

SELECTED WORKS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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Reference on Pondicherry

I went to France after that. In France one of the dominating questions is Algeria, very much so. It is obvious that our reaction to all these questions wherever they might be whether in Algeria or in Cyprus or anywhere else, is in favour of the freedom of the people concerned. The question, however, is always to be considered as to how we can help. If we function as we do in the diplomatic field, we are somewhat constrained from using strong language against any country even though we may not agree with its policy. We talk to it in diplomatic language, strongly if necessary but in a friendly way. The Algerian question is a fairly difficult question, chiefly because there is a very considerable population there of people settled there for the last hundreds of years, people of French or European descent, that is running into about a million and a quarter, for it is obvious that because they are there, they cannot obstruct the freedom of others. But looking at it practically you cannot ignore them, a million and a quarter people cannot be thrown into the sea and certainly no French Government can survive for a day if they agree to any such thing. So some way has to be found for the freedom of Algeria which incorporates these people as well as others. You will remember that I put some suggestions before the Lok Sabha, about two- three months back.¹ We have to be very cautious in what we say, because every country like our own, has a certain pride. You and I will not like it if some other country began telling us what to do in regard to our matters or in regard to our relations with some third country.

¹ See Selected Works (second series), Vol. 33, pp. 481-483.

One has to be very cautious in putting forward ideas without any element of being superior. So we made some suggestions which were: Firstly, that this fighting should stop, the terrible killing going on there. Secondly, that there should be negotiations between the parties between the French Government and the leaders of Algeria. We mentioned that Algeria's separate individuality should be recognized. What is that? Because under French law at present Algeria is a kind of a department² of France, just like the Portuguese say that Goa is a part of Portugal. However, we said that these descendants of European settlers should also have a full place there. At the present moment they are the most prosperous section of the community, occupying the coastal areas. No one rejected our suggestions, neither the French Government nor the others. Each party when they are fighting thinks if they agree to something it might give an advantage to the other party. But gradually people have come round to many of the things we have suggested there. The French Government has recognized the separate individuality of Algeria. They say, they want a ceasefire; they say, they are prepared for negotiations. Naturally, there are difficulties. I think my visit there and talks were helpful.

I had to see Marshal Tito and I said I will come there for one day. It so happened that when I went there, Colonel Nasser was paying his visit. So accidentally we three met. It was interesting for us with much in common and yet with different approaches to different problems, meeting together and discussing matters. It was just about that time when we were at Brioni and leaving for Cairo when news came about the American and later the British having withdrawn their offer to give help for the building of the Aswan Dam. We did not discuss that, it was none of my concern but naturally this produced some reactions there. The fact of it and the manner it was done.

² An administrative district in France