

SELECTED WORKS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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Page 300

Policy Towards Goa¹

Jawaharlal Nehru: ...Well, broadly speaking, you know our policy with regard to Goa. Goa belongs to India geographically and in every way, and inevitably it must become part of the Indian Union. The whole question is: How can this be brought about; According to our broad policy in regard to all such questions we seek to bring about a solution peacefully and by negotiation. It is patent and it does not require an argument that when this vast land of India became free and the British power had to yield, it is absurd from any point of view to expect India to tolerate any bits of foreign territory. Fortunately we came to a friendly settlement with the French with regard first to Chandemagore and then Pondicherry, etc. In Goa the Portuguese authorities have been not only non-cooperative but something much worse. Now some people wonder and ask us: Why do you tolerate this kind of thing? Are you not strong enough obviously. That does not require proof, and it is not right for anyone to suggest that we are afraid in the circumstances. I do not say that we have been heroic always but it is quite absurd to say in connection with Goa that we are afraid.

We are afraid of one thing, that is, of following a policy which is not in keeping with our larger policies, with our objectives, with our methods. We attach great importance to the basic principles governing our policy,

¹ Press conference. New Delhi, 31 May 1955. From the Press Information Bureau. Extracts. For other parts of the press conference, see post. pp. 328-332. 380-389. p. 431 and pp. 503-505

international policies especially. We have gained some credit in the world for following those basic principles, and we do not wish to be hustled or hurried into forgetting and bypassing those principles that govern our foreign policy everywhere. Naturally in a changing situation as in Goa, one has to adapt that basic policy from time to time to a changing situation. But the basic policy must remain, as otherwise, we stand discredited in our own eyes, because we have talked in one way, and acted in another. That is not the reputation India has achieved in these past years. Therefore our policy will be adapted from time to time, but basically it will be a peaceful policy, a policy where the door is always open for peaceful negotiation and settlement, even though the Portuguese do not behave correctly as they don't. It is open to us to take many measures within that ambit of peace. We have taken some measures; we may take others.² Now there can be no doubt that the people of Goa wish to merge with or to get Goa join the Union of India. It does not require an argument.

I cannot speak for everyone there, and mind you I am speaking not of the Hindus or non-Christians of Goa who form the majority there-they are sixty per cent-but I am speaking of the Catholic Christians there. I think enough evidence has come, including the arrest of quite a considerable number of Catholic priests by the Portuguese authorities for expressing themselves in favour of union with India. So, it is not a religious matter. Roughly the population of Goa is sixty per cent Hindus or non-Christians; and forty per cent Catholic Christians. Now, I say, leave out the sixty per cent Hindus of Goa who obviously are in favour of joining India. I say, the forty per cent of the Christian population of Goa, the majority of them wish to join India and I would say a considerable majority but I cannot naturally say exactly how many. So, there is no question of what the people want; there is no

² Severance of diplomatic relations and even some form of blockade were some of the steps contemplated

doubt about it. One may differ in the estimate as to whether ninety per cent of the population want it or eighty per cent want it. There may be some difference in that calculation, but there is no doubt about what the people want.

You know that the Government of India have made it perfectly clear, that as with Pondicherry we propose to treat Goa as an entity, as a separate unit and entity. We do not propose to just attach it to any other part or state in India, and make it perhaps a district of India. We recognise that Goa has an individuality-and a history, and one should maintain that individuality till the people of Goa themselves wish to change it. That is a different matter. So that within the Indian Union Goa will have an individuality and necessarily a normal self-governing apparatus which goes with membership of the Indian Union. What changes might be brought about in future, will naturally be in consultation with and with the approval of the people there. Nothing is to be imposed upon. And it is perfectly clear that so far as religious matters are concerned, they will have the fullest freedom. Reference has been made to the relics of St Francis Xavier. Well, before him, many of you know was St Thomas in Madras and there are millions and millions of Catholics, chiefly in South India. But the biggest testimony is that the Catholic priests and others in Goa are taking a very considerable part internally in this movement for freedom and for union with India. And quite apart from sentimental reasons which may influence them in this behalf, there are practical reasons. It is obvious to them that they will have far greater, freedom as members of the Indian Union, than they have at present. It is not my intention to criticise any country's government, but it is obvious that normal democratic freedom does not prevail not only in Goa, but even in Portugal. Sometimes it is said that some reforms are going to be introduced in Goa-but you can hardly expect Goa to become more democratically free than Portugal itself. And if

