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India's Neglected Backyard

Speech delivered by Mr. M.R. Masani, M.P. to the Annual General Meeting of the Indian Council of World Affairs, Bombay on June 11, 1965

The subject which I suggest we discuss today is "India's Neglected Backyard". I was asked the day before yesterday somewhere which is the backyard I was referring to and I was interested to know that there was some ambiguity to my title which I had not suspected.

Before I discuss the backyard, let us consider the neighbourhood as a whole. What kind of a setting are we living in. How do we find ourselves vis-a-vis our neighbours. I suggest we have, what the French would call a tour-de-Raison right round our frontiers starting say with the west, where we find that we are embroiled with Pakistan in a dispute that ranges from Kashmir down to Kutch.

If we turn North we find the Chinese Communist Army in occupation of all the strategic heights in the Himalayas pointing the muzzle of their guns down our back. We have Nepal in the Himalayas, a neutral country practicing non-alignment against us in the same way that we have chosen to do all these years.

Little further east we find that we have been embroiled for ten years in armed hostilities against the Nagas, which hostility luckily came to an end last September through a ceasefire which persists and which we hope will become permanent. But that problem has still to be solved.

On the North East we have Burma which we thought was a friendly neighbour but which has been particularly beastly to our people in the last couple of years. The way they handled Indian citizens and people of Indian origin is shocking and equally shocking is the supine manner in which our Government has allowed this to happen.

Then further East is Laos and Viet Nam in flames and to the south we have Malaysia which is under pressure and fire from Indonesia.

It could be said till the other day that we had only two friendly neighbours, ~~was~~ Afghanistan and Malaysia. After the recent elections in Ceylon, I think one could safely add that country as an ally for the time being.

I happened to be in Ceylon soon after their General Elections and I found two basic facts or feelings that I gathered. One was that Ceylon was completely bankrupt. When I mentioned to a high dignitary in Ceylon that we in India had some six weeks' foreign exchange to continue our import of essential goods, he said 'we have'nt got even for one week' ! The Bandarnaike Government which followed the same policies which our present government does in India, handed over the government with a completely empty kitty. . At the same time although they all knew they are bankrupt, they are terribly happy, relieved and joyful. That is because of what they have escaped. Whenever you ask a fellow what did you feel about the change over of office, he would say, 'Oh, you don't know what we have escaped; we had almost stood on the brink; we almost had it; it was a matter of touch and go and for twenty four hours we didn't know whether we would be taken over by a Communist dictatorship.' Because for twenty four hours after Mrs. Bandarnaike lost her election, she was being instigated by her Communist allies to stage a coup d'etat. It was only when the Governor General gave her an ultimatum that if by the next day she didn't give her resignation, he would dismiss her. Then she ultimately agreed to make up her mind and go. While having got that near to an almost Communist take-over, you can imagine how relieved and how happy the people were , they didn't worry that they were bankrupt.

Now I find that today we have our eyes glued to the Himalayas, perhaps to Kutch. But all the time when we are facing this way, the enemy is creeping in on us from our backyard. And our backyard, I suggest, is South East Asia. For the last fifteen years, I think it would be fair to say that we have done very little to cultivate our garden, to look after our backyard. It has been a case of very bad neglect. This came out in 1961 when Jayaprakash Narayan sent a Bengali Professor, Prof. Samar Guha to visit the countries of South East Asia, meet the Governments and people and to come back and report. I happened to be present when Prof. Samar Guha reported to Jayaprakash Narayan in Bombay on his return and the story he told is most interesting. People in the Philippines, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Ceylon told him 'why do you neglect us ? Why does your government not call us together ? Why does not ~~xxx~~ Mr. Nehru take the lead so that we can all group together for the regional defence of all these countries ? You think that the Himalayas are your frontiers alone. You are wrong. It is our frontier too and we are prepared to help you in defending it. But you don't seem to want us. You do business with the Chinese all along.' This was the essence of Prof. Samar Guha's report at that time and that

and that shows how cruelly we neglected our neighbours and our neighbourhood.

