

Escape of Mr. Walcott

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- *6. { **Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath:**
Shri Maheswar Naik:
Shri Dhaon:
Shri B. P. Yadava:
Shri Bishanchander Seth:
Shri Yashpal Singh:
Shri D. C. Sharma:
Shri Surendra Pal Singh:

Will the Minister of Transport be pleased to refer to the reply given to Starred Question No. 345 on the 3rd December, 1963 regarding escape of Mr. Walcott and state:

(a) whether there has been any further development in the matter; and

(b) if so, the nature thereof?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Transport (Shri Mohiuddin): (a) and (b). There has not been any significant development in the matter.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: Has any communication been received from the United States Government as to what steps they have taken or propose to take in response to the Government's request made some time ago in this matter, and has Government been informed at least of Mr. Walcott's present whereabouts?

Shri Mohiuddin: I had stated in December that we have received a communication saying that the Aviation Agency of the United States is taking action against Mr. Walcott for offences committed by him and they will look upon the request with sympathetic consideration. This was the reply given on the 4th of December.

Mr. Speaker: Has it been further pursued?

Shri Mohiuddin: Since then no further communication has been received; nor do we know the whereabouts of Mr. Walcott.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: Is Government aware of the statement made by Mr. Walcott soon after he landed in Karachi to the effect that the Indian administration is most corrupt and, in this context is Government also aware of the fact that Mr. Walcott, just before or shortly before he smuggled himself and his plane out of India in broad day-light, was the guest of the District Manager of Air India, New Delhi, at his residence and, if so, has any action been taken in this matter?

Shri Mohiuddin: As far as Mr. Walcott's statement is concerned, I had read it in the newspapers. Similar false statements are made by many other people and we cannot always take notice of such statements. As far as the other statement of the hon. Member, that he was the guest of the Air India Manager, is concerned . . .

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: District Manager.

Shri Mohiuddin: I do not know anything about it. This is the first time that the hon. Member has mentioned about it. Thirdly, the whole question of the escape of Mr. Walcott has been referred for further enquiry to a very senior officer, who is making his enquiries.

Mr. Speaker: Shri Indrajit Gupta.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: When will the report be out?

Shri Indrajit Gupta: If I understood the hon. Minister correctly, he referred to the communication received from the United States authorities last December. I would like to know whether since December—this is February—our Government has pursued this matter further with the United States authorities and, if not, why not.

Shri Mohiuddin: As far as the United States Government is concerned, as I have already stated, we are still awaiting further information from them.

Mr. Speaker: Have we taken any action?

Shri Mohiuddia: I presume our Ambassador in the United States has done something about it.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: Why presume? What has the Government done? That is the question.

Mr. Speaker: When the Minister says he presumes that our Ambassador has done something, it is admitted that this Government has not done anything.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: Why not?

The Minister of Shipping in the Ministry of Transport (Shri Raj Bahadur): So far as action on the part of the United States Government is concerned, this is subject to the whereabouts of Mr. Walcott being known. As has been submitted by my colleague we do not know—neither do we think the United States Government knows—about his whereabouts. The action against him depends on that. Then, so far as we are concerned, we have made a complaint against him through the Home Ministry under section 6 of the Registration of Foreigners Act. Action under rule 15 of the Aircraft Rules is also being pursued.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members are anxious because last time when they put this question they were told that a representation had been made to the American Government and they had stated that they would do everything to co-operate with us in order to find out the whereabouts of Mr. Walcott. Now they want to know whether anything further has been done by the Indian Government to pursue that matter with the American Government.

Shri Raj Bahadur: I assume that we have to depend on the United States Government for further information being given to us as and when they are able to find out the whereabouts of Mr. Walcott.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: There is inefficiency on the part of Government.

