

motion involved on that. Now, Shri Bhogendra Jha.

13.15 hrs.

MATTER UNDER RULE 377

REPORTED OBSERVATION BY U.S. AMBASSADOR ABOUT U.S. BASE AT DIEGO GARCIA

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA (Jainagar): Mr. Speaker, through you, I am drawing the attention of this House and of the Government particularly to a happening of great importance and which is a great danger to our country and which is concerning our sovereignty. And this reminds us of the days of the 'gunboat diplomacy' of the erstwhile East India Company days! Sir, just on the 4th of this month, that is, day-before-yesterday, the US Ambassador in India, at Madras, made a statement that the Diego Garcia Island in the Indian Ocean is more important to the USA than to India, and that USA's interests there are more valuable than those of India. Not only that, Sir, but he has cast aspersions upon our Government, upon the Government of the littoral States. He has said that the protest of the Government of India was 'normal, sensible and tolerable'. He has determinedly said that the USA Government is going to establish this war base there, thereby meaning that the protests of the Government of India were not serious or not seriously meant nor seriously taken. So, that is casting aspersions upon our Government, upon other Governments like Australia and Sri Lanka and other States and upon the Prime Minister and upon the august House itself, Sir. And, the other thing which he said is more sinister. He said: "Why call it the Indian Ocean? One may well call it the Madagascar Sea." We have no enmity with Madagascar. What he meant is, not only changing the name of Indian Ocean, but to split the littoral States, that is to say, spreading quarrel among them. This he said particularly at a time when even the Government of Australia agreed to our Prime Minister's view in denouncing this establishment of the war base in the Indian Ocean.

When he was asked by the Pressmen with regard to the utterances of the Chairman

of the House Committee on Agriculture in the USA, what has he said, Sir? He has said that 'probably the Indian sugar lobbyist had got tough with the House Committee Members'. He said this. I don't know who went there, whether they went with the sanction or with the permission of the Government of India or not to sell sugar there. But then, the behaviour of the Chairman of the House Committee was that unless India ditto the line of the USA Government, unless India supports or relents or repents for its opposition to the US aggression in Vietnam or on the issue of Bangladesh and other issues, USA is not going to permit the import of commodities particularly sugar. In such a situation I want to know whether the protests made by the Government of India were meant to be taken as some strong feelings or whether it was meant to be treated lightly. What the US Ambassador is saying is insulting our country and our sovereignty, and in such a situation I would like to ask whether the Government of India would think of declaring this ambassador a *persona non grata* and asking him to quit. Or will Government declare these utterances by the US representative as hostile to India?

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Vasant Sathe had also given a similar notice but he is not here. Now, the hon. Minister.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SWARAN SINGH): On the establishment of the British and US base at Diego Garcia we have expressed our opposition in unmistakable terms. We are totally opposed to the establishment of any foreign base because this goes against the spirit of the UN resolution where it is the objective that the Indian Ocean should remain an area of peace and tranquillity. We have, therefore, taken a position totally opposing the establishment of this base. We have conveyed our views in unmistakable terms both to the United Kingdom and to the United States of America.

It is true that the British and the American decision to go ahead with the establishment of the base is there and they

[Shri Swaran Singh]

are going ahead with the establishment of that base. It is not only the Indian opposition which is there, but the vast majority of the littoral countries surrounding the Indian Ocean are opposed to the establishment of this base, including Australia and New Zealand. Our view in this respect is quite clear and quite categorical.

We do not accept the assertion that the Diego Garcia base is more important to the United States. The distance from United States to Diego Garcia is perhaps more than 7000 k.m. whereas it is closer to us. In fact not only to us, but this is a matter of concern to all the littoral States surrounding the Indian Ocean. This covers the point with regard to the Diego Garcia base.

I have also seen in the same report Ambassador Moynihan's statement about the House Agricultural Committee's Chairman and his comment on that. I would like to say very categorically that we never accept any economic help or any economic co-operation with strings attached to it. There is no question of India altering its policy on vital issues whatever may be the consequences of that. India has a particular policy and we have never accepted the assertion of any party whatsoever that our policy in the matter of external relations.....

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur): What action is he taking against the Ambassador?

SHRI SWARAN SINGH: This is a clear attitude that we take. Even from this statement I do not find that Ambassador Moynihan is supporting what was said by the Chairman of the House Agricultural Committee. I have gone through this carefully. This is the statement made by the Chairman of the House Agricultural Committee. But Ambassador Moynihan does not support that statement. I do not see it from the news item that has appeared.

