

## **Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru**

*Volume 25*

*Reference on Pondicherry*

### **Hurdles in Building a New India<sup>1</sup>**

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So, this is what the Five Year Plan is all about. We must consider how far it will take us towards our goal and then increase our pace accordingly. You must think about these things because we need your advice and suggestions to draw up the Second Five Year Plan also.

You must have heard about the pockets of foreign rule still in existence in the country, Pondicherry in the South, under the French and Goa near Bombay, under the Portuguese. These are the result of the history of the last few centuries. They are the last remnants of colonial rule in India. The British did not bother very much about these small pockets of French and Portuguese rule. You will find that the total population of the places under colonial rule is not more than three lakhs, about one-third of the population of Kanpur. There is one city with a population of about two lakhs and some smaller ones with about fifty thousand each. Now when the British empire in India has come to an end, it is absurd to think of small pockets of French and Portuguese rule continuing in India. I cannot understand how anyone can argue in its favour. Apart from the fact that it is absurd, it is also to some extent dangerous for us. It is dangerous to have pockets of foreign rule right in the heart of the country for they make us vulnerable and at some time or the other, our enemies may try to take advantage of them. At the moment, they are constant sources of irritation. They are flourishing centres of smuggling of gold, silver, cocaine, opium, etc., and it is very

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<sup>1</sup> Speech at a public meeting, Kanpur, 26 March, 1954.

difficult to apprehend the culprits. Anyhow these are minor matters. The basic thing is that it is wrong to allow these little islands of foreign rule to flourish. We have said this quite clearly right from the beginning and also that we wish to solve this problem by peaceful methods for, after all, it is not only these little pockets which are involved. Big nations are involved and of them, we have friendly relations at least with France. France has an ambassador in Delhi and we have one in Paris. France is an ancient country and we wish to maintain friendly relations with it. So we wish to settle this matter amicably, though five or six years have gone by without any progress. There has been a new development recently. The local government in Pondicherry, which does not enjoy many powers, has yet managed to pass a Resolution in their Cabinet saying that all the colonies should be integrated with India immediately. So what we have been saying all along has been confirmed by the Cabinet which consists not of Frenchmen but of local people. I do not remember exactly but the Mayors of the fourteen municipalities and the councillors have passed a Resolution 'that they should merge with India immediately.'<sup>2</sup> As you can imagine, after such a move, there is no scope for doubting the people's verdict. This happened three or four days ago. I regret to say that the French Government has started committing great atrocities. It is an old habit of the French officials to use strong arm tactics to punish the people whom they do not like. They have started threatening the members of the Cabinet to coerce them to withdraw their Resolution. The Mayor had run away to the Indian side and was staying with some friends. Day before yesterday the French police crossed the border and had taken him as well as his two Indian friends.<sup>3</sup> Today I heard that several of the Cabinet members have run away

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<sup>2</sup> On 18 March 1954. For details see. *post*, p.513, fn. 2.

<sup>3</sup> On 24 March 1954, Nandagopal, the Mayor of Mudaliarpeta and two others were arrested by Pondicherry police from Kattupalayam. See *post*, p. 516.

to India in panic.<sup>4</sup> It is becoming a joke that the French should indulge in such unlawful activities.

Well, we shall put a stop to them. We have made arrangements to stop their police at the borders but the problem is that the French pocket is not one contiguous area. I do not wish to go into details. We shall do whatever is proper and try our best to solve the matter peacefully. But it should be clearly understood that it is impossible to let the French pockets continue to exist. That is absolutely wrong.

The same thing applies to Goa. The Goa issue is even more complex because at least as far as the French ministers and officials are concerned, we are able to talk to them, even if there are disagreements. It is extremely difficult even to talk to the statesmen in Portugal. I will tell you the reason for that. They present such fantastic arguments that we have no answer to them. Their argument is that four or five hundred years ago, the Pope in Rome had given Goa to them as a gift. This is a fantastic argument. What can I say in reply? Four hundred years ago, Europeans were largely ignorant about the rest of the world. They were just beginning to discover the world then with the voyages of Columbus to America and Vasco da Gama to the East. In those days, Spain and Portugal were two very rich countries of Europe with the new wealth pouring in from America. So there was a rivalry between Portugal and Spain to conquer the New World. The Pope, as you know, is their great religious leader. So when the case was taken to him, he divided the world into two halves between the two countries. Unfortunately, India fell to the lot of the Portuguese. They did not get half the world but they certainly established themselves firmly on the soil of Goa. Now what can I say if their argument is that Goa is the Pope's gift to them? You can imagine

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<sup>4</sup> Edouard Goubert, a minister of the French India Government and K. Muthu Pillai, Mayor of Pondicherry, left Pondicherry proper on 25 March evening and were believed to have gone to the French Indian communes of Pondicherry to launch a mass movement for merger.

that it is absurd to argue like this in this day and age. It simply cannot be accepted. But in the dangerous world of today, when war is constantly knocking at the door, we wish to face these things calmly and often tolerate quite intolerable things. We shall certainly not accept anything that is against our dignity. Therefore, we would like to solve this matter peacefully even if it takes a little longer.

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### **Issues in Foreign Affairs<sup>5</sup>**

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thereto, without the consent of the people concerned. In fact, we were anxious in the case of some of the French possessions, especially Pondicherry which is the chief of them, that it would be a good thing if it should continue as a centre of French language and culture in India if the people there wanted to do so. So, in Chandernagore also we propose to give some assistance in the preservation of certain cultural developments that have taken place. Whenever a change is made like this, whether in Chandernagore or elsewhere, a number of people those who have grown up in the last 100 years or more in a different background, linguistic or other, are necessarily put in some difficulties. We do not want them to suffer. That is, so far as Chandernagore is concerned.