And now if I may turn to Laos and Viet Nam for a while and Malaysia. The Geneva Agreement of 1954 about Viet Nam prescribed that respect for the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of this country and everyone promised to refrain from interference in their internal affairs. There is a similar Geneva Agreement for Laos in 1962. But while the first Geneva Agreement divided Viet Nam north and south, the 1962 Geneva Agreement kept Laos united under a so-called neutral government or a coalition government of the anti-communists, the neutralists and the communists. Now in both cases from the word 'Go' the North Vietnamese Communist regime rode a Coach and Four through both the agreements. They shamelessly violated both agreements before the ink was dry and their instruments in these two cases were the Viet Cong in Viet Nam and the Pathet Lao in Laos. In Laos, the Government was formed of the Pathet Lao, the Neutralists under Souvanna Phouma and Kong Lee and the anti Communists under Nosavan. These three elements joined together in a so-called coalition government which everyone could have seen that it could not possibly work. Things deteriorated in 1964.

In the beginning of 1964, the Communist Vice-Premier who happens to be the half-brother of the neutralist Prime Minister ran away from the capital joined the North Vietnamese forces in the north and then started the invasion of the Plain of Jars which he more or less occupied. Most of the Plain was overrun.

The neutralist forces of General Kong Lee had refused to accept American Arms on the ground that they would be contaminated and so they had only accepted Soviet arms. But during the battle of the Plain of Jars, they found that the Soviet Union turned off the taps. Half way through the war there were no replacements, no munitions, no spare parts and General Kong Lee found that he was being immobilised by his Soviet friends and allies. So he shouted to the Americans for help at the last moment and the Americans as usual gave him the arms to defend his neutralism. But he had learnt a lesson and on 24th May, 1964, just a year back, he said publicly, " I like neutralism, but the Communists like to destroy the neutralists every time. So from now I announce I will support all those who are against the Communists and my neutralist forces will join them in their fight. The result is that today the neutralists and the anti-communists fight side/side in Laos. As you must have seen from the

newspapers, Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma whom Mr. Nehru regarded as his first Comrade-in-Arms of neutralism has publicly welcomed the United States bombing of North Vietnam as essential for his own survival.

Now to turn to Vietnam. The communist infiltration started in 1956 in force. This is a new kind of war, a new kind of aggression, a calculated effort of the North Vietnamese communist regime to conquer the South. But the Communists tried to sell it to the rest of the world that this was a civil war. If I may make a generalisation, I would say that no struggle in which communism is involved can ever be a civil war. It has to be an international war, because the communists function as the agent of a foreign power.

President Johnson said this on the fourth (it was reported in the Time Magazine) at the Baylor University: "in today's world/^{when} the enemies of freedom start talking about wars of national liberation the old distinction between civil war and international war has lost much of its meaning." Now what is the war of national liberation? It sounds very nice. But a war of National Liberation by communist definition is any war which furthers the communist ~~xxx~~ revolution. The communists think that wars are of two kinds - the just wars and the unjust wars. Lenin laid that down. A just war is any war that furthers the communist ends. Quite as simple as that. X

Now the Viet Cong are fighting according to them, a war of national liberation, which means that North Viet Nam can conquer South Viet Nam. In other words, a war of national liberation is any war waged by communists to overthrow a non-communist government and those engaged in that fight are called the forces of national liberation.

I was amused that our very innocent Prime Minister, when he went to Moscow signed a communique which must have seen in the Press. There are many features of that communique, not all of which are amusing. But this one is because Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri put his signature to the fatuous statement: "The peaceful coexistence of States, is a positive factor in the development of national liberation movements". Did the poor man understand what he was signing? Obviously not. Let us imagine that the left Communists whom he has locked up today develop sufficient strength to pick up arms, receive help from outside and start a civil war against Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri's government. The, according to Moscow and Peking that will be a war of national liberation. Yet Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri see a virtue in peaceful

because it facilitates the starting of such wars of national liberation against all democratic ~~democratic~~ governments. How any Prime Minister of a non-communist Government can sign such a communique baffles one's imagination except that one knows what a naive, innocent and ineffective person he is.

Now this is true not only of ~~of~~ Peking. This is also true of Moscow. Moscow believes in wars of national liberation as much as Peking. Throughout the summer and fall of 1963, Khrushchev was arguing all the time that the Soviet Union must support the struggling groups of the national liberation movement. In December 1963 for instance, not long before his fall, he attacked those who called themselves socialists and countries like ours, but were not prepared to act as communist satellites.

According to Pravda of December 22, he said: "Socialism cannot be built by opposing the countries in which socialism is victorious or by prosecuting communists." So that our Government according to him is not genuinely a socialist government.