Portugal has not got that freedom, well, that is reflected in a much intenser degree in Goa naturally. However, what Portugal has or has not, that is none of my business; that is for the Portuguese people. But it is my business what happens in Goa, and it is only our definite policy of peace, peaceful approach, and restraint, which prevents us from taking other steps. I think it is completely open to us to take such steps in the economic domain as we consider proper. We have taken some; we may take other. People have been going there as satyagrahis, and inside Goa also, you must remember that there is a satyagraha, and many people have been arrested from time to time there. Last year we issued directions, broad directions, that Indian non-Goanese, Indian nationals will not be encouraged there to go. Why? There is no principle about it. Non-Goanese Indian nationals can go there. It is not a sin for them to go there. In fact, I would add: those who want to go there do go. When then did we say this? Because we thought that it is easy enough for large numbers of Indians to go there, almost to paralyse the Government. India has enough people round about there. We felt that that would lead to people to think that we are coercing these Goanese that this is not a movement of the Goanese people. Mind you I do not challenge the right of Indians to go there. Goa is a part of India. Why should we not do it? But we wanted to bring out the fact that this freedom movement with which we wholly sympathise is essentially a Goanese movement, of the people of Goa, and it is nothing thrust upon them; there is nothing which is imposed upon them. And we thought that if large numbers of Indians went there in this way, it would give an opportunity to others to say that this is just an extraneous effort with which the people of Goa did not agree. That was one reason. The second reason was and all this applies to large numbers of people going there that this was bound to lead to other consequences which were not peaceful. The Portuguese Government and authorities, I fear, have little

understanding of satyagraha or peaceful methods. They have been trained in a different school than ours, and we did not wish to create a situation which might well lead to large-scale shooting, killing and the passions that would be aroused in India and elsewhere.

I have told you frankly our reasons for that.

Now, in the past six or eight months, occasionally one or two Indian nationals accompanied the Goanese. Nothing wrong with this. What we wish to prevent was large groups of Indian nationals going together, and coming into conflict and creating a difficult international situation, violence, shooting and all that, something which would come in our way of a peaceful solution of the problem. This time a considerable number of Indians, well, about 55, some were Goanese, but a majority of Indians, they went not by the straight normal route to Goa.³ That itself, of course, prevented that kind of major conflict. We can't line up the whole border with packets and troops and the main approaches are guarded by us for entry and exit. Now, that policy continues, i.e., we do not approve of large numbers of Indian nationals going there for some kind of satyagraha, or what is supposed to be satyagraha. Individuals have gone, they can go with the Goanese and others. In spite of recent developments, which have pained our people and us very much, we propose to adhere to our policy of dealing with this question peacefully, economically and otherwise. And even now the problem of Goa has not been solved, but I have no doubt that it has come nearer solution, and we shall go ahead with this policy, vary it from time to time and keep completely wide awake to what happens there.⁴

³ On 18 May 1955, a batch of 54 satyagrahis, led by N.G. Goray of the Praja Socialist Party, crossed over into Goa and the Portuguese opened fire with four satyagrahis receiving bullet wounds. Many others were abused and beaten harshly

⁴ On 20 May 1955, the Foreign Affairs Committee met to discuss the Goa situation. "It accepted the recommendation of Chief Minister of Bombay that consul general, Goa should ask local authorities to grant interviews with detained satyagrahis in order to ascertain

Question: Mr Alvares⁵ has stated that some foreign government is at the back of the Portuguese Government and he has named the country which has constructed an aerodrome there. In view of these developments, don't you think our policy needs revision at this stage?

JN: Well, that information Mr Alvares has at his disposal, I do not know. It is quite possible, indeed probable that an aerodrome there has been improved, but because of that we cannot take exception to an aerodrome being improved in a place. I do not think personally, there is any foreign government involved in this matter of Goa. Maybe sometimes some may have sympathy with them, but otherwise I don't think there is anything in it.

In fact, I think in the course of the last seven or eight months, that is, since August last year, when there was a big hubbub and since indeed this policy of ours was clearly framed and announced, there has been a much clearer understanding and appreciation of our policy and India's objective in Goa in other countries, in most countries in fact, than there was previously. They did not understand then, but now because of our patience and restraint and yet a firm policy, it has been understood much more in other countries, and even those, who sometimes criticised us have come round to the opinion that the only solution is for Goa to come to India. Mostly they say privately, "It is bound to come to India, why are you in a hurry. Within two or three years it is bound to come." That is the present foreign approach, if I may

details of police firing on 18 May. The Committee decided that if reports about the 18 May incident were found to be correct, then India should take steps to close the Portuguese legation and consulates in Goa and Bombay. It was also decided that no further action would be taken if "incidents were not so grave".

⁵ Peter Alvares (1908-1975); President, National Congress, Goa, 1953-61

say so, but it is generally admitted almost by every country, excepting Portugal, that Goa is bound to come to India.

Q: You stated previously that NATO wanted to extend its tentacles to India.

JN: I did not say that exactly or used the word tentacles. I said that the Portuguese stated eight months back, or nine months ago that they would appeal to NATO, because they are members of it. We were informed by some countries belonging to the NATO alliance politely that they hoped that this question of Goa would be solved peacefully. That was the approach made to us. Well, we do not mind anyone, any country telling us this or talking to us about it, but we did object and resent this kind of thing, which was otherwise legitimate, being said in connection with the NATO alliance. That is what we thought was completely wrong and we expressed our views in Parliament and outside.