

LOK SABHA

Wednesday, 28th March, 1956

The Lok Sabha met at Half Past Ten of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

11-38 A.M.

MOTIONS FOR ADJOURNMENT

INSULT TO SPECIAL ENVOY OF INDIA AT KARACHI ON PAKISTAN

REPUBLIC DAY

Mr. Speaker: I have received a notice of an adjournment motion from Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani and a similar one from Shri N. C. Chatterjee with reference to 'the grave insult offered to the Special Envoy of India on the occasion of the Republic Day Celebration in Karachi on 23rd March, 1956 which constitutes an insult to India'.

The other one of Shri Chatterjee is on the same subject though of different expression. It states :

"The affront and insult to Shri Mehr Chand Khanna, Special Envoy of India at Karachi on the 23rd March, 1956, when he represented India at the Proclamation of Pakistan as a Republic at a public meeting held under the presidentship of the Prime Minister of Pakistan."

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): I can well understand the reaction of the Hon. lady Member opposite to the accounts that were published in the public Press about an incident

that happened in Karachi at a public meeting, but I do not understand the relevance of this particular motion.

Shri N. C. Chatterjee (Hooghly): May I explain that? Let the hon. Prime Minister resume his seat, Sir. This is a matter of very serious international delinquency on the part of a State. They sent us an invitation and on that invitation our Government sent a special envoy to represent this country at a particular conference where they wanted to inaugurate the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. There they insulted the special envoy.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: Who?

Shri N. C. Chatterjee: The Prime Minister does not know who.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: I do know; therefore, I am asking who.

Shri N. C. Chatterjee: The Press Trust of India has issued a message and that can be taken as correct. And also the *Times of India's* message is there. About 50,000 people assembled at a public function and the Pakistan Prime Minister was presiding. The special envoy was asked to attend that function just as other representatives. Then he was subjected to booing for minutes and insulted with the words "Down, down with Bharat; go back Khanna" and other such things, which are all reported in the Press.

Sardar A. S. Saigal (Bilaspur): By whom? We want to know insulted by whom?

Shri N. C. Chatterjee: I am ashamed that Members of Parliament do not realise that this is an insult to India, insult to our nation also. As a matter of fact, do they not realise the fact that this is a deliberate working up of the Pakistan politicians? They had been deliberately working up to insult us. Otherwise they would have never done any such things, especially when a solemn occasion was being enacted under the aegis of the Prime Minister. It must be taken in its proper perspective. They

[Shri N. C. Chatterjee]

worked their people up and were carrying on a systematic anti-Indian propaganda. And the Pakistan Prime Minister was presiding there. Therefore, for this kind of delinquency on their part, the Pakistan Government should have made amends to Shri Khanna, our special envoy, and also to the Government and this country. I want to know whether that has been done. For much lesser things, stern and prompt action has been demanded. As a matter of fact, the Press has also reported that Shri Khanna had been requested to stay on for some days for parleys and for discussions to settle many outstanding Indo-Pakistan problems, but it is reported that he had to come back. Therefore, a responsible Minister, who is charged with important questions, had to cut short his visit. Presumably this country should realise that he had to do so because he felt that he was humiliated and insulted, and he, as the representative of India, was not treated fairly, not by some urchins who were there, but because he realised that he was not treated fairly and properly at a State function as a representative of a self-respecting State. If this country has any sense of self-respect, it ought to resent this. There must be a universal resentment at this attitude. Therefore, I submit that this is a matter of urgent public importance to which we must draw the attention of this House. This is not a question of a mere affront to one man. It is the responsibility of Pakistan Government and they cannot disclaim it. What have they done? Why did Shri Khanna come away? Why did he cut short his visit? Why were the parleys and conferences stopped? Naturally that creates a very serious impression, a very unfavourable impression on the whole thing. Has the Prime Minister of the Government of Pakistan apologised to Shri Khanna? I would like to know if the Government of Pakistan apologised to the representatives or to the Government of this country. That is a very very important thing. For much lesser things reprisals have taken place. If our Government have any sense of dignity, stern action should have been taken. It seems that the SEATO Conference has unbalanced the Pakistan Government and they are thinking that they can go on doing anti-Indian propaganda and that they can easily play this game of insult on our special envoy whom they had invited to that function.

