

Correspondence between Mr. Hersh and Indian Ambassador in U.S.A.

*186. SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI:†
SHRI SHRIDHAR WASU-
DEO DHABE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that before publishing his book in 1982 Mr. Hersh sent the relevant chapters including the one in which he had made allegations against Shri Morarji Desai to our Ambassador in the USA for comments and that the chapters were returned with the comments that the Embassy did not find anything serious or damaging in those chapters;

(b) whether the Indian Embassy referred these chapters to the Indian Government and if so, what was the reaction of the Government of India thereon;

(c) whether Government are taking any action for negligence or dereliction of duty on the part of the Indian Embassy officials in not referring such serious allegations to Government; and

(d) if the answer to part (a) above be in the negative, what steps Government propose to take to set the matters right?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) The purport of the Question is not quite clear.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Sir, the honourable Minister has said that Mr. Hersh had not sent the relevant portion, relevant chapter including the one in which he has made allegations

against Mr. Morarji Desai, to the Indian Embassy. But it has come in the Press that Mr. Hersh has asserted that he has sent it to the Indian Embassy and the Indian Embassy returned it with some comments, returning it saying that there is nothing objectionable. Sir, this is not a simple matter. Here an allegation has been made against a person who has occupied all the possible important positions in this country right from independence, as a Chief Minister, as a Cabinet Minister here, as the Deputy Prime Minister and then as the Prime Minister. And, Sir, when allegations of this nature are made against him, they not only tarnish his image, but they also tarnish the image of this country because outside the people will think as to what type of a country this is where a person, who occupies the position of the Prime Minister, can be bought for the pittance of a sum of twenty thousand dollars. They may not know whether there is truth in it or not. But the Government cannot shirk its responsibility also because when such allegations are made, the country is entitled to know whether our system is such that a person who occupies the highest position can sell himself to a foreign country.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You kindly put your question.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Therefore, I would like to know whether the Government has made any inquiry to assure the countrymen about the truth and veracity of the report. I am asking this because if actually Mr. Hersh had not sent it to our Embassy, then it was incumbent on the part of the Government to deny these Press reports. But, unfortunately, no such denial has come. I would like to know from the honourable Minister... (Interruptions)... why no denial has come from the Government so far.

SHRI J. K. JAIN: Denial of what? That Mr. Morarji Desai was not a CIA agent? Please clarify that. (Interruptions).

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Dinesh Goswami.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Sir, if Mr. Jain cannot follow English, it is not my fault. Mr. Jha has specially made this statement that this chapter in the book relevant to India was sent to the Indian Embassy and the Indian Embassy had returned it back with certain comments. The Minister of External Affairs and the Government of India ought to have denied it or said that Mr. Hersh did not send it, send his book. Has any denial come? I hope Mr. Jain will now understand what I am saying.

Secondly, Sir, we may have personal differences and political differences with many persons. I have strong differences, political differences, with Mr. Morarji Desai. But, when an attempt is made to show, and when an allegation is made, that the Prime Minister of this country can be bought for twenty thousand dollars, it tarnishes the image of this country and, therefore, it is the duty of the Government of India to clarify the position. Will the External Affairs Minister explain the position now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Goswami, what do you want to know? You want to know whether any enquiry has been made or not?

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Sir, I want to know why the Government has not denied the statement made by Mr. Hersh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If Mr. Hersh's every statement is to be denied, then there will be plenty of statements... (Interruptions)...and denials.

SHRI R. R. MORARKA: No, Sir. (Interruptions).

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Sir, that chapter in his book was sent to the Indian Embassy and the Indian Embassy returned it with some comments. Therefore, I would like to know why this has not been denied by the Government. (Interruptions).

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: Sir, you are doing injustice both to Mr. Hersh

and to Mr. Morarji Desai by saying that umpteen denials will have to be made. For heaven's sake, please do not say that. (Interruptions).

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Why has the Government not denied it? (Interruptions).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shall I tell you one thing? (Interruptions). Just a minute. There was a very wise statement made by Mark Twain: "Deny a rumour if it is true." (Interruptions).

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: It is not a rumour, Sir. It is an allegation made against the former Prime Minister. (Interruptions). It is an allegation made against Mr. Morarji Desai and I do not know how you are saying that it is a rumour and mentioning Mark Twain and all that. I am very sorry. Sir. (Interruptions).

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: Sir, my friend has very specifically asked a question whether Mr. Hersh sent his papers to the Indian Embassy. You please confirm it or deny it. (Interruptions).

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Why no denial has come so far?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jain, you are departing from what I should say correct etiquette for the House. (Interruptions).

SHRI J. K. JAIN:*

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am very sorry. Erase everything that Mr. Jain has said. (Interruptions) Mr. Jain's statement shall be erased from the record.

SHRI J. K. JAIN:*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything further he says without my permission shall not be recorded. (Interruptions)

SHRI J. K. JAIN:*
(Interruptions)

*Not recorded.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Silence, please. Attention.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: Am I permitted now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am permitting you.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: Sir, I have quite categorically denied that anything was sent to the Embassy.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: That is not my question. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: I have not completed my sentence.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please go on.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: At least a sentence should be heard if I am allowed...

SHRI SHRIDHAR WASUDEO DHABE: By your Members.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: By all Members, any Members. As I said, I categorically deny that anything was sent to the Embassy or seen by the Embassy. That is number one. Hersh himself has denied this, stating—I quote:

“Think of the way I earn my living. If you think I can work as a bagman for the Indian Government and write what they want me to, then you can go ahead and make a story out of it.”

I have not come across any statement of Hersh saying that he has sent a chapter to the Indian Embassy for vetting or got it back after vetting and that he is relying on the Indian Embassy for the veracity of what he is writing. This has not been said by him. In fact, the contrary has been said by him. He has denied it by saying:

“Think of the way I earn my living. If you think I can work as a bagman for the Indian Government

and write what they want me to, then you can go ahead and make a story out of it.”

What does this mean? It is a clear denial that he works according to the wishes or according to the vetting of the Indian Embassy, and I have not come across, as I said, any statement from him to the effect that he sent anything which he has written to the Indian Embassy. That is the long and short of it.

Now, Sir, coming to the next question, that is very important, and I welcome that such a very important question has been raised by Mr. Goswami. Sir, fortunately, in this very House we have a very useful precedent as to what is to be done under circumstances such as this. When persons in high authority are written about by foreigners, what do we do? What should the Indian Government do? Earlier we did not have any precedents. But the first precedent came and it was discussed; it was debated in this very House and the then Home Minister, Mr. H. M. Patel, made it very, very clear in that case what exactly the Government should do. It so happens that we are trying to follow him and I would like to place before the House what exactly happened to a former United States Ambassador to India, Daniel Moynihan who published in 1979 a book called ‘A Dangerous Place’. In that there were certain allegations against Mrs. Gandhi. The matter came up before the House here on the 10th May, 1979. The then Minister of Home Affairs made a statement in the Rajya Sabha in response to a Calling Attention Notice. Shri H. M. Patel said: “The Government has no information regarding this matter.” He also said that “the normal presumption would be that Mr. Moynihan would not have gone on record on an issue like this had there not been any element of truth in it.” I have not said that in regard to Shri Desai. This Government has not said that. On 10th May, 1979, in the debate following the Home Minister’s statement, the

Minister of Home Affairs was asked whether he was prepared to condemn and deprecate such kind of irresponsible writing of an ex-Ambassador of the United States. This was the question specifically put to him. His reply was: "I certainly would condemn any irresponsible statements of this kind if they are proved to me incorrect. Because I am not in a position either to prove or to disprove it, I have not made any statement about it." The Home Minister went on to say that "Mrs. Gandhi should file a suit in this country against the Indian publishers and immediately the facts will come out. Why do you not take the obvious legal steps that are open to you?" This is a precedent which is on all fours with the present case. Shri Morarji Desai for whom all of us have respect has been involved in this. We did not prefer the advice to him because the advice was available from his own the then Home Minister. So, he acted on the advice. He has done it. He needs no advice now. Sir, the Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, only said: "I hope it is not true." Now, it is for the Member to compare both the statements and see which is more magnanimous.

(Interruptions).

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Sir, I am not here to defend Mr. Morarji Desai. But the hon. Foreign Minister has slipped on one point. It is not that Mr. Hersh has stated that he has received this information from the Indian Embassy. But we know that in the Watergate scandal, the practice followed by the American journalists is that whenever an allegation is made, they send this allegation to the persons concerned or to somebody to say whether these allegations are true or not. Every allegation made against the persons in authority in the Watergate scandal was sent to the person concerned for comments. Mr. Hersh has said that it is not that his information is from the Indian Embassy. He has said that because he had made this comment, he had sent it to the Indian Embassy for their comments so that if they have got something to

say on this, they may do so. I am sorry that the hon. Foreign Minister's attention has not been drawn to it. There have been extensive reports in the Indian press and if his attention has not been drawn, then there is something inherently wrong with this Government.

Secondly, there is an essential distinction between the case of Shrimati Indira Gandhi. (Interruptions). You allowed Mr. Ramanand Yadav 10 minutes. When an allegation is made that the Prime Minister of this country or a former Prime Minister or a Cabinet Minister can be a paid agent of the C.I.A., it no longer remains a personal question. My security is affected because the situation in this country is such that a person in authority occupying the position of the Prime Minister or that of a Cabinet Minister can be an agent of the C.I.A., then the security of this country is jeopardised: To take up the position that the Government has no responsibility in such a situation and to follow Mr H. M. Patel's statement is to say something which is not borne out by facts. In every country, whenever such allegations have been made, in England whenever such allegations have been made, the Government has never said that they were not responsible. I would like to ask whether it is a fact that even when allegations are made that persons occupying important positions in this country are agents of certain foreign agency, no investigation will be made in this country to assure the people of this country whether it is true or not true so that one can feel secure. Is it the position of the Government?

(Interruptions)

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: Sir, . . . (Interruptions)

SHRI J. K. JAIN: What were you doing in those days? (Interruptions) with the Government. (Interrup-

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Sir, he has asked me a question. Let me reply, Sir. In those days, we fought with the Government (Interruptions). We fought with H.M. Patel. (Interruptions).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the Minister answer now.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: We fought against H. M. Patel.

SHRIMATI USHA MALHOTRA: Is it on record.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Please look to the record. You are a new Member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wish you would.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: Now there is no need for all this excitement.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Why should there be?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: We are all of the same opinion that when allegations are made against persons in high authority, particularly those who have been Prime Ministers, it is a serious matter. What I was trying to submit to the House, particularly to Mr. Dinesh Goswami, was that in this particular case, if it had been the first case of its kind, the Government would have had certain latitude to take this course or the other course, and several courses would have been open. And had I not followed the precedent, the House would have come down heavily on me and said, "Look, here is a precedent. Why did you not follow it?"

(Interruptions)

SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR: There is no parallel.

श्री शिव चन्द्र झा : देश के सामने परम्परा है (व्यवधान) मुझे सवाल पूछने दें (व्यवधान)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. (Interruptions) Don't record.

SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR: *

SHRI SHIVA CHANDRA JHA: *

*Not recorded.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am standing now. (Interruptions); While I am standing nothing except what I say will go on record. This sort of thing must stop. Yes, Mr Minister, you go on.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: No two things can be absolutely identical. After all, we have to (Interruptions). I said there is a precedent. The precedent is something which gives you a principle and not all the facts, hundred per cent. I mean, where a question of principle is involved, where a question of course of action is involved, we look to the precedent. That is what is called precedent. That is why... (Interruptions).

SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR: Basically there is a difference.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: Sir, there is another point which I would like to add: Mr. Dinesh Goswami... (Interruptions).

MR. CHAIRMAN: May I inform the House that only seven minutes are left? If this noise goes on, I will adjourn the House for seven minutes and close the Question Hour. You allow the Minister to speak.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: Sir, Mr. Goswami has raised another point, a valid point. But in this case it does not apply because if a person who writes a book another person writes something against him, Shri Goswami says the practice is that he sends it to that person. Then in this case, Mr. Herish should have sent it to Mr. Morarji Desai, not to the Indian Embassy. He was not writing anything against the Indian Embassy. The logic of what Mr. Goswami says is very clear that he must have sent it to Mr. Morarji Desai. If he has not done it, then he has taken the risk of the action by Mr. Morarji Desai. So, the Indian Embassy does not come into the picture. So far as the Government's attitude is concerned, I have found myself in possession

of a precedent. The Government have followed the precedent although we know that no two cases can be identical. This is my position, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dhabe.

SHRI SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Mr. Morarji Desai has filed a suit against Mr. Hersh.

SHRI SHRIDHAR WASUDEO DHABE: I am surprised to have a reply from the hon. Minister that the Janata Government set very good precedents because many times this Government has said that these were not good decisions, and that they were not good precedents. (*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Doesn't matter.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: I have not commented on the precedent. I only said that there is a precedent and it so happens that we have followed it.

SHRI SHRIDHAR WASUDEO DHABE: It is not...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Whether it is good or bad, doesn't matter.

SHRI SHRIDHAR WASUDEO DHABE: It is not as if it is a fight between the Janata party's decision, and the ruling party's decision in the matter. It is not the question of the people who are sitting on the opposite side and are opposing this view. But to say that the decision is between the Janata Government and the ruling party Government to find out all this, this is not the proper attitude to the problem. The very important question is even if it is a precedent, does he consider it a good precedent? If he treats it as a good precedent, I think it is a wrong thing for the Minister to say that the matter involved is a person who was holding a high office, against whom allegations of a serious type have been made, which involve the integrity of our country and national honour of our country. May I know from the

Minister whether he has made any inquiry in this affair and the allegations made in Hersh's book?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is in the answer.

SHRI SHRIDHAR WASUDEO DHABE: Has the Government made any inquiry?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: I have not said either it is a good precedent or it is a bad precedent, which is not very ancient. It is only of 1979. Therefore, in order to stave off the possible criticism that while something was available within the last four or five years we have not followed it, we have followed it. We have not said anything and the Prime Minister has said, she hopes that the allegation is not true. As I have already stated, it is not that we have exactly followed them. We did not say, let them go to the court. He has already gone to the court. But still the Prime Minister says, 'I hope it is not true.' What else can a Government say under the circumstances? It just beats me.

SHRI SHRIDHAR WASUDEO DHABE: My question is whether an inquiry has been made from the Embassy. (*Interruptions*).

श्री संघ्यद सिवते रजी : मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय मंत्री जी से पूछना चाहूंगा कि क्या कोई ऐसा ट्रेडिशन है कि विदेश में यदि कोई किताब किसी के बारे में लिखे तो यह जरूरी है कि वहां की जो हमारी इम्बैसी है उसको किताब, उसके ऊपर कमेंट मांगने के लिए भेजे या कोई चैप्टर अगर ऐसा हो जिसके बारे में कोई ख्याल हो तो उस चैप्टर को भेजे ? क्या ऐसी कोई रवायत है ?

श्री पी० वी० नरसिंह राव : रवायत सिर्फ नहीं है बल्कि जो वहां भेजा जाता है वह वहां भी लोग भेजते हैं । कोई इम्बैसी अपने सिर पर नहीं लेती है । वहां भेजते हैं तो वहां भी भेजा जाता

है। लेकिन यहाँ नहीं आया, वहाँ नहीं आया, यह सच्ची बात है।

(Interruptions).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Wait a minute.

DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA: May I know from the Minister whether there is any kind of a liaison between the CIA and any of the Government agencies in order to know as to who are on their list as far as this kind of work is concerned? Secondly, I would also like to know from the Minister whether, when such operations take place by a foreign Government, it is possible for the Government here, unless they are in possession of some evidence, to make any kind of assessment. Thirdly, Sir, I would like to ask the Minister whether he does not consider it a matter of shame that these elements in our country denounced Mrs. Gandhi when a similar charge was made against her though she was the Prime Minister?

SHRI SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Not a similar charge.

DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA: I correct myself, not a similar charge. When a charge was made as referred to by the Prime Minister that at that time position of the Prime Minister was forgotten that these very elements were prepared to do everything in their power and they did not at that time think of the national honour and national shame. Here the charge is of an entirely different nature. I am grateful to my friend, Mr. Razi, for pointing out that there the charge was of taking money and here the charge is of acting as a CIA agent. Will the Minister, while talking of the precedent, make also clear the distinction between the two so that this kind of a talk of national shame is stopped once and for all?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: I have no answer to the first two parts of the question. I would say that no general answer can be given. Every case has to depend on its own merits.

In some cases, we may have the information. In some cases we may not have the information. Therefore, no generalised answer can be given. The third thing is a comment, on which I need not comment.

SHRI V. N. TIWARI: I want to know from the hon. Member—forget about this book; there is an allegation here—will the Government enquire into the matter and tell the House as to what the position is about this allegation, so that we know about it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It cannot go on. The Question Hour is over.

श्री सतपाल मलिक : मेरा व्यवस्था का प्रश्न है। मान्यवर हम इस पर आधे घंटे की चर्चा चाहते हैं।

श्री सभापति : अभी बहुत चर्चा होगी, कोर्ट में केस है।

I must congratulate the hon. Minister for having handled this very ticklish question with a great sense of dignity and aplomb.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Session of the U.N. Special Committee on the Indian Ocean

*181. DR. (SHRIMATI) NAJMA HEPTULLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the third session of the Special Committee on the Indian Ocean, as mandated by the U.N. General Assembly was held from the 11th to the 22nd July, 1983; if so, what is the outcome thereof; and

(b) whether the International Conference on the Indian Ocean would be held in 1984?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA