps being taken to find out how this agreement was concluded in the name of this country?

Now, I shall give one or two other examples of the shady dealings that have been taking place during the last few months. The next thing is about the appointment of our Envoy-designate to Britain. I am afraid the Prime Minister was not only kept in ignorance about this gentleman's activities in the past but she even misled the House when she gave her reply or rather she was herself misled, which is more likely, on the 27th November. She gave two explanations or excuses. She said that the statement was made by Mr. Dhawan at the time of the Indo-Pakistani conflict and it was soon after the British Prime Minister had made a statement, because everybody was excited about the matter.

I would like to point out that this article was published in Blitz on the 29th January, 1966, six months after the conflict had come to an end, and, in fact, after the Tashkent agreement had been signed. I have got the article here, and not once in the whole article does Mr. Dhawan show the slightest interest in the Indo-Pakistani conflict. On the contrary, the only time he mentions Pakistan is in a very friendly way, when he hopes that the Tashkent Agreement would be carried out by both sides! Therefore, his tirade against Britain had nothing to do with the Indo-Pakistan conflict.

I was pointing out that Mr. Dhawan's article was not an isolated act as the Prime Minister was given to understand. Under the pseudonym 'Sanjaya' he used to write articles in the National Herald during the Fifties, and those show that he is a Communist fellow-traveller without any doubt. He says in one article:

"A few months ago, I was asked to give the definition of a progressive person. I replied: 'Today the test of a progressive person is his attitude towards the Soviet Union.' "

When Communist China attacked Tibet, Mr. Dhawan wrote an article in the National Herald on 9th November, 1953, where he said:

"The interests of India are not directly involved, and the question of our making a protest simply does not arise. The propaganda about Chinese 'aggression' in Tibet is completely baseless."

Then he went on to welcome the liberation of Tibet by his Communist friends, and said:

"I have no doubt that the people of Tibet will benefit greatly as a result of closer contact between Tibet and China. Tibet is one of the most backward countries in the world....All this will change under Chinese rule. Tibet will now share the benefits of civilisation like all the other countries in Central Asia which have passed under Communist rule."

In an article in November, 1966, writing about his visit to the Soviet Union, he said there was full Rule of Law in the Soviet Union; in fact, there is more rule of law there because the Soviet Union has no Preventive Detention Act!

This is the man we have chosen to improve our relations with Britain by sending him to London. If he had been sent to Budapest or Prague, may be the local Government would not have minded it, but this is a mischievous act foisted on the Prime Minister and the Government by some of her unfortunate advisors.

Take her visit to Moscow last October. We tried to warn her when we saw an item

in the press that she was going to put her foot into it. My friends, Mr. Dandeker, Mr. Amersey and I sent a telegram from Bombay saying "Please don't do this". We pointed out that her visit would be misinterpreted because there would be anti-democratic propaganda during the celebrations, and we asked her: Have you ascertained how many Prime Ministers of democratic countries are going to attend, or you will be in the company of Soviet satellites alone? All that we said came true because with the exception of only one man, Prime Minister Kekkonen of Finland, whose situation we all understand, whose geographical situation under the paw of Soviet domination we sympathise with, no other Prime Minister or Head of State in the whole world went there except communists and fellow-travellers. The Daily Telegraph wrote that she was "a lonely figure from the democratic world." By this act did she increase her prestige or the prestige of the country or the sincerity of our country's allegiance to non-alignment? Here are examples I have given to show that the so-called foreign policy is being distorted in day to day action.

May I commend to the Prime Minister a very interesting article written by Mr. Girilal Jain in the Times of India on 20th December, only a few days back. He refers there to the fact that there has been a definite change in the policy of the Soviet Union towards this country since 1965, starting with the hostilities between India and Pakistan and the situation in Kutch. The Soviet Union, under pressure of the Chinese friendship with Pakistan, has veered from its position of friendship with us and has taken up a position of equidistance about our conflicts with our neighbour. Similarly, under the pressure of the Chinese dictatorship, Moscow is veering back to the path of international insurrectionary policies which Stalin carried out in his time. The phase of friendship, the phase of relaxation of tensions, is coming to an end. Mr. Jain has given many arguments for it. I commend the article to the Prime Minister.

Now, if you want any proof of the shifting of Moscow's stand towards India, it is provided by the activities and the policies of the two Communist Parties in this country. I can show it from their documents. Both the Communist parties are responding to Peking and Moscow's pressure by taking an insurrectionary line. Read the documents, Sir, of the Calicut meeting of the Communist party (Marxist) last October. Mr. Sundarayya released those papers and the decisions to the press. I have no time to read them here but I will mention this. At a press conference at the end of that month, he said that "we have realised that the biggest danger to us" - that is, the Marxist Communist party - "is the danger of revisionism." After all that they had done in Naxalbari and the ghernao, they thought they were not insurrectionary enough! So, they have now shifted to a clearly anti-democratic insurrectionary line. That is in their document which they released from Calicut. (Interruption) I am not yielding. If the hon. member gets an opportunity, he can speak at that time. Let them read Mr Sundarayya's press statement.

Sir, the "Right" Communist party, which is supposed to be more respectable these days, is also under the same pressures and is moving in the same direction. They gave a release after a recent meeting in Delhi. After that meeting, it was announced that there was rank and file pressure that the "Left" Communists should not be allowed to steal the show and, therefore, the "Right" Communists should compete with the "Left" Communists in the insurrectionary line, just as Moscow is now following Peking in following the line of fomenting "wars of national liberation."

These are very important developments. To go on behaving as if we are living in another period, as if the shift has not taken place, is a very disastrous thing. If really non-alignment is going to be carried out, this is not the way.

It is against this background that Rajaji has quite rightly demanded that now that these trends, internal and external, have become a clear and present danger to our democratic Constitution, both these Parties should be banned and not allowed to take advantage of the benefits of our democracy.
