

Nomination of High Commissioner Designate to U. K.

M.R. Masani
N. Dandekar

Will the Minister of External Affairs be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Government are aware that Shri S.S. Dhawan, High Commissioner Designate to the United Kingdom in an article in Blitz of the 29th January, 1966, inter alia wrote the following:

"Nehru had not anticipated British treachery. He did not realise that Britain was still an implacable foe of a strong and united India....As regards Britain, I see no future for Indo-British friendship, because reluctantly I have come to the conclusion that Britain does not regard the existence of a strong India in her interests and she will shed no tears if India is disrupted" and

(b) Whether in view of these views of Shri Dhawan, Government will reconsider his appointment as High Commissioner to the United Kingdom?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (Shri B.R. Bhagat):

(a) Yes, Sir. The quotations which are, in fact, two distinct quotations, have been taken from a lengthy article entitled, "Has India's foreign policy failed?" The first is in the context of late Prime Minister Nehru's Kashmir policy, and the second, from the concluding portion of the article, with particular reference to Indo-Pakistani relations.

(b) In the context in which the quotations appear, Government see no reason to reconsider an appointment which has been made with the agreement of the British Government.

Mr. Dandekar: May I know whether (a) it is a fair presumption that one sends persons in ambassadorial posts with the object of maintaining, developing and fostering friendly relationship between this country and the country to which the person concerned is accredited and (b) it is a fact that the High Commissioner-designate is Chairman of an organisation known as the Blitz National Forum in Lucknow and that this particular organisation as well as the newspaper Blitz is consistently, continuously and bitterly anti-British? Thirdly, may I know whether the High Commissioner-designate believes avowedly that the UK has committed treachery against this country, is the implacable foe of this country and that there is no future prospect whatever of establishing Indo-British friendship, as he himself says? In these circumstances, will Government reconsider the designating of this gentleman as our High Commissioner to UK?

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Indira Gandhi): As the Minister of State has pointed out, these statements were made by Justice Dhawan at the time of the Indo-Pakistani conflict. It was soon after the British Prime Minister had made a statement saying that India had committed aggression against Pakistan. I do not think a man should be judged by an isolated statement taken out of its context. It is the totality that matters....

Shri Ranga: Oh! of his personality?

Mrs. Indira Gandhi: I am convinced that Justice Dhawan will do a good job in Great Britain. All the facts about him were placed before the British and they have agreed to his appointment. It will, therefore, not be possible to make any change. I am sure he

will work to strengthen the relationship between India and Great Britain. Many of us have at some time or another expressed various views. In fact, the whole independence movement was directed against Great Britain.

Shri Ranga: Did he also take part in the independence movement? Is he a freedom fighter? Has he gone to jail?

Shrimati Gandhi: He may not have gone to jail. But he did play a part in it.

It does not mean that one sticks to certain attitudes. I am fully convinced; as I said earlier, that his going there will help us to forge new links with different sections of the people, as well as the Government, of Great Britain.

Mr. Dandekar: My questions have not been met. I asked first of all as a question of fact whether he is not Chairman of the Blitz National Forum in Lucknow which Forum is admittedly continuously and persistently anti-British, so is the newspaper. These are questions of fact concerning which there has been no answer. Secondly, I asked as a question of fact whether or not Mr. Dhawan is presently believing in the proposition that England is our implacable enemy, that there is no possibility of establishing Indo-British friendship vis-a-vis a country which has been treacherous towards this country. I have had no answers to these.

Mrs. Gandhi: My colleague says he has denied the first thing, about Chairmanship of the Blitz Forum. I have no information about it. He can answer ~~that~~ it later. As far as the other thing is concerned, I thought I had answered that it was in the context of a particular thing. Today he does not believe. Otherwise, he would not be willing to go to that country for the express purpose of strengthening our relations which is our intention.

Mr. B.R. Bhagat: This matter was raised by Mr. Masani in a letter to the newspaper that Mr. Dhawan is a member of the Blitz National Forum, Lucknow. He has categorically ~~denied~~ this.

denied

Mr. Hem Barua: May I know if the attention of Government has been drawn to the comments in a section of the British press on the appointment of Mr. Dhawan as our High Commissioner in London? The Guardian has said -- I have read their comment -- that by appointing a man who is not known either in Britain or in India to a job that was once held by Mrs. Pandit and Mr. Krishna Menon, India shows that she does not pay the same importance to Indo-British relations which she used to pay once. And the Time -- I have read their comment also, and it is more funny -- says that Mr. Dhawan has no inhibition in the matter of food and drinks, for he is a Panjabi. In the context of that, may I know whether Government think that the Indian cause will be served best by Mr. Dhawan who is a non-vegetarian, as Mr. Piloo Mody says, and among whose qualifications are that (a) he was the President of the Cambridge Students Union, (b) he writes occasionally for the Blitz and the Leader, and (c) he has no inhibition in the matter of food and drinks, whether Govt. think that our cause is served best by this gentleman?

Mrs. Gandhi: Yes. Government do ~~not~~ think so, not because of the reasons which the hon. Member has mentioned, but because he has a very thorough understanding of our foreign policy and of the trends of various policies followed by other countries, and he does not have set views, and I think ~~rather~~ that he knows the British people and Great Britain sufficiently, as I remarked earlier, /to project India's point of view and to create a new understanding. It is true that our previous relations with Britain have left much to be desired, and it is my belief that Mr. Dhawan can help in such a situation.

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Mr R.K.Sinha : May I know from the Minister of External Affairs whether it will be a qualification in future appointments that India or Pakistan, America or U.A. should not be criticised if it is in the interests of the patriotic growth of the country? Will it be a qualification that Indian patriotism should not express itself in view of the fact that a certain acceptability has to be worked out with all countries or with the benches opposite? Is it also a fact that Mr. Masani said that Indian behaved like the peons of UAR, and Mr. Dhawan wrote an article stating that Mr. Masani had put his party interests above his patriotism? Was this question provoked because of that? These are the questions I would like to put before the Minister of External Affairs.

Shri Ranga : He has become notorious now.

Mr.A.K.Sinha : He has been a patriot.

Mr.B.R.Bhagat: Ours is a democratic country, and everybody has a right to express his opinion freely. I think it should be appreciated. As the Prime Minister has explained, in a particular context we may express ourselves in a different manner. Actually I can remind the hon. Members of the tempo that was prevailing in this House itself after Mr. Wilson's statement on the Indo-Pakistan situation, and so, if Mr. Dhawan has written in a certain manner in a particular article, that should not be taken as a permanent view. It is the personal opinion expressed at a particular moment of time.

As for the second part of the question, that Mr Dhawan has written an article in which he said that Mr Masani put his party interest before the country, that is a fact.

(Interventions by Mr. Fernandez and Mr.Madhu Limeye in Hindi)

Mr. Piloo Mody: It is generally known that the post of the High Commissioner in the U.K. has been going abegging for several months, and the Government in their wisdom have not been able to find a suitable incumbent for the post. Am I to understand that in this country of over 500 million people, all that they could find to represent us in the U.K. was an occasional correspondent of Blitz (Interruption).

Mrs. Gandhi : I do not think that the question requires any answer.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: Of late, posts are being given to superannuated persons. May I know if there are any special reasons for appointing superannuated persons to the diplomatic missions in the United Kingdom or the work has become so unimportant that no younger man is considered suitable?

Mrs. Indira Gandhi: The work is important. But here it is not a question of age, it is a question of people who understand and are able to interpret our policies and to strengthen the bonds with other countries.

Dr. Rajen Sen: Sir, from these questions and answers it is quite evident that a section of hon. Members of this House are quite annoyed with the Government of India for appointing one gentleman who at a certain time when India was in danger had uttered certain comments or criticism about the United Kingdom Government. Is it the criterion of the Government of India to appoint only stooges of certain countries as ambassadors of India. ~~I want an answer to my question whether it is the policy of the Government~~

Mr. Speaker : No answer is necessary

Mr. Bal Raj Madhok: Sir, ambassadors are appointed in various countries so that they should be able to present the country's case and build public opinion elsewhere in favour of the country. They are also meant to see that the problems of the people of this country who are living there -- in the U.K. it is quite a large number -- are properly tackled. Is it a fact that for the last so many years there have been complaints after complaints about the behaviour and conduct of the people who have been holding the post of High Commissioner in the United Kingdom which has the highest number of personnel -- about 1400 people working there? In that context, may I know whether the Government of India could not find a man, even if they had to find one from their own party, who could deal with the people, who could command the confidence of the people and also of the Government to which he is accredited, instead of finding a man who is known for his views and who is, for that matter, even a persona non grata in the country to which he has been sent?

Mrs. Gandhi : They would never have agreed to his appointment had he been a persona non grata. May I use this opportunity, Sir, to answer one or two other questions which were asked in between? I think it was Shri Fernandez who said that we got the permission of the British Government but not of this Parliament. Whenever an ambassador or a High Commissioner goes it is the custom to take an agreement from the country to which he goes just as our agreement is sought when their ambassador or High Commissioner comes to us. I should also like to take this opportunity of stating clearly that Shri Dhawan has never been anti-British. He has always advocated Indo-British friendship by honourable terms. As I pointed out, it was on this specific occasion that he wrote this because everybody was excited about this matter. This article was one of the series of articles that he wrote. It is not only that he wrote about the British, but he also praised the British for playing a progressive role in India, that side by side with her imperialist role there were enough people in Britain and the British Govt. who had supported Indian independence and who continuously supported the policies of Indian Government. In fact, just as we are also blamed by both the extremes, the Communists thinking that we are Swatantrites and the Swatantrites thinking that we are Communists, similarly, in his case also, for one of his articles he was at one time called by a Moscow journal as a paid agent of British imperialism, so that anybody who expresses his opinion honestly always seems to get into trouble with one side or another.

