

## Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

*Volume 39*

*Reference on Pondicherry*

### **Political Situation in France<sup>1</sup>**

The French Ambassador<sup>2</sup> came to see me this morning. He had recently returned from France where, he said, he tried his best to expedite the ratification of the treaty of Pondicherry etc.<sup>3</sup> But owing to changes of government and like difficulties, this had been delayed. There were some people who were bent on delaying this even though they could not finally come in the way. However, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, which was an important body, had considered this matter and expressed itself in favour of ratification by, I think, 25 votes to 13.

2. The Ambassador said he was sorry for this delay but there was no help far it because of the difficult political situation in France.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, he had visited Pondicherry, since his return, and work was proceeding well there. The delay in ratification did not make much difference.

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<sup>1</sup> Note to Secretary General, Foreign Secretary, Commonwealth Secretary and Special Secretary, MEA, New Delhi, 30 October 1957. JN Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Stanislas Ostrorog.

<sup>3</sup> Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam were formally ceded to India by a treaty signed with France on 28 May 1958.

<sup>4</sup> The Government of Bourges-Maunoury lost the confidence vote in the French National Assembly on 30 September on the issue of certain constitutional changes in Algeria. Attempts by various leaders including Guy Mollet and A. Pinay etc. to form a Cabinet failed. Finally Felix Gaillard formed the Government with the support of other parties on 29 October 1957.

3. The Ambassador then said that he was speaking to me not on behalf of his Government but on a personal level. He spoke with some pain and emotion about the present state of affairs in France. He said things were bad there on the political level and it was not merely a political crisis but a crisis of the regime -- *crise de regime*. This meant that democratic liberties and liberal ideas were all at stake. He was much troubled about this. Nobody appeared to be strong enough to form a government. Parliament there distrusted government and wanted to keep power in its own hands. This gave a greater sense of importance to each Deputy who hoped to be a Minister himself. This was most unfortunate and it hurt him to say all this about his own countrymen.

4. Anything that happened in France would have powerful reactions on Europe and the world. The French President<sup>5</sup> might have to send for General de Gaulle<sup>6</sup> and ask him to form a government. That would seem a step towards authoritarianism and the French people do not like this.

5. I told the Ambassador that only yesterday I had been reading a report from Ambassador Panikkar in Paris. In this report he had more or less given the same analysis of the situation in France.

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<sup>5</sup> Rene Coty

<sup>6</sup> Charles Andre Joseph Marie de Gaulle (1890- 1 970); French Army officer and politician; served as Captain, in First World War; General of Brigade and Commander, 4th Armoured Division, 1940; Under Secretary, National Defence, 1940; Chief of Free French, and President of French National Committee, London and Brazzaville, 1940-42; President of French Committee of National Liberation, Algiers, 1943; President of Provisional French Government of French Republic, Commander-in-Chief, French Armies, 1944-46; Prime Minister of France, 1958-59; President of France, 1959-69.

6. The Ambassador said that Shri Panikkar was getting on very well in Paris. He had wide contacts and was much appreciated in spite of the fact that he could not speak French. If he had known French, he would have dominated the scene there.

7. I asked the Ambassador why in view of these political difficulties an election could not be held. He seemed to think that an election would not solve these difficulties and the same trouble would recur.

8. I pointed out that it was very extraordinary that while this political crisis was threatening France, in other domains like industrial advance, science, literature, art, etc., France was doing very well. He said that this itself indicated that the French were not a decadent people but were full of life and vitality, but politically they appeared to be going to pieces.

9. The Ambassador then mentioned to me on behalf of his government this time that they were much distressed by the Japanese resolution in the UN about disarmament. I said that the only resolution I knew was about suspension of nuclear tests. We thought that this Japanese resolution did not go far enough and I saw no reason why there should be any alarm about it. We were strongly in favour of suspension, though we realized that we must aim at a full and comprehensive disarmament agreement. But we could not wait for the whole agreement to appear and some step forward had to be taken. Suspension of nuclear tests was not disadvantageous to anybody and meanwhile scientists and others could devise means of proper inspection and control and the general question of disarmament would also be considered.

PONDICHERRY

**Conditions in Pondicherry<sup>7</sup>**

I saw a group of Communist MPs this afternoon about Pondicherry affairs. I had not seen your note at that time.

2. Among those who came, were Shri H.N. Mukerjee and two or three others. Subbiah,<sup>8</sup> the Communist from Pondicherry, was also with them. It was Subbiah who spoke. I made a brief note which I attach.

3. In effect, they said nothing definite to me. They complained of the lack of democratic functioning of the Assembly and of the Opposition not being represented in the Commissions. Further, that the Assembly sat only for two or three days in a month, and then goes into Committees where there is no opposition. Further, that the decisions are not implemented. And the Planning Board meets rarely. Also, that there is corruption.

4. No opportunity is given to discuss various issues in the Planning Board. The Police and Magistrates still function in the old bad way.

5. The Municipality in Pondicherry has a Communist majority. But, Government does not cooperate. Reference was made to the case of the Mayor last year, and it was suggested that his suspension just before the elections was intended to influence the elections.

6. As the de jure transfer is going to take place shortly, there should then be an election of a representative for the Lok Sabha and also general elections.

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<sup>7</sup> Note to Foreign Secretary, New Delhi, 7 September 1957. JN Collection

<sup>8</sup> V.K. Subbiah was Member of the Pondicherry Assembly at this time

7. All this was very vague. I asked what had happened to the Mayor, and was informed that he had been convicted, but an appeal was pending. They complained that he was still suspended. I said that this was an extraordinary complaint when he had already been convicted.

8. In effect, nothing definite was said to me and only vague allegations were made.