Acharya Kripalani (Bhagalpur-cum-Purnea): May I ask if a distinction is being sought to be created between the people of Pakistan and the Government of Pakistan? And if the people are at fault, is it not the duty of the Government to apologise on behalf of the people?

Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani (New Delhi): This was a ceremonial function. It was not an ordinary public function. There the representatives of the various countries were invited to attend. On this ceremonial occasion, we sent Shri Khanna, not in his personal capacity, but as our special envoy, carrying a message of goodwill from our State. At that function, Pakistan followed a procedure which was unusual at such a function. Foreign representatives are not ordinarily asked to address public meetings. At this public meeting, representatives from the other countries were present; some of the countries that spoke were given the dignity and courtesy due to them. When our representative stood up to speak, he was singled out for insult. We are being asked as to who did it. I do say the Pakistan Government. In this country also we have had foreign guests during the last few years and particularly last few months they have had occasion to address public meetings. I should like to know whether our Government did not take care to see that proper courtesy was shown to our foreign guests? Should not the Government of Pakistan also have done the same and seen that no insult at any rate is flung upon our representative? It is certainly wrong to ask, who insulted us? Pakistan Government is fully responsible; they have been carrying on incessant anti-Indian propaganda for months, and this is merely an outburst that exploded at that public function. I hold the Pakistan Government fully responsible and they owe an apology for this.

Shri Ramachandra Reddi (Nellore): As Shri Khanna is now in this House, may we have a statement from him so that the House might know what exactly had taken place?

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: All kinds of speeches have taken place when I sat down, but I could not understand the relevance. . . .

Shri N. C. Chatterjee: Very relevant.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: I quite understand the reaction of the hon. lady Member and of others too. Nevertheless, I do not see the relevance of this motion. Perhaps if I state the facts, it will be easier then to consider this motion in the context of those facts.

First of all, may I say that my colleague, the Minister of Rehabilitation, did not go to Karachi for a conference in regard to various matters, as the hon. Member, Shri Chatterjee, seemed to think. Certainly, when he went there, if he had the chance, he would have mentioned some matters but it was not to be expected that on an occasion when a very large number of foreign visitors and others were there and ceremonial functions were taking place, there could be a conference to discuss matters of importance to us and to Pakistan. So, there was no question of his going there for that and coming away because he could not hold that conference. Hon. Members should not take for granted everything that appears in the public Press. There was nothing in our mind about a conference at any time, although it is true that some newspapers brought this out of the depths of their imagination. The facts as stated to me by my colleague, the Minister, are as follows. There was this function organised, a public function, that is to say, a function to which a large number of the public were admitted. There were a large number of foreign visitors, especially envoys, about forty or more, seated on a platform. Then, lower, there were a considerable number—some hundreds—of specially invited guests seated. Then, behind, there was what might be called the public, who came of their own accord presumably—some distance away. According to his report, there was a crowd of anything from 6,000 or 7,000 may be up to 10,000 altogether. A number of persons spoke, who were invited to speak; for five minutes each there—that is, foreign visitors. Most of them, if not all, spoke in some foreign language. Naturally, they did not know any Indian or Pakistani language. Then came Shri Mehr Chand Khanna's turn. He was asked in turn as they were seated and when he went to the forum, some people from the distant crowd, behind the invited guests and others, waved their hands and expressed the wish that he should not speak. They waved their hands like this and also shouted that they did not wish to hear

him and this lasted probably for half a minute—may be, it might have lasted 45 seconds.

Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani: As if there was a stop watch and the time was being observed.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: I am merely saying this from Shri Mehr Chand Khanna's account. The moment it started, he naturally turned to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, who was presiding, also wishing to know what he was supposed to do. The Prime Minister thereupon came—that is why I said, he came immediately—and he addressed the crowd and said that this was highly improper that they should behave in this way to the invited and respected guest of Government—specially invited—and he appealed to those who misbehaved not to do so and he invited Shri Mehr Chand Khanna to proceed with his speech.

I may add that Shri Mehr Chand Khanna was speaking in Urdu—in very chaste Urdu. Thereupon, he started afresh and a few persons—very few, much fewer than previously—still waved their hands but they stopped doing so and soon they listened to him for five minutes or so—four, or five minutes that he spoke—and were so affected and influenced by his speech that there was loud cheering at the end of it.

Then, at the spot and at that meeting itself, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan expressed his deep regret to Shri Mehr Chand Khanna and later the Prime Minister also expressed his deep regret at this behaviour on the part of the crowd. Therefore, however regrettable the incident it does not seem to me what more the Government of India or Shri Mehr Chand Khanna or our High Commissioners could do in the matter.

Only a small section—I would say that it was a small section of a fairly large crowd—misbehaved in this way. Undoubtedly, it was bad behaviour, misbehaviour and all of us when we heard of this reacted strongly that our envoy should have been subjected to this treatment at this function and a few persons behaved in this way.

And, may I add that, for my part, I am not even prepared to say—individuals apart—that I blame the people of Karachi? They are simple folk and I

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

am quite sure that between the people of Karachi or the people of Pakistan and the people of India, there is no great ill feeling except when they are excited, except when they are incited. If any person or if anything is wrong, at least the major wrong, if I may say so, is some part, if not all—of the Press of Karachi in Pakistan. I have seldom during the fairly long career or experience of the Press in India and Pakistan—and the Pakistan Press has not been a good example to follow anywhere in the world—come across such concentrated venom and invective as the Pakistan Press in these very days in their leading articles and their display and their headlines, etc. If some of the people of Pakistan naturally got worked up when they see their Press behaving in this way, it is not surprising. You will see—the House will notice—that they are those very people who have been worked up no doubt by these articles and the headlines in the public Press. When they heard Shri Mehr Chand Khanna for three minutes, actually they cheered him afterwards. So, I do not blame those people. They were misled.

I do think it is a serious matter that any country's Press should devote itself in this concentrated way to spread hatred against another country and another people. That is a very serious matter. But that is not a matter which comes before or can be dealt with in the course of a motion for adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: In view of these facts and the fact that no further action arises, I refuse to give my consent.

ALLEGED OCCUPATION OF KACHCHA THIVU ISLAND BY CEYLON GOVERNMENT

Mr. Speaker: There is another adjournment motion standing in the name of Shri Vallatharas which reads:

"The urgent serious situation that has since arisen consequent on the present violation by the Ceylon Government of the sovereignty and the mutual relations of the Indian Government by entering into and occupying the Indian territory of the strategic island of Kachcha Thivu near Danushkodi claiming it as their own, and by directing their Air Force to use the island for practice bombing and gunnery range on from 1st April, 1956."

Shri Vallatharas (Pudukkottai): I may submit that the island is personally known to me. It was in the exclusive possession and enjoyment of the Raja of Ramnad when he was a zamindar of the Ramnad estate. After Government assumed the zamindari, that island was under the control of the Indian Government. It is an Indian territory. Quite recently, some months before—in October—this trouble arose and there was correspondence between the Ceylon Government and the Indian Government about its ownership. I understand that the Government of India have not paid proper attention to it and no reply has been sent. On that basis, the Ceylon Government have assumed some sort of a claim and entered into the island and occupied it and they have directed their Air Force to use it as a base. Under the present circumstances of SEATO and so many other suspicious factors around, I attach very great importance to this move. I want to know whether that island is ours, whether it is a fact that the occupation has been done and what steps the Government have taken in all these months to controvert the approaches of the Ceylon Government.

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): I am afraid, I have no adequate information on this subject. We are enquiring from the Madras Government about it.

Mr. Speaker: Anyhow, inasmuch as this has been going on for sometime past, there does not seem to be any urgency.

Shri Vallatharas: There is urgency; they are going to use it as a base for training, bombing as well as for gunnery range. It is very serious...

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. The hon. Member has said enough. If he wants full information, the hon. Prime Minister has referred the matter to the Madras Government—he may table a short notice question and I shall see what can be done about this matter.

ARREST OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I have to inform the House that I have received the following telegram dated the 27th March, 1956, from the Police Commissioner, Bombay: