

12.04 hrs.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

STATEMENT MADE BY INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO U.S.A. REGARDING INDIA'S DEFENCE FORCES

Mr. Speaker: I had received notice of an Adjournment Motion by Shri H. N. Mukerjee, Shri Prabhat Kar, Dr. Ranen Sen and Shri Warrior regarding the statement made by Shri B. K. Nehru, Indian Ambassador to the USA regarding India's defence forces. That was held over on the 25th May, because Government had not full facts in their possession at that time. May I know whether the facts have been received and they are now available?

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Atomic Energy (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): Sir, first of all may I express my deep regret that due to my absence some inconvenience was caused to you and to the House when this matter was first brought up. As a matter of fact, even if I had been present then, all I could have said was that we should get the full transcript of the television interview that was given by our Ambassador, because that is the real fact to be considered.

Immediately we did send a telegram to our Ambassador asking for the full transcript and also what exactly he said. He sent a reply which did clear up some matters. He said he was sending the transcript. We thought we may better wait for his transcript instead of taking up bits of it. This transcript apparently arrived in the evening of day before yesterday or yesterday morning. I was not here, I understand it was here yesterday morning. And with a little, perhaps, difficulty it might have been placed before the House yesterday morning—it takes some time to make copies of it and all that. As I am informed, a copy of it was sent to you, Sir, yesterday afternoon. And now I am placing a copy of the transcript of the interview on the Table of the House. [See Appendix III annsure No. 48].

I need not say much about it at this stage anyway, because it is for you and for the House to judge from the actual transcript. But I should I just give a brief summary of it because hon. Members have not had the time to read it yet.

The Programme Moderator, as he is called, who is in charge of the television interview referred, to begin with, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's cut of 90 million dollars from the Administration's request for 815 million dollars for aid to India. In this connection he wanted to know what the effect of this was on our Government; and he pointed out that the principal question to be considered by this television interview, the central issue, was whether the United States should or should not try to influence the foreign policy of recipient countries through the money they give them. And our Ambassador was asked as to how his Government felt about this cut. Our Ambassador said that he had not had any reactions from his Government, but he supposed that his Government would feel badly about it because it would somewhat affect our development programme.

Then some reference was made, in this and the questions to the proposed purchase of M.I.Gs from the Soviet Union and how that would be paid for, and how it would save foreign exchange. To this our Ambassador replied that the Indian defence forces were badly equipped, they did not have the latest equipment and we have not been able to equip them because of shortage of money. He referred to the threats from Pakistan and also to the more fundamental question of our border with China; we had to defend ourselves against both, and in order to do so we seek to buy wherever we can do it to our advantage, wherever it is the best and cheapest method, and specially when it does not affect our foreign exchange situation. And we try always to link this with the programme for the manufacture of equipment in India.

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

Also, it has to come in time—the question of time is important. Any trading with the Soviet Union, presumably, would be in terms of rupees and would not involve foreign exchange. The Indian goods sent to them would not be in terms of foreign exchange abroad.

The Correspondent then, questioning our Ambassador, said something about India making the best of both worlds. Our Ambassador replied that this was not so; all the aid that we got from the West and the East was less *per capita* on the combined basis from both sides than what the American allies have got from one source only.

Reference was then made by the correspondent to the strong feeling on the part of Members of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate that the attitude of our Defence Minister had probably influenced the cut. Our Ambassador replied that it was difficult for him to answer this question. He knew that our Defence Minister was not popular with the Senate Committee and the Senate Committee was therefore displeased with us. But this had nothing to do with our policies in the United Nations. He then referred to the Indian forces in the Congo but for which the Congo situation would have worsened much more. The Correspondent then referred to the case of Goa. The Ambassador replied that Goa was a matter of national policy. The Correspondent then asked if this cut by the Committee would influence any change in Indian policy. The Ambassador replied that he could not think this was the proper way of looking at it and foreign aid should not be used to influence Indian policy and this would mean expecting the country to sell itself to the highest bidder.

Briefly, this is the substance of the interview which hon. Members and you, Sir, will read or have read. The main question, as I said right at the beginning was, how far the United States should try to influence the

foreign policy of the country to whom it gives aid. To this, the Ambassador replied that this would be highly improper and in any event, India did not function in this way. He made it perfectly clear that India would make her purchases all over the world and decide what was best for her and this would not mean any change in her policy.

It should be remembered that this interview was in answer to *ad hoc* questions. The American way in these television interviews is rather odd from that which we are used to here. The questioner often puts words into the mouth of the persons interviewed. But, in so far as the policy question was concerned, it was made clear, and I wish to make it perfectly clear, it is obvious that we do not seek any aid from anywhere with strings attached or conditions attached. May be that we may be hard pressed for help. But, no pressure because of local conditions or others will induce us to change our policy in that respect.

In defence, of course, it is obvious that we should like to increase our capacity to manufacture defence equipment. But, we have often said that this does not mean that we are weak today. It is all a relative question of aircraft or other things, equipment. But, whatever our position may be, we propose to defend our country, I think, adequately whatever happens and from whatever source the danger might come. It is obvious we want to have better equipment and that is the reason why we have approached various countries for this equipment and more particularly to manufacture it here.

That is all I wish to give as brief summary.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath (Hoshangabad): On a point of clarification, Sir . . .

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. The only point that is definite before the

House so far as this adjournment motion is concerned is that sentence, despite impressions to the contrary; our defence forces are not sufficient to safeguard our country. That is the only sentence so far as this adjournment motion is concerned. We are not at present concerned with the other parts of the statement because this is the definite matter that is brought before us in the adjournment motion.

Shri Tyagi (Dehra Dun): It is not defence forces; it was about equipment.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: The actual words were:

“... defence forces inspite of impressions to the contrary are certainly insufficient for protection and security of country because they are badly equipped.”

This is what he said. I am not very happy about what he said there. Even what he said, I am not happy. But, it is clear that he was laying stress on the equipment and our desire to improve it.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: On a point of clarification,

Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta Central) The Prime Minister has not only by implication but very clearly admitted that it was not very happily put. And actually, if we read the whole transcript, which I am sure we would have the opportunity to do, then we shall find what the tenor of the interview was like.

I do not wish to discuss the merits, because you have not permitted us to do so as yet, but I do feel that since this matter has been bruited about and circulated all over the world, and from what the Prime Minister says, essentially and substantially there is hardly any difference between what the transcript says and what the PTI

reports, I do feel that your consent should be forthcoming, and if the House permits, we can have a discussion of this matter.

Mr. Speaker: Then, I shall ask the hon. Member to ask for the leave of the House.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: If there is no objection, I suppose...

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member must move the motion first, and ask for the leave of the House under rule 60.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: I beg leave of the House to move my adjournment motion.

Shri Tyagi: I oppose this.

Mr. Speaker: Has the hon. Member leave of the House? I shall ask those hon. Members who are in favour of leave being granted to rise in their seats—

I find that only 45 Members have risen in their seats. As the requisite number under rule 60 is not there, leave is not granted.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: In view of the attitude of the ruling party and some of its allies and their decision to withhold discussion on a matter of this description, I feel as a protest against this kind of procedure that we should walk out of the House.

12.15½ hrs.

[*Shri H. N. Mukerjee and some other hon. Members then left the House.*]

12 16 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO
MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC
IMPORTANCE

STATEMENT MADE BY INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO U.S.A. ABOUT INDIA'S DEFENCE FORCES

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath (Hoshangabad): Under rule 197, may I call the attention of the Prime Minister to the following matter of urgent public importance and request