

12.17 hrs.

STATEMENT UNDER RULE 199

[English]

SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO (Dhenkanal) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am grateful to you for permitting me this opportunity under Rule 199 of the Rules of Procedure to make a statement in this august House with regard to my resignation from the Council of Ministers.

It was kind of the Prime Minister to have informed me that in a charge sheet to be filed by the Government against one Ram Swarup, my name appeared amongst other public men. Even without the benefit of seeing the content or the context in which my name figured in the charge sheet, I tendered my resignation from the Council of Ministers in order to uphold the propriety and dignity of Parliamentary democracy and the high tradition of public life which the hon. Prime Minister graciously accepted immediately.

While the contents of the charge sheet received wide coverage in the news media, leading to conjectures, rumours and assumptions, I was unable to obtain a certified copy of the charge sheet. My lawyer was informed that such copies can only be made available to either an accused or a witness. I did not come under either of the categories. Subsequently, I learnt from a copy of the charge sheet in circulation that my name has been mentioned in two places in the narration without any specific charges. Therefore, I deem it my duty to place the facts concerning me vis-a-vis the mentions made in the charge sheet for the information of this august House to which I have been elected.

My name has been referred to in the first place at Para 9 of the charge sheet. I quote "It was seen that the names of the following M.Ps./former M.P.s. who have been sponsored on visits to Taiwan at his behest find mention in the recovered documents (here my name appears)".

I had undertaken the study tour of the Far East, which included Japan, the Republic

of Korea (South Korea), Republic of China (Taiwan), Hong Kong, Cambodia and Thailand from 15th November 1969 to 7th December, 1969, as a Member of the Fourth Lok Sabha to which I had been elected in 1967 as its youngest Member and was the Chief Whip of the Swatantra Party in Parliament then. On the return leg of my study tour I visited Taiwan. I was a delegate attending the Asian Parliamentarians Union Meet at Taipeh. This was attended by more than 40 Members of Parliament/Senators of 10 Asian countries including India. There were Members of Parliament from New Zealand and Australia too. The leader of the delegation was Shri Dayabhai Patel, son of late Sardar Patel, who was the Deputy Leader of the Swatantra Party in Parliament and senior Vice-President of the Party at that time. The Conference was inaugurated by Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-Shek, the President of Taiwan.

The entire expenses of my study tour, including that of my wife who accompanied me, were borne from our own resources. The complete itinerary was prepared by Air India, Delhi. The air fare of the two Air India tickets No. 0983—3482645/6/7 and No. 0983-3482648/9/50 amounting to Rs. 10,646/- (Rs. 53.3/-each) was drawn vide cheque No. 071799 from the State Bank of India, Park Street Branch, Calcutta, our bankers. I had also drawn foreign exchange from the Reserve Bank of India which was admissible under the Rules for Members of Parliament who undertake study tours. All travel arrangements for the study tour were in total conformity with the rules, regulations, laws of the land and protocol prevalent at the time and cleared by Government.

Sir, it is with infinite anguish and sorrow that I mention that all these facts could have been verified before my name was alluded to in the manner it has been done. All these facts can still be verified now by the investigating agencies/authorities. I would like to state here that any suggestions that I had gone to Taiwan at the behest and sponsorship of Shri Ram Swarup is totally baseless. In fact it was the considered view & policy of the Swatantra Party at that time, after the Chinese betrayal of 1962, that friendship with

[Shri K. P. Singh Deo]

Taiwan was in consonance with enlightened national self interest.

The other mention of my name in the said charge sheet is at page 12 which reads, I quote : "Ram Swarup's efforts were always directed to select Members of Parliament in the ruling party. While during the Janata Party regime the concentration was on.....(a number of names) during Congress (I) regime his efforts were directed towards (a number of names) including mine". Once again there is no specific charge against me.

I was elected to the 7th Lok Sabha as a Congress (I) member in January, 1980 and was appointed Deputy Minister of Defence on 15th January, 1982. It is a fact that in my capacity as an M.P. like other colleagues in this august House as well as all those in public life, I have perforce to meet and be introduced to many people from all walks of life. People also come with various public grievances, problems, applications, petitions, invitations and requests to attend various functions and participate in conferences, meetings, discussions and seminars. Invitations also come from institutions, organisations and missions as well as diplomats. There have been many occasions where I have responded to such invitations as well as have reciprocated some times. It is neither possible nor practically feasible on my part as an M.P. to check on the antecedents of every individual or body before being introduced or attending to him. There appears to be no code of conduct for M.Ps. in dealing with such situation.