The war in Viet Nam, I say is an international war of aggression, a new kind of war for these facts. This white paper put out by the United States entitled "Aggression from the North" which you can get from the U.S.I.S. is a most ^{and revealing} fascinating document. Briefly the story and the evidence is this:

1. The hard core of Viet Cong forces are trained in the North whose avowed aim is to infiltrate the South
2. the key leadership of Viet Cong forces consists of professional officers of the North Viet Nam army
3. the operations are directed by wireless and radio from Hanoi, the capital of North Viet Nam, and
4. the weapons that are used by the Viet Cong are new weapons manufactured in Soviet Russia, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Communist China.

Now India happens to be the Chairman of the International Control Commission which is supposed to supervise the peace in Viet Nam. On 2nd June, 1962, the International Control Commission which consists of three members, the Indian Chairma n, the Canadian and the Pole had before it the report of its Legal Committee that investigated charges. And by a majority of two, the Indian Chairman and the Canadian against the Polish dissent they adopted a report

which was published which our government is trying very hard to make us forget. I shall read two or three paragraphs from the report, because as I said an attempt is being made to draw a veil over this chapter when our own government has come to a certain definite finding. This is the report of the Indian and Canadian member:

"The Committee has come to the conclusion that in specific instances there is evidence to show that armed and unarmed personnel, arms, munitions and other supplies have been sent from the Zone in the North to the Zone in the South with the object of supporting, organising and carrying out hostile activities, including armed attacks directed against the armed forces and administration of the Zone in the South. These acts are in violation of articles 10, 10, 24, and 27 of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities. There is evidence to show that the Peoples Army of Vietnam (that is the North) has allowed the Zone in the North to be used for inciting, encouraging and supporting hostile activities in the Zone in the South aimed at the overthrow of the administration ⁱⁿ in the South. The use of the Zone in the North for such activities/in violation of article 19, 24 and 27 of the agreement. The Commission accepts the conclusion reached by the Legal Committee that there is sufficient evidence to show beyond reasonable doubt that the Peoples Army of Viet Nam has violated articles 10, 24 and 27. The Polish delegation dissents from these conclusions. "

So, our Government is committed to the position that North Viet Nam has committed aggression against the South, something as I said, they are trying very hard to forget and make us forget today.

Now what is the measure of aggression. Between 1959 and 1964, in five years, 20,000 North Vietnamese officers and soldiers crossed the frontier into South Viet Nam. Now we know that when a guerilla force is fighting a regular army, 10 soldiers equal one guerilla. In Malaysia, in Greece, in the Philippines, it has been found that for equality or effectiveness, a regular army had to be ten times strong as the guerilla army to be able to carry on. Therefore, 20,000 guerillas are equal to an army of 200,000 men. Now if two hundred thousand men cross the country from one place to another is that aggression or not. Is that a war or not. This is the question that arises.

On 18th February this year, a North Viet Namese ship was sunk off the coast of ^{South} Viet Nam. It was visited by the Indian and other members of the Control Commission. The cargo was found to consist of 100 tons of weapons and munitions--new ones of Soviet, East German and Czechoslovak origin. Now all these evidence certifies Marshal Chen-yi's statement that China and North Viet Nam go together like teeth and lips. Which is the teeth and which is the lip is very easy to understand. In the face of all this, the U.S. followed a most amazing policy for the last eight years of tolerating this nonsense. They accepted the doctrine of what has been called the 'privileged sanctuary'. That is if the aggressor attacks from his territory, you can fight him on your territory, but you must not attack him on his territory. In other words, a war in which you cannot cross the frontier, but he can go on doing so.

If today the American forces are taking a beating, if the American boys' lives are being lost, the American government itself to thank for eight years of supine passivity, which should have been avoided in the light of past experience. However, better late than never. At last this year, President Johnson deserves credit for having allowed himself a firm and realistic policy. He has now gone in for withdrawing the privileged sanctuary and ~~xx~~ saying that you may be punished on your own side of the frontier. So far only by air but one hopes later by land also. This is the policy of planned escalation. The initiative no longer rests with the communists. According to my understanding what has been happening on the basis of the facts which I have put before you, I do not believe that any lover of freedom in Asia can do other than congratulate President Lyndon Johnson and welcome the stand that he has taken. It is comparable to President Kennedy's stand in calling Mr. Khrushchev's bluff in Cuba and the Chinese Communist bluff has been well and truly called.

