

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WWU - 10
INDIA: NEUTRAL TOWARD WHOM?

Claridge's Hotel,
Aurangzeb Road, New Delhi.
March 31, 1959.

Mr. Walter S. Rogers.
Institute of Current World Affairs.
366 Madison Ave., New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

I have just spent two months in India trying to learn something about the arguments for neutrality, or "non-alignment" (the term preferred here), from the people who first conceived of non-alignment as a positive foreign policy in a postwar world of Eastern and Western blocs. During these past two months I have visited India's three chief business centers, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras; her holy city, Benares; villages, towns and reclamation projects in the Punjab; an old Maharajah's capital, Jaipur; a Communist state which gained its objectives through Constitutional means, Kerala; medium-sized industrial cities such as Lucknow and Bangalore; and, of course, India's capital, New Delhi. I have had interviews with some 80-odd people and I am now an expert -- in confusion. I suspect my notebooks contain 80-odd opinions on 80-odd subjects. India is by far the most complex country I have yet visited on my worldwide tour of the neutral countries. And the Indians like to talk -- about themselves, about their country, and sometimes just to be voluble. Temptations to the contrary, I shall try to confine my reactions to the non-alignment theme. And to spare your eyes and my typewriter fingers, I will divide this letter into five parts: India's non-alignment per se; How it is looked upon by India's leaders; Mr. Krishna Menon, the most strident spokesman on the subject; The relationship between non-alignment and foreign aid; and A catch-all of afterthoughts. Ready, set, go.



BOMBAY'S GATEWAY TO INDIA: A new Nation since George V and Mary stepped ashore.

First off, let me confess that I now think my theme -- the arguments for neutrality and non-alignment-- isn't really what I was seeking in India. I soon discovered on coming here that a foreign policy of non-alignment is not only generally and genuinely popular; it long since has been hashed over and now is considered beyond the realm of controversy. And I think we in the U.S., begrudgingly or no, also have come to recognize this. You may recall my letter from Rangoon (WWU - 8) in which I wrote you that even Mr. Walter Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, declares that he

no longer finds fault with U Nu's insistence that Burma be a neutral. But, back to the subject, I think what really bothers me, a good many people in the U.S., and some candid leaders here as well, is the question, "How neutral is the neutral?"