During this period, Shri Rama Swarup might have met me at functions and gatherings where I was also invited. Thereafter, I do not recollect having met him. After my inclusion in the Council of Ministers from 15th of January, 1982 till I resigned, I have never attended any function of any foreign mission without the clearance of the protocol of the Ministry of External Affairs or which was not connected with my Ministerial/Parliamentary functions.

I joined the Congress in 1977 with the full conviction and realisation that under the dynamic and inspiring leadership of

Shrimati Indira Gandhi, I could render my services to the country and help build a strong, united India on the basis of policies of economic self-reliance within the country and non-alignment in international affairs, which she had placed before the nation. Besides, I was attracted by the 20-point programme formulated by her for the alleviation of the sufferings of the backward and under-privileged in the country. I stand fully committed to national integration and communal harmony and offer my full support and services to my young leader, the Prime Minister, in fulfilling the noble tasks and implementing the Congress policies as well as manfully tackling the challenges facing the country, with courage and fortitude.

I would like to give my solemn assurance that I am under oath and pledge to preserve, protect and safeguard the unity, integrity, security and sovereignty of the country, as well as the Constitution of India, both as a Member of this august House as well as a serving officer in the Territorial Army and that no sacrifice is too great to uphold it. In the immortal words of Sant Tulsidas :

*Raghukul reet Sada Chali ayee
Pran jaye, par vachan na jayee.*

It is in this context, I have had the privilege of serving in a Territorial Army Regiment in the 1971 war, charged with the responsibility of providing Air Defence to vital areas of the country and Defence installations. The Regiment was recipient of two gallantry awards for its performance in the 1971 war. I have also had the privilege of being associated with the organisation and conduct of IX Asiad 1982 besides the 7th NAM 1983 and the CHOGM 1983 in which I was a delegate too.

My conscience is clear. I have not done anything consciously or unconsciously that would in any way injure or prejudice national interest. I can only plead that public men should be saved from the insinuations and slander of unscrupulous persons who may try to extricate themselves by implicating innocent persons who have no forum to defend themselves in such cases. I now leave it to my hon. colleagues and peers. of both the Houses and the

people who have known me since 1967, to judge me. Our motto is "Satya meva Jayate" and I am sure truth will prevail in the end.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur) : Mr. speaker, Sir, I know that no debate can be asked on it. But as the Speaker who is the custodian of our dignity and prestige, I want to bring to your notice that some agencies are forcing Ram Swarup to make false allegations in writing against some Members of Parliament. You should inquire into the matter. I think, it is clear from the statement that he has a clean political character. One may differ with his political opinion. But he has a clean record. But this is what is being done by some elements and you should guard the dignity and prestige of the Member of Parliament. We want an assurance from you that you will guard the prestige and dignity of the Members of Parliament. You see the trend that is going on. Some agencies are forcing and coercing Shri Ram Swarup to make allegations and statements against Members of Parliament. You should go into all that. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : I told that when the case is over, we will take it up at a later stage, not now. *(Interruptions)*

PROF. N.G. RANGA (Guntur) : We on this side wholeheartedly agree with the demand of Mr. Dandavate.

MR. SPEAKER : I have got my compulsions.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : You have to protect our reputation.

(Interruptions)

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD (Bhagalpur) : You have a Committee of the House.

An honest Minister has been maligned like this in public life.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : It is very clear from the statement and what is happening in this House.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I heard it. I know.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : We are not worried about the property. We are worried about the character. You must defend our character and values.

MR. SPEAKER : I am one with you on this subject. Don't worry.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY (Mahubnagar) : You should find out the way.

MR. SPEAKER : I have to find ways and means.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : You have to find out.

MR. SPEAKER : I have to work under rules and regulations.

(Interruptions) . I have given you my assurance that I stand one with you as far as honour and respect and integrity of Members is concerned. We are unnecessarily dragged in. This is a slur. We are going to deal with it according to the rules. Let me have the chance.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Basirhat) : What troubles us also is the role of the Intelligence Agencies and the Police. What role are they playing in this ?

MR. SPEAKER : Now it is sub-judice. When the time comes, we will take it up.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : The modus operandi of the shady characters who may be doing....

MR. SPEAKER : It is a sub-judice case. Let me wait and see.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : What more can I say now ? Do you want me to repeat the same thing ? I said whatever I could.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I have said, Mr. Rangaji, I cannot do anything more.