

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

OFFICIAL REPORT

4139

4140

HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Tuesday, 6th April, 1954

The House met at Two of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

2-42 P.M.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

REPORT OF SECOND REVIEWING COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL OF SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Defence (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table of the House the Report of the Second Reviewing Committee of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. According to the rules, the review takes place every five years. This particular review was conducted by a Committee of eminent scientists with Sir Alfred Egerton as Chairman. I only got this about three days ago. I thought it desirable to place it on the Table of the House immediately. Some copies have been sent to the Parliament Library and the Government will consider the recommendations made therein and lay their views before the House. [Placed in the Library. See No. S-106/54.]

Shri B. S. Murthy (Eluru): Will it be possible to supply copies?

71 P.S.D.

Mr. Speaker: Members will get copies.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: I have sent half a dozen copies to the Library and half a dozen here. For the moment, we have not got enough copies for all the Members of the House. In fact, it was signed three days ago.

STATEMENT RE. DEVELOPMENTS IN FRENCH SETTLEMENTS IN INDIA

Mr. Speaker: Statement to be made by the hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Defence (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for your kindness in this matter. Sir, this is a statement in regard to the developments in French possessions. I do not wish to take up too much of the time of the House in reading the whole of it because a large part of it is really a summary of the events that are known and are being mentioned just to make the story compact. I am prepared to lay it on the Table of the House or read it, or give a summary of it and lay it on the Table of the House.

Mr. Speaker: It is better he gives a summary.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: The House knows that on the 18th March, a number of resolutions were passed by the municipalities in Pondicherry demanding immediate merger with India. Some days later, similar resolutions were passed by the municipalities in Karaikal. The resolutions had the full support of the French Indian

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

Councillors, who are popularly known as Ministers, and the President of the Representative Assembly.

These Municipalities represent roughly 90 per cent. of the population of the French possessions and they called upon the Government of France to take urgent and necessary measures to give effect to the wishes of the people. They made it clear that the vast majority of the population, through their elected representatives and responsible Ministers, were supporting the popular demand. After this, there has been a great deal of repressive activity on the part of the Government and the Ministers functioning in some parts of Pondicherry. People were told to withdraw their support. Pressure was brought to bear on them. So far as we are concerned—we are naturally concerned in many ways—it has been with the effects of this repressive activity, and we drew the attention of the Government of France to these developments and again suggested to them what we had said before, that the obviously simple and proper course would be for them to agree to hand over the *de facto* Government of the territories retaining the *de jure* sovereignty to be discussed a little later, because that would involve constitutional changes both in India and in France and we can discuss them at a later stage and take such steps as were necessary. The *de facto* control should have been handed over anyhow, and after this obvious expression of the people's will at Pondicherry and Karaikal, there is no argument—even such arguments as had previously been advanced—on behalf of the Government of France. The Government of France did not respond favourably to our proposal and they repeated that there could be no transfer of French territory under the French Constitution without the consent of the people. So far as we are concerned, the consent of the people has been shown in very ample measure. Apart from this, of course, if

hon. Members would look at an enlarged map of the Settlements—not a small map—the whole thing appears like a jigsaw puzzle, with all kinds of odd bits here and there, Indian territory inside, French Indian territory there and French Indian territory here. From the administrative and political point of view, it is not defensible. Apart from this point of view, basically we cannot admit the right of small pockets of French territory anywhere in India. We cannot have a few villages here and a few villages there owing allegiance to foreign and distant Powers. Apart from that basic argument, the fact that here was a popular expression of will through the elected representatives seemed to have amply satisfied every provision even of the French Constitution. So, we have been suggesting that the *de facto* transfer should be made, and then, for the *de jure* transfer, if any steps have to be taken and procedures have to be gone through, they can be gone through. It should be remembered that it has been stated by the authorities in Pondicherry, etc., that certain subversive elements have not been behaving properly. The 'subversive elements' happen to be persons who were elected a little while ago as Ministers, Councillors and Mayors and they were responsible for the people a little while ago, but later because they expressed their opinion in a particular way, they were viewed as subversive elements. So far as the Government of India are concerned, they have pursued, and still hope to pursue, peaceful methods to secure a friendly settlement with the Government of France. Certain measures we have taken. One was to prevent French Indian police crossing Indian territory to go from one enclave to another. We had to take it for a variety of reasons. One was that we could not allow this trouble to spread in Indian territory. We could not allow people to cross Indian territory for

the sake of repressing others. Apart from all this, we had put up certain barriers to stop smuggling etc. We have not stopped essential supplies, because we do not wish to bring any pressure to bear upon the general population. It is only in one case, that is, in the case of petrol, that we have, in the last few days, stopped its supply, because it was reported to us that in distributing this petrol there was a great deal of discrimination—that is, the so-called pro-merger people did not get petrol and those whom the Government there favoured got petrol. So, we stopped the supply of petrol. Otherwise, all essential supplies go.