In regard to other foreign establishments in India, only yesterday in reply to a question, I referred to the present position that has arisen in Pondicherry and roundabout.<sup>6</sup> This as the House knows, is an entirely spontaneous

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<sup>5</sup> Intervention during the discussions on the Demand for Grants relating to the Ministry of External Affairs, 23 March 1954.

<sup>6</sup> On 22 March in response to a question of M.S. Gurupadaswamy, Nehru said that there had been a spontaneous movement inside the French enclaves in India demanding their merger with India. He hoped that steps should be taken for peaceful transfer of power.

movement in the French possessions and comprises in its fold practically all the Ministers, in fact, all except one who happened to be absent, accidentally, -all the ministers and about 80 per cent, of the councillors of the municipal communes who have unanimously asked for merger with India to be brought about without any referendum, as rapidly as possible. They have naturally addressed the various high dignitaries of the French Government in Paris on the subject. They sent these resolutions to me also and we have acknowledged them. It seems to me that this move, this spontaneous development in Pondicherry, puts or ought to put an end to any argument that might have been raised by those who were opposed to merger and even get over the other technical, legal and constitutional difficulties which sometimes the French Government has pointed out to us .in this matter. It is clear that there can be no clearer exhibition of popular will than we have seen, not only from the ministers and municipal councillors, but at the other end from the industrial workers who, the House may remember, a little while ago demonstrated in favour of merger and there was some conflict with the French authorities. I hope that this will lead to a friendly settlement of this problem between the French Government and our Government, and a *de facto* transfer of power there. I say *de facto; de jure*, of course, should follow and has to follow. It may take a little time for the legal formalities. Sometime back we sent a note to the French Government in which we suggested that the *de facto* change over might take place straightaway and the *de jure* can follow soon after, after the necessary formalities had been done. I am hopeful, therefore, about these French possessions. I am not very hopeful at the present moment about the Portuguese possessions, though it is inevitable that the same results must follow there.

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## Principles of Foreign Affairs<sup>7</sup>

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As far as Goa is concerned, we have said right from the beginning that we wish to solve this problem peacefully and through non violent methods. Some people have been annoyed with us that we are showing weakness. But we stuck to our policy and shall continue to do so because if you look at the larger world picture, it is not an isolated issue but something on which major issues hinge. It would not be very wise of us if we were to take any step by which we get bogged down in a morass of difficulties. Goa and Pondicherry cannot go away from us. They are part of India and will continue to remain so. There is also no doubt about it that all these territories will become a part of the Republic of India. We have to determine when to take the appropriate step in a peaceful manner. Sometimes we are able to move fast and at other times the pace becomes slow. Did you observe the strange spectacle that we witnessed in Pondicherry? Did you note what a great victory it is for our policy? Not that we engineered the victory in any way but it does mean that it spells victory for our policy of peace. If the referendum and plebiscite had been free and fair, the people would have expressed their views openly. But the manner in which the French Government had organised the referendum, there could be no fairplay because there was hooliganism and tremendous pressure. This is what the foreign observers said. Where was the question of referendum when everyone there including the common people said in one voice what they wanted? There is mention in today's newspapers about a note that has been sent to us by the French Government.<sup>8</sup> I want to tell you that the note has not yet come to us. We shall look at it when it does. But it is obvious that the time has now come I

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<sup>7</sup> Speech during debate on the Demands for Grants relating to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 March 1954.

<sup>8</sup> See *post*, p. 515, fn. 6.

for the French Government to realize that there is no point in dragging this *J* matter any further, it is of no use to anyone, least of all to them. That is why I we have been telling them to hand over *de facto* possession to the Government of India. Regarding *de jure* possession the deliberations can continue and amendments to the Constitution can be adopted leisurely. Before I forget, I should like to tell you that all kinds of rumours and stories are spread these days. Recently there was an extraordinary news item, I think it was published in Colombo, that an anti-communist rally was to take place in Ceylon to which some elderly statesmen from different countries had been invited and among them was mentioned Shri Rajagopalachari's name. Anyone who read "this would have understood how absurd and mischievous this item was. I made enquiries about the matter. Shri Rajagopalachari replied to me as follows:

*I have absolutely no knowledge of it, nor have I received any such invitation. I entirely agree with you that it is an outrageously' foolish conception which can only be traced to the genius of some journalist.*

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## **India and International Situation<sup>9</sup>**

Jawaharlal Nehru: I beg to move:

*"That the present international situation and the policy of the Government of India in relation thereto be taken into consideration."*

About four months ago, in January last, this House had a debate on foreign affairs.<sup>10</sup> Since then, many developments have taken place and from time to

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<sup>9</sup> Statement in the Parliament. 15 May 1954. *Parliamentary Debates (House of the People)*, Official Report 1954. Vol. V. Pt. II. cols. 7493-7514.

<sup>10</sup> In December 1953. See Selected Works (second series), Vol. 24. pp. 558-579.

time I have come to this House and made statements in regard to those developments, or sometimes in answer to questions, placed before the House our viewpoint and the facts as they were developing. The House is, therefore, well aware of these developments.

I shall deal this morning with some of the more important ones. To begin with, I would remind the House that at the present moment, since yesterday, our representatives are discussing with the French Government in Paris on the future of the French establishment in India. Now, our viewpoint in regard to those French establishments is very well known. We have gladly accepted the invitation of the French Government to send our representatives to Paris with a view to negotiations about the future of these establishments, and I would not like to say very much more at this stage about them, except this, as is well known, that the recent developments in Pondicherry and round about there are rather remarkable; they have been completely spontaneous, and quite extraordinarily unanimous. In fact, not only the Central Assembly there, but every commune in Pondicherry, Karrikal and Mahé decided for a merger with India without any referendum or the like. We have not in any sense intervened or participated. We had to take certain steps to avoid conflicts in Indian territory and, therefore, we decided-and we informed the French authorities in Pondicherry-that we could not allow armed police or any other armed French forces to pass through Indian territory from one part of those establishments to another, in case Indian territory intervened. As a result of this popular and spontaneous movement, roughly one-fifth of those French establishments are under some kind of popular control, and in the rest too, there are strong movements. We had no desire to interfere in this matter unilaterally as we thought that the best settlement would be the peaceful settlement after negotiation with the French Government. Therefore, we are now negotiating with them and I hope that these negotiations will lead to satisfactory results. I might add

that with a view to creating as good an atmosphere as possible for these negotiations and to show our own goodwill, while firmly adhering to our position, we have decided that we may, in certain matters, relax certain steps that we had taken, that is to say, in regard to permits, we allowed the permits a little more, in regard to this scarcity of petrol, we allow a little more petrol and in regard to some parcels, etc., which have been held up, we may allow them to go. But we hope that the French Government, on their side, will also show by their attitude in those settlements that they are desirous of promoting a peaceful settlement.

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**To Balvantray Mehta<sup>11</sup>**

New Delhi

21<sup>st</sup> March 1954

My dear Balvantray,

In view of the developments in Pondicherry,<sup>12</sup> I think that we should send some instructions to the Pradesh Congress Committee at Madras. These instructions should be that we should not offer any provocation from outside and allow these developments to take place spontaneously. But one thing the Congress Committees round about Pondicherry should do and that is to meet and pass resolutions congratulating and welcoming the attitude taken up by the Pondicherry ministers and mayors and municipal councillors of the

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<sup>11</sup> JN Collection.

<sup>12</sup> On 19 March 1954 Edouard Goubert and four ministers of the French India Government belonging to the ruling French India Socialist Party reiterated the resolutions passed on 18 March by municipal councils of eight communes of the French Settlements demanding that these be merged with the Indian Union without any referendum. Copies of the resolutions were sent to the President of the Republic of France, Presidents of the three Houses of the French Parliament and the Prime Minister of India.

communes of the French Settlements. Some such expression of opinion will be helpful.<sup>13</sup>

For the rest we have to watch the situation closely. Our Consul General in Pondicherry<sup>14</sup> is coming to Delhi tomorrow for consultation.

Yours sincerely,

Jawaharlal Nehru

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### **Telegram to C. Rajagopalachari<sup>15</sup>**

You will have followed recent developments in French Settlements where elected councillors of municipal communes have unanimously declared in favour of merger with India. We understand that French authorities there are intimidating people supporting merger movement and some arrests have been made.<sup>16</sup> We are lodging protest with French Ambassador here as well as the Pondicherry authorities.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> In a meeting of the District Congress workers of Madras on 28 March, a resolution, appreciating the launching of the movement by the people of French India for merger with the Indian Union, was passed.

<sup>14</sup> Kewal Singh Chaudhry.

<sup>15</sup> New Delhi, 21 March 1954. JN Collection.

<sup>16</sup> French India policemen and other Government officials visited various communes on the evening of 20 March and told people not to hold demonstrations. Since the evening of 20 March reports came of assault on prominent leaders of French India Socialist Party by goondas. The PTI correspondent was beaten up severely in front of E. Goubert's house on the night of 20 March.

<sup>17</sup> In a protest note delivered on 22 March the Government of India pointed out that the resolutions passed by the Representative Assembly of Pondicherry and mayors of the communes, demanding immediate merger of the Settlements without referendum, were an expression of the wishes of the people of the Settlements: and proposed that a *de facto* transfer of authority to India should take place immediately, pending a *de jure* transfer: and

We understand that French Police party is being sent to some of these communes to suppress this movement for merger. We should not permit armed police to cross Indian territory for this purpose.<sup>18</sup> I hope your Government will issue necessary instructions.

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**Cable to H.S. Malik<sup>19</sup>**

We have sent you text of note about Pondicherry developments.<sup>20</sup> Copies of this note have been handed to Commissioner in Pondicherry<sup>21</sup> and French Ambassador here.<sup>22</sup>

2. There have been isolated cases of intimidation in Pondicherry. Reports have also reached us that French authorities may be sending armed police to the enclaves. We have lodged protest about this and are taking steps to prevent passage of armed police.

3. Developments in Pondicherry show that demand for immediate merger is completely spontaneous. Resolutions about this have been passed by all the councillors and elected mayors of eight communes and their colleagues. A few days ago, there were demonstrations in Pondicherry which showed that

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protested against attempts by the police to intimidate the people of Pondicherry, including the arrests of supporters of the merger movement.

<sup>18</sup> Out of the eight communes of the French Settlements, three were separated from Pondicherry by Indian territory.

<sup>19</sup> New Delhi, 23 March 1954. IN Collection. H.S. Malik was India's Ambassador in France.

<sup>20</sup> See *ante*, p. 514, fn. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Andre Menard.

<sup>22</sup> Count Stanislas Ostrarog.

industrial workers are also supporting this demand.<sup>23</sup> It is clear that large majority of the people, representing various interests, are behind this popular movement.

4. We would like you to take up this matter immediately with French Government. You should remind them that a settlement of this question has been held up for many years by doubts which existed in their mind about wishes of the people. Wishes have now been expressed in most effective manner possible under existing circumstances. We feel, therefore, that this is a suitable opportunity for reaching a friendly and peaceful settlement of this question.

5. In our last note to French Government, we suggested that they should agree to direct transfer of their possessions, leaving constitutional and other matters to be settled by negotiation. There was no reply to our suggestion, but we would like them to consider this now.<sup>24</sup> Constitutional changes will take time and both Governments will have to take some action in this respect. This should not, however, come in the way of a *de facto* transfer of administration which could be given effect to immediately.

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<sup>23</sup> On 2 March, some textile mill workers in Pondicherry took out a peaceful procession shouting slogans for merger of the French Settlements with the Indian Union. They were beaten up and arrested by the Police. The Government of India lodged a strong protest with the French Embassy in New Delhi against this incident on 9 March.

