

In Southeast Asia, doubts about China's intentions

The following are excerpts from an article entitled "Doubts Over Peking Trip," which appeared in the Indian weekly paper New Wave Nov. 26, 1978. The article focuses on relations between India and China, but contains insights on the situation in Southeast Asia. Particularly appropriate are the comments cited in the article that were made by the Indonesian Foreign Minister during his recent trip to India, which stand in stark contradiction to comments by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, Richard Holbrooke last week.

The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, had come to New Delhi (last week — ed.) straight from Hanoi, and had first hand knowledge of what is happening there. It is true that the Indonesians still persist in their "once bitten, twice shy" attitude towards the Chinese, but they are no lovers of the Vietnamese and the Soviets either. His view that Chinese aggressiveness has left no option for the Vietnamese except to seek a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union, should therefore carry conviction in New Delhi.

The Indonesian Foreign Minister is fully convinced that the Vietnamese would neither invoke the treaty in their dispute with Kampuchea (Cambodia — ed.) nor allow their nonalignment to be compromised. There is therefore no reason why our foreign policy makers should have any doubts about the treaty signed between the Vietnamese and the Soviet Union. The Indonesian Foreign Minister was not speaking for himself alone when he said that before signing the treaty the Vietnamese had taken steps to remove whatever doubts lingered among their neighbors about their intentions.

Indeed, the treaty which Vietnam has signed with the Soviet Union is on the same lines as the Indo-Soviet treaty, and the clauses of the two documents which lay down that in the event of aggression or threat of aggression against either contracting party the two sides would hold consultations for effective steps to end the threat and eliminate aggression, are identical. It seems that the Vietnamese as also the Soviet Union deliberately took the Indo-Soviet treaty as the model for their draft instead of the treaties which the Soviet Union has signed with some other countries like Angola and Ethiopia.

With our own experience of the Indo-Soviet treaty, our Foreign Minister does not need any assurance that the Vietnamese treaty would not result in Soviet intervention in Southeast Asian affairs, contrary to what the Chinese allege. But the Indonesian Foreign Minister seemed to feel that the Chinese have failed to remove the suspicions in these countries about their own intentions. These doubts have in fact, been strengthened by Chinese involvement in Kampuchea, their pressures on Laos, and their aggressive attitude against Vietnam.

Third World battles

At the UN, heated debate over the role

Nonaligned nations around the globe have been steadily pursuing an effort stemming from before the Colombo Non-Aligned Nations' meeting in 1976 to rescue news control from the mouths of British-sponsored propaganda outlets which systematically "filter, mutilate, and distort", developments of vital interest to these nations. The largest press agencies of the West, notably Reuters (British) and Associated Press and United Press International (U.S.) are among the major targets.

At the center of this battle is the controversial Tunisia-Group of 77 (Third World nations) study entitled "The New World Order of Information." The study asserts that "in the absence of adequate regulations, one must expect a veritable invasion of television programs and broadcasts constituting a violation of national territory and individual homes and

Free expression ...

Third World diplomats and journalists have numerous cases where Western journalists' exercise of "free expression" passed over into disinformation and outright falsehood. Some examples:

- At the height of the recent demonstrations against the Shah of Iran, UPI reported from Teheran that the Shah had been assassinated, causing panic on Iranian financial markets. Iran expelled the UPI correspondent responsible.
- The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) broadcast appeals from exiled Shi'ite leader Ayatollah Khomeini to strike, demonstrate and blow up the oil fields; the government responded by jamming BBC Persian language broadcasts and expelling BBC correspondents.
- Maltese Prime Minister Dom Mintoff addressed the European Commission last month regarding consistent British press falsification of matters relating to him personally and to his government's policies. Malta over the past two years named the BBC, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Daily Mail* as failing to retract stories as they had agreed, and was forced to take court action to receive retraction and civil penalties.

for press responsibility

of the media

the rape of men's minds. This threat cannot be too strongly denounced."

And the study calls for the right of any nation to receive news that is not "filtered, mutilated, or distorted"; the right to equality in the use of the world's airwaves; the right to a code of ethics for reporters to ensure fair and honest reports and the right of reporters to be free from reprisals from their employers; the "right of correction" to distorted, false or misleading news stories; and the right to break the Western monopoly of news agencies which the developing sector views as a colonial holdover.

The Tunisian study, which was supported by the Soviet bloc, further points out that the five largest international agencies control 80 percent of news circulating in the developing sector and maintain 4,300 foreign correspondents and over 500 news bureaus,

with virtually all telecommunications and satellite services in Western hands.

The study has been the target of a bitter and intense opposition campaign by Western media led by the British press and such U.S. outlets as the *New York Times* and CBS's Walter Cronkite, who charge that the study's effort to impose standards of professional accountability on newsmen amount to censorship of their right to "freedom of expression."

But the underlying issue is the fact that too many Western news gatherers — far more than what was suggested in the Church Committee report in 1977 — have become tools of Western intelligence and economic agencies. They regularly, almost instinctively, Third World spokesmen charge, slant their coverage in favor of their own government's foreign policies (to the point of encouraging coups and government

or disinformation and lies?

- The Belga Press Agency (Belgium) released the story of the French rescue operation in Shaba Province, Zaire, four hours before it took place, precipitating the massacre of Western medical and mining personnel.
- On July 3, 1977, UPI correspondent Van Benniker announced that President Alfonso Lopez Michelsen of Colombia had been assassinated by terrorists. Van Benniker was expelled from Colombia, as he had been expelled previously from Peru for asking President Poveda if he ran drugs. Van Benniker is still employed by UPI — now in Nicaragua.
- The Church Committee of the U.S. Senate exposed the CIA-fed story carried by UPI just before the Chilean coup in 1973, announcing that the coup was going to take place. This destabilization from without was run by 970 press outlets in the next three days.
- CBS's "60 Minutes" program, Sunday, Feb. 26, 1978 accused Cuban President Fidel Castro of running cocaine into the U.S. and laundering drug money.
- The *New York Times*, on March 19, 1978, during the Colombian presidential campaign, ran a story entitled "Drugs, the New Treasure," blaming Colombian government officials for drug running.
- The March 22 *New York Post*, in a story titled "Cocaine still pouring in," claimed that Julio Caesar Turbay, then running for President of Colombia, was involved in drug trafficking.
- CBS's "60 Minutes" program claimed that Rosalyn Carter had handed Colombian President Michelsen a list of names of drug runners which included Turbay as one high government official who "possibly" ran drugs. This was two weeks after CBS had agreed to, but had not aired, a retraction of earlier slanders.
- UPI's Juan Tamayo, just hours before the deadline for agreement on the tense Beagle Islands dispute between Argentina and Chile, ran a lengthy dispatch, "War Noises in the Southern Cone," asserting that war between Peru and Equador was inevitable because Peru had no oil. This war never occurred, and Peru certainly has oil.

destabilizations, as some Third World spokesmen note, angrily pointing to the example of the BBC's recent egging on of anti-Shah rioters in Iran) and belittle developing nations' efforts to industrialize (e.g., the low-key coverage of recent Mexican oil discoveries in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*). Says one Third World diplomat at the UN: "They (the Western news agencies) are used against us like a robber uses his knife."

The battlefield recently shifted from UNESCO to the Special Political Committee, preparatory to reaching the floor of the General Assembly. Although Britain, it is widely conceded, would be most affected by the Tunisian-Group of 77 proposal, it is the United States which has taken up the cudgels against the Third World draft. Applying intense pressure, the United States forced UNESCO to replace the Tunisian draft with a Mass Media Declaration which completely

ignored the issue of the media's responsibility for truthful reporting. This declaration was sent to the Special Political Committee on Nov. 29 for full UN sanction.

There, just before a Dec. 5 vote, the French delegation, reportedly with support from the Soviets and Indians, suddenly asked for consultations with other delegations — effectively blocking the vote.

The U.S. is saying that it will not tolerate any attempt to "curtail the freedom of the press." In a declaration to the UNESCO Plenary on Nov. 20, U.S. Delegate William G. Harley said that the U.S. "would not accept any language" that imposed "any restriction upon journalists seeking in their professional duties to gain needed access to sources of information, any harassment of professional media personnel, any suspension or blocking of the entry or exit of information across national borders, and any suppression

U.S.: Freedom of expression vital

From the Mass Media Declaration, UNESCO, Paris, Nov. 29, 1978:

The exercise of freedom of opinion, expression and information, recognized as an integral part of human rights and fundamental freedoms, is a vital factor in the strengthening of peace and international understanding It is essential that journalists and other agents of the mass media, in their own country and abroad, be assured of protection guaranteeing them the best conditions for the exercise of their profession.

U.S. Delegate George A. Dalley to the Special Political Committee, Dec. 4, 1978:

(Dalley) recalls the incipient spirit of cooperation which is coming to prevail in the world community with respect to information and communication. In an atmosphere of tolerance, forbearance and mutual respect, we overcame some very difficult obstacles to cooperation

The Delegate of Ecuador to the Special Political Committee, Dec. 5, 1978, in support of the Declaration:

We are totally opposed to any restriction on the freedom of the press by any government. In my part of the world the government doesn't control the press; it is just the other way around. The press makes suggestions that usually are taken up and made into legislations.

Third World: disinformation retards development

From the Tunisian Group of 77 Study:

(The Western press agencies present the Third World) in the most unfavorable light, emphasizing crises, strikes, street demonstrations and coups d'etat.

The protection of journalists is a basic element of the world communication and information system. Such protection should be extended to include the journalists' relations with their employers and should enable them to retain freedom of thought and analysis Journalists are disloyal to their profession if they provide erroneous, tendentious or truncated information, or information dictated by their own particular concerns, criteria or choices.

In that case, the state involved has the right to issue a correction in which it may add to incomplete information which has already been disseminated the elements needed to give an accurate picture of the facts and restore them to their proper context.

Non-Aligned Nations Declaration, August 16, 1976, Colombo, Sri Lanka:

The Non-Aligned countries noted with concern the vast and ever-growing gap between communication capacities in Non-Aligned countries and in the advanced countries, which is a legacy of their colonial past. This has created a situation of dependence and domination in which the majority of countries are reduced to being passive recipients of biased, inadequate and distorted information

of the fundamental human right of individuals to express themselves. . . ."

In place of the Tunisian study, Harley has offered a plan to assist in training developing nations' journalists and share Intelsat time with other nations. He proposed a Consultative Group sponsored jointly by UNESCO, the World Bank, and the UN Development Program (which funds low capital "appropriate technologies") to create an Advisory Committee of Experts to deal with "specific communications problems."

A respected Asian journalist commented, "When developing countries use government resources to set up press services, the West claims this is not 'free.' Do they think we don't know who these correspondents are — like Jack Anderson for example?"

Another correspondent said, "What will we do with the satellite time? That is really the problem; we must develop personnel. It's easier to pay ten rupees for a James Reston column than to develop a worldwide journalist corps. A press pool was agreed to at the Colombo Summit (of Non-Aligned nations —ed.) in 1976 and is now run by Tanjug (Yugoslav Press Agency) but it's just a collection of random articles. My paper almost never uses it."

Background of the controversy

The controversy goes back to 1974 and 1975 when officials from India, Guyana, and Cuba, spurred by the need for what one high level Non-Aligned nation diplomat described as "development oriented" news and not the "garbage about Liz Taylor or riots in Africa," attempted to set up a Third World press pool that would guarantee the delivery of news and reduce dependence on Western media. But there was a split in the developing countries themselves, and Tunisia went ahead with a January 1975 Information Conference before the Non-Aligned foreign ministers met in New Delhi in July 1976 in preparation for that year's Non-Aligned Summit in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Two programs were presented, with the central controversy being whether UNESCO (as in Tunisia's proposal) or the Third World should fund and control the press pool. The significance of this issue can now be clearly understood: even if the UN General Assembly defeats the Mass Media Declaration, UNESCO will continue to implement it in its International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems. The Commission is headed by Sean MacBride, a founder of Amnesty International, a worldwide British spy network specializing in "human rights" destabilizations of governments.

The difficulty of developing Third World journalists to break the Reuters-British Intelligence control of world news is glaringly shown at the UN. In a press corps numbering 200, there are no more than a dozen genuine "prodevelopment" working journalists. Of the remainder the majority pump out tunnel-vision copy about "their" country or bloc, and devote con-

siderable attention to the UN social whirl.

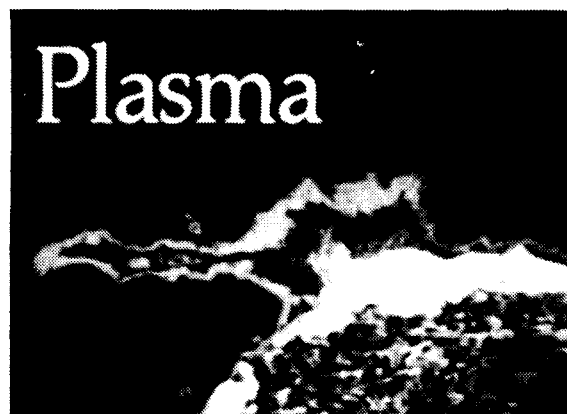
A substantial minority, however, are known to be stringers for intelligence networks interfaced with Reuters/BBC/MI-6 and related Canadian and U.S. intelligence/press networks.

Despite the massive in-place capabilities of the British Intelligence-run press networks, and the political support that the U.S. continues to lend to them, the issue of providing honest news is coming to a head. The Shah of Iran responded to the BBC's month-long saturation of that country's airwaves with calls to revolt by Mossad agent Ayatollah Khomeini by jamming BBC broadcasts and kicking the BBC "reporters" out of the country.

—Leif Johnson
United Nations, New York

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