Mr. J. B. Kripalani : I do not know this gentleman from Adam and I do not know his doings in India because I do not read Blitz. But may I ask if it would not be desirable to send persons as foreign ambassadors who are not liked by a large section of the House?

Mrs. Indira Gandhi : Well, this is a very difficult question. Until you see his working, you cannot really decide what type of work he is capable of doing. In my previous answer I did not fully reply to the question of Shri Madhok, when he spoke about the large Indian population there. I must say that we appreciate what he said, because this was one of the factors which weighed with us in selecting this person, because he would be able to help, with a large number of Indian emigrants there, as he knows their language and as he has been in touch with that problem for quite some time.

Shri Kripalani : This is not an answer to my question. I asked whether it is desirable to send as our representative a person who is not liked by a section of the House, which means also a section of the public.

Mrs. Gandhi : I thought I had replied to it, Sir. We had sought the agreement of the British Govt. and that agreement has come. It would not be proper now....

Mr. Speaker : The hon. Member was referring to the views of a large section of the people in India.

Mrs. Gandhi : I am not prepared to believe that a large section of the House is against him. I want to say that I doubt if we will find any really effective person about whom

some section of the House will not object. Of course, if we sent somebody who has no opinions, probably everybody will accept that person. But, then that person will not be able to do his job effectively.

Shri W.S.Mahida : Shri Dhawan is an eminent jurist and his sentiments are that of a patriot and a realist. Is it a disqualification for a person for appointment as ambassador if he is a patriot and realist?

Dhri D.A.Patodia : Is it a question?

Mr. Speaker : He has repeated what the Minister has stated.

Mr. Nath Pai : Mr. Speaker, it seems, like the office of Governor, the office of our envoys, ambassadors, High Commissioners, etc. also is being reduced in its value by being used as a matter of patronage. I would not say what qualifications these days are necessary to be a Governor, but we have instances of Congress candidates defeated in elections being sent as ambassadors. Now, is it fair to this country, or the countries to which such ambassadors are being accredited, that people who were rejected by their people are to be sent as ambassadors? What exactly are the criteria that are being evolved as qualifications to represent this country, may I know? It used to be said during the tenure of office of her distinguished father that the highest ambition of an Indian envoy who went abroad was not to project the image of this country, such as it is, but to return to India with a duty-free Ambassador car, a General Electric refrigerator and a Grundig radiogram. Has there been any change in this? Is there any change in the desires or ambitions of our envoys?

Mrs. Gandhi : I submit that this is a very unfair remark to make about our ambassadors abroad. As far as the other part of Shri Nath Pai's question is concerned, I think I have already answered it a number of times just now....

Mr. Nath Pai : I would like to know what exactly are the criteria that the Prime Minister is trying to evolve and to what extent it is true that defeated men are appointed. This is very serious. Unless she provokes me, I would not name the man.

Mrs. Gandhi : Sir, the difficulty is that they bob up immediately even before one starts... (Interruption). I was just saying that as far as the second part of Shri Nath Pai's question is concerned, that is, about ambassadors in general, I have said that it is a very unfair statement to make. If anybody has any specific allegations to make, they can certainly come and speak to me about that. As far as the first part is concerned, Shri Dhawan is not defeated candidate. In fact, although he took part in the independence struggle, he was not and has never been a member of the Congress Party.

Shri Hem Barua : What about Shri Raj Bahadur? He was also defeated... (Interruption)

Dhri D.A.Patodia : The appointment of Shri Dhawan has been defended by saying that the article was an isolated one. May I know in this context whether Shri Dhawan is the Chairman of the Indo Soviet Cultural Society, UP Branch, and whether he had been writing regularly for years in the National Herald under the name of Sanjaya anti-British articles? Is it not a fact that during his 20 years' career in the past he had systematically been conducting anti-British activities? May I know whether the Govt. is prepared to look into the activities of this gentleman for the last 20 years to see to what extent he had been acting as anti-British and thereafter whether they would like to reconsider their decision?

Mrs. Gandhi : I have already replied to this by saying that Shri Dhawan is not anti-British or pro-Soviet. It is not that supporting Government's policies towards the Soviet Union is being anti-British; in fact, sometimes the Britishers are also supporting the Soviet Union.

Mr. S. M. Banerjee : From the various questions it appears that some people are unhappy because he had written certain articles said to be anti-British. Every Indian was anti-British at one time. I would like to know whether instructions have been issued to Shri Dhawan that while holding this office in the UK he would counteract the vicious propaganda that is launched by the British imperialists against India and in favour of Pakistan.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi : These instructions are issued to all our ambassadors and not just to one, obviously.

Shri Lobo Prabhu : Has the Government considered the propriety of appointing a Judge of the High Court to a post like this which implies that you are rewarding his ~~xxx~~ services? If this judge was so eminent, as was suggested, why would it not have been more appropriate to appoint him to the post of Chief Justice?

Mrs. Gandhi : I think, when this question is raised, it is a suggestion that any judge is good, but all of them cannot be appointed Chief Justices. I can assure the House that it is not a question of finding a job for a retired judge. It was a question of finding a person who fitted into the job, which is not only a diplomatic one but which needs many other things. As Shri Madhok rightly pointed out, there is a very special problem in England with regard to both Indian students and a large number of Indian emigrants. That is just an important part of the High Commissioner's functioning as it is to create better relations with Britain.

Mr. Kanwarlal Gupta (Question in Hindi)

Mrs. Indira Gandhi : It is not any rule that judges are to be appointed. There have been one or two exceptions. As to the question of the post lying vacant, it was not 10 months, it was less. I do not think this has affected our relationship with Great Britain in any way. We had a very good and competent Dy. High Commissioner there...

Mr. K.L. Gupta : Why was the post lying vacant for the last 9 to 10 months?

Mrs. Gandhi : May I also add that some persons were not willing to go and that also caused some delay.

(rough Kim translation of Hindi interventions)

Mr George Fernandez : Sir, because it is always commented upon that, amongst the Indian ambassadors appointed in foreign countries, mostly there are defeated ministers, ex-bureaucrats and such people whose bona fides are later questioned in this House, will it not be advisable for the Government to consult this House before making ambassadorial appointments? (disturbance) ...What is happening in other countries, should be studied first. And if the Government feels shy in facing the House, then like other committees of the House, there should be a committee on foreign policy and before appointing any ambassador this committee should be consulted.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi : Do you think there are different opinions on foreign policy? If such committee is formed in which members or representatives of the opposition parties are present, then there can be never be unanimity....

Shri Madhu Limaye : Why unanimity? Majority vote can be taken. But place the matter before the Committee...(interruptions) Chairman, Sir, the reply should be right. George Fernandez did not say that there should be unanimity. Please understand the question.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi : I understand the question fully well...

Mr. Madhu Limaye : When did he say that there should be unanimity of opinion?

Mrs. Indira Gandhi : Mr. Chairman, the function of the Indian ambassador is to make the other country clearly understand the policy of the Indian Government. Therefore, this work can be done only by the Government.

Mr. Madhu Limaye : Sir, she has not answered the question of George Fernandez

Mr. Speaker : Constitution of a committee on foreign affairs.

Mr. Madhu Limaye : He did not say that the Committee should take a unanimous decision. He simply said that before the appointment of an ambassador, the matter should be referred to a committee of the Parliament as those are referred to the Senate in the United States. There we come to know about the suitability of the man.

Mr. George Fernandes : The Government of U.K. is consulted but there is hesitation in consulting the people here.

Mr. B.R.Bhagat : Sir, we follow the Parliamentary system where the functions of the executive are well-defined and of the legislature are also well-defined. Here we have checks and balances. The presidential system which the hon. Member has quoted is entirely a different system which prevails there. Therefore, to apply without going into the entire constitution as it is, a thing which prevails in an entirely different system, will make it completely confused.

Mr. Madhu Limaye : There is a committee even in the House of Commons. . Mr. Chairman, I should be excused if I say that the hon. Minister is not aware of the new improvements introduced in the democratic system. This is on the pattern of the House of Commons...

Mr B.R.Bhagat : The hon. Member has not said anything which shows that I have not got knowledge of new improvements. He has talked of American system.

(rough Hindi translation of Hindi intervention)

Mr. Kanwar Lal Gupta : I would like to know from the Prime Minister the reasons for which the post of Indian High Commissioner in U. K. remained vacant for ten months. Does the Prime Minister not think that such things affect the relations of the two countries? Secondly, is it correct that Shri Chagla was the first High Commissioner who was previously a judge of the High Court and now this is the second High Court judge who has become the High Commissioner? Hon. Prime Minister has said that because he has been a freedom fighter, so he has been appointed to this post. I want to know from the Prime Minister whether it is right in principle to appoint the High Court Judges as governors and ambassadors because it affects the judiciary directly or indirectly? Will the government appoint any independent enquiry commission in this connection and seek its opinion on this matter?