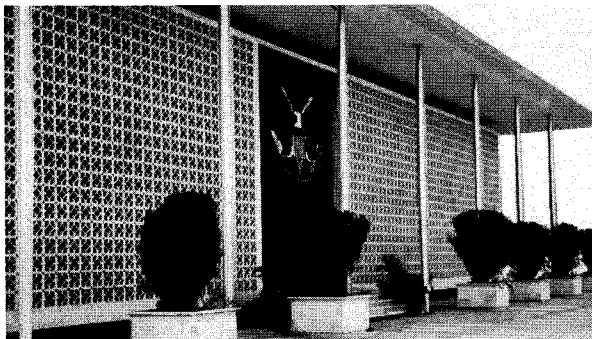
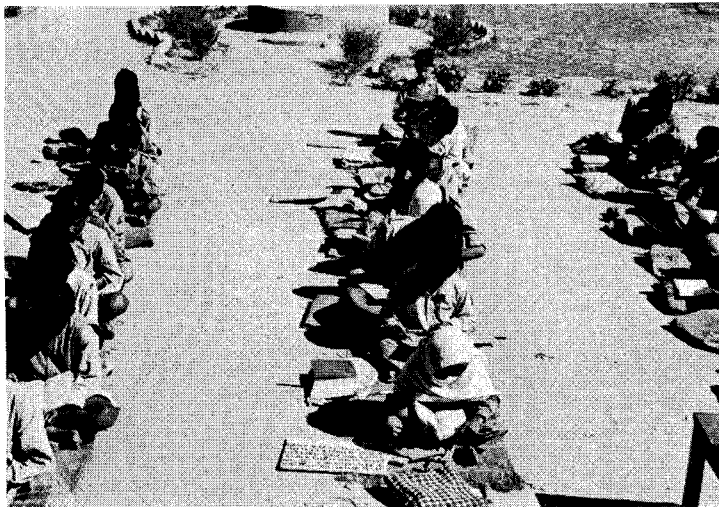
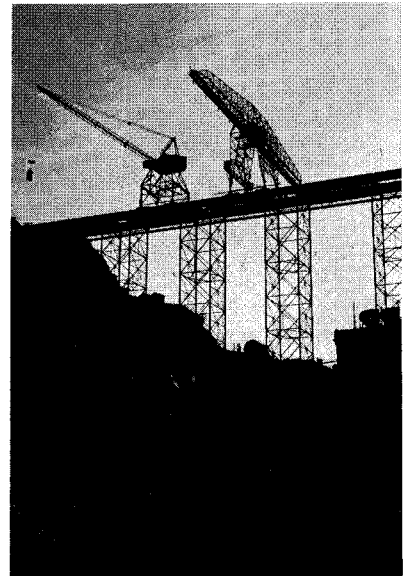
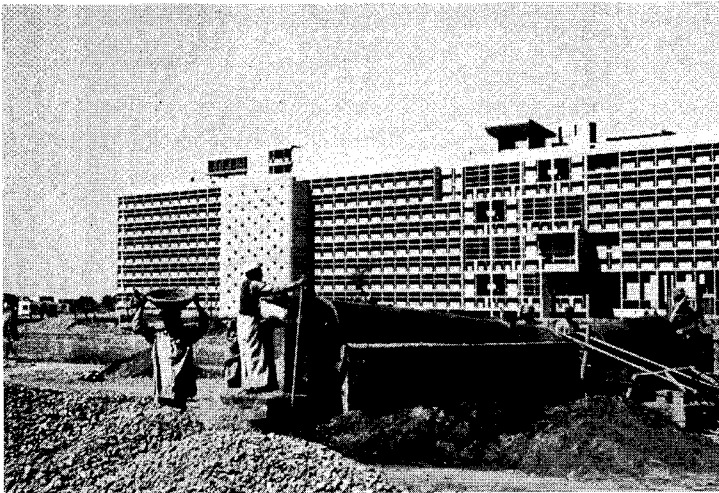
Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, who many consider to be the best emissary the U.S. has yet sent to New Delhi (and for India, at least, the list has been quite impressive), declares that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru is "definitely not neutral on the Russian side!" -- as some Westerners have charged. And Bunker has a list of instances, including some Nehru statements during the past year, to buttress this.

But then you have Minoo R. Masani, a colleague of Nehru's from the early struggles for Independence now trying to organize an opposition to the huge Congress Party majority, declaring that Nehru is a Marxist to the core and that the only thing which keeps him from a full public embrace of the Russians and Chinese is their use of violence, which he says Nehru considers a mere "aberration." And, from another perspective, you have Mrs. Renu Chakravarty, a Communist M.P., getting up on the floor of the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and suggesting to the Prime Minister that the reason his comments on the new U.S.-Pakistan arms agreement have been so muted is that he is hungry for American aid dollars.

To this last, Mr. Nehru immediately replied: "I am really grieved at this idea being put out that our policy is governed by the lure of dollars, or roubles...People do not seem to realize that a country can act just on the merits of a question and not under pressures and fears...I do believe that the United States has the friendliest feelings for us, by and large. It may be that its policies are moved by other considerations and push it in other directions. It is a different matter. I also do believe that the Soviet Union has the friendliest feelings for us. And it is a matter of great satisfaction to me that we can follow a policy, a policy which I hope is a straight forward policy, and which yet gets these friendly feelings from great and small countries which are hostile and antagonistic to one another. This is not due to any cleverness on our part or any sleight of hand or any wonderful feat of diplomacy. It is due basically to that little touch -- very little touch, I am sorry to say -- of the Gandhi in us that functions...I do not wish to seek any shelter in high moral phrases and I am not a person who is at all conditioned to speak in high moral terms. But what we have sought to do is to follow a policy which seems to us to be correct, both in regard to our own interests, short-range and long-range, and also helps somewhat the cause of world peace."

No doubt the Prime Minister (who always has been India's chief foreign policy architect through his other job, Minister of External Affairs) has addressed himself to this theme a good many times during India's almost 12 years of Independence. But for my money, this extemporaneous little bit, delivered in Parliament on St. Patrick's Day, seems to represent the Neutral-Above-Reproach. Not that there haven't been causes for reproach, from inside India as well as from outside.

Tibet. This enormous problem is engrossing both Mr. Nehru and Parliament right now. Until the moment China decided to crack down on Tibetan nationalism, fire on the rebels, scour the countryside for the fugitive Dalai Lama and see to it that the Indian Consulate in Lhasa knew nothing more than it "could see from its front window" (Nehru's own description), I had found it extremely difficult to get anyone in India to even mention the word, "China."



INDIA, 1959

(Left to right): Headbaskets still carry gravel for the Punjab's new capital Secretariat at Chandigarh; Bhakra Dam moves up; Outdoor village school near Nilokheri; a Maharajah's old servant-turned Jaipur City Palace guide on a 93-cent tour; and the new U.S. Embassy, the cynosure of New Delhi's diplomatic row.

Right now, the press and Parliament will talk of little else. And both Nehru and neutral India seem to be undergoing an agonizing reappraisal in trying to protect their border, not irritate China any more than absolutely necessary -- and still adhere to long-preached moral principle.

Modern India's China problem began in 1950 when the Chinese first walked into Tibet. Immediately after this, **to India's satisfaction** Nepal's feudal Rana regime was replaced by a King more attentive to the needs of his people, and to the on-the-spot guidance of the Indian Ambassador (WWU - 9). India then worked out a modus vivendi by recognizing China's suzerainty of Tibet. Asoka Mehta, the Socialist leader and one of Nehru's chief opponents in Parliament, said India's action in recognizing the Chinese occupation of Tibet was "immoral" from the start. Others have told me that India actually did some behind-the-scenes maneuvering at the UN to keep China's action against Tibet from being brought up on the agenda. And four years later, in 1954, Nehru and Chou En-lai got together, all smiles, and announced the celebrated "Pancha Shil" (Five Principles of Coexistence) agreement. Yet since then there have been recurrent reports of Chinese troop movements across the Tibet border and indications that Nehru & Co. were still keeping both eyes glued on their good friend China. And the Government has acknowledged protesting to Peking over the way Chinese maps blithely appropriate sections of Indian Assam. For that matter, the whole border section of Assam, in what is known as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), is strictly off-limits to the public.

Now comes Tibet, 1959, with an Indian public so aroused that there are New Delhi demonstrations in front of the Chinese Embassy (the only previous time was in 1950, again over Tibet), with some members of Parliament so aroused that they are demanding that Nehru bring the matter before the UN. Up to now, Nehru's replies during the Parliament Question Hour have been a study in slipping self control.

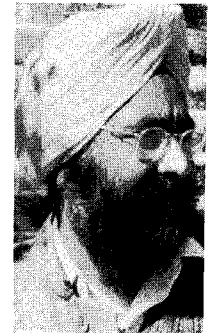
The first reports that something was astir in Tibet began to appear in Indian newspapers the beginning of this month. Then a British journalist was both admonished by the Indian Government and publicly ridiculed by Nehru for dispatching "mischievous" reports from Kalimpong, on the Indian side of the Himalayas. On March 24, Nehru was forced to concede in Parliament that the situation was "difficult and delicate." But he referred to India's "friendly relations" with China, her "long tradition of cultural and religious ties" with Tibet and refused to go into any full-scale discussion of the matter in Parliament as "it would be a novel proposition for the House to discuss events in other countries." Five days later, obviously infuriated by a Chinese charge that India's Kalimpong was the "commanding center" for the Tibetan revolt, Nehru made a 180-degree turn. He said that Parliament was certainly going to discuss anything it felt concerned about and that the people of Tibet had India's full sympathy. The Prime Minister then went on to say that he was not at all satisfied with the authenticity of the notes China had released in which the Dalai Lama purportedly had castigated his own rebel faction. And Nehru reminded Chou-En-lai that when the two of them got together 2½ years ago it was Chou himself who volunteered that Tibet was "not Chinese" and that "he wanted to give it full autonomy." This was Mr. Nehru as of two days ago.