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA: He is blaming the Indian sugar lobbyist.

SHRI SWARAN SINGH: He has not supported the statement made by the Chair-

man of the House Agricultural Committee.

So far as the attorney is concerned, I would like to inform the House that he was a representative of the Sugar Mills Association. They had engaged a counsel who had appeared before the Committee and these remarks which have appeared in the press are stated to have been addressed to that counsel, and he stated at that very meeting that he did not represent the Government of India, and therefore, he could not comment on the political aspects of the problems that had been raised by the Senator. But our position is quite clear, sugar quota or no sugar quota, India's policy is clear and categorical and no one need be in any doubt about our policy.

This is our clear position.

I would also, in all fairness to the ambassador, like to say this, because yesterday the Deputy Chief of Mission of the US Embassy did convey to us that Ambassador Moynihan did say something to the press but it was on the clear understanding that it is not to be published and it is off the record. (*Interruptions*). I am only conveying what he has said. I am not saying that I agree or you agree. It is my duty to place all facts before the House. He said that this was not meant to be published and the normal convention in accepting something which is said off the record, that it should not be published, had not been followed in this respect. I do not know; I was not present there. This is the information that the Mission conveyed to us.

The basic point that is mentioned in the statement of the ambassador in justifying the establishment of the Diego Garcia base is absolutely unacceptable to us. We have already made our position quite clear. But we should also understand that the position of the US Government in this respect is not the same as ours, and just as our ambassador in the US will go on pressing our viewpoint, even though it may not be acceptable to the Government of the US, the US ambassador will also

from time to time continue to project the viewpoint of his Government in this country. As a free, open society, we should take it in our stride and see as to whether there is anything valid said in that statement. We believe that the case that he has tried to put to justify the establishment of the Diego Garcia base is untenable, and we should leave it at that.

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA: Changing the name of the Indian Ocean?

SHRI SWARN SINGH: I do not think we should take that seriously. Who is he to change the name of the Indian Ocean? This is a fact of geography, and it is not a gift of the US or of any ambassador of US.

MR. SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that the Minister of Agriculture will make a statement in this House regarding removal of restrictions on the moment of coarse grains etc. at 4.30 P.M. today.

We now adjourn for lunch to reassemble at 2.30 P.M.

13.27 hrs.

The Lok Sabha adjourned for Lunch till thirty minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

The Lok Sabha reassembled after Lunch at Thirty-four Minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

[**MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER** in the Chair]

RAILWAY BUDGET, 1974-75—

GENERAL DISCUSSION—contd.

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR (Ahmedabad): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, it is true that the railway fares in our country, even after the latest increase announced by the Minister, are still comparatively lower than the fares existing in other countries. But comparisons with other countries would not be valid because in many other countries although the fares are high, the facilities and amenities provided to passengers are also many more, whereas what we find in this country is that every year the hon. Minister goes on increasing fares and decreasing amenities. We find that the bulk

of the passengers are third-class passengers and it is they who give a large part of the revenue to the Government but they are not receiving their legitimate dues in terms of adequate increase in amenities. The catering is poor; eatables are not good, retiring rooms are not adequate and water facilities are not so good. Reading material available on the platforms is also not adequate. And, what is more often the genuine and honest passengers are harassed because they are not given the right of reservation of seats or berths. A lot of bungling is there in respect of this matter. The platform tickets had been raised to fifty paise. Apart from this being prohibitive, it creates an anomaly in the sense that it is more than the lowest fare. How can that be? I hope the Minister will explain this. Now, Sir, as I was saying yesterday, our Railways have to be looked at from the point of view of a national public utility. What we see today is that too much of politics is corroding our Railways. Recent agitations and strikes and gheraos all over the country are of such an extensive nature that they are holding the entire country to ransom. It is so because many times the workers in the railways and other departments also find that unless they coerce the Government to the last point, the Government do not start listening to their just demands. Whether it is students or teachers or doctors or engineers or any other persons or group of persons, Government begin negotiations only when they are coerced this way. Let the railways be free from party feuds. Sometimes even ministerial angularities and quarrels are responsible for a lot of agitations. Let there be only one union in the Railways, and this should be democratically decided by having a secret ballot. Why are Government adopting roundabout methods in this matter? If they really believe in democratic functioning let there be a secret ballot to decide which union has majority support and then that union should be recognised.

The railwaymen must get bonus. It has been their just and long-standing demand. The problem of casual labour should also be settled forthwith; they are treated