<sup>24</sup> In response to the Indian note of 22 March, the French Government, on 26 March, proposed immediate discussions on the conditions under which a referendum could be held, preferably under international control: it rejected the Indian allegations that conditions in the Settlements did not permit pro-Indian elements to express their opinions freely and declared that recent measures by the Indian Government to "deprive the inhabitants of a normal economic life" were an attempt to bring pressure on them.

6. We have given assurances that laws, customs, language and cultural associations of the people will be respected in any constitutional arrangements that may be made. We wish to bring about these changes, which are in any case inevitable, in a peaceful way and by consent of the people. If we can reach settlement in this matter, an important cause of friction will be removed and relations between India and France will be greatly strengthened. We would strongly urge them, therefore, to consider suggestions we have made about *de facto* transfer and also to take steps to prevent intimidation of the people who have made this spontaneous demand. As we have pointed out in yesterday's note, any attempt to intimidate the people is bound to have serious repercussions in India.

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### **Telegram to C. Rajagopalachari<sup>25</sup>**

We are receiving information about French Government's coercion of merger movement in Pondicherry etc. People are being intimidated by goondas set up by authorities.<sup>26</sup>

2. This morning's newspapers contain information that French Police came to Indian territory and arrested not only a mayor from Pondicherry, but two Indian Nationals.<sup>27</sup> We are asking for confirmation of this news which is serious, and will have to take some action if confirmation received.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> New Delhi, 25 March 1954. JN Collection.

<sup>26</sup> Muthu Pillai, the leader of the French India Socialist Party and Mayor of Pondicherry, in a letter to Commissioner Menard on 22 March, drew attention to the acts of violence indulged in by goondas who were moving about the town shouting anti-Socialist slogans and bullying citizens. These goondas targeted the houses having Indian Flags hoisted on them.

<sup>27</sup> On 24 March armed French India Policemen trespassed into Indian territory of

3. I had requested you to have Madras Armed Police posted on routes connecting Pondicherry with western communes to stop passage of police, arms, etc. Please have this done immediately.<sup>29</sup> If necessary, we are prepared to help you with military for this purpose.

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### **Situation in French Indian Settlements<sup>30</sup>**

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am glad of this opportunity to inform the House of the position as it is, in so far as we have received information. This Government is greatly concerned with the situation in the French Settlements and on the borders. The House knows that a few days back, practically all the Ministers of the Government there in the French Settlements and all the communes of Pondicherry - I think they are 8 - the councillors and the mayors separately in each commune passed a unanimous resolution in favour of immediate merger with India without any referendum, and they sent this on to the French Government, the President of the French Republic, and various other dignitaries in France. A copy of

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Kattupalayam and took into custody Nandagopal, the Mayor of Mudaliarpet Commune and two other Indian citizens from the house of an Indian citizen.

<sup>28</sup> The Government of India on 25 March sent a protest note to the French Embassy in New Delhi demanding immediate release of the arrested persons and punishment of the police officials responsible. The Government of India in an *aide memoire* on 26 March demanded release of the three arrested persons, as the Indian Consul General in Pondicherry was satisfied after inquiries that the arrests took place on Indian territory.

<sup>29</sup> The Madras Government posted armed police along frontiers of the Settlements on 25 March.

<sup>30</sup> Statement in Parliament. 25 March 1954. *Parliamentary Debate.!* (*House of the People*), *Official Report*, 1954. Vol. II. Pt. II. cols. 2979-2983. Extracts.

that was also sent to me. Yesterday, all the communes, I think they are six, in Karaikal have also passed a similar resolution...

They want to inform them, the French authorities, of the wishes of the population for an immediate merger with the Indian Union without referendum. They request the French Government to take necessary steps to this effect.

Now, every commune in these French Settlements, excepting a small village, and Mahe and Yanam, have passed this. I think the population of these French Settlements is roughly about 3,20,000, of which Pondicherry has 2,20,000 and Karaikal 70,000. We have a good majority in Karaikal and Pondicherry and at those places all the mayors and councillors have unanimously passed this resolution. There can be no more clear, emphatic, and widespread expression of opinion of these Settlements than this. When we heard of this, we thought that there should be no further difficulty for at least the *de facto* transfer of authority of these to the Indian Union. Some time back, a year or more perhaps we suggested to the French Government that there should be this *de facto* transfer, though the *de jure* formalities can be undertaken latter.<sup>31</sup> They did not agree with it then. After we heard of these resolutions, we again drew the attention of the French Government to our previous suggestion and said that the time has now come for this *de facto* transfer.<sup>32</sup> As a matter of fact, in the case of small enclaves, the question of our taking a referendum in three or four villages in the middle as to whether they should be in the Indian Union or not is rather odd. as if

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<sup>31</sup> The Government of India in October 1952 had asked the French Government that negotiations between the two Governments should take place on the basis of a direct transfer of the areas to India. See *Selected Works (second series, Vol. 19, pp. 679-680*. The French Government did not agree to the proposal saying that "inhabitants of the establishments whatever the origin must take a direct part in political life" and there could not be a direct transfer of power without the consent of the interested populations.

<sup>32</sup> See *ante*, p. 514, fn. 3.

three or four villages in the heart of India or as if any village in the heart of a country, can decide an international question as to whether there should be a merger. On the face of it, these enclaves had to come to India and have to come to India.<sup>33</sup> Apart from that obvious argument, the fact that all their representatives had declared emphatically in favour of merger has put an end to any possibility of argument about that. So we drew the attention of the French Government to this; we have not had their reply, although in the newspapers there are some references to it. But let me say this. As soon as these resolutions were passed by the communes, it appears that the authorities in these French Settlements adopted an attitude, which I can only describe briefly. They tried various methods of intimidation to frighten those people, the mayors and councillors, and other leaders of the merger movement, and to make them retract and to generally make out that the people of the French Settlements were not in favour of integration with India. The local French administration went about asking all their officials and pensioners to send telegrams to Paris requesting continuation of the French rule, and officers were sent to other communes in Pondicherry to get further declarations from pensioners in favour of France. Actually, violence was used and a number of people, who, we are informed, were paid persons of the goonda type, were sent to some of the leaders of these parties, the chief party concerned being the French India Socialist Party, and some of them were arrested and, we are told, subjected to shameful treatment. Others went to the houses of the mayors and councillors and tried to frighten them by shouting abusive slogans. The police, as such took part in this, going about all these communes and telling people that if they

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<sup>33</sup> In a letter to Rajagopalachari the same day, Nehru wrote, "I quite agree with you that there can be no question of a plebiscite. Plebiscite or no plebiscite, they have to come to us...The point is to make it clear that we are earnest about this and will not tolerate any nonsense."

demonstrate in favour of merger or if they express any pro-Indian sentiment, they will meet with a dire fate. The police behave in a curious way apparently at Pondicherry it appears that the police took out effigies of some of the leaders of the movement and of some of the mayors also in the streets of Pondicherry just to frighten people. All this occurred within the French Settlements.

But yesterday another incident occurred which is of an even more serious character. One of the mayors had apparently taken refuge in Indian territory.

The House may perhaps not know that there are all kinds of enclaves there, that is to say, there is a French enclave in Indian territory and an Indian enclave in the French territory. So, I think in one of these Indian enclaves in French territory the mayor took shelter with some Indian citizens. The French police, that is to say the police from the French Settlements, entered into Indian territory, arrested the mayor, and possibly the three Indian citizens also who apparently had given him hospitality, and carried them off to their own territory.

Now this is a very serious matter. We have previously for the last two or three days, protested both to the French Government in Paris, to their Ambassador here and locally in Pondicherry against various activities they were indulging in against people in favour of merger. This news has come today and we have immediately taken action and communicated with the French Ambassador here and with the authorities in Pondicherry. We shall communicate with the French Government also. We have demanded also the immediate return not only of the Indian citizens but the mayor who was taken away, and punishment of the policemen who had perpetrated this outrage on Indian territory. We have also taken measures, that is, through the Madras Government, the armed police of the Madras State, to prevent any armed people, policemen or any persons with arms, entering Indian

territory from those French Settlements. That is all that I have to state before the House.

The situation is obviously a changing and developing one and if anything important occurs I shall come before the House and place the information before it.

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### **Stoppage of Supplies to the French Settlements<sup>34</sup>**

You have already intimated to the Madras Government to post armed police on all the routes leading from the French Settlements to the Indian territory. Please verify by telephone if this has been done.

In another telegram from our Consul General, he suggests that supplies of petrol and other petroleum products should be cut off completely. I think that the time has com~ when we should do this. For what period need not be stated. Please, therefore, arrange that these supplies are stopped and instructions are sent to those concerned.<sup>35</sup> The Consul General should be informed that you are doing this.

It is worthwhile examining immediately what other supplies might be stopped if need arises.

You might keep in touch with Kewal Singh by telephone. He is apt to get a little excited. Tell him to keep cool and that we shall do everything necessary in good time.

Since writing the above, I have seen a note from the Defence Secretary<sup>36</sup>, in

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<sup>34</sup> Note to the Foreign Secretary. 25 March 1954. IN Collection.

<sup>35</sup> Export of petrol and petroleum items from Indian territory to French India Settlements was stopped towards the end of March.

<sup>36</sup> M.K. Vellodi.

which he tells me that he spoke to the Chief Secretary of Madras<sup>37</sup> and that Armed Police have been posted at 12 important points on the Pondicherry-Madras boundary and mobile parties are also moving about.

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### **Friendly Settlement of Pondicherry Question<sup>38</sup>**

The French Ambassador has just seen me. Mr Christian Belle<sup>39</sup> came with him and he handed to me a letter from the Prime Minister of France, which I enclose in original.<sup>40</sup>

2. I read this and then said to Mr Belle, who had brought the letter from France, that I should like some further elucidation of the letter and what the Prime Minister had in mind.

3. Mr Belle told me that the French Government had to face certain difficulties and obstacles in regard to the Pondicherry situation. The chief difficulty was their Parliament. Neither the people generally, nor Parliament understood the situation fully. It was not possible for the Government to take any step without convincing Parliament. It was conceivable that this question of Pondicherry might be settled by India unilaterally. But this would be unfortunate and affect the relations of the two countries. Hence it was desirable to deal with this matter by negotiations.

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<sup>37</sup> K. Rammuni Menon.

<sup>38</sup> Note to the Secretary General. Foreign Secretary and the Commonwealth Secretary, 20 April 1954. JN Collection.

<sup>39</sup> Christian Belle was an emissary of the French Government.

<sup>40</sup> See the following item.

4. I said that throughout these few years we had taken special care to avoid taking any step which might affect the prestige of France. We had also been anxious to settle this question in a way which would leave no trail of bitterness behind between the two countries. This pointed to the way of negotiations.

5. The French Ambassador then spoke. He said he had not discussed this matter with me during the last two and a half years of his stay in India, because he felt the time was not ripe for it. Now he felt that the time was ripe for such a discussion. This could only be done by negotiations and not by way of ultimatum. In negotiations there was some give and take and the countries concerned dealt with each other in a friendly way and no country's prestige was affected. In such negotiations it was obviously desirable not to lay down conditions in advance because that would mean that the decision had already been taken and would be in the nature of an ultimatum.