All this raises the question of how neutral is neutral India when it comes to protecting her own frontiers? I told you about Nepal (WWU-9) where India maintains a military mission at the same time she criticizes U.S. military aid to Pakistan; where she backs a **resolute** monarch at the same time she criticizes Western support of a dictator like Syngman Rhee. And then there

are Sikkim and Bhutan, which guard the Chinese border in between Nepal and Assam. Sikkim, the only princely state remaining from the India of the Maharajas, is given India's outright protection. Bhutan, an "independent" country whose Maharajah is guarded by soldiers still carrying bows and arrows, is a no-outsiders-permitted Shangri-La where Nehru took to foot and horseback last year in order to be neighborly. (Nehru wanted to visit Lhasa too, but the Chinese dragged their feet in inviting him). By treaty, Bhutan agreed in 1949 to contribute an annual bounty to India and to "consult" with India on foreign affairs. And even though Bhutan has her own Ambassador to Lhasa, India likes to look on the term "consult" as meaning "adhere to India" on foreign affairs. Bhutan, you see, **enjoins** the main trade route to China.

Hungary. Until the recent crisis in Tibet, the classic instance of India not being a Neutral-Above-Reproach -- the example even a good many Indians themselves volunteer -- is Hungary. What happened was that when the Russian intervention came before the UN, India in one instance voted against condemning Russia and in another instance abstained. Later on (I've had estimates varying from a few days to a few weeks and not even the U.S. Embassy officials agree), Nehru issued some words of disapproval. But these only followed a general rebuke of his silence from both the Parliament and the press. I've heard various explanations of his action. That he didn't have the facts immediately at hand (this would contrast with Nehru's ready condemnation of the French in Tunisia and Algeria before Hungary, and of the British, French and Israelis ^{in Suez} after Hungary). That a mere vote of condemnation was a diplomatic exercise which would achieve nothing. That sending a UN police force into Hungary would establish the precedent for sending a UN police force into Kashmir, which India regards as an internal matter. And I've had the explanation of realpolitik, given me by Niranjana Majumder, the very bright and very cynical Joint Editor of Calcutta's Hindustan Standard: "Hungary was in October (1956). In January (1957), Kashmir was due to go again before the Security Council. The U.S. and U.K. had made it clear they were not favorably disposed toward India. France was mad at us for Algeria. Formosa doesn't count. And if Krishna Menon had not gained at least one veto, the UN security force would be in Kashmir now. We just couldn't afford to displease the Russians on Hungary for it was the Russians who had to save us on Kashmir."

Kashmir. I purposely have tried not to get too involved in this question because each time the subject comes up my interviews seem to get out of hand. Basically, as I gather it, even those Indians critical of their country's Kashmir policy say that Pakistan committed the original aggression by sending her troops into this border state in the North. But listen to Khushwant Singh, a leading Indian novelist and magazine editor currently on a three-year Rockefeller grant to write a history of the Sikhs: "Nehru was right in going in to Kashmir originally, but he erred in thinking the Kashmiris would side with India. Now our Pakistan policy is dead wrong. Every Indian knows that we would lose a plebiscite (the majority of the Kashmiris, as you no doubt know, are Muslims). We've ignored all our promises, driven Pakistan into the American orbit and forced her and us to spend great amounts on arms. And we've also ended up with an unfriendly Pakistan. Now it's all the more complicated with 40 million Muslims living here in India and nearly 10 million Hindus in Pakistan. If we gave in, it would reopen the whole issue of a religious state and religious warfare. And yet on the other hand I am afraid we are going to have a minority problem as long as there is a Pakistan."



SINGH

Singh is considered an enlightened Indian, an intellectual. But even he shudders at what India's Hindu majority would do to its Muslim minority if Kashmir was claimed for Allah. I have met no one here in India who has even mentioned the possibility of a solution to the Kashmir problem. But Kashmir is only one of the two thorns aggravating Indo-Pakistani relations. The other, I am told, is perfectly capable of solution. This involves the division of the waters of the Indus River and five other rivers which rise in Tibet and Indian Kashmir and then divide into six streams, half of them flowing into Pakistan territory. That part of the northwest Punjab which now belongs to Pakistan was the one area of the old India to have extensive dam and irrigation development. Now India is intent upon bringing water to the Eastern part of the Punjab which remains the barren part. The World Bank has proposed dividing up the water of the six streams, three per country, and India has agreed to go along with this. Pakistan has not. In a year or two, India will begin construction on the dams that affect the waters flowing into Pakistan and then the fat will be in the fire. Currently there have been some optimistic reports both here and in Karachi that points of agreement are being reached.

Israel. I didn't realize before I came here that although India recognized the State of Israel soon after its independence, she has never permitted the exchange of diplomats. A. Caspi, the Israeli Consul in Bombay and his country's sole representative in India, told me that he can't even get Indian shippers to carry his household needs to and from Israel: He has been forced to use such transshipment points as Istanbul, Athens and Genoa. Caspi considers Israel every bit the de facto government that Peking is, and India has long urged world recognition of the Peking regime on just this argument. Caspi says that India has long promised "full recognition" to Israel but that Krishna Menon had risen in Parliament 1½ years ago to explain that the delays were budgetary and administrative. Krishna Menon did not beat around the bush when I saw him: "We do not want to offend the Arabs," he said with unapologetic matter-of-factness. Menon didn't need to add that India has long sought to gain support for her Kashmir policy by isolating Pakistan from the other Mohammedan states. For a long while, Nehru's chief trump was the late Maulana Azad, Hindu India's No. 1 Muslim and the showcase example of how India's Muslim minority was represented at the very highest councils of government (Congress Party President). For his part, the Maulana insisted that there be no diplomatic exchange with Israel. Now, however, the Maulana is dead and Caspi says he knows for a fact the preliminary drafts of the Indian budget for the past several years have contained a financial provision for a Ministry in Israel. And Caspi says Nehru already has put out feelers for sending agricultural trainees to Israel. "He wants voluntary cooperative farming in India. He can't send trainees to China or Russia or Japan for the only place where voluntary cooperative farming has succeeded is Israel," Caspi declared.




CASPI

There are some other factors raising questions over the consistency of India's role as world mediator. One U.S. Embassy political officer said he is sorry I wasn't here for Republic Day, January 26, "to see how damn proud they were of their jet bombers." And even since I've been here I have come across such items as the Congress Party's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education unanimously recommending compulsory training under a military officer for university students -- "for inculcating a sense of discipline in them." The group cited the Prime Minister's own endorsement of such a scheme.

I shall discuss the neutral consistencies involving Krishna Menon and India's foreign assistance programs in later letters. But I am now wondering if all these exceptions or aberrations of a Neutral-Above-Reproach couldn't be more clearly understood, appreciated, perhaps sympathized with, if India came right out and said: "We, as all nations, base our foreign policy on self-interest. It is to our self-interest to be non-aligned and to be left to mature economically and politically in a world full of strife. But sometimes it is also to our self-interest to throw our weight around with our neighbors, to horsetrade across the table of international compromise and to make some decisions which may not strictly conform to the village spinning wheel of our Great Gandhi who, after all, was quite a practical fellow too."

But India doesn't make this speech. Nor, as a matter of fact, do we.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Warren W. Unna

Received New York April 14, 1959