How many serious warnings has the Chinese Communist Government not given to America in the last two months. Some people say they have counted them, it comes to 143 or 144 or something. But all the serious warnings have not led to one soldier moving or one ~~man~~ bomb being dropped. In other words, it has now ~~man~~ been shown that it is not the United States which is a paper tiger but it is Communist China which is a paper dragon.

Faced with this, the mask itself being thrown out, another good thing that

American policy has done is to drive realities out into the open. On June 1, Communist China at last admitted that there was no 17th Parallel dividing North Viet Nam from South Viet Nam. In other words, it has now accepted the fact that they were attacking South Viet Nam across the frontier. This was nothing of course. They were blaming American bombing for it. This is the reality. For eight years, there has been no 17th Parallel except for the Americans in the South. One side recognised the frontier and the other side didn't. Now at last the myth has been given up and the naked aggression has come out in its true colours. ~~This~~

This morning there was another amusing admission. The North Viet Namese Government has recognised the Viet Cong. Just imagine. You recognise your own stooge on the other side of the frontier as an independent government and now you receive a delegation of twelve of your own stooges and say we hereby recognise you as the Government in exile. All these myths, all these amusing paradoxes have been very useful because, the sham that the Viet Cong are the nationalists/^{insurrectionists} in South Viet Nam has at last been given up.

Now turning from Viet Nam and Laos to Malaysia. Here we find that Malaysia is being attacked by Indonesians with the support of Peking and Moscow. The news says that Nikoyan during his visit to Jakarta gave full support to the Indonesian attack on Malaysia which country is now under fire. Indonesia has already a very near Communist government except for Mr. Sukarno himself, who is an ambiguous person. ~~and that is the~~

And that is the ~~present~~ picture on the South East Asian side. ~~2~~

Now, what is the attitude of our own government in regard to these developments? In the case of Viet Nam they have two attitudes. First they want them to negotiate. Negotiate with whom? People who broken the agreement according to your own Chairman of the International Control Commission? Alright, suppose you negotiate with a man who has already broken faith. Mr. Lyndon Johnson accepted the 17 non-aligned countries' suggestion that there should be unconditional negotiations. On April 8 he said: "I agree to negotiate without even stopping fighting. Let us negotiate." Our own government was delighted. On April 9, the following day, the Indian government welcomed the response by the United States to the 17

non-aligned nations' appeals and a Ministry of External Affairs spokesman said in Delhi ' Mr.Lyndon Johnson's is a constructive and positive response to the appeal. It raises hopes of a solution.'Unfortunately, Peking Radio rejected Mr.Johnson's appeal and described his speech as full of lies and deception. ~~Unfortunately~~ What happened. Five days later our Prime Minister does a brief somersault in the air. Forgetting that he had asked for negotiations, and that President Lyndon Johnson had accepted his plea, he then goes on to say that must stop bombing first. Now is the imposition of the condition that you must stop bombing first consistent with the earlier plea of unconditional negotiations ? Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri and other non-aligned countries made an appeal to both sides. America accepts the appeal, then Peking and Hanoi rejects it. You would expect that Mr.Shastri will then say that Mr.Johnson is right and they are wrong. Mr.Shastri forgets what he said a week ago makes a complete volte face and says 'Oh No!but you must stop bombing first. In other words he imposes a condition that would be of help to the Communists. And since then he has stuck to this position. On April 24, President Radhakrishnan made a new offer. He said let there be an immediate ceasefire. Let there be a Afro-Asian police force to guard the frontier and then let them negotiate. This offer was again rejected by Peking and Hanoi. In other words , whenever we have suggested something, the Communists said no. But for some mysterious reason we always are in the Communist camp. Our attitude to Malaysia is just as bad, but it also has gone further with qualification. What is that attitude ? It is one of neutrality between Malaysia and Indonesia.

I shall quote from the annual report of the Ministry of External Affairs submitted to Parliament. It says that Government of India have refrained from taking sides in the dispute between the two countries. In case some Congress leader or Minister gets up and says that we are with Malaysia, don't you believe that. That is meant to throw dust in our eyes. The fact is that the Indian government has left Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur to know that ~~xxx~~ they are not taking sides; they are neutral, they want the two to negotiate, just as the other neutrals advised to negotiate with Chou en lai when his troops were invading our country in October-November 1962. We felt very angry about it. But apart from that the attitude to Malaysia, apart from being against our own interest also smacks of base ingratitude. When India was

attacked, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Prime Minister of Malaysia happened to be in Delhi. He did not sit on the fence, he was not neutral, he did not advise the two parties to negotiate. He went on the Radio that same evening and said 'we are with you against China' and by doing that he incurred the wrath of the Chinese Communists for which he is paying today. He did not even call a meeting of his cabinet to consult his Ministers what he should do. He took the decision like a brave man. For that act of friendship, we are now repaying him by stabbing him in the back.

What the world would think of our country and our policy is for us to consider. Now the net effect of India's stand on Malaysia, Viet Nam appears to me to be to give aid and comfort to our Chinese communist enemies at a time when our whole aim should be somehow to sustain those who are holding that enemy in Viet Nam. Let us consider what would happen if tomorrow Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri's word was unfortunately to be accepted. His advice is 'stop bombing the North'. The Americans are not bombing the North for fun. They are doing it, because that is the only basis on which they can stop further supplies and men coming into Viet Nam to destroy it. In other words, the Americans do not feel they can save South Viet Nam unless they bomb the North. So Mr. Sastri says 'you stop bombing the North'. That means in effect although he has not the guts to say it 'get out of Viet Nam'. The Indian Government's secret attitude is get out of Viet Nam and hand it over to the Communists. That is the logic of the Indian government's stand. Now supposing the Americans were to say 'alright, that's what you like, let's see how you like it later' and walk out. What's going to happen?

The first result will be that the Communist Chinese troops which are poised in North Viet Nam would be shifted to our frontiers. In other words those who are pinning down the enemy forces from attacking us will be liberated to come and concentrate against us in the Himalayas. The second effect will be that Viet Nam will have a so-called neutral government which the Communists will dominate. When that happens, Laos and Thailand will capitulate and the whole of Indo-China will be under Chinese Communist domination. Now that will bring the Chinese to the frontiers of Malaysia. Malaysia will then be caught in a nut-cracker. Indonesia is already there in the field and the Chinese Communists will press from the North and Malaysia will be crushed. That means the Chinese Communists will get to Singapore. India will therefore be surrounded by China and her friends or satellites, all the way round

from Karachi down to Singapore. That is the wonderful result that Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri's advice will have produced for us.

Now what does the occupation of Malaysia mean? It means a new Yunnan for India. It means the territory where 10% of the population is of Indian origin the Chinese Communist will select a few thousands for brainwashing and indoctrination and training in guerilla warfare and having trained them they will then put them in little boats and push them on to the coast of Madras, where they will land with arms. This is really what Mr. Sukarno is doing in Malaysia today and that is what they will then do to us and they will be Indians looking like us, who mix with the people of this country and they will never be identified. Thereafter ~~the war~~ when enough have been landed the war of national liberation will start.

This policy, I do not know how to describe it - would it be wrong to call it a policy of suicide or a policy inspired by a kind of death wish of a government that wants to destroy its own country? There is no other way of looking at it. And when that happens the amazing thing will be the New York Times and American liberals in the Universities will call upon the American Government not to help Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri because they will say this is a genuine nationalist fervour in India trying to overthrow a corrupt, reactionary, imperialist government.

Singapore having gone, the Americans will not know how to help us, because the Seventh fleet won't find it very easy to come from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean. So our nuclear defence from behind which could have stopped the Chinese army entering India will also have gone. I hope I have said enough to show that the frontiers of India lie on the river Mekong and that anyone who helps in the destruction of that river is striking a blow at the destruction of the defence of India.

Now, can we in the light of this blame President Lyndon Johnson if he lost his patience and said that he had no time to waste on people who gave this kind of suicidal advice. Some press comment in India at that time suggested that the United States should not take India for granted which made me laugh. The real point of that was that we should not take the United States for granted and that's what President Johnson was trying to get into our needle.

Mr. George Ball, Under-Secretary of State put this very clearly and in a very restrained and gentlemanly manner on 18th March this year. He said, thinking of countries like ours no doubt and perhaps Mr. De Gaulle: " To play an effective and useful role on the world stage it is not enough for a nation simply to offer advice on all aspects of world affairs. It should be prepared to back that advice with resources. If unwilling to do so, it does not contribute to the interests of the free world by seeking to impose its view on the nations that are carrying the common world."

I think this is a very good epitaph on our foreign policy.