6. The Ambassador went on to say that the position in France was difficult. The Government was not very strong<sup>41</sup> and there were especially internal difficulties in the French Parliament. No French Government could come to a decision on this matter without informing their Parliament and getting their support. If Parliament refused support to the Government on an important matter, then the Government would fall and the next Government was likely to be worse in so far as that particular question was concerned.

7. The Ambassador also suggested that some kind of a token of goodwill, however small, on the part of the Indian Government, would have a very good effect in France. He felt sure that the result of negotiations was likely

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph Laniel, the French Prime Minister, belonged to Independent Republican Party having a voting strength of 55 in the French National Assembly of 627 members.

to be very close to the viewpoint of the Indian Government. Mr Christian Belle was remaining here in case we wanted any further explanations or wished to utilise his presence in some way.

8. I repeated again that we attached value to a friendly settlement and to friendly relations with France and, therefore, we did not wish to do anything which might affect France's prestige in any way. I agreed that the way was by the method of negotiations, but it was not quite clear to me what kind of negotiations and where and how these should take place.

9. The Ambassador replied that once the principle was agreed to, the other details should not offer much difficulty. He again said that there was much goodwill on the part of the French Government and, especially, their Minister of Foreign Affairs,<sup>42</sup> but there were material obstacles, such as the French Parliament. However, if properly approached, they might be able to get over these obstacles.

10. I pointed out that at any time it was desirable to have peaceful Settlements. That was our policy and at the present juncture, when grave world issues were pending, this was all the more necessary.

11. I then said that I would give further consideration to this matter and consult my colleagues.

12. I should like to mention this matter briefly to the Cabinet, which is meeting at 5 p.m. today. Fuller consideration should take place in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cabinet, probably tomorrow. Meanwhile, I should like copies made of the letter of the French Prime Minister (in

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<sup>42</sup> Georges Bidault.

English). I suggest that SG and FS might see me for a few minutes at about 4.15 p.m. today.

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**To Joseph Laniel<sup>43</sup>**

New Delhi  
23rd April 1954

Dear Mr Prime Minister,

I am grateful to you for your communication of the 16th April,<sup>44</sup> which was handed to me on the 20th April by M. Christian Belle.

2. I fully share with you the sense of responsibility to continue to maintain relations of confidence and friendship between our two countries. I welcome your initiative in writing to me about the Establishments that France still possesses in India and gladly respond to it. As I stated in our Parliament, I am anxious that this problem should be sealed between our two countries in a friendly way without leaving any ill will or bitterness between the two nations. Certain recent developments in these Establishments have been a matter of deep regret to us and have naturally produced strong reactions in the whole of India. The deterioration in the situation doubtless adds to our difficulties. But, at the same time, it points to the necessity of both our countries meeting this situation with wisdom and speed. This new situation

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<sup>43</sup> JN Collection.

<sup>44</sup> Laniel hoped that a free exchange of views would help in arriving at an equitable solution of the problem. But he felt that, "the very regrettable measures which have recently complicated the relations on a local plane", would make it difficult to work out an agreed formula, acceptable to both the Governments. He wanted reduction of measures affecting economic and social interests of the population in the French territories. and requested India to facilitate maintenance of law and order by French authorities in their territory.

in the French Establishments in India has arisen because of a spontaneous movement of the people there. Although we have inevitably sympathised with this movement, we have kept ourselves aloof and adhered strictly to international practice, because, as I stated in our Parliament, we do not desire to reach unilateral decisions in this matter.

3. This popular movement has demonstrated beyond all doubt that the people of the French Establishments in India desire to unite with the rest of their countrymen in India. What remains now, and is urgently called for, is to bring about this result peacefully and speedily. I entirely agree with you that we shall have to deal with our Parliaments in this matter in accordance with our respective constitutional requirements. Your Government is, of course, aware of the approach we have made to this question and of the suggestions which we have put forward for a friendly settlement. This approach appears to us to be practicable and offers a peaceful and equitable solution satisfactory to both countries.

4. You have referred to international action and mentioned that it is not your intention to seek that course. I should like to make our position clear on this issue. The Government of India have taken no steps which violate any principle of international law or recognised international behaviour. They have endeavoured to adhere strictly to international law and proprieties. As you are well aware, the people of India have passed through certain historic processes, which ultimately led to their independence and the establishment of the Republic of India. It is natural, therefore, that the Government and people of India should have sympathy and a sense of solidarity with people who are themselves Indians and are engaged in the same historic processes, which have led to the independence of India.

5. The Government of India having regard to their history, the sentiments of the people of this country and modern internationally recognized concepts of the rights of peoples to their freedom, could not permit their territory to be used for the suppression of a popular movement. They have been constrained to take some measures in order to protect their territory and interest. It has not been, and is not, the intention of the Government of India that any of their actions should inflict hardship on the people of the French Establishments in India and, so far as they are aware, no such result has occurred.

6. The Government of India, as always welcome a peaceful approach and settlement, however difficult the problem may appear. They have already stated that the cultural and other factors that are part of the recent history of these areas would be respected by them. This is also in full accord with the desires and sentiments of the Indian people and with the Constitution of India.

7. In the considered view of the Government of India, the next step is that our two Governments should enter into active negotiations forthwith for the solution of this problem and thus to implement as early as possible the desires of the people concerned.

8. It is naturally our wish, as it must be yours, that during these negotiations nothing should be done which might worsen the situation, and that efforts should be made to create an atmosphere which will be helpful to those negotiations. Should the two Governments decide to enter into negotiations for a peaceful and friendly settlement, we would naturally be disposed as we feel sure you too would be to take such practical steps as are possible to help in creating this atmosphere.

9. Mr Prime Minister, I sincerely welcome your communication to me as an initiative in the direction I have indicated and shall be glad to assist in giving it practical shape. The Government of India, therefore, suggest that the Government of France appoint representatives to discuss these matters with them at New Delhi without delay. The Government of India are not moved by any sense of prestige in this matter and will gladly send a representative to Paris for the same purpose, but they feel that negotiations in India will have a reassuring and calming effect on those concerned and assist to promote our common purpose.

With assurances of my highest esteem and consideration,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

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### **Merger Through Negotiations<sup>45</sup>**

The recent developments in the French Establishments in India have brought matters to an immediate crisis. As a result of this, the French Government in spite of their numerous difficulties in Indo-China and elsewhere, have been compelled to take some action and approach us for negotiations on this subject.<sup>46</sup> They have not committed themselves about the future, but there can be no doubt that they are seized now of the reality of the problem and realize that there is no way out except by handing over these Establishments to India. They want to do this in a way to save their prestige as far as

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<sup>45</sup> Note to the Secretary General and Foreign Secretary, 7 May 1954. JN Collection. Extracts.

<sup>46</sup> On 22 April during discussions in New Delhi between R.K. Nehru and Christian Belle, it was agreed to open negotiations in Paris regarding the French Settlements on 14 May.

possible. We should naturally help them in this. Our object is to get these French possessions merged in India and not to create difficulties for the French.

2. Therefore, the coming negotiations in Paris are a welcome development. Any other course would lead to a prolongation of the conflict and later, possibly, to international complications.

3. This fact should be fully appreciated by the pro-merger people in the French Establishments. That is to say, that this new development about negotiations is really a victory of their movement. They must not be apprehensive about these negotiations in any sense, but consider it a logical development which is likely to lead to their gaining the objective they have proclaimed.

4. Probably, these negotiations in Paris would not last very long at this stage.<sup>47</sup> They may not be completed and there may be a second stage, possibly in Delhi. The real difficulty which might cause delay is the uncertain future of the French Government and the Geneva Conference, and, above all, the position in Indo-China which absorbs French attentions for the moment. However, I have little doubt that something substantial will be achieved during these talks in Paris.

5. Our position is going to be a firm one as we have stated previously. That is, there must be full merger. For the present, there should be a physical transfer of the territory to India; the *de jure* question can be considered a

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<sup>47</sup> The Paris negotiations broke down on 4 June 1954 after it was found impossible to reconcile the opposing viewpoints on the conditions under which transfer of sovereignty should take place.

little later at leisure. We shall adhere to this position and in no way give it up. Of course, innumerable other questions arise about the maintenance of existing cultural and other rights there. We have given guarantees about these and we shall of course, adhere to them. But that will be a matter for fuller consideration later.

6. If this position is fully realised by the pro-merger elements, then they must adapt themselves to it. This does not mean that they should weaken in their movement. They can certainly continue it as they have been doing. But they should avoid all aggressive incidents involving, in any way violence. If such an incident occurs, they might well queer the pitch and weaken our position at a critical moment. Therefore, the movement should be peacefully carried on without any attempt to create incidents.

7. We have given a vague assurance to the French. Government that if negotiations are started we may relax some of the measures that we have taken recently. It was thought that this might create a favourable impression on the French Parliament. Obviously, we cannot relax any vital thing. Thus, it is quite clear that we will not permit French police or armed force to cross our territory into the enclaves which have been liberated from French rule.<sup>48</sup> This is the principal point to be remembered.

8. What else can we do?

(I) We might relax somewhat the issuing of permits, i.e., permits may be multi-journey<sup>49</sup> permits etc. or some other such relaxation;

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<sup>48</sup> By 30 April 1954, one-fourth of the French Indian Possessions had been liberated by the pro merger elements. Only the bigger Settlements like Pondicherry, Mahe, Karaikal and Yanam remained under French control.

<sup>49</sup> On 19 April Government of India introduced a permit system for regulating travel between the French Settlements and India when the Consul General of India at Pondicherry

- (II) we might allow a little more petrol to go there, provided always that this is distributed without discrimination;<sup>50</sup>
- (III) there are large numbers of parcels, about a thousand, lying in Madras, addressed to Pondicherry. We have to deal with them in some way. Probably, the best course would be to return them to the senders. This must be considered.<sup>51</sup>

9. Any of these courses adopted by us does not directly affect the movement or strengthen French authority. On the other hand, they are signs of our own strength. At any moment we can make these measures stricter or even introduce new measures. But a gesture of this kind, without injuring the movement, by us may be very helpful in the negotiations.

10. I want this to be fully appreciated both by the Madras Government and the pro-merger people in the French Establishments. There should be no apprehension on this score in their minds and no thought that we are weakening on the major issues involved. We are proceeding as a Government and with a view to ending this matter favourably to us without leaving a trail of conflict behind. It would be easy enough for us to take possession of these Establishments, but that would be a running sore

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was authorized to issue single journey visas on identity certificates issued by the French authorities to the residents of the Settlements. On 18 May, the Government of India instructed the Consul General to issue multi-journey visas at his discretion.

<sup>50</sup> The Government of India on 18 May decided to resume supply of petrol and petroleum products on the basis of monthly quotas. Toward the end of March, export of these items to French Settlements were banned.

<sup>51</sup> Some postal articles, intended for delivery through Indian post offices to the French Settlements were held up for completion of customs formalities. The Government of India on 18 May as a gesture of goodwill decided to release the parcels for onward transmission to the addressees.

between India and France and the change-over in these French Establishments would have this legacy to face. There might be international complications also. Therefore, it is obvious that we should adopt the wise course of peaceful negotiations, while at the same time we maintain our strength. This way we achieve our end honourably and without loss of prestige of either party. This is the way of satyagraha which Gandhiji taught us, and the pro-merger people who are carrying on a peaceful movement for merger will, no doubt, appreciate this.

11. We could have left these negotiations to our Ambassador in Paris. But we were anxious that someone should go from here who was in intimate touch with recent developments in the French Establishments and had in fact personally come in contact with the pro-merger leaders so that he could know their viewpoint fully. That is why we are sending special representatives from here.

12. We shall keep in touch with our Consul General, of course, and whenever possible we shall ascertain the views of the pro-merger leaders, as well as Madras Government.

13. I am sending this note so as to make the position clear both to the Madras Government and our Consul General who can explain this situation fully, in an informal manner, to the pro-merger leaders. It must be remembered that we as a Government are not responsible for the movement and therefore nothing should be said or done to embarrass us in this way....

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## Reactions to the French Proposals<sup>52</sup>

I have seen Foreign Secretary's telegram<sup>53</sup> No.9 of May 26 to you and *your* provisional reply.<sup>54</sup> It is desirable for Kewal Singh to be informed and asked to sound local leaders and report their reaction.

2. In view of present French proposals,<sup>55</sup> our attitude should not be of rejection but of proposing amendments to them. It should be made clear that French accept transfer of sovereignty in principle and some time limit should be laid down for subsequent steps and ultimate transfer. Referendum should not be agreed to, but we may agree to final proposal being legalised in accordance with constitutional requirements of both countries.

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<sup>52</sup> Note to the Secretary General. 27 May 1954. JN Collection.

<sup>53</sup> R. K. Nehru, the head of Indian delegation to Paris, wrote that during plenary discussions he noticed that the French Government was not in a position to accept the principle of total transfer of administration in the Settlements and insisted that some departments there had to remain with them till transfer of sovereignty.

<sup>54</sup> N.R. Piliyai the Secretary General, in his cable promised to send reply on receipt of the Prime Minister's instructions and advised R.K. Nehru to deal with matters like serious situation at Yanam etc. in the next meeting.

<sup>55</sup> Main points of the French proposals were: (i) France was prepared to accept transfer of sovereignty in principle. But after transitory arrangements dealing with immediate situation had been made, negotiations should start for transfer of sovereignty which should be ratified by people in accordance with constitutional requirements; (ii) under transitory arrangements the French Commissioner in Pondicherry would be replaced by two delegates representing France and India. Departments of Economic Affairs, Customs and Public Works would be under the Indian delegate and the French delegate would have the departments of Police and Judiciary. Each delegate would have right to advice the other; (iii) existing Commissioner would be replaced by a new one and the Council of 84 and Municipal Councils would be replaced by new members jointly by France and India; (h) new Administrators in Mahe, Karaikal and Yanam would be appointed with the approval of India. Enclaves under popular control .would be taken over completely by India.

3. Transitory arrangements should end at conclusion of period specified above. In these arrangements any diarchy of authority should be avoided. We might accept two delegates representing France and India respectively to take the place of French Commissioner in Pondicherry. Indian delegate must have Police and Judiciary in his charge.

4. There may be Advisers as suggested.

5. In Mahe, Karaikal and Yanam, new Administrators must be approved by India if not appointed by India.

6. Enclaves under popular control to be taken over by India completely.

7. There seems no reason why present Council of 84 and Municipal Council should be replaced by new Council. Their continuance appears both desirable and proper during this transitory period which should not be lost.

8. It is not quite clear what will happen in Pondicherry itself except that two delegates will be in control.

9. Generally I agree with paragraph 6 of Foreign Secretary's telegram.<sup>56</sup> He should continue negotiation insisting .on transfer of Police and Judiciary to Indian portfolio.

10. Important points are: French agreement to transfer of sovereignty in principle and actual transfer of important departments immediately. These

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<sup>56</sup> It suggested that if negotiations had to be discontinued, it would be better to break off on the question of inclusion of Police and Judiciary in Indian portfolio.

departments must include Police and Judiciary. Otherwise we cannot control situation. Also some limit for transitional period.

11. We cannot make ourselves responsible for divided administration in which we are directly or indirectly responsible for continuation of French colonial rule. Hence importance of Police and Judiciary and limitation of period.

12. These are my present reactions. *You* will no doubt give full thought to this matter and get reactions from Pondicherry.

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### **Suggestions *for* Negotiations with France<sup>57</sup>**

I have seen Foreign Secretary's telegram<sup>58</sup> No. 10 dated 27th May and *your* note dated 28th May.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Note to the Secretary General, 29 May 1954. JN Collection.

<sup>58</sup> R.K. Nehru had written that the French had clarified that some immediate transfer of authority would take place as part of transitory regime. Complete transfer of sovereignty would be subject to further negotiations which would be part of arrangement to be ratified by the people. R.K. Nehru suggested that he would tell the French that India was agreeable to sharing of authority as transitory measure as against her previous demand for complete *de facto* transfer provided Police and Judiciary were transferred to India.

<sup>59</sup> N.R. Pillai had written that the French proposals were being discussed with Madras Chief Minister, Kewal Singh and the pro-merger leaders. He enclosed with his note a draft telegram to be sent to R.K. Nehru seeking clarifications from the French on certain points such as: - (i) principle of transfer of sovereignty; (ii) envisaged period of transition; (iii) nature and purpose of the technical and other common issues relating to full transfer; (iv) precise nature of proposed popular consultation in place of formal referendum; (v) exact

It seems to me that everything depends on the transfer of Police *and* Judiciary. of these two, Police is more important. Unless the law and order aspect is transferred to us, we cannot possibly undertake any responsibility. I would not mind, during this temporary period, for any other less important subject not to be transferred. But the whole position depends upon police activities and we must control them fully.

As for consultation of the people, I have indicated in my last message that we are prepared to consider this matter, even though we are not agreeable to a formal referendum. But this can only be considered after a substantial transfer of authority, including Police, is made now and for the transition period.

You might make this clear to the Foreign Secretary repeating that the transfer of Police and Judiciary is the crux of the matter and without that we are unable to proceed further. Other matters can be discussed.

For the rest, you should ask for full clarification as in your draft telegram.

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nature of financial union suggested by the French as condition for transfer of certain departments to the Indian delegate.