Shri Hem Barua: Sir, on a point of order. As we understand it whenever there is a question, they reply of the Minister or the Government should be categorical either in the positive or in the negative. Here is a Minister who has presumed when what we wanted was certain specific information from him. Under these circumstances, Sir, we have to seek your protection. Is it not a fact that the Minister has, in contravention of the rules, tried to throw dust into our eyes?

Shri Kapur Singh: May I say a word in this connection? I partially support my hon. friend.

Shri Nath Pai: Why partially?

Shri Kapur Singh: I will tell you why I partially support him. I partially support his point of order. Because if by saying "I presume" the hon. Minister means that he has grounds for presuming, he has returned a categorical reply; but if his presumption is merely a presumption, in the general context, it is not a categorical reply and to that extent I support the point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I am not so well at English as to distinguish between all these niceties of the language and other things. Therefore I will certainly express my inability to appreciate all those fine things. But I have to answer the point of order that was raised. The hon. Member began with a point of order and then sought my protection.

Shri Hem Barua: It is related.

Mr. Speaker: Therefore he himself was doubtful that there was no point of order.

Shri Hem Barua: My English also failed.

An Hon. Member: He is a Professor of English.

Mr. Speaker: But this is clear and I need not repeat it every time that the question ought to be precise

Shri Tyagi: Answers may not.

Mr. Speaker:and answers also should be clear and to the point. There is no doubt about it. There we are all agreed.

Shri Hem Barua: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: But no hon. Member obeys that. Be it this side or that side, both sides are not conforming to that. Therefore if hon. Members just give me that support, I can certainly enforce that very strictly (*Interruption*).

Shri Ranga: Can you give that protection to the hon. Ministers?

Mr. Speaker: Not at all (*Interruption*). I have said that both sides are not conforming to the rule.

Shri Ranga: You must also be in a position to say to the hon. Ministers, "Your answer is not clear, is not categorical, is not specific".

Mr. Speaker: Probably, the hon. Member forgets that I pursued that matter and I put the second question in order to get a clear answer.

Shri Raj Bahadur: On a point of personal explanation. First of all I would like to assure that we would like to be as positive in our answers as possible. We are as positive in our answers as it is possible to be. The only thing that we referred to was that the United States Government wrote to us "to assure us of the full co-operation of the U.S. authorities especially the Federal Aviation Agency of the U.S.A. in taking action against Mr. Walcott." If after that we say that we presume that action is being taken, "there is nothing wrong about it evidently, we cannot presume otherwise. It is in that context that it was said that we presume that the United States Government is doing that. I think, the reply given was absolutely correct (*Interruption*).

Shri Hem Barua: He need not say that. He is wriggling out.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: Instead of merely depending on the good pleasure of the U.S. Government, have we taken any initiative in the matter of extradition, for instance, because in this case a foreigner has offended against the laws of our country and has run away? May I know if any regular extradition processes have been initiated so that the U.S. Government in international law is bound to respond?

Shri Mohiuddin: My senior colleague has stated that action is being instituted in the local courts about the breach of rules regarding the Foreigners Act and of rules regarding civil aviation and also about the recovery of the amount due from him. All these actions have been taken. We will take further action regarding the processes of extradition on the basis of these actions in the local court.

Shri Hem Barua: Again he is vague.

Shri Nath Pai: May I point out before I ask the question that in the statement laid on the Table of the House when the question was first raised here, the hon. Minister stated that the matter was being pursued with the United States authorities? The pursuance had reference to this aspect that Mr. Walcott will be brought back to this country. In view of this may I know whether there is any ground for the growing suspicion in a wide section of the public that the Government is avoiding procuring his presence in India because if he appears before a court in India the Government is afraid because of the disclosures he made regarding what he calls, incompetence and corruption in the Administration? Are you not energetically pursuing the matter of getting him back into India because of this fear?

Shri Mohiuddin: That presumption is absolutely incorrect. I absolutely deny it. We are very vigorously pursuing the matter. If he appears here, he will be prosecuted without any fear as suggested by member.