And even in regard to stopping the French police from crossing the Indian territory, it is only the French police that have been stopped; the civilians have not been stopped. For normal purposes, even a civilian functionary of the French Indian Government can go.

One thing else. We have decided to introduce a permit system for people coming into Indian territory from that territory. We have to give a fortnight's notice for this, and this notice was given, I think, four or five days ago. During the last few days, the movement for merger has gained considerable ground in spite of the repressive measures of the Local Administration, and, as perhaps most hon. Members know, some of the separate enclaves have more or less declared their independence from the French Administration and are carrying on by themselves. I would like to make it perfectly clear that this entire movement is naturally spontaneous and, when it is natural for all of us to feel sympathy with it, there has been no question of our Government directly or indirectly interfering with it.

There was a case, the House will remember, when the French police came outside just across the French border into Indian territory and arrested one of the Mayors and two

Indian citizens—-young men—, which was a violation of Indian territory. We protested strongly and the two Indian citizens were released a day or two later. But, so far as I know, while we had demanded the release and return of the Mayor whom they had taken, so far the Mayor has not been released and certainly not returned. We had asked for the punishment of the policemen who had done this and that too has not been done. These are the major reasons why we had to stop the French police from coming into Indian territory.

We were asked by the French Government whether we intended taking possession of those enclaves where the people have taken possession, I mean, where for the moment the French Administration has ceased to exist, because people have seized the Local Administration in those few villages. We informed them that we have no intention of taking any unilateral action in this matter, but we could not allow the French police to use Indian territory against them. This would have serious repercussions in India, and therefore, the ban on the police going there must continue.

The Government of India are disturbed by reports which have reached them of acts of hooliganism against Indian citizens. There have been reports of attacks on the library attached to the Consulate-General and on the quarters occupied by Indian press correspondents in Pondicherry. The Government of India are making enquiries about this matter and they will take necessary action to safeguard their rights and interests.

It is clear from the developments that are taking place that the demand for immediate merger with India without a referendum has the general support of the people. The movement is completely spontaneous and is led by persons who until recently were responsible members of the Administration. Other political groups and leaders have also declared

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

their support of this popular movement. Repression cannot kill a movement which is based on the natural desire of the people to form part of India. The people of the French possessions form an integral part of the great Indian family. Economically, culturally and in other ways, they have the closest links with India. A political system which keeps them separate from India and subject to foreign rule is wholly unacceptable to them and to the Government and people of India.

It is the hope of the Government of India that this system will be changed peacefully by means of a friendly settlement. It cannot, in any case, continue much longer, for the people have declared their firm intention to terminate it. The Government of India have, therefore, again requested the Government of France to consider the suggestion which they made in October 1952. They have stated the reasons which prevent them from accepting the proposal for a referendum. All important political groups have rejected this proposal on grounds of principle and also because conditions in the French possessions are such that no free referendum can be held. As the wishes of the people have been made known so clearly by the elected representatives of almost 90 per cent. of the population, a referendum is in any case unnecessary.

The Government of India have made it clear that the cultural and other rights of the people will be fully respected. They are not asking for the immediate transfer of the *de jure* sovereignty of France. Their suggestion is that a *de facto* transfer of the administration should take place immediately, while French sovereignty should continue until the constitutional issue has been settled. Both India and France will have to make necessary changes in their respective Constitutions. All this will take time, while the demand of the

people is for immediate merger without a referendum. The Government of India are convinced that the suggestion which they have made will help to promote a settlement, which they greatly desire. They will gladly enter into negotiations with the Government of France on the basis suggested.

Statement

I have already informed the House of the developments that are taking place in the French possessions. On the 18th March, resolutions were passed demanding immediate merger with India by the eight municipalities of Pondicherry. Some days later, similar resolutions were passed by the six municipalities of Karaikal. The resolutions had the full support of the French Indian Councillors (who are popularly known as Ministers) and the President of the Representative Assembly.

2. The Municipalities which passed these resolutions comprise nearly 90 per cent. of the population of the French possessions. They called upon the Government of France to take urgent and necessary measures to give effect to the wishes of the people. Telegrams were sent to the President of the French Republic, prominent members of the French Cabinet and the Presidents of the National Assembly, the Senate and the Assembly of the French Union. Copies of these telegrams were sent to me.

3. It is clear that the vast majority of the population, through their elected representatives and responsible Ministers, are supporting this popular demand. The demand is for immediate merger without a referendum, as the wishes of the people about merger with India are known. The Ministers and the elected representatives expected that the Government of France would consider their request sympathetically. Their expectation was, however, not realized, for the local authorities ignored

the resolutions and adopted repressive measures against the popular movement.

4. Some threats were held out to the Ministers and others in order to make them retract their declarations. There were acts of hooliganism in Pondicherry and on the 20th March the local PTI correspondent was assaulted by lawless elements. Police parties were sent to various parts of Pondicherry and warnings were given to the people that they should keep aloof from the popular movement.

5. The Government of India expressed their concern about these repressive measures. A strong protest was lodged with the local authorities and they were informed that these acts of intimidation were bound to have serious repercussions in India. A similar representation was made by the Indian Ambassador in Paris to the Government of France. The Government of France were reminded that a settlement of the question of the future of the French possessions had been held up for many years by doubts which existed in their mind about the wishes of the people. These wishes had now been expressed in the most effective manner possible under the existing circumstances.

6. The Government of India had made a suggestion in October 1952 that a settlement might be reached on the basis of a direct transfer of the administration, leaving constitutional and other matters to be settled by negotiation. The *de jure* sovereignty of France would continue, pending further negotiations, while the administration would be in Indian hands. The Government of France were invited by the Ambassador to consider this suggestion and to take the opportunity afforded by the popular demand for merger to arrive at a friendly settlement.

7. The Government of France have not responded favourably to this suggestion. They have alleged that certain measures have been taken

by the Government of India to prevent the people of the French possessions from enjoying a normal economic life. These measures, according to them, have the aim of exerting pressure on the people. The Government of France have also stated that no transfer of French territory is possible under the French Constitution without the consent of the people. They propose, therefore, to start immediate conversations about the conditions under which a referendum could be organised in the French possessions.

8. The Government of India regret that the suggestion they have made for a peaceful and friendly settlement of this question has not yet been accepted. They have made it clear, time and again, that the economic measures which they have adopted are designed solely to protect their legitimate interests. They are measures directed against smuggling and other undesirable activities which have been encouraged by the peculiar methods and policies of the local administration. There is no basis for the suggestion that pressure has been exerted on the people. Many essential supplies for the French possessions come from India and, with one exception, these supplies are being continued. The Government of India have also pointed out repeatedly that, under the conditions existing in the French possessions, a free referendum cannot in any case be held. These conditions have steadily deteriorated since 1951 when the neutral observers appointed by the Government of France gave expression to similar views.

9. In the last few days, the movement for merger has gained ground, in spite of the repressive measures of the local administration. The movement was launched on the 28th March since when processions are being taken out and meetings are being held almost daily in Karaikal and parts of Pondicherry. Some supporters of the merger movement have been arrested and others have been victims of violence from the police.

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

The movement has been conducted peacefully and in the western areas of Pondicherry, *e.g.*, Nettapakkam and parts of Bahour, the pro-merger parties appear to be in effect in power. According to newspaper reports, the local police has gone over to them and they have hoisted the Indian flag on public buildings and declared their wish to form part of India. They have again called upon the Government of France to take immediate measures for the integration, without a referendum, of the French possessions with the Union of India.

10. In view of the repressive measures of the local administration, the Government of India have been obliged to take some steps to protect their interests. Some days ago, Indian territory was violated by the French police who seized two Indian nationals and the Mayor of one of the Pondicherry Communes who was seeking shelter in Indian territory. There were other acts of coercion and intimidation of Indian nationals living on the border. The Government of India lodged a strong protest about these incidents and demanded the immediate release and return to Indian territory of all the three persons who had been illegally seized. They also demanded the punishment of the French officials concerned and some assurances about the future. Their demands have not been met and they have been obliged to take various precautions to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. Among the measures which they have taken is a total ban on the passage of French police across Indian territory to any part of the French possessions.

11. The Government of India have no intention of assuming control unilaterally of any part of the French possessions. They cannot, however, allow the French police to use Indian territory for the purpose of suppressing a popular movement. This would have serious repercussions in India and the ban must, therefore, continue

so long as the present tension prevails. This ban has been imposed in the interest, not only of Indian nationals, but also of the French police. The Government of India have no wish to interfere with the normal administration of the French possessions, much as they disapprove of some of the methods that are being used. The ban which they have imposed is, therefore, restricted to the police force. Other functionaries of the administration are not subject to this ban.

12. Another measure which the Government of India have been obliged to adopt is the ban on petrol supplies from India to the French possessions. Petrol and other essential supplies were being sent freely until the Government of India discovered that in the matter of sale of petrol some discrimination was practised by the local administration. Dealers had been given instructions to stop sale of petrol to supporters of the merger movement. The Government of India cannot give facilities for export of articles to the French possessions if sale or distribution is restricted to supporters of the local administration. They have stopped supplies of petrol and they propose to apply this principle strictly in all cases.

13. The Government of India have also given notice to the local administration that they propose to apply the permit system to regulate traffic to and from Pondicherry and Karaikal with effect from the 19th April. They have been obliged to take this step, not only as a check on smuggling which has not been stopped in spite of the measures that they have taken, but also with a view to preventing undesirable elements from coming freely to India. Conditions in the French possessions will become more and more unsettled if repressive measures are continued and lawless elements are encouraged by

the local administration. The Government of India consider it necessary, in the conditions which are now developing, to control the entry of persons from Pondicherry and Karaikal into India. Ordinarily, single-journey visas will be given for visits to India, but the Consul-General will be empowered to give multi-journey visas in special cases. He will also have complete freedom to refuse visas at his discretion.

14. The Government of India are disturbed by reports which have reached them of acts of hooliganism against Indian citizens. There have been reports of attacks on the library attached to the Consulate-General and on the quarters occupied by Indian press correspondents in Pondicherry. The Government of India are making enquiries about this matter and they will take necessary action to safeguard their rights and interests.

15. It is clear from the developments that are taking place that the demand for immediate merger with India without a referendum has the general support of the people. The movement is completely spontaneous and is led by persons who until recently were responsible members of the Administration. Other political groups and leaders have also declared their support of this popular movement. Repression cannot kill a movement which is based on the natural desire of the people to form part of India. The people of the French possessions form an integral part of the great Indian family. Economically, culturally and in other ways, they have the closest links with India. A political system which keeps them separate from India and subject to foreign rule is wholly unacceptable to them and to the Government and people of India.

16. It is the hope of the Government of India that this system will be changed peacefully by means of a friendly settlement. It cannot in any case continue much longer for the

people have declared their firm intention to terminate it. The Government of India have, therefore, again requested the Government of France to consider the suggestion which they made in October 1952. They have stated the reasons which prevent them from accepting the proposal for a referendum. All important political groups have rejected this proposal on grounds of principle and also because conditions in the French possessions are such that no free referendum can be held. As the wishes of the people have been made known so clearly by the elected representatives of almost 90 per cent. of the population, a referendum is in any case unnecessary.

17. The Government of India have made it clear that the cultural and other rights of the people will be fully respected. They are not asking for the immediate transfer of the *de jure* sovereignty of France. Their suggestion is that a *de facto* transfer of the administration should take place immediately, while French sovereignty should continue until the constitutional issue has been settled. Both India and France will have to make necessary changes in their respective Constitutions. All this will take time, while the demand of the people is for immediate merger without a referendum. The Government of India are convinced that the suggestion which they have made will help to promote a settlement, which they greatly desire. They will gladly enter into negotiations with the Government of France on the basis suggested.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

(1) REPORT OF TARIFF COMMISSION ON FAIR RETENTION PRICES OF STEEL PRODUCED BY INDIAN IRON AND STEEL CO. LTD.

(2) MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY RES. NO. SC(A)-2(89)/52, DATED 25TH MARCH, 1954.

The Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri T. T. Krishnamachari):
Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy