

**Letter from Colonel E.W. Fletcher, Consul General of Great  
Britain in Pondicherry to Major Atta-ul-Rahman, Under  
Secretary to the Government of India, Department of External  
Affairs and Commonwealth Relations, New Delhi**

BRITISH CONSULATE-GENERAL  
PONDICHERRY, INDIA.

D.O. No Camp L/7

Hampton, Coonoor

July 1<sup>st</sup> 1947.

SECRET

My dear Rahman,

I had a talk with Baron to-day. He arrived in Wellington yesterday intending to spend a fortnight and, while I was with him, received a telegram asking him to fly to Paris as soon as possible. He intends to leave to-morrow.

2. He appeared considerably worried by the fact that the Communists have decided to make common cause with the Congress and agitate for independence or, rather, union with the Indian Union, and said he could not understand how they could give up the advantages of being within the French Union in order to join the Indian Union where they will be dominated by the Congress. The truth is, I think, that political labels mean little to the ordinary man in Pondicherry and that sentiments of kinship with India are far stronger than political party ties. The Communists are also hopeful that in the long run they will become stronger than the Congress in South India. Baron told me that

he was going to do his best to persuade the Colonial Ministry to give French India the status of a Dominion within the French Union as there was nothing else to be done. He was afraid, however, that the Ministry might only agree to concessions which would not go far enough to satisfy French Indian demands. He said that any idea of using force was out of the question.

3. Bazin, the Administrator of Chandernagore, has arrived in Pondicherry and, so Baron told me, is extremely worried about the future and considers that, after the transfer of power in British India, his position will become impossible and that his life may be in danger. I learn from Chandernagore that he said there that he would agree to remain as adviser to an Indian Administrator but that his position as Administrator would be hopeless. I think that unless the French Government make some kind of move before the 15<sup>th</sup> August there will be considerable agitation throughout French India, especially in Mahe and Chandernagore, and that the French may in that event be compelled to use force in order to keep order. Baron thinks there is likely to be serious trouble in Chandernagore and is apprehensive lest the inhabitants of the surrounding districts in Bengal join in, in order, as he put it, "to liberate their brothers from French Imperialism". As there is a political crisis in France he fears that he may be unable to get anything definite out of the French Government. He seems now to pin his hopes on the people of French India and the Government of the Indian Union agreeing to accept a dual status for French India by which its inhabitants would possess both French and Indian nationality. He said he thought that both Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi were impressed by this idea. Reports from

Pondicherry indicate that the idea of creating a French cultural center there has aroused no enthusiasm.

4. According to Baron, Subbaiah left France on the 27<sup>th</sup> June by the French steamer "Chantilly", which is due at Pondicherry between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of this month. He professed to be annoyed that the French Government should have allowed him to leave by a French ship as he had hoped that he would be arrested by the Madras Government on his way through India. How far sincere he is over this I do not know. He may hope that Subbiah will try to persuade the Communists to decide for staying within the French Union. I doubt very much if Subbaiah would do this even if he could. He has lost a lot of influence but, if he regains it and French India becomes autonomous and elects to stay within the French Union, it may be embarrassing for India as Pondicherry will then become a kind of Communist base. It appears the...

(Sd) - Fletcher