CHAPTER IV

The Freedom Movement in the French Settlements and the response of the People and the Press

As a result of the French revolution, an all-white general assembly was held on 2nd February 1790, in Pondicherry. An all-white municipality was set up in Pondicherry in August 1791 with 5 members and a Mayor. A new representative committee of 27 members with a representative from each of the other settlements including Mahe was also set up. The Indians were not allowed to participate in it. The representative committee was replaced by a Colonial Assembly consisting of twenty one members. Fifteen of them were from Pondicherry, three from Chandernagore and one each from Mahe, Yanam and Karaikal. French residents above the age of 25 and who were residents in India since two years were to elect the 21 representatives of the Colonial Assembly. Mahe had a French Mayor called Boyer. The general council consisted of about 2 members for Mahe. The local council consisted of about 6 in Mahe. Each commune had its municipal council and its Mayor. The whole of Mahe was constituted into one single commune. The municipal council of Mahe was composed of 12 elected members. The Europeans were about hundred in Mahe. In 1870 Nalporeyil Baddouincutty (Vaduvan Kutty Vakil) was elected to the local council of Mahe in the 1870s and also as Mayor of Mahe, Payanadin Bapou, was the Deputy Mayor. In the local and municipal councils during this period, there were people like

97 K.S. Singh, op. cit., p. 480

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Errampally Kellappan, Manalile Moideenkutty, Poudiaporeyil Carotte Abdulaja, and Madayi Knaran. In 1899 Punna Ramotty was elected as Mayor of Mahe. Radical - socialist party communities first appeared in Mahe in 1907.

The natives of Pondicherry identified themselves with the Indian Independence right through the history and the stalwarts of this noble movement were invited periodically to come to Pondicherry to address the people here about the growth of the national Congress. The fiery speeches and writings of leaders like Tilak, Gandhiji, Nehruji, Das, Aurobindo etc; were received with great enthusiasm. The imprisonment of the leaders of the movement and their satyagraha sparked enough courage and conviction among the citizens of Pondicherry. The stay of great leaders like Aurobindo, Bharathi, V.S.S. Iyer, Neelakanta Brahmachari and a host of their local admirers tilled the soil of Pondicherry and sown the seeds of freedom. The spirit of nationalism, patriotism and freedom from the foreign yoke became very significant in Pondicherry. Interestingly, the labour movement of the textile industries in Pondicherry were used as the substratum for organizing public demonstrations initially towards realization of their long pending demands. The same force formed the basis for freedom movement later. V.Subbiah, veteran freedom fighter and labour leader provided commendable leadership at the beginning.

Pondicherry was not lacking in national consciousness before 1947. In the year 1924 itself, one Shri A. Palanippa Mudaliar of Muthialpet was running a bus company by name “The Swathanthira

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94 N. Rajkumar, The Problem of French India, Department of foreign Relations, Indian National Congress, New Delhi, p. 194

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Major bus company” and “The Swathanthira Motor Service” which earned the displeasure of both the British and the French Governments. He acquainted himself with the liberation movement against the British domination. He used to help the nationalists in many ways. The name of the motor service roused the indignation of both the alien Governments. Though he was pressurized constantly to change the said name of the bus company, he flatly refused. As a result of his philanthropic acts, he lost all of his properties and for the debts he had thus incurred, his properties were auctioned on the 25th February 1935 by the Pondicherry court.

The Indian National Congress came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi who wanted to attain complete Independence for India. He launched the civil disobedience campaign against British rule. Many residents of French Mahe participated in the civil disobedience movement. Kallat Damodaran, a Tiyya of Mahe plunged into the Civil Disobedience movement in neighbouring British Malabar, C.F. Gopalan and Muchikkal Padmanabhan joined the communist party in organising a youth league in Mahe in 1934. Mahatma Gandhi came to Mahe in 1934 to uplift the Harijans and social reforms. The Mahajana Sabha party was organised under the leadership of Marie Savary and R.L. Purushothama Reddiar. N. Sahadevan was re-elected as Mayor. His relative C. C. Kumaran and a Muslim were appointed as Deputy Mayors. Namatte Madayi Karayi Govindan and Padicotte Nadamel Kanchi Mannan were the land owners who became special deputies of Pallur and Pandakkal. The nationalist trends of both Pondicherry and the British India remained inseparable right from the beginning of Independence struggle. In fact,
the prominent leaders like Gandhiji and Nehruji felt that the independence of Pondicherry from their French colonial master was almost an automatic by product of Indian Independence from the British Raj. Mahatmaji during his visit to Mahe in 1934, declared that there was no difference between French India and British India as far as Indian Independence was concerned. Hence, there was no question of leaving the issue of liberation of French India unsettled for a longer duration. Including the encounters under the French and the Portuguese control efforts were already on to mobilize public consciousness towards the goal of independence from the French masters even by early 1930s. The formation of Harijan Seva Sangam in 1933 and the visits of Mahatma Gandhiji in 1934 and that of Nehru in 1936 accelerated the process of political consciousness and fundamental thirst of freedom. In 1939 the Mahajana Sabha party was founded in Mahe. Two Muslim associations were founded during this period in Mahe. The association known as the La Jeunesse Musulmane of Mahe took active part in liberating Mahe from the French. Though Shri Vijayaraghavan had not entered into a direct clash with the French, he served very usefully for the liberation cause. He was the editor of “The French India Gazette” in 1930. In 1938, he vehemently opposed the poll-tax imposed by the French Government to the British subjects living in the French Settlements. According to the order, a British subject living in the French settlements had to pay Rs. 20/- per head if he was a male and Rs. 10/- per head if she was a female. Unable to withstand the growing opposition to the said order, the French Government withdrew the poll-tax.
In 1942, he published the protest of the late Shri S. Arangasami Naicker of Tirunallar to the convening of the special session of Representative Assembly in a private man’s building. Having become furious over this news item, the then Governor M. Bon Vin banned the publication, “The French India Gazette”.99

Many illustrious leaders like Shri P. Ansari Doraisamy, R.L.Purushothama Reddiar, V.Subbayya, A.Khaddar Nedesan, Ettyappa Naicker and S.R.Subramaniam took leading part in the “Salt Satyagraha” and the “Quit India” movement sponsored by Mahatma Gandhi in the years 1930 and 1942 respectively. Some of them were however criticised by their contemporaries for their indulgence in petty politics. Antonie Vallabah Mariadassou writes in his paper referred to earlier that “what is the most amazing bewilderment is that a popular leader like Subbiah, a very steadfast person, had recourse to such ugly methods. Greed for power seemed to have shot him into the vortex of the ill process of dirty local politics. Thereby Subbiah became a opportunist, without ideology and principles. As a result, his popularity began to decline”. As long as the second world war 1939 – 1945 lasted, the CPI stood under the command of the international communist authority called Comintern of all political decisions. For instance, the CPI took a different stand contrary, to Gandhiji by not supporting the “Quit India” people’s movement of 1942 for the only ideological reason of not jeopardising soviet interest to win the war whose duration could not be foreseen.100

99 Ibid
100 Ibid

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Freedom Struggle in Karaikal Region

The formation of the Karaikal National Congress on 13th June, 1947 and the students Congress on 31st January 1947 were events of great significance in the nationalist history of Pondicherry region. The popular desire to get freedom was very visible. Leaders like R. Supparayan and Sivanandam took early steps to form the students Congress even by 21st September 1946. However, the French administration gave them permission only in January 1947. Immediately after its formation, they passed a resolution for merger with the Indian Union on 13th March, 1947. The working committee of the Congress party rejected the concept of free city floated by France.

National Democratic Front in Chandernagore

Annussamy belonged to the National Democratic Front. Chandernagore identified itself more with the nationalist politics and developed a strong tendency to slip away from the tutelage of Pondicherry. They for the first time, demonstrated their rebellions temperament in the middle of July 1946 in the wake of the municipal elections. In that elections the NDF (a communist led front) secured a majority and Kamal Ghosh, a NDF leader, became the Mayor. They, along with the courtsides, hoisted the flag of the Indian National Congress on the Marie (town hall). The trend of defiance of the Pondicherry authorities thus commenced continued until Chandernagore seceded from Pondicherry. Its memories were still fresh in the minds of the people. While the rest of India was obeying the anniversary in a befitting manner, French India did not want to lag behind and decided to observe 21st February 1947 as a day of union between the army, “the police and the people” in order to demonstrate
their determination to wrest complete independence and throw off foreign domination. The French India communist party organized the whole thing and the NDF took the lead. In a telegram the President of the French India National Congress also held the communists and their associates, the NDF responsible for the incident at café Ansari and pointed out that inadequate preventive measures of the Pondicherry administration gave the attackers a few hand. The administrator of Chandernagore observed that it was for the first time that all parties – united parties members of the representative Assembly, the NDF (Mayor), Communists (labour leaders) jointly protested against the police and not only patronized an illegal action but threatened to blockade the police post as long as their demands for apology were not accepted.

Annussamy, a NDF member strongly criticized the proposed constitutional reforms and demanded the institution of a really responsible Government in French India. The governor still remained as the executive power, observed police and Judiciary, supported by metropolitan budget (from 1st September 1947), remained in his hands. Annussamy demanded the integration of French India with Indian union and strongly pleaded for the conversion of the Representative assembly into a constituent representative assembly with all rights and prerogatives. Demonstrations and slogan shouting against the decree marked the inaugural day of the municipal assembly. It was reported that the party opposed to the NDF had accepted the decree of 7th November on the advice of the Indian National Congress and with the consent of the Bengal provincial Congress committee. The Presidents of the newly constituted Administrative council could not be strictly
called Congressmen with the exception of one or two – they were moderately inclined anti-communists and opposed to NDF. Expressing his reaction on the installation of a new administrative council in Chandernagore the French Consul General of Calcutta reported to the charge ‘d’ Affaires of the French Government at New Delhi that the administrative changes in Chandernagore had been received well by the people.\footnote{Ajit K. Neogy, op. cit., p. 69} Resentment against the provincial administrative council was also mounting and Prakash Chandra Das, President, NDF demanded immediate dissolution of the Administrative council and its replacement by an impartial responsible Government. There was a strong protest when the life of the provisional Administrative council was extended for another six months. Elections of the Municipal Assembly through elected members would fix the date of consolation and the modalities of referendum. Hence there was a President demand for an early declaration. The council of Joint Action had also threatened violence. On 2\textsuperscript{nd} May, a bulge crowd besieged the representative Assembly which had rejected the nationalist motion for integration with Indian union. The municipal election of Chandernagore was last held in 1946 and in that election, as stated earlier, the NDF Emerged Victorious. Since 1947 Deben Das and other members of the Pondicherry representative Assembly from Chandernagore had been demanding the revision of the voters lists, but it was delayed on flimsy pretexts. The election of 25\textsuperscript{th} July attained special significance for the first time voting was to be on the basis of adult suffrage. Already the CPI had been bound and the NDF was on a low profile. The Congress Karma Parishad fought the election under the patronage of the provisional council of administering. As this
municipal assembly was going to play an important role in the coming days and the contesting parties the Congress, the NDF and the Forward bloc periled up all their resources to win the election and naturally it generated an unprecedented thesis among the people, nevertheless the election was peaceful.

The French administration was constrained to introduce a few reforms to appease the domestic aspirations of the agitated people of Pondicherry. The Privy Council was replaced by a Council of Government by an act of 12th, August 1947, by another order of 20th August, 1947, the Governor was to give directions and exercise control over the public services in the French establishments in India. He continued to function as the President of the council of Government as previously in the case of the conseil privée but functioned under the advice of the Councilors who were to be elected by the assembly. He was to pass orders only in the council of Government or in consultation with the Councilors except on subjects like judiciary police, law and order. There were six Councilors in the council of Government. Three of them were elected by the representative assembly and the rest were appointed by the Commissioner. The communist party also demanded the immediate merger with India. V. Subbiah, senator for French India and the Leader of the communist Party criticized the reforms envisaged by governor Baron regarding the composition of the council of Government and called upon the people of French India not to accept any settlement except on the basis of complete transfer of French Indian territories to the Indian union.102

102 N.Rajkumar, op.cit.p.196
The communist Party gave instruction to all the municipal bodies to hoist the Indian flag in place of the French flag on 15th August, the Bar Associations of Pondicherry and Karaikal passed resolution on 30th August 1947 calling for the integration of the French establishments with India. Chandernagore, situated in west Bengal, decided to merger with India through a referendum held on the June 1949 in which 7473 voted in favour of merger and 114 against merger.

With the announcement of the dawn of freedom to a major portion of India on the 15th day of August 1947, from the British yoke, the continuance of French colonialism in some parts on the coast lines of India was felt as an anomaly and also against the security of India. So, a great wave of enthusiasm and zeal began to creep into the minds, of the young men to rise up against the French colonial rule over the tiny pockets of Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe, Yanam and Chandernagore in India.

The French administration introduced some illusory methods in the pattern of administration with the aid of his “Yes Men” to make the people believe that a true representative Government was functioning in Pondicherry also like free India. By a decree dated 12th August 1947 he formed a “Council of Government”, “Conseiller du Government” to aid and advise the Governor in the administration of Pondicherry and by another decree on the same date, the Representative Assembly was created for Pondicherry and other enclaves. By another decree dated 20th August 1947 he changed his designation as Commissioner for the French Republic in India. Out of six counsellors, three were to be elected from the Assembly and the other three, to be nominated by the
Governor. But to trumpet to the world that true democracy was functioning in the French Settlements in India, he allowed all the six counsellors to be elected from the Assembly itself. This council which had to meet at periodical intervals under the Presidentship of the Governor was purely an advisory body. Their advice could be flouted or ignored, if it did not suit the imperialistic interest of the French. These advisers had no say on the subjects of Finance, Police and Judiciary. All the heads of these Departments were also Frenchmen and their salaries were paid from the Metropolitan Budget of the French Government. In case of any difference of opinion among the six counsellors on any matter, the Governor had the casting vote. For example, in 1948 when the counsellors became divided three on one side and the other three another side, the Governor Mon. Baron cast his vote in favour of the group headed by Mon. Goubert as the resolution of the latter was found favourable to the imperialistic interest of the French.

Mon. Baron on his way back from Paris with the above said legislations, arrived in Calcutta and sought an interview with Gandhiji. With the help of the then Chief Minister of West Bengal Dr.B.C.Roy, he was able to meet Gandhiji. It was said of him that he briefed Gandhiji as to the legislations, he was about to introduce in Pondicherry in the pattern of administration. Gandhiji, who was seized with the communal riots which were rocking the country at that time, was stated to have paid patient hearing to his words but what actually transpired between the two-nobody knows. Mon. Baron, after reaching Pondicherry issued a press statement that the said legislations had got

103 Ibid
the blessings of the Mahatma and thus gagged the mouth of all the nationalists. By this arrangement, the French were able to retain a handful of vested interests, styled as "The French Indian Socialist Party" headed by a retired judicial officer who was a French-Indian, Mon. Edouard Goubert by name. This Party had no connection either with the Socialist party in France or in India. It did not function even as a party.

With the aid of power, police, he and his supporters in Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam were able to maintain a rowdy gang, always at their disposal, to terrorise their respective localities and to suppress pro-merger feelings. Since Pondicherry, Karaikal and Mahe were free-ports, smuggling had become an approved and dignified business. Those merchants who indulged in smuggling activities, naturally owed their allegiance to the foreign domination. With the connivance of the French authorities, these merchants were able to import luxurious goods, free of duty, from foreign countries and smuggle them across the borders to India, thus affecting the Indian economy. So, the continuance of French rule in some parts on the coast lines of India, another one in the heart of Andhra Pradesh and the other on the bank of the river Hoogly in Bengal, had become a constant headache to the Government of Free India. Even then the activities of the pro-French elements were not able to put down pro-merger, sympathies. This was made clear to the French Government by the people of Pondicherry and by the Government of India, in no uncertain terms. In April 1948, Shri Leon Saint Jean, Secretary of the Congress group in the Pondicherry

104 R.Ramasrinivasan,op.cit,p.17
Representative Assembly, which consisted of S. Raja Iyer of Kurumbagaram and T. Madhavan of Varichikudi declared that immediate merger with the motherland alone will be a stable solution.\textsuperscript{105}

**Communist Party**

On 1\textsuperscript{st} May 1947, the communist party of Pondicherry organised a huge procession at 10 A.M. followed by a demonstration at 5 P.M. Through Dupleix street (Now Jawaharlal Nehru Street) which took an ugly turn and during which Ansari Dorai’s restaurant was plundered by hooligans shouting only one solgan ”Long Live V.S. Leader Subbiah” a student Congress meeting was going on the 1\textsuperscript{st} floor of the Café. No action was taken by the French Administration to ban the demonstration. Despite the presence of a strong contingent of armed police, the assault could not be prevented, thus the communist party had to hooligans this event to such an extent that communist rowdies snatched and tore the tri-colour flags hoisted on several houses in the town and more than as suspenders. Still, they did not do to approach the house of Ansari Dorai and that of brothers Paul Rajanedassou knowing fully well that they were prepared as well as to meet them adequately as Sardar Vallabai Patel once remarked that connection with the Razakar Hooligans let loose on the Congress Volunteers in Hyderabad. "Meet goondas with Goondas."\textsuperscript{106} On the 6\textsuperscript{th} October 1947, immediately after the attainment of Independence by India, some "Loges" viz. Surat, Calicut, Masulipatnam, Balasore and other places in India were handed over to India even without any referendum.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid
\textsuperscript{106} V. Subbiah, Saga of Freedom of French India, Madras, 1990, p. 147
With India’s independence approaching and the French Communist party in France resigning from the French Ministry in protest against the Vietnam War, and also abiding by the clearly drawn policy of all the Indian Communist party as published in the official organ “New, Age, the liberation of the territories from alien rule” as claimed long before by the students Congress and National Congress. Subbiah, Chief of the French India Communist Party on his return from Paris, told press that the French Government should grant complete political autonomy to French India so that it could make perpetration for fusion with India. He also rewarded that the cultural relations with Baron intended to forge with India was nothing but a mask of preparation, French Imperialism in India. Soon a manifest was signed by the Mayors of Pondicherry, Tirubhuvane, Nettapakkam, Modeliarpettah, Oulgaret, Ariankuppam, Bahour, and Villianur, distributed it among the people urging the French Government to transfer power to free India. They expressed their firm intention of getting united with India and requested Indian nationlist leaders to help them in their efforts. The Bar association of Mahe, held an extraordinary meeting held on 28th July 1947, adopted a resolution similarly urging the French Government to give up their claim of sovereignty without delay and transfer power to a popular interim Government under conditions analogous those to Great Britain. The French India National Congress and the French India communist party instead of working on a common programme, competed with each other in organising processions and rallying people. Subbiah wanted to take extreme measures. But the French Indian National Congress was for Non- violent movement, Veteran leaders like Pakirissamypillai, Kali Ghosh (Joint Secretary, French India Communist Party) and
N. Ranganathan did not escape from the wrath of the French Police. The Mahajana Sabha of Mahe demanded that the French Government should immediately concede independence to the five French Indian settlements and establish an interim popular Government. The resolution adopted by the party further stressed that in the event of the failure of the French Government of concede of the above demands it would constitute a parallel Government in Mahe. The French India Communist party had by now changed its stand towards that French pockets in India. The communist party suddenly found the Government of India an anathema. Slogans for the merger of the French Indian settlements were no longer heard so vociferously. The Government of India refused to grant visa to Subbiah for his visit to France. He along with his CPI comrades in Chandernagore had taken active part in the mini-resolution of the town. The Government of India had banned the CPI, so did the Chandernagore Council of Administration now they felt no qualms of heart to support a resolution which aimed at blocking the process of merger. They now gave an all out and sovereign status.

The Indian National Congress appealed to the people of French India to remain patient until the issue could be sorted out by mutual agreement. It was openly announced by the Government of India. It was on 1st January 1948, the French Indian National Congress had a two-day convention at Nehru Vanam to decide the future of French India. More than two hundred delegates were present, it was held under the leadership of R.L. Purushothama Reddiar. He called for the unconditional withdrawal of France from the establishments and conveyed its determination to achieve its merger with the Indian union. It did not approve the idea of holding a referendum for this purpose as
it would affect the sentiments of the people though they were for a bilateral dialogue with the French administrator. The people were asked to fight for their freedom. The Municipal elections were held as scheduled on the 24th October 1948 and the results were also as anticipated. Except Chandernagore and Thirunallar Commune in Karaikal, all Municipalities were captured by the French Indian Socialist party which stood for the continuance of the French colonialism in India. French democracy was so broadminded, even a single opposition candidate was not able to win a single municipal seat in any of the municipal constituencies. After the Municipal elections were over, one “Vinthan” composed a song which gave a vivid description of the French Democracy in action in the French Settlements as to the fair conduct of the election. The said song was published in Tamil Weekly “The Kalki”, published from Madras & edited by a veteran Freedom Fighter, Shri R. Krishnamurthy. Immediately, the French India Government banned the circulation of the said weekly in Pondicherry and Karaikal.107 Only after the imposition of the ban, the circulation of the weekly increased as the people immensely glad to place on record that the contribution of the dailies and the weeklies, of Madras and the other parts of India to the liberation cause of Pondicherry was unique and unforgettable.

The central committee of the French Indian communist party, in a manifesto dubbed the Nehru Government as “fascist”, strongly criticised the failure of the Nehru Government to solve the problems of the country “in ten months”, the repressive measures it had followed in Hyderabad and Puducottah and expressed its willingness to remain

107 Ibid
within the French union. The party believed that by remaining within the French union and fighting for people’s democratic right in close cooperation with the French working class, a social structure could be built up. On 15th August 1948, at a meeting held in Quai de gingy, Subbiah strongly opposed the integration of the French Pockets to Indian Union. The Communists might have changed its stance possibly with a view to wooing the Pondicherry authorities. They feared that if Pondicherry authorities had banned the party in the manner Chandernagore administration had done, their survival would be at stakes. Moreover, the all India position of the party was not comfortable either. The French pockets might be safe if anything worse befell them. In the mean time a good number of Malabar communists had taken shelter in French Mahe where they were welcomed by the pro-French elements and this created considerable tension. The communists of Karaikal also expressed their willingness to remain within the French union. Le Monde explained the changes in the attitude of the French India communist party as a reaction of New Delhi’s policy of anti-communism followed by the southern states. It also alienated the shift in policy as an expression of disapproval against some reactionary members of the Government.

The French Government with a slight modification in its old-stand agreed to the participation of the Municipal Councilors of all the Municipalities of Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam who were elected during the elections in the year 1948 about the fair conduct of which the Government of India disputed with the French and the Members of the Pondicherry Representative Assembly in the so called referendum, instead of the whole population. This idea of the French
was of course a God sent opportunity for the leaders of the so called "French Indian Socialist Party" who were skilful in changing colour overnight. The Government of India readily agreed to this proposal. The fact that the spirit of the June 1948 agreement was not carried out either by our Government or by the French Government can never be allowed to go into oblivion. Even though the French Indian Socialist party leaders betrayed the French, in the last minute the French was not willing to abandon them but were very keen in giving them a new lease of life under the Indian regime also, by giving importance to them.

As early as 1948, the Government of India served a notice to the French Indian Administration expressing its intention to terminate the customs union under changed conditions. No reply was received from the local administration. The future status of these areas was announced later. The future status of the French territories was to be decided by the natives through a referendum. The modalities of the future status was to be decided by the municipal councils of all at the settlements. The Government of India continued to express its goodwill by permitting the customs union agreement to continue until the referendum was over. There were differing opinions about the stand of the Indian Government. Their agreement with the French was vague and full of loopholes. Another group of people preferred to have a fair conduct of the plebiscite under joint Indo-French auspices to ascertain the wishes of the people. For the first time in the history of Hyderabad, the Nizam came to the Begumpet airport to receive Sardarji, the then Deputy Prime Minister, of India by whose efforts all the princely states were amalgamated with India. No vengeance was wreaked either on Razvi or Razakars by the Government of India but
they were treated in the Gandhian way. Shri Ramanandha Thirthar and his colleagues who stood for the merger of Hyderabad with India, against many odds, at least achieved their objective.

The French India National Congress and Students Congress

In the year 1949 a group of politically conscious young men formed the French India National Congress. Prominent persons like Savarinathan, Sethuraman Chettiar, Ambadi Narayanan, Govindapathar and M.A. Annamalai laid the foundation of this organization in Pondicherry. Its functions came under the guidance of R.L. Purushothama Reddiar, S.R. Subramanian, Ansari Doraisamy and Zeevarattinam.

As a preliminary act before the proposed referendum, fresh elections were proposed to be held for all the municipal councils. As early as 1949, they were held in Chandernagore and Karma Parishad captured 22 out of the 24 seats. The municipal councils in Pondicherry had 102 seats. There were 250 candidates in the fray. The French India National Congress fielded 84 candidates, the French India socialist party put 102 candidates. Even in September, 1948 political activities gained sufficient momentum. 120 student processionists defied the ban and the merchants responded to a hartals call given by the French India National Congress. Ambassador of France Daniel Levi made it clear to the press that the conduct of both the elections and the referendum would be done with absolute fairness and in the best democratic tradition. However, the realities were different. The election process came to be encamped as a political fraud played upon the people as no opposition party and the Government was in a position to win the

108 N.Rajkumar, op.cit.p.198
elections. Police atrocities and terrorism became inseparable. All these unhappy events were brought to light by the French Parliamentary commission in its report to the Government.

The people of Pondicherry professing faith to various parties like the Congress, the Communist, the Socialist and the Dravidar Kazhagam forgot their internal differences and joined together in their struggle for independence. Both men and women without any distinction of caste, creed, religion, race and language contoured their maximum to fight against the French rule. The newspapers and magazines gave top priority to the message of preparing the natives for this holy task Manilam Samudayam, Janatha Podhujanam Vimochanan, and Puduvaimurasu, some of the journals triggering the independence struggle.109 The role of Swathanthiram was definitely unique. Three parties were the major contenders in the fray; the French India National Congress, the French India socialist party and the Progressive Democratic party, the last one included the Communist Party of French India and the Dravidar Kazhakam. There were certain reported irregularities in the conduct of elections. The polling agents of the Congress party did not receive authorization cards in sufficient numbers. The percentage of polling was poor. Ballot papers of some of the contesting parties were removed from the booths. There were several instances of misuse of voters identity cards. Among women, only a feasible percentage of voters preferred to vote, some of the Congress candidates were targets of attack by the socialist party workers. The Presiding Officers of maximum number of booths belonged to the French India socialist party and in a number of cases

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109 N.Rajkumar, op.cit., p.199
they were the candidates for elections. Dr. Subbarayan of the Congress party warned the Government of India to recognize the elections in French India in deciding the option of the people to merge with the Indian union. However, the election process was completed and the Socialist party recorded hundred percent success. Even the Representatives of the French Government, Laugenie, expressed that the referendum would not solve the problem. He added that the proposal to go for a referendum must be given up and a Tripartite conference was suggested. In the meantime, the Government of India introduced a permit system for the flow of essential goods into Pondicherry.

A meeting of the newly elected Municipal Councilors of the four regions was held on 17th, and 18th October 1949 in Pondicherry, K. Mouttoupoule, Mayor of Pondicherry presided over the meeting. They passed a set of resolutions underlining certain basic conditions and this resulted in the indefinite postponement of the referendum. The joint session of the Municipal councils however accepted the offer of autonomous status and implored the natives to accept it. The political activities were carried out with tremendous zeal and fervour to secure unanimous acceptance of the French offer. In the mean time, the Government of India clarified the false impression among the natives on 27th, October 1949. Accordingly, the Indian Government decided to extend an autonomous status for these counters under the patronage of the central administration. Changes in the administration were to be implemented only after the public opinion. Further, they promised to preserve the linguistic and cultural identities of these colonial pockets.

110 Ibid
They came forward to extend necessary financial assistance for running the administration. The existing financial commitments of the French administration would be honoured by the Indian administration. This statement was perhaps the first categorical official declaration of the union Government in respect of the colonies of the French and Portuguese.

The French Indian Socialist Party leaders were made to stay in the costly Hotel “Maiden” in New Delhi at the cost of the Government of India. Facilities were given to them to fly to Agra and admire the beauty of the Taj Mahal. In short, according to Dr. N.V. Rajkumar, they were treated as the “sons-in-law” of the Government of India.

A delegation of the French India Socialist Party went to Paris on 11th July 1949 but returned empty handed and disappointed. They subsequently went to Delhi and had an interview with the late Panditji, and Shri Girijashankar Baj Bai, the then secretary-General of the External Affairs Department of the Government of India, except the late Rajaji, who was then the Governor-General of India, all others gave them the necessary assurances to safeguard their political status, if they decided to merge with India. That is to say, their treachery done all along to the National cause will be forgiven and forgotten and they will be retained as Ministers in Free Pondicherry under the kind patronage of the Indian National Congress for their display of last minute patriotism. This was meant that those, who kept the problem alive all along, sounding pro-merger slogans, will be thrown into the waste paper baskets.

III R.Ramasrinivasan, op.cit., p.37
It must be said to the credit of the Government of India and the Indian National Congress that after liberation, both allowed the French Indian Socialist party to be converted as the Pondicherry Congress Committee and these accredited leaders of the same with the exception of those who passed away in the meantime were made to decorate the Ministerial Chairs, flying the Indian tricolour on the bonnets of their state cars, flag which they tore into pieces through their rowdies and caused it to be worn by them as lion-clothes on the occasion of the celebration of “Chandernagore day” in the Odiansalai maiden in Pondicherry on 26th June 1949.

These leaders, throughout their talks with the Indian leaders in New Delhi assured them that after they had reached Pondicherry they will again call for a meeting of the Municipal Councilors and the Members of the Pondicherry Representative Assembly and arrange to pass unanimous resolution favouring merger with India. Prior to this, Monsieur Daniel Levi, the then French Ambassador in New Delhi visited Pondicherry. The people of Pondicherry, under the leadership of Shri Durai Munusamy and S.R.Subramaniam staged a “Black Flag” demonstration. The precisionists were severely manhandled by the police and the jeep belonging to the Congress party was burnt to ashes.

On his way back to New Delhi, Monsieur Levi issued a statement to the press that Pondicherry and Karaikal may be retained as Andora and Montegarlo in France. It will be curious to know that Andora and Montegarlo are two places in France which were used as holiday-resorts by the Frenchmen as well as the visitors to France to satisfy the petty ambitions and obscene comforts of the unprincipled adults. Volleys of protests from all over the French Settlements came
against the statement of M. Levi, that the Indian culture and civilization do not allow the existence of Andoras and Montegarios, within the skirts of India.

The French Indian delegation after finishing their talks in New Delhi, came back to Pondicherry and called for the joint meeting of the Municipal Councils and the Representative Assembly on 17th and 18th October 1949, contrary to what they have assured the Indian leaders in New Delhi, the leader of the delegation Mon. Goubert gave a distorted version of their talks with the Indian leaders in New Delhi to those attended the meeting and caused the ignorant "Yes Men" to pass a series of resolutions in one of which they condemned the Government of India. Instead of chalking out the modalities of the referendum proposed to be held on 12th December 1949 they threw the referendum-baby on the laps of the two Government of India and France to negotiate as long as they could. This was a clever stratagem to procrastinate the issue for an indefinite period.

Though the Government of India was not shocked at this attitude of Mon. Goubert and his followers, it had to rebut the charges levelled by him against the Government of India by means of communiqué through the Ministry of External Affairs. The said communiqué dated the 27th October 1949 of the Government of India made it clear that in case the people of Pondicherry decided to merge with India, the former French Settlements will be administered as autonomous units in direct relations with the centre. They will also be kept as separate entity until the population decide otherwise. Apart from this, necessary legislations will be made to give representations in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, one in the former and the other in the latter, though
Pondicherry is not eligible for a single seat on population basis and adequate funds will be provided from the central budget to run the administration and payment of pensions. In addition, the late Panditji said that Pondicherry will be maintained as a “Window of French Culture”.

The heroic people of Chandernagore under the leadership of Shri Debenthranathdas gave the unanimous “NO” to the French and tolled the first death-knell of the French colonialism in India. Since the Municipal Congress had decided to leave the referendum question to both the Government of India and France and on the pretext of waiting till the decision of the two Governments, the French Indian Socialist Party leaders put forth their ability to perpetuate the French seldom over the other territories viz. “Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam”, In Pondicherry, the “Chandernagore Day” was celebrated by the Nationlists on 26th June 1949. The Government accorded the necessary permission to hold the public meeting in the Odiansalai Maidan but instigated the rowdies belonging to the French Indian socialist party to brutally attack the general public who thronged there to hear the National leaders. The Indian National flag was torn to pieces and one man to the amusement of the police who were posted there on bandobust duty wore the Indian Tricolour as loin-cloth.

On the pretext of maintenance of law and order, the police dispersed the crowd and from that day onwards the French India Government imposed complete ban on public meetings and processions throughout Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam. Shri Dadala Ramanayya of Yanam who was the Inspector of Police in the

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112 R.Ramaerinivasan, op.cit.p.57
Special Branch Department of the French Government was suspected to have revealed the official secrets to the promergerites and he was dismissed from service. While the French attempted to arrest him, he evaded arrest and fled to Cuddalore and threw himself heart and soul into liberation activities.

Since the Karma Parishad captured 22 seats out of 24 in the Municipal Elections it wanted the outright transfer of Chandernagore to India even without a referendum. As the French insisted for a referendum, it was held on 19th June 1949. On 2nd May 1950 the Government of India took over the de facto administration of Chandernagore. The Indo-French Treaty of Cession of Chandernagore was signed in Paris in 2nd February 1951. The de jure transfer took place on 9th June 1952.\(^{113}\)

Mahe Revolt

On 22nd October 1948, I.K. Kumaran hoisted the Indian National flag on the Administrator's residence in the presence of not only thousands of people (two thousand) but also the Administrator Perrier, the Mayor, C.C. Kumaran, the Deputy Mayors, N. Sahadevan and M.Muhammad Kunhi, the French India representative assembly member, V. Govindan and other elected representatives and the heads of all Government departments and some prominent citizens of Mahe. The Ambassador of France in India, Daniel Levi had the view that the Indian foreign Ministry and the Congress party assumed the anti-French posture. I.K. Kumaran, President of the Mahajana Sabha arrived in Mahe, accompanied by 450 nationalists hailing from India and 50 members of the local Congress party. V. Subbiah participated in

\(^{113}\) R.Ramasrinivasan, op.cit., p.71
the Mahajana Sabha of Mahe. A meeting of the Mahajana Sabha was held on 9th October 1948 at Pallur, attended by 300 persons of which 100 were from Indian territory, one of the leaders P.V. Anandan declared that 600 volunteers from neighbouring Kurnmbaranad Taluk and hundreds of other volunteers from Chirakkal were ready to invade Mahe. Jawaharlal Nehru did not want the French Government to prosecute the Mahesians who had taken part in the revolt. Some Muslim members of the Mahajana Sabha like K.A Omar Haji participated in the revolt. In October 1946, a rival Congress group All French India Congress was formed by Muthu Venkatapathy Reddiar and C.A. Rathinam. There were no serious ideological differences between the two Congress organizations. The new organization was to be inaugurated by M. Bhakthavatchalam under the Presidency of K. Kamaraj, Chief Minister of Madras state on 30th September 1949. The old organization claimed seniority and priority and condemned the new one as the communist sponsored organisation. All French Indian Congress questioned the national character of the French Indian National Congress. The local administration issued an order prohibiting the foreigners addressing public meetings in the French territory and introduced rigorous press laws. The entry, sale and distribution of the Madras journal Dinasyary and other tracts of political nature were totally banned in October 1946. The news that the British had ultimately decided to quit India in August 1947 granting full independence to India resulted in a new awakening among the people in Pondicherry and stirred them to action. From the year 1950, law and order situation in Pondicherry became deteriorated. A bomb was thrown on Mon. Goubert while he was addressing a public meeting in Murungappakkam. He had a narrow escape but here others among the
gathering became seriously injured. From that day onwards, violence began to raise its ugly head. Outbreaks of goondaism were witnessed everywhere. The provision stores, the building of the Communist Party in Pondicherry wherein the office of the Tamil weekly "Swathanthirm" was located, the house of Shri V. Subbayya, and the garage of Shri Nannayya Bhaga vathar were set to fire. On the 13th January 1950 along with them nearly two hundred houses were burnt to ashes.

The French India communist party was in a disarray. But, the communist party of India called upon the people of French India to vote for joining Indian union in the ensuing elections and to oppose any move to the retention of "French Imperialism" in Indian soil. In statement the party in order to justify French India communist party embittered by the betrayal of the Indian leaders and the repression in the Indian union, had persuaded themselves into the belief that the French union was much progressive and thereby fallen into a reactionary trap. In Pondicherry and in the adjoining communes Subbiah's follower's became the target of assault by the muscle men of Goubert in collaboration with Boulard, the Police commissioner. In Mahe, their position was much more precarious and they were bounded like anything by the nationalist forces. The French India Communist party led by Subbiah had changed its stand and demanded merger of the French settlements with India. But, anti-mergists of Chandernagore anticipated that the results of the referendum would go against them. Both Goubert and Subbiah lurked in a bitter rivalry. Goubert's official position enabled him to lynch his communist rivals. The communist were stripped of their hope on the working class popularisation of

114 Ibid
115 Ibid
persecution, terrorisation and physical liquidation. The assembly
election of January 1950 was the occasion for the outbreak of new
violence in Pondicherry with all its attendant evils. It was essentially a
fight between Goubert and Subbiah, the latter having already been
cornered by the strong-arm policy of the former. They also raised the
house of Venugopalasami, a Congress worker of Pondicherry and
threatened him in similar manner. The house of Thambidorai who was
a French India delegate to the Preparatory Asian Regional Conference
of I.L.O at Delhi was attacked because he had made a statement of the
press condemning insecurity in French India, the attack on the
labourers, dismissal of workers on political grounds and harassment
and exploitation of labourers by political parties. Aided and abetted by
the administration the “Goonda” ran on a rampage, booting and buying
the headquarters of the French India Communist party which was
located in the house of Subbiah. On 14th January 1950, the fire which
reduced to ashes the house of Subbiah, spread rapidly to adjacent shops
and houses. The police chief Boulevard was personally present there
but did nothing to stop this. The houses of Clemenceau and
Annussamy leaders of the French India communist party were all set
on fire. More than 30 houses in French India Capital were burnt by
goondas who received no resistance from anywhere. Subbiah had to go
under political liberation. India had issued warrant of arrest on him on
many counts and more particularly to prevent the extension of
Communist activists in South Arcot districts. Nehru’s anti communist
policy was strongly resented by Subbiah. The CPI also received a raw
deal in his hands. The Government of India’s warrant had in
interdicted his entry in the South Arcot districts. He had incurred the
displeasure of the Pondicherry Government for many reasons. He was
a staunch critic of the French imperialist rule. One of the founders of the French India communist party had organised the working class population against the exploitation of the management.

The year 1950 was year of violence and lawlessness. More than 125 houses of pro merger supporters were burnt in Pondicherry alone, including the office of the communist Party. A team of neutral observers appointed by the International court of Justice at the instance of France visited Pondicherry in April 1950. They concluded that the organized political violence was conducted as a profession in the establishments. On June 17th, 1951 election was held to choose a Deputy to the French Parliament. Goubert was elected getting 90,053 votes out of 90,667 votes polled. The election result was a surprise to many. By this time, the Indian Government withdraw its warrant issued against V. Subbiah in 1948. Swandalum, a Tamil Weekly published from the border areas served as the Chief Organ of his Movement. He said that the Communist Party of French India would ally itself with all the democratic forces in French India to fulfill its historic commitment of liberating Pondicherry from the French domination and strive for its reunification with India. Prime Minister Nehru condemned the acts of violence in the territory of Pondicherry in his public address in Madras.

When Andre Gaebele formed the opposition to the French India socialist party in power, violence was further invigorated on a large scale in Pondicherry. Dr. Pery, a Member of the National Assembly in parties ridiculed the policy of the French Government playing into the hands of the Socialist party which had no faith in civilized administration and its main creed was unabated goondaism.
In 1952, nearly thirty families of the Handloom Weavers and those belonging to the “Sizing Workers Union” had been forced to leave Pondicherry under the leadership of Mr. Srinivasan owing to the repression let loose by the ruling party and they took refuge in the adjoining area of Kottakuppam in Tamil Nadu.

Under these circumstances in the year 1952, they planned to form a youth organisation with a view to jump into direct action. With great difficulty, the National Youth Congress was formed with the sole aim of offering Satyagraha against the French under his Presidentship. Shri R. Ramasrinivasan was also aware of the fact that the elders were not in favour of any direct action. He encouraged and assured all possible assistance from his side. He came back to Karaikal, prepared an ultimatum to the Overseas Minister of France and sent it to him stating that if the French did not withdraw from India before the 31st July 1952. His colleagues were about to offer Satyagraha in the month of August 1952. In the meantime he met Dr. P. Subbrayan, the then President of the Tamil Nadu Congress in Kumbakonam and sought his advice. Contrary to his expectation, he was to refrain from any activity which will encourage the French authorities. Though, he was shocked by this advice of Dr. Subbarayan, he did not get discouraged.

Soon after the publication of the news in the press, the then Administrator of Karaikal Monsieur Roman Charles Bouchney summoned him to his office. Narrating the incident of firing in Bengal when he was the Administrator of Chandernagore, he said his agitation will lead to loss of lives. He also said that such an agitation was unwarranted in Karaikal since this was ruled over by a Republican country and not like the Britishers. He also stated that our own
countrymen were the advisers. When he pointed out to him that the key-posts and key-portfolios were retained in the hands of the French, he had no explanation to offer.

He assured him that the proposed agitation would be cent-percent non-violent in spite of provocations if any from the Government side. At that time, he used to write articles in the weekly edition “Kudi Arasu”. Shri G. Rathnavelu, S. K. Subbarayan and M. S. Mani also used to write articles in the said weekly.

While making the search, he seized all files from him and was very keen only in removing one file which contained the letter of the Indian Consul-General Shri Tandon from Ooty. He was steadily standing by the side of the Police Commissioner to snatch away the letter of Shri R.K. Tandon if he was able to trace out the same, following the footsteps of Shri Jaya Prakash Narayan as he had already read the way in which Shri Jaya Prakash Narayanan tore the letter sent by his wife to the prison where he was detained, concealing in a book, put the pieces into his mouth and chewed in the presence of the Jailor. He succeeded in removing the same and handed it over to his young brother R. Rama Krishnan who took it away to a safer place. Then he took them to the T.R. Pattinam police Station. There he picked a copy of the journal “Kudi Arasu” which contained his article making reference to his unlawful act. He asked him whether he had written the said article and when he answered in the affirmative, he left it at that. On the pretext of investigation, they were kept in the police lock-up of the French in one of the colonies of the so-called “Big-power” France, requires a special mention.
On the 8th of August 1952, they were produced before the investigation Magistrate, Monsieur Hubert de Rozario who was a Franco-Indian. He immediately remanded them to judicial custody and ordered to be kept in separate rooms in the gaol of Karaikal which were called "secret" rooms and which were meant for criminals who are alleged to have not revealed the truth.

Panditji was arrested by the British Government on the 9th of August in connection with the "Quit India movement", sponsored by Mahatmaji. Most of the Students of school observed hartal and were picketing standing before the portico of the school requesting their schoolmates to refrain from attending the school. The said hartal was led by Shri R. Ramasrinivasan's classmates Shri T.S. Kuppusami and T.S.Dashinamurthy Mudaliar, both from Tirumalarayanpattinam. Since he was staying in the house of a gentleman who was a staunch supporter of the Justice Party Shri SP.K. Kandasami Pillay, he was strictly instructed by him not to join the hartal but to attend the school. But he felt very much for his inability to join the hartal and said to himself whether he will get a chance of going to the gaol following the footsteps of our beloved Panditji. He totally forgot the continuance of the French colonialism in India at that time.

It was irony of fate that Shri Dakshinamurthy Mudaliar who conducted the hartal in 1942 against the British became one of the staunch pro-French elements in 1952 within a short span of ten years and he himself did not participate in the hartal in Karaikal in 1952.

116 Ibid
While in jail, they received the shocking news that the goondas hired by the French Indian Socialist Party, entering the house of the late Shri R. Sellane Naicker, a leading advocate and a staunch nationalist in Pondicherry on the 20th August 1952 fired at him three shots by a revolver. Fortunately, Shri Naicker escaped with a bullet injury in his left thigh. He declined to undergo treatment in the local hospital at Pondicherry. Therefore, he was immediately taken to the General Hospital at Madras.

In the month of October of the same year, Panditji visited Madras and while addressing a public meeting there in the Gymkhana grounds, referring to the French Settlements he said, "Either the French Government must be unable to check gangsterism or it must connive at it. There cannot be third reason for it". A delegation consisting of the top leaders among the nationalistic groups of Pondicherry met Panditji at Madras and informed him of the political situation then obtained in Pondicherry. To them, Panditji is said to have raised the question "Is there only one Ramasrinivasan in Karaikal?" A group of students which included Janab A.M. Dawoodshaw went on an excursion to Kashmir and they met the then Yuvaraj Shri Karan Singh. He and his brother were defended by the late Shri J. Xavery and the late Shri M.J. De la flore appeared for the late Shri Pillay claiming damages. During enquiry the judge appointed a committee consisting of a Notaire (Sub-registrar), one temple accountant and another retired police officer viz. Shri Rajaganapathy, Muthayyavandayar, (father of K.M.Sivasubramaniam) and Lesingar to find out whether the handwriting in the wall-posters were that of his brother Kanda Kumar's. Their finding was in favour of the prosecution. On the twenty-sixth of
November 1952 the Judge Mr. Huber de Rozario, convicted and sentenced him to six months imprisonment with fine and his brother Kandakumar to eight months imprisonment and M. Uthirpathy to eight months imprisonment in absentia and one approver to three months imprisonment.

They prepared an appeal against the said judgment to the Tribunal de Superior in Pondicherry. Pending disposal of our appeal, in expiry of the term of his conviction, he was released on 8th February 1953 and his brother on 8th April 1953. After his release, he wrote a letter to the Indian consul general at Pondicherry and he sent him an inspiring reply. After his release, M.G. Chellayyan came to his house and garlanded him. When this news was conveyed to Shri Sivasubramania Pillay he instigated his hooligans to manhandle Chellayyan. Unable to bear the troubles given to him, he left Tirumalarayanpattinam and took refuge in a nearby village Pragramam in Nannilam Taluk.

On 3rd May 1953, a meeting of the agricultural labourers was held in the Kizhaiyur Harijanpet. At the request of the Harijan leaders Kandakumar, the late G. Loganathan and Ramakrishnan attended the meeting. The meeting discussed about the reduction of the yearly wages by two kalams of paddy (from 18 Kalam to 16 Kalam) and about the non-representation of the Harijans in the Municipal Councils and the Legislature.117 The speakers told them that this disparity can be removed only after the liberation.

117 R.Ramasrinivasan, op.cit.,p.94
The appeal came up for hearing in the Sessions court at Pondicherry some months later before M. Coussin, French Judge who confirmed the lower court conviction. Here they were defended by Shri G. Ambroise and D. Zivarathanam, the two leading advocates of Pondicherry belonging to the Merger committee.

By the end of October 1953, Kewal Singh took over as the Indian Consul General in the French establishments succeeding R.K. Tandon. At the beginning of January 1954, steps were taken to launch a massive campaign in favour of merger with the Indian Union. Saravanan, a former member of the Council of Republic in France called for the unification of all the pro-merger parties to defeat the humiliating French Indian Government in power. He expressed his reservations about the fair conduct of plebiscite and further added that there was no need for it. Subbiah issued an appeal to the people to forget all party differences and to extend their full support to the merger movement.

On the 14th of November 1953, Shri Kewal Singh assumed charge as the Indian Consul-General at Pondicherry. Within less than one year of his assumption of office as Consul-General, he was fortunate enough to become the first Chief Commissioner of liberated Pondicherry. Earlier in February 1953, the general body of the Tamil Nadu Congress committee which met in Tranquebar under the Presidentship of the late Shri K. Kamaraj appointed a sub-committee consisting of Shri M. Bhakthavathsalam and T.N. Ramachandran of the Tara press, Nagapattinam to attend to the freedom struggle of Karaikal. He was in constant touch with Shri Ramachandran and both toured around the border areas of Karaikal and gathered the support of
the Congressmen there. The French India Liberation League was also formed in Nagapattinam to help us with many distinguished persons including Shri S. Ranganatha lyengar, the press Correspondent.

"The Free India Publications" of Madras published a booklet by name "The French pockets in India" which contained the photographs of almost all the leaders of Pondicherry, Karaikal and Mahe who were active at that time. These booklets were distributed in Tirumalarayanpattinam. One Mr. Dharman brother-in-law of Shri Antonisamy Pillay, a patriot of Velankanni who spoke in the market place of T.R. Pattinam that what was done to his father as unjust was severely beaten till he fell unconscious. They remained there conducting public meetings in favour of merger around the borders. Kannayya Thevar also joined there in Nagore with his family.

In Karaikal in the month of November, Pannerselvam and M. Marimuthu offered satyagraha by holding the Indian National flags in their hands. Since they were students they were severely beaten by the police and later let off. The then Chief Minister of Madras (before the bifurcation of Madras, Andhra & Kerala) the late Shri O.P. Ramasami Reddiar refused to hand over these patriots to the French. A criminal case was filed against them in the French court of sessions at Pondicherry and after a long time the trail was conducted during the absence of these revolutionaries. Shri I.K. Kumaran and the late C.E. Bharathan were convicted and sentenced to twenty years rigorous imprisonment each in absentia and their other followers to various terms of imprisonment. These patriots carried on the liberation movement till July 1954 by remaining outside. Before the Municipal elections, the late Shri Kamaraj the then President of the Tamil Nadu
Congress Committee Dr. P. Subbarayan and the late Shri S.B. Adityan came to Karaikal to address a public meeting in favour of merger on 2nd October 1948. Though the Government accorded permission to hold the public meeting in the premises of Shri Karaikalammayyam temple in Karaikal, it instigated some rowdies to pelt stones on the dais when the meeting was going on. Shri Kamaraj had a narrow escape without being hurt. A similar meeting was also held in Tirumalrayapatnam which was addressed by Shri Adityan.

On the pretext of maintenance of law and order, the French police making use of this incident dissolved the meeting and foisted criminal cases against the leaders and Shri N. Srikantha Ramanujam was convicted and sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment and was ordered that he should not enter Karaikal for two years after release. Shri A. M. Jambugesan, M. Sundaramurthy, S. Mani and Thangaraj were awarded six months imprisonment each.

Since the national activities in Karaikal were necessitated to be confined to only holding of in-door meetings owing to the ban imposed by the French Administration for conducting processions and holding public meeting as a measure of preventing the spread of Promerger feelings, the publication of the news items in door meetings in the newspapers was felt primarily necessary. The daily editions and the Weekly editions of Madras which played a significant role in the freedom struggle of India against the British did not lag behind to contribute their best to the struggle of emancipation of the French Settlements in India against the French also. The Tamil dailies viz.

118 R.Ramasrinivasan, op.cit.p.24
119 R.Ramasrinivasan, op.cit.p.25

The part played by the Press Trust of India and the United Press of India was so great and the editor of the latter Shri S. Vijayaraghavan had his thickest connections with Shri A.N. Sivaraman, a veteran Freedom-fighter and the then editor of "The Dinamani" the news of our activities were given much prominence by him.

Shri S. Vijayaraghavan, a journalist of Karaikal who had already earned the displeasure of the French officials for his pro-merger activities and Shri M. Nagarajan, Secretary of the Karaikal National Congress had been to Pondicherry to watch the proceedings of the joint meeting of the Municipal councils and the Representative Assembly, the former as a correspondent and the latter as an observer of the Karaikal Congress. On the report sent by Shri S. Vijayaraghavan, "The Dinamani" vehemently attacking the Slavish mentality of Mon. Goubert published the remarks "Gouberts Servile mentality is exposed in the Municipal meeting". This has exasperated the followers of Mon. Goubert, and one among them had begun to search for Shri S. Vijayaraghavan. But he was taken away to a safer place in Pondicherry and later to Cuddalore having become aware of their bad intention. It may be recalled that in 1947 when Shri Vijayaraghavan was on a visit to Pondicherry, two people caught hold of the rickshaw
in which he was travelling and overturned it and the other two people took out a big aruvai and cut off his tuft.

Despite the prevalence of this sort of organized goondaism, the Pondicherry Students Congress under the able leadership of the late Shri Durai Munusamy, the Pondicherry National Congress under the able guidance of late Shri R. L. Purushothama Reddiar, P. Ansari Doraisamy and S.R. Subramaniam were vigorously working for the liberation cause. The late Shri R. Sellane Naicker, S. Perumal, D. Zivarattinam, G. Ambrose leading Advocates of Pondicherry and other organisations under the leadership of the late Shri D. Mariappan, A. Lahache, Shri A. Arulraj and others also stood for the merger cause. Shri A. Khadder Nadesan, Andhre Selvanadan Govindapather, L.G.X. Doraisamy, M.S. Annamalai, K. Sivaprakasam and Palani Doraisamy, a press correspondent also played an important role in the freedom struggle.

In Karaikal, the late Shri R.M.A.S. Packirisamy Pillay, the then Senator, representing the French Settlements in the French Council in Paris who was the Mayor of Karaikal belonging to the ruling French India Socialist Party headed by Mon. Goubert, was acting as his agent. While the Karaikal National Congress was vigorously working for the merger of these territories under the Presidentship of Shri R.M.A.S.Venkatachalapathy Pillay, the pro-French activities were carried on by his younger brother, the late Shri Packirisamy Pillay.

In Karaikal, Tirumalarayanpattinam Commune deserves a special mention. The late Shri P.R. Sivasubramania Pillay, Mayor and one among the advisers to the French India Government was
terrorizing this place like an autocratic zamindar." He was notorious throughout French India as a smuggler. He was having a set of rowdies always at this disposal. He did not allow any merger activity here. The Karaikal National Congress was able to have a branch in Tirumalarayanpattinam, only after strenuous efforts. At a time when nobody was willing to come forward to shout the merger slogan and earn the displeasure of Shri Pillay, some courageous people came forward to form an adhoc committee. Nobody had the courage to take over the Presidency as it meant a challenge to the supremacy of Shri Pillay.

At such a time, the adhoc committee was formed under the Presidency of the late Shri S.O. Rangasami Pillay with the late Janab. S.M. Shri K. Madarsa Maraicar as Vice President, the late Shri V.O.K. Ganapathi Pillay as treasurer, Shri S. Varadarajalu Chettiar and Shri Mari Savari as its secretaries and some others including Shri R. Ramasrinivasan formed the working committee. Some fishermen of the place also were very active workers of the organisation. This has enraged Shri Pillay and he induced his hoodlums to assault Shri S. Varadarajalu Chettiar in the public market place of Tirumalarayanpattinam. A complaint was filed with the local police regarding these incidents but to no effect. Nobody came forward also to tender evidence regarding these incidents. The fishermen who had pro-merger sympathies also were attacked mercilessly. Contrary to this, Tirunallar Commune was known as a Congress commune under the leadership of the late Shri R. Subbarayaalu Naicker, the Mayor of that place.

120 Ibid
Under these circumstances, the Municipal elections were held. As said above, the identity cards to those electors who were known as pro-mergerites were not distributed. Hence, the Karaikal National Congress refused to participate in the election and boycotted the same. The same tactics was adopted in Mahe. The Mahe Mahajanasabha which was functioning under the leadership of Shri I.K. Kumaran and the late C.E. Bharathan did not tolerate the same of Mahe rallied round under the leadership of these two illustrious leaders and went to the Administrator of Mahe who was a Frenchman and placed before him their grievances. Since he did not pay heed to their words and gave a satisfactory reply, they got furious, surrounded the office and captured the administration. Shri I.K. Kumaran assumed charge as the Administrator of Mahe, placing the French Administrator under house arrest. At the time of the Municipal election a French Cruiser “Dumond Du Vile” by name was readily anchored off the Pondicherry shore just to terrorise the electorates. When the news of the capture of Mahe by the national leaders reached the ears of the French Governor Mon. Baron in Pondicherry, he immediately boarded the cruiser and arrived in Mahe. As soon as the cruiser reached Mahe, all the revolutionaries evacuated Mahe and left for the Indian territories of Badagara and Azhiyur near Tellicherry just to avoid unnecessary bloodshed under instructions from the Government of India and remained there as refugees. The French Government issued warrants of arrest against them and requested the Government of Madras to execute them.

The late Shri R. Subbarayalu Naicker who was then the Mayor of Tirunallar Commune accorded a vociferous reception to
Dr. N.V. Rajakumar in the premises of the Municipal office. It must be said to the credit of Shri Naicker that he was the first Mayor not only in Karaikal area but also in the whole of the French Settlements in India to celebrate the first Indian Republic Day in Tirunallar commune hoisting the Indian National Flag in the Municipal Office out of the Municipal funds. Exasperated these acts of Shri Naicker, the French Administrator of Karaikal M. Picat suspended him from the loyalty for a period of one month.

In the meantime, outbreaks of goondaism in the French settlements were reported to the Government of India and at the request of the same to the International court of justice at Hague, for observers viz. Messrs. Holgert Anderson, Rodolf Castro, Francois Perrard and Manul O’ Chan were sent to Pondicherry to make a report whether favourable conditions were obtaining there for an impartial referendum. Under instructions from the French India Government, the French Indian Socialist party men took vigilant care to see that nobody hands over any memorandum to these observers regarding the prevalence of goondaism in the French Settlements. The buildings in which they stayed in Pondicherry and Karaikal were fully guarded by the goondas of the party in power. In spite of these difficulties, Karaikal National Congress leaders managed to meet them in Karaikal and handed over a memorandum to them giving a vivid picture of what was happening in Karaikal to terrorize the people.

Youth Congress

Even from 1938, illustrious leaders like Shris Joseph Xavery, S. Arangasamy Naicker of Tirunallar, Leon Saint jean, Syed Ahmed, V. Thangavel Pillai, Vyande Pazhanoor of Kottucherry,
R.M. Govindasamichettiar, C. Kathaperumal Pillay of Ponbethi and V. Krishnamurthy Iyer who resigned the post of the Municipal Secretary in 1954 in favour of the merger cause and many others nurtured nationalistic aspirations under the aegis of the Mahajana Sabha and Thiruppani Senai without directly jumping into a direct conflict with the French.

The late Shri V. Subbiah, the leader of the Communist party of Pondicherry to whom Mon. Goubert and his followers owe their political existence had gone underground since warrants of arrest were pending against him by both the Governments of India and France. Though the available records show that the policy of the Communist party was not stable regarding the issue of the question of merger of these settlements with India, it stood for merger with India sometime before 1954. Later on, the hurdle of warrant of arrest was removed by the Government of India enabling Shri V. Subbiah to jump into the freedom struggle by remaining in the borders.

In Karaikal, the Karaikal National Congress under the Presidentship of the late Shri R.M.A.S. Venkatachalapathy Pillay was working against these odds. The late Shri N. Srikantha Ramanujam was its working committee President, Shri P. Pichaikannu Pillay was its Vice-President, Shri M. Nagarajan was the secretary and the late Shri A.M. Jambugesan was the Treasurer. The Jawahar Youth League was functioning under the distinguished leadership of the late Shri M. Sundaramurthy, with a group of selected young and energetic youths.
After the receipt of this reply from the French Government, the Government of India announced that negotiations in this regard had failed. But the Indian National Congress decided to send its observers to watch the election to be held on the 24th October. Accordingly, Dr. N.V. Rajkumar, the then Secretary of the Foreign Department of the Indian National Congress and the late Dr. P. Subbarayan, representative of the then President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee were sent to Pondicherry, the late Shri A.M. Saminatha Chettiar of Nagapattinam, the then President of the Thanjavur District Congress Committee to Karaikal, Shri Jagannadha Rao of Bhimavaram belonging to the Andhra Pradesh Congress to Yanam and Shri Damodaran of Kerala Pradesh Congress to Mahe. Having become aware of this, these three gentlemen began to negotiate with Shri Kewal Singh, the then Indian Consul-General at Pondicherry through Shri Fernandez, the son-in-law of Mon. Edouard Goubert. Necessary assurances were reiterated to these gentlemen that their past treachery to national cause will be forgiven and forgotten and they can continue to enjoy the benefits of the same offices even under the Indian regime. With these assurances, they were about to leave Pondicherry on the 18th March 1954. Shri Kewal Singh aspired for a strong agitation in Karaikal also simultaneously so that the French Colonial rule may be paralysed and so he made a dash visit to Nagapattinam on the 12th March 1954, stayed in the Dak Bungalow there and had discussions with the Merger leaders like the late Shri R.M.A.S. Venkatachalapathy Pillay, Leon Saint Jean, N. Srikantharamanjum, A.M. Jambugesan, M. Nagarajan and S.O. Rengasamipillai of T.R. Pattinam. These leaders were informed of the change of mind of the French Indian socialist party leaders and their proposed agitation on the 18th. But they were
not in favour of any direct action against the French in Karaikal. They had even gone to the extent of informing the Consul-General that any agitation in Karaikal will bring them into direct conflict with the French Government.

At about 10 PM, on the same night, i.e. on 12th March 1954, he got a telegram from the Consul-General to meet him next morning at Pondicherry immediately. Accordingly, he met him at Pondicherry and he narrated him that Mon. Goubert and his retinues have become pro-merger minded and they were making arrangements to shout the pro-merger slogans more loudly than us and we should not allow these French Indian Socialist party leaders to reap the benefit of sounding the merger slogan at the eleventh hour. He made it clear to him in no uncertain term that these socialist party leaders who were like "Cats on the Wall" have then decided to jump on the Indian side having found that the Indian landing ground alone was found to be very soft for them earlier. He also will help the cause. He accepted his point of view and he gave him his plan of action and he readily agreed to that.

In the meantime, the Commissioner for the French Republic in Pondicherry Mon. Andre' Menard summoned a meeting of the Representative Assembly at Pondicherry on 27th March 1954.

After coming back to Nagore, Shri R. Ramasrinivasan sent the second ultimatum to the French Overseas Minister in Paris stating if the French did not withdraw from the Indian soil before the 26th March, he will offer a non-violent peaceful Satyagraha on the 27th March 1954 on the eve of the proposed meeting of the Representative Assembly.
He further wrote, "We love France and the French but not its colonialism in the Indian soil. We have no personal enmity towards any single individual belonging to France or French Settlements. All our struggle is against colonialism, which will be ventilated in the form of a movement on the eve of the opening of the Representative Assembly at Pondicherry on the 27th."

On the morning of the 18th March 1954, Mon Goubert, Shri K. Muthupillay and B. Muthukumarappa Reddiar with their pelf and costly "Cadillac" cars left Pondicherry to Tindivanam. Mon. Menard who was eagerly waiting to put them behind the prison bars got disappointed by their miraculous escape. They took shelter in Tindivanam. They were not able to commence any movement till the then Government of Madras tightened their security arrangements by posting the Malabar Special police along the borders to prevent the trespasses of the French police into the Indians limits. Nettappakkam and Tirubhuvanai, two Communes in Pondicherry became isolated by this posting of police. These leaders with their henchmen went to Nettappakkam, head erect, and established a parallel Government. While Nettappakkam was under the control of the French Indian Socialist party leaders, Tirubhuvanai was under the control of the Communist leaders. A similar attempt of them to establish a parallel Government in Bahour, became futile because the French police had access to Bahour through the Coromandel Coast. An "Administrative Council" was set up in Nettappakkam and the late Shri V. Venkata Subba Reddiar was made its President. Shri V.Subbayya was attending to the administration of Tirubhuvanai. It is worth mentioning here that Shri Kewal Singh had become shaky, because Mon. Goubert
and his colleagues began to keep quite in Tindivanam without resorting to any national activities for about a week. In spite of repeated requests of Mr. Fernandez, Mon. Goubert’s family was not allowed to leave Pondicherry by Shri Kewal Singh till Mon. Goubert and his colleagues went to Nettappakkam and established a parallel Government there as the example of Mr. Rashid Ali Baig, the former Indian Consul-General at Pondicherry was before him. It was told that the socialist Party leaders gave an assurance to Mr. Rashid Ali Baig through Shri Leon Saint Jean that they will bring a resolution favouring merger with India in the Representative Assembly itself. Mr. Baig reported this assurance to the Government of India immediately but later they changed their stand which badly reflected on Mr. Baig.

The French Indian Socialist party Leaders who left Pondicherry and established parallel Government in Nettappakkam on the 30th March 1954 were dismissed from their respective offices by the French India Government. In the meantime, Mon Goubert, Shri B. Muthukumarappa Reddiar and K. Muthupillay conveyed their decision in favour of merger with India to the then Inspector-General of colonies of the French Government, Mon Teznaz du Montcel. The then President of the South Arcot District Congress Committee Shri K.S. Venkatakrishna Reddiar also played a significant role serving as a negotiator, between the Tamil Nadu Congress and the French Indian Socialist party Leaders.

The proposed meeting of the Representative Assembly on the 27th March was announced to have been postponed sine die and the meeting was never called for under the French banner thereafter. Since R.M.A.S. Packirisamy Pillay of Karaikal had felt that the Satyagraha
may also be postponed. He sent this message through Shri S. Vijayaragavan to him at Nagapattinam. He did not agree to that but told him to contact the Indian Consul-General at Pondicherry. Accordingly, he spoke to Shri Kewal Singh over the phone and conveyed this news. He was also of the same opinion of him and did not agree for the postponement.

Soon after the announcement of his Satyagraha on the 27th March, appeared in the press, his father had met Shri Joseph Xavery, a leading advocate of Karaikal and one among the merger leaders, as usual. He seemed to have told his father that defying the Government ban on processions and public meetings was serious office according to the French law, punishable in the “Court Criminelle” (Sessions court) with imprisonment in years and such it was not wise on our part to conduct the Satyagraha and face a risk. His father did not get discouraged by the legal advice tendered by his family lawyer but jocularly revealed it to him, one day. While this was the feeling of everybody at that time, his commencement of the Satyagraha and release from the police custody itself within less than twenty-four house arrests serves as an encouragement and eye-opener to all the white-collared merger leaders and ear marked the liberation activities in Karaikal in the final phase of the struggle in the year 1954.

The Karaikal Administrator Mon. Bouchney took all steps to get agitators arrested before they could stage a demonstration in Karaikal. He wanted that the people should not understand that there was an upsurge in Karaikal against the French colonial rule. He posted the police on all sides through which they could reach Karaikal from the Indian borders. The service buses coming from the Indian borders to
Karaikal were stopped in the French limits of all sides, passengers were asked to get down and interrogated.

Shri R. Ramasrinivasan was unaware of this and on the previous day Shri S. Vijayaraghavan came to Nagapattinam and told him about the measures taken by the Administrator. He advised him to adopt careful methods to enter into Karaikal. He was strongly of the view that somehow or other a demonstration should be staged in Karaikal on the 27th March 1954 as announced by him. It was a pity that even our colleagues in Karaikal did not fail to make a false propaganda that he won’t come to Karaikal and offer satyagraha.

He asked some of his colleagues to come to Nagore and halt there the previous day itself. Accordingly S. Anjappan and K. Arumugam reached Nagore. V.A. Kannayya Thevar, M.G. Chellayyan and Raju Nadar were already there with him. He left Nagore by about 9 P.M on the 26th March with Placards and flags, and reached Dharmapuram on the same night. Since Kannayyan was thorough with the border routes, he safely reached Dharmapuram, a village in Karaikal and halted there in the house of one Kumaravel who was a best friend of Kannaya Thevar. The next morning they saw that they were surrounded by blue caps and red caps (French local police and Armed Reserve). Thevar planned to go Karaikal and bring a taxi through which they can go to Karaikal. As a first step to his endeavour, he walked a distance of a few yards and reached a bridge nearby where an armed police constable was sitting who questioned him and threatened him with dire consequences if he persisted to go Karaikal. He came back and narrated the incident.
Shri R. Ramasrinivasan asked Anjappan and Arumugam to go to Karaikal first and wait there near a Pillayar temple. They then folded the flags, wrapped the placards with a paper, removed their shirts and tied them around heads just like sweetmeat-hawkers and began to walk. Throwing dust on the eyes of all the police constables who were posted to round them up, they were able to reach Karaikal and arrive near the Cinema Theatre, Jothi Talkies. Anjappan and Arumugam also joined them there and got ready for a demonstration wearing the badges and holding the Indian National flags flying and the placards which contained the slogans “We don’t want referendum”, “we want merger with India”, and “French colonialism quit”, “Don’t curb Civil liberties” and “Independence is our Birthright”.

They hurriedly reached the Mosque in Tirunallar Road and began to shout the slogans and moved towards the Government House. A Sub-Inspector of Police and a host of constables stopped them and asked them to disperse. On refusal to do so, they were asked to walk up to the Central Police Station. While nearing the police station, a French Police Officer came out and asked a constable to identify him. When the constable identified him, he caught hold of his shirt, snatched away his flag staff and beat him with it. When he started using violence on him, other constables began to beat his other colleagues. As revealed to him later by prominent persons among the crowd collected nearby, viz. Shri S. Kadirvelayutham and P. Thandavasamy that the French Police Commissioner was said to have remarked while beating him “I agit par conviction”.

When they were in the police station Mon. Bouchney came there and sent word to him. During the meeting, he characterized the
Satyagraha as a “foolish act”. When he retorted that he was unhappy to hear these words from the mouth of a Frenchman whose country gave the three great ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity to the whole world, he simply smiled. The next morning they were taken to the Government house to meet him. Mon. Bouchney told him that if they gave him the assurance that he will not persist in merger activities in future he could order the release. He asked him what was the harm done by the French to him. When he pointed out that while he was sitting he was made to stand before him and that itself was an injustice done not only to him but also to the Indian Community, he immediately offered him a seat. When he refused to give him the assurance he wanted, he got wild and ordered a service bus to be brought to the police station, and asked to get into the same. The conductor was instructed by the police to drop them in the Nagore customs chowkie, i.e. beyond the French Indian limits. Except his brother Kandakumar who was told to have been arrested under a pending warrant, they were all taken in that service bus belonging to Shri Sakthi vilas bus service, Porayar and dropped near the Nagore chowkie. Along with his brother P. Chidambaram of T.R. Pattinam was also arrested and remanded to judicial custody. Leaving his other colleagues in Nagore, he went to Nagapattinam and met the Vice-Consul Mr. S.J. Wilfred who was waiting for him and other merger leaders like Shri M. Nagarajan, the late Leon Saint Jean and the Press Correspondent S. Vijayaraghavan. Shri D.M. Jejurikar, who was the Pro-Consul also used to visit Karaikal often. Before release, the Administrator had sent word to Shri Vijayaraghavan and refused the appearance of the news in the press that the Satyagrahis were lathi charged. He had also told him to get a statement from him and publish
it and therefore he wanted a statement from him. What actually happened was the police wrested the flag staffs and used them as lathis.

They then decided to revive the agitation and continue it till the achievement of the object. The next day i.e. on the 28th March a procession was taken, defying the ban, under the leadership of the late Shri R.M.A.S. Venkatachalapathy Pillay elder brother of the late Shri R.M.A.S. Packrisamy Pillay, a pro French leader in Karaikal which included the late Shri Leon Saint Jean and N. Srikanta Ramanujam and many others. The procession was taken under the aegis of the Jawahar Youth League, Karaikal. P. Meenakshisundaram, M. Selvaraj and A. Poyyathamurthi, were arrested on a charge of threatening a police constable. This time the Government changed its attitude. They did not want to leave the mergerites unpunished. Since the French Government were repeatedly saying that nobody will be punished for political offences, they resorted to foisting cases against them. These three nationalists were charge sheeted on the cooked-up charge of having threatened a police constable. Immediately they were remanded to judicial custody and during the trial after a few days, they were given the benefit of “first offenders”.

Then the wrath of the Administrator fell on the press correspondent Shri S. Vijayaragavan. He summoned him and warned him that he will sue against him for damages if he persisted in sending news relating to pro-merger activities to the press. The following day, another batch which included Thangaraj, Packrisamy, G. Meenakshisundaram, M. Ganapathy and Sivaparakasam, offered satyagraha. They were arrested and released from the police itself. Day by day, the agitation was getting strong. The police also began to
use brutal force on the workers after taking them inside the police station. The late Chinnappa of Neravy belonging to the Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam, Govindaraj, and G. Meenakshisundaram took out a procession. Though the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Dravida Kazhagam have not sent any directive to their supporters in Pondicherry and Karaikal to support the liberation cause of Pondicherry and Karaikal, they participated in the freedom struggle in their individual capacities. The said two Kazhagams maintained the same policy towards the French which their parent organisation, the Justice Party, was having towards the British. In this connection, it is worthy of mention that in the year 1948, the late Shri P.R. Sivasubramania Pillay organised “The French-India Swantantra Thaniarasu Committee” in T.R. Pattinam for making pro-French propaganda. One of the public meetings held under the auspices of the said Committee was addressed by the revolutionary poet Kavignar Shri Bharathidasan, and Shri Varadarajaluchettair.

After the parallel Government was established in Nettappakkam in March 1954 in Pondicherry by Mon. Goubert and his Colleagues, there was a move to isolate some places in Karaikal also viz. Padutharkollai in T.R. Pattinam and Parivarthanakattalai in Nedungadu Commune. As a first step to this endeavour, two maps of these two villages were supplied to the then Inspector General of Police, Madras Shri V.R. Ramanathan by the then Chief of the Cadastre Department of Karaikal Shri S. Kadirvelayudam through Shri A. Ramanathan Chettiar who had his thickest connections with the Karaikal National Congress but the idea was dropped later.
On the 11th April 1954, the National Congress Karaikal took out a procession defying the ban. They wrote to the Karaikal Magistrate (Procureur De la Republique) about their proposed Satyagraha on the said date at about 1PM and sought his permission for a procession. As they anticipated, the Magistrate refused to grant permission but they have decided to offer the Satyagraha as planned originally. While the police were making arrangements to round them up before the commencement of the procession, i.e. before 1PM these leaders, having become aware of the plan of the police, started the Satyagraha two hours earlier. This procession was headed by the late Janab S.M. Shaik Madarsa Maraicar, the then President of the organisation. When the Government was under the impression that the whole of the Muslim community was with them, a Muslim leading the Satyagraha had naturally roused the indignation of the administration. No sooner did they move a few yards from the Congress house than the police arrived on the spot and began to use force. The procession included the late Shri A.M. Jambugesan, M. Nagarajan, P. Pichaikannu Pillay, S.O. Rangasami Pillay, S. Varadarajan Chettiar, S. Marisavari, the late M.S. Mani, M. Ramasami, K. Murugayyan, Derparanya Sundaram Pillay and some others.

After taking them to the police station, except the late Janab Shaik Madarsa Maraicar, Shri A.M. Jambugesan, M. Nagarajan and P. Pichakannu Pillay, all others were let off. It was told later by Shri V. Janakiram, the Investigating Magistrate of Karaikal after merger that those who were released from the police except a few, others gave a statement that they did not participate in the Satyagraha but stood there as mere on lookers. The police after recording this statement from
them, released them. Afterwards a fine of fifteen francs each was levied on those who were released from the police itself. Some among them paid the same and many like M. Ramasami refused payment which was waived by the court after merger.

In the police station Janab Shaik Madarsa was severely assaulted by the rowdies of the Pro-French elements. He got bleeding injuries on the face and the ear and immediately rushed to Nagapattinam hospital and took treatment there. One Veerappan of Neravy and the Secretary of the Kottucherry Municipality were assaulted. Upagarasamy, a student was also manhandled. The police had also planned to do away with the press correspondent Shri S. Vijayarghavan.

In Mahe, the Mahe Mahajanasabha workers attempted to hoist the Indian National Flag in the Police Station of Cherukillai. In a Police firing, Achulthan and Anandan were shot dead. Since there was a lull of activities for more than a week without any demonstration, he arranged for another batch of Satyagrahis. On the 17th May 1954, the members of the National Youth Congress under the leadership of M.G. Chellyyan offered Satyagraha. It included his another brother R. Ramakrishnan, R. Adhimoolam, G. Krishnamurthy, G. Packirisami and the late M. Uthirapathy and R.M. Varadaraju. This batch also had tasted the police repression and they were remanded to custody. After trail, they were sentenced to six days imprisonment each.

At this stage, attention of the T.R. Pattinam police fell on the fishermen quarters. Utilising the exchange of heated words between the Pro-Merger group and the Pro-French elements, the police had begun to use force on the Pro-Mergerities alone. Unable to withstand
the beating because he had shattered the impression among the general public that the whole of the Muslim community in Karaikal was behind the French. A French Police Officer came to the Police lock-up and shouted “Charge that Musalman”. Then these four leaders were remanded to judicial custody and during trial Janab Shaik Madrasa and Shri M. Nagarajan were convicted and sentenced to three months imprisonment each with an order of extermination for two years after release and Shri Jambugesan and Pichaikkannu Pillay to fifteen days imprisonment each. The next batch headed by K.M.Sivasubramaniam of the “Karai Pagutharivu Manram” which included Kudanthai Srinivasan, Valangiman Balakrishnan, Thillaiyambur Samy Ayya, Valangiman Saminathan and Sivasubramanian offered Satyagraha. At this time, repression of the Police reached the high pitch. The processionists were severely beaten and the left hand of Sivasubramaniam was fractured by the beating of the police. They were remanded to custody and after a detention of twenty-three days they were sentenced to seventeen days imprisonment each.

Rowdism was let loose by the police itself. Hooligans instigated by the police pelted stones on the house of the late Shri Leon Saint Jean one day in order to intimidate him. The late Shri A. Manickam, editor of the weekly, “The Karai Mail”, a pro-merger journal of Karaikal and Shri Ramadoss lyer of the Arya Bhavan were assaulted. On the same night, just a few minutes after this assault while a meeting of the “Comite Francophile “was going on, Shri R. Ramasrinivasan and one Krishnasami were brutally attacked by the police, some of them began to retaliate. The situation had gone to such an extent that some of the impatient youth snatched away the caps of policemen. By
this incident, a large number of fishermen had evacuated T.R. Pattinam and reached Nagore. Against many of them criminal cases were filed and they were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment by the Karaikal Court in absentia.

In this connection, Shri R. Ramasrinivasan was summoned by the then Investigating Magistrate of Karaikal Mon. Guernmane to meet him in his office.

He took more pains to mobilize the Satyagrahis from the remote corners of Karaikal. He and G. Meenakshisundaram very carefully reached Tiruvettakudy one night to organize a branch of the National Youth Congress there. There, some energetic and patriotic youngmen were ready to join the Satyagraha movement. He asked them to reach Nagore on the previous night itself. In the meantime, the police, off and on, used to make him get down from the bus at the Arasalar bridge at Karaikal and made him walk from there to the town. This became an amusement to the police. As passport system was introduced from 19th April 1954 and it was in force at the time, he obtained his passport from the Tirumalarayanpattinam Municipality. The then Deputy Mayor Shri Dakshinamurthy Mudaliar who was officiating as Mayor after the demise of Shri P.R. Sivasubramaniapillay issued him the passport. This news has reached the ears of the police. One morning, he was summoned to the Karaikal Police Station and one Sub-Inspector of Police who, has retired as Superintendent, Shri Katinat Kadirvelu wanted his passport. When he handed it over to him, he took it and sent him away.
On the 22nd May, he was arrested again and remanded to custody and these satyagrahis were released from the court. During trial, the judge Mr. Hubert de Rozario, convicting and sentencing him to one month imprisonment remarked that his head had become burnt. In French he said “Votre Tete est bruis”. His brother Kandakumar who was arrested on the 27th March while offering Satyagraha along with him on a charge of assault and remanded to custody the next day was acquitted by the judge for want of evidence after a detention of forty-five days. While the enquiry was going on, my brother refuting the charge that he came to Tirumalarayanpattinam and committed the offence referred to the assault of his father in the public market place near the police station. His brother said in the open court that how can he come to that place where police co-operates with rowdies? The judge Mr. Razario, shouted aloud and said “The very same France is establishing justice now you are acquitted”.

Besides the late Janab Shaik Madarsa Maraicar, S.M. Zackaria, A.M. Kader Syed Ahmed and Sheriff Maricar were active in the movement. An organisation called “The United Merger Front” was formed under the Presidentship of the late Shri Leon Saint Jean. This consisted of persons of all shades of political opinion with the object of merger with India. Those whom the police suspected to be working for the merger cause were summoned to the police, detained there for a few hours for interrogation and sent off. This had become a habit to the police. S.M. Zackaria and Kader were taken to the police and later let off. One N. Thangarasu was arrested while distributing bit-notices in Ambagarthur, beaten severely and later let off. The screening of the cinema “Andhanaal” was banned by the Government. Mon.
Bouchney, having become desperate, began to indulge in letting loose rowdysm.

On the 22nd June the late P.M. Ambiga Sundaramurthy, one among the prominent leaders of the communist party of India, Karaikal Unit, offered satyagraha and was arrested. He was later convicted and sentenced to three months imprisonment. After release, his remand was extended for two years. The late M. Sundaramurthy, President of the Jawahar Youth League was convicted and sentenced to one month imprisonment. M. Subramniam another prominent and active leader of the Communist Party and K.M.Sivasubramaniam were arrested, beaten mercilessly, detained in the police lock-up for more than two days unlawfully and later released. Gopalakrishnan, V. Vengadachalam, K. Saminathan, A. Hirudayasamy and the late K.P. Pushpam offered Satyagraha and they were arrested, severely belaboured, detained in the police lock-up for two days illegally and later released. By the beating of the police Pushpam lost two of his teeth. On the morning of the 22nd June, he was released from the jail after the expiry of his one month term of imprisonment. Having become aware, of the date of his release, Mon. Bouchney had ordered the Revenue Department to demand payment of the court expenses regarding his previous case in the year 1952 and in default of payment to take him back to the prison. The officials of the Revenue Department were made to wait in the police station of his place which is on his way to Nagore. But he took a different route and reached Nagore completely unaware of this news. He then gave up the idea of conducting, the movement inside Karaikal. Most of the mergeities became disheartened owning to the repression let loose by the police and the goondas.
Shri R. Ramasrinivasan therefore, came to the conclusion of imposing economic blockade around the borders and thereby cause hardships to the anti-social elements inside which will paralyse the administration to a certain extent. The people of Karaikal have to get their daily necessities only from the adjoining Indian borders. Except luxurious goods, which were illegally imported from Srilanka and other foreign countries, all commodities essential for human consumption had to be got from India.

He conveyed his plan to the Indian Consul-General at Pondicherry Shri Kewal Singh and he readily agreed to the same as similar activities were going on in the Pondicherry frontiers. On the previous day, he along with the then Superintendent of Customs chowkies viz. Sennamangalam (Nagore), Valumangalam, Kandangudi, Velangudi and Nandalar (Porayar) and he instructed all the customs officials to offer every possible assistance to the volunteers. In Nandalar, he met the then Manager of Shri Shakti Vilas Bus Service, the late Shri Narayanan Nambar and requested him to bring all the buses to the head office at Porayar for night halt. Accordingly, he took all the buses to Porayar, leaving only one at Nagapattinam.

Selvaraj of the Jawahar Youth League was arrested for non-payment of a fine of 16 Francs levied by the Magistrate. The late P. Jeevagan, a Municipal Councillor of Tirunallar Commune was arrested and later let off. S. Rajamanickam, Pannirselvam, S. Rathnasami, M. Kandasamy, K. Velusami, V. Ramachandran, K. Mani, S. Murugayyan, Govindarasu and some others, were convicted and sentenced to six months imprisonment each in absentia while they were participating in picketing around the borders. S.K. Subbarayan
offered Satyagraha on the 22nd July and he was arrested and sentenced to one month imprisonment.

The repression let loose by the Government was most unbearable, and it had affected the mergerites to some extent. The movement from within and without got strengthened day by day. Durairaj, N. Mani Iyer, T. Thiagarajan, V. Govindasami, S. Manickam, M.V. Krishnan and Karadi alias Krishnan took out a procession and they were severely beaten and later let off.

On the 29th July Puduthurai Narayanasamy, Sambandam, M. Vivekanandam and S. Visvanathan were arrested and later released. The rowdies instigated by the Pro-French elements pelted stones on the house of Shri N. Nagarajan and his neighbour Sattayappan was also assaulted, P. Muniandi alias Meenakshisundaram resigned his post from the Veterinary Department to express his sympathy towards the merger cause and joined the movement.

A token fast was observed by M. Ramasami, Syce Xavier, Krishnamurthy, Charles, Aroul, U. Thirunavukkarasu and Simmon Saint Jean in the office of the United Merger Front. On the 27th July it was inaugurated by Shri Joseph Xavery. The next day Shri Leon Saint Jean joined the fast along with his wife. P. Thirunavakkarasu Pillay, Ex-INA of Neravy was arrested and convicted to fifteen days imprisonment. Processionists led by Shri T.K.S.M. Kalayansundaram of Neravy which included the late A. Dhandapani, Vaithilingam, T. Govindaraju, Singaravelu, Dakshinamurthy, Kannayyan, Chinnappa, Muthuvaithilingam Pillay, Narayanasami, Madasami, Pethaperumal,
Rethina Vanniar and Mariappan manhandled by the police and later let off.

The students of the Modern College who observed hartal on the 3rd of August were suspended for fifteen days. Ekambaram, K. Jayakumar and K. Ramasami were arrested and released. Among the students the name of A. Perianayagasami deserves to be mentioned. He used to address many meetings in favour of merger translating the French Speech Shri Michael Padmanaban. Between the years 1950 and 1954, he along with G. Sathymurthy of Tirunallar published the Journal “Manavan” in which articles were written by Shri Leon Saint Jean, A. Manickam, A. Sebastien and Syce’ Xavier, the said journal. French languages for which Shri R. Thirumurugan, Mariadoss Pillay and William Vitorian were Honorary editors respectively. Though young in age, these two exhibited enormous courage carefully distributing the bit-notices through Russia alias Vengadachallam in Karaikal got printed in Nagapattinam and brought to Karaikal through P. Thandavasamy along the sea-coast.

In Pondicherry, three students viz. Janab C.M. Ahriff, former Minister of Pondicherry Shri Prosper Tamby, a doctor in Pondicherry and Shri L. Balasubramaniam undertook a token fast as a mark of protest against the atrocities perpetrated by the Government on the pro-merger elements. This novel situation had really became a challenge to the administration. Shri Swamy Lourdes, Secretary of the Bharat Yuvak Sangh, Pondicherry, with a group of selected youngmen also played an important role in the freedom struggle. Shri B. Rangapillay, N. Damodaran, S. Ragunathan, B. Parthasarathy, M. Gunaseelan (son of Shri D. Maniappan), P. Janarthanan and Anwar Alikhan took out a
procession under the aegis of the Pondicherry Students Congress on the 14th April 1954 defying the ban on processions and public meetings, imposed by the Government. They were arrested and remanded to judicial Custody and released afterwards binding them over for good conduct for five years. They were severely belaboured by the jail authorities also by casuarina posts as a result of which the forefinger of the right hand of Shri B. Rangapillay got fractured. Shri N. Damodaran, who was in Netaji Uniform, holding the Indian National flag in his hand was severely instructed by Shri Dorai Munusamy, not to leave the flag to the police so long as he was conscious. In case he had become unconscious, the instruction of Shri Munusamy was that the next person should hold the flag. Accordingly, Shri Damodaran refused to hand over the Indian National Flag to the police till he fell unconscious and was taken away to the police van with head injuries. On the evening of the 31st October 1954, the French National Flag was lowered down from the Government House, Karaikal with full Military Honours by Mon. Bouchney in the presence of the then Town Kaziar Janab H.M.T.S. Kader Mohideen Sahib Maraicar. The way in which Mon. Bouchney took leave of him was said to be very pathetic Mon. Bouchney said “Mon. Kazi, je Mon Vais à la France’. The reply also, was said to be in the same tone which is needless to repeat. He felt that it has now become ripe to weigh the pros and cons and examine the merits and demerits of the policy adopted by Mon. Goubert as leader of the French Indian Socialist party throughout his public life upto the 18th March 1954 towards the merger cause. Comparing the political fate of Chandernagore with that of the other settlements viz. Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam which are kept as autonomous units in direct relations with the Centre,
inspite of their geographical positions, judging the activities of Mon. Goubert from the happening in the quagmire of the politics of that time and probing into the reasons for the issue of the Communiqué of the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India on the 27th October 1949, clarifying the political status of Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam after merger as separate entity, right-thinking persons of political maturity, sagacity and far sightedness will not fail to characterize his activities before merger as a blessing in disguise to the people of Pondicherry. The fact that he always evinced keen interest in safeguarding and maintaining the individuality of Pondicherry cannot and should not be allowed to go into oblivion. He was all along the champion of the same and he ever surrendered it to anybody, however highly placed he may be, during his life-time even in the midst of many cataclysmic vicissitudes in politics.

After handing over charge to Mon. Douvechelle, Mon. Bouchney left for Trichy immediately from where he emplaned to Paris via Colombo. On the 1st November 1954, at about 3 P.M. Mon Douvechelle handed over charge to Shri A.V. Loganathan, who was appointed as the Administrator of Karaikal by the Government of India and he hoisted the Indian Tricolour in the Government House before a huge gathering which included those who suffered and sacrificed for the liberation cause of Karaikal. All our representations to the late Shri K. Kamaraj regarding the treatment meted out by Shri Pillay became futile. He was very particular about the present and future than brooding over the past. He was not willing to revive old memories.

The referendum was held in Kizhur, an adjoining Indian territory near Pondicherry on the 18th of October 1954. 170 out of 78 of
the participants voted in favour of Indian where as 8 persons expressed their willingness for the continuance of the French. The French Government agreed to transfer on to power to India by means of an agreement. The referendum was supervised by Shri Kewal Singh on behalf of the Government of India and Mon. Pierre Landy, Special Envoy of the French. The agreement was signed by our late Panditji on behalf of our Government and Mon. Count Stanizlas Ostrorog, the then French Ambassador in India on behalf of the French on 21\textsuperscript{st} October 1954.

The French agreed to effect the de-facto transfer of power to the Government of India on the 1\textsuperscript{st} November 1954. So the French had decided to abandon its colonies in India but they insisted on the formality of a reference under article 27 of the then French Constitution which was told to have required popular consultation before transfer of power. They were very keen on this as to avoid repercussions in other colonies like Algiers, Morocco and Tunisia. In this context Mon. Henry Jacquier, Member of the Union of France and Shri R.M.A.S. Packirisami Pillay carried out a new proposal for the solution of this problem. According to their proposal, which was called “Condomonium”, the former French Colonies in India may be administered by both the Government of India and France .It was told that the said proposal got the blessings of the French Government also.

This ridiculous proposal had been rejected not only by the patriots but also by the two Governments of India and France.\textsuperscript{121} Even though the Metropolitan Government of France had come to the conclusion of abandoning these colonies in India as early as possible

\textsuperscript{121} R.Ramasirivasan, op.cit,p.113

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and was expediting quick disposal, Mon. Bouchney, the Karaikal Administrator did not fail to cling to every effort to perpetuate the tottering structure of the French colonial rule in India. He instigated the Government employees to carry on Pro-French activities very vigorously. Just six months before the defacto transfer of power was to take place, the Administrator caused the formation of a Committee called “Comite Francophile” consisting of the Government employees and some big merchants. 122 These gentlemen used to hold meetings in big buildings with the installation of loud-speakers attacks on the Government of India. Conspicuous among them were the late Shri Venkaratrama Iyer, interpreter in the Court. In Pondicherry the French Governor M. Menard took every step to create some stooges who can fill up the vacuum caused by the shifting loyalties of Mon. Goubert and his followers. One Mon. Dutamby came forward to help the French and formed a party called “The Republican Party”.

In the same month, on the 7th April 1954, a Satyagraha was organised by the Youth Congress which started from the border of Kottakkupam led by one Raja which included V. Srinivasan, M. Shanmugam, Angamuthu, Rajaram and many others. Another Satyