

RAJYA SABHA

Friday, the 4th August, 1972/the 13th
Shravana, 1894 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock,
MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MISSING SOVIET ENGINEER

*121. SHRI M. K. MOHTA :†

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO :

SHRI OM PRAKASH TYAGI :

SHRIMATI SITA DEVI :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether a Soviet Engineer working at the Bokaro Steel Plant along with his family has been found missing; and

(b) if so, whether Government have made any inquiry into the matter; and if so, the results thereof?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH) :

(a) Yes, Sir. It has been brought to the notice of Government that a Soviet Engineer working at the Bokaro Steel Plant alongwith his family is presently missing;

(b) The matter is being investigated by the appropriate authorities. The results of the investigations are awaited.

SHRI M. K. MOHTA : May I ask the hon. Minister whether the Press reports suggesting that the Soviet engineer has defected to any of the western countries is true and, if so, whether the Government has made any enquiry as to the service conditions and other conditions of Soviet Engineers serving in India?

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri M. K. Mohta.

1—10 RSS/72

How is it that so many citizens of the USSR are defecting to the west through India?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH :

Sir, the investigations are still being carried out and it is very difficult to say whether this particular gentleman has defected from India. We do not know it.

SHRI M. K. MOHTA : The missing was reported quite some time back and if the engineer has not left India by the usual exit channels, airports or the sea-ports, and he has not gone back to his country, if he is not found in India, how long will it take the Government to complete its enquiry and come to a definite conclusion as to what had happened to him?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH : It is very difficult to say how long the enquiry will take. We are doing everything possible in this matter. The investigations are being carried out. All necessary action is being taken to ensure that he does not leave the country. Beyond that it is very difficult for me to say anything.

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO : This is the second case in which a Soviet citizen has been whisked away from either the Embassy or when he was a visitor. This is the second case in India. The Minister has replied that this matter is under investigation. The fact remains that the Soviet citizens who had been abducted before this, their whereabouts are still unknown. How is it that in this country Government is not aware as to how people can be contacted and whisked away without any effort by Government to find out whether they have gone out of the country or whether they are still remaining in the country? What are the organisations who are behind this move to give India a bad name that this is a country where people can be whisked away?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH :

The hon. Member's presumption is that this Soviet engineer has left this country or has been whisked away to some other country or some other place. We do not know that yet. It is very difficult to keep track of all foreigners in the country all the time. This is not a police State. People go about this country wherever they want to. It is only when a case is brought to our notice that we can take action. Investigations are being carried out. It is very difficult to say anything beyond that.

SHRI C. D. PANDE : In case a Soviet citizen or any other citizen wants to defect from our country to another country, then in that case is it not the duty of the Government of India to trace that man and hand over that man to the Government from where he wants to go away?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH : No, Sir. Any foreigner leaving the country has to have an exit permit. In the first place it is not always easy for them to leave the country without our knowledge.

SHRI C. D. PANDE : My question is whether he will be restored to Russian custody or he will be free to go wherever he likes.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH : When that situation arises, we will take a view.

DR. M. R. VYAS : Will the Government include in the investigation the possibility of a foreign agency working in India to embarrass India by making these people defect?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH : Naturally, investigations are taking place.

SHRI B. K. KAUL : What is the line of investigation taken by the Government of India and also may I know whether the Government is sure that they have not been whisked away by some political parties?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH :

Whether he has been taken out of the country or not, will be known only after the investigations.

श्री मानसिंह वर्मा : माननीय मंत्री जी यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि इस संबंध में रूस की क्या प्रतिक्रिया है।

श्री सुरेन्द्र पाल सिंह : रूस की क्या प्रतिक्रिया है मैं इतना ही कह सकता हूँ कि जब उसके गायब होने की खबर रूस की एम्बेसी को मिली, तो उन्होंने हम को खबर दी। उसके बारे में जब हमारे पास खबर आ गई तो हमने इंवेस्टिगेशन शुरू कर दिया।

SHRI N. G. GOREY : I presume that in this country there are many foreign elements who have come here as experts in various projects. Is there any machinery with the Government to keep a watch on their movement and to know where they go and what they do? If so, how is it that so far as this particular gentleman and his family are concerned the Government does not know where they have gone.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH : It is true that under the Foreigners' Registration Act there is some procedure whereby they get themselves registered. But the hon. Member fully knows that it is not the custom here that we keep a track of every movement of a foreigner. That is not our custom and we do not think that we should have that custom. In this particular case, the investigation that has so far been made shows that he had come to Delhi and he had registered himself in the YMCA Hostel as a tourist. From there he left. He was supposed to reach Bokaro where he did not reach. This is the information in our possession at the present moment. But as my colleague has already mentioned, further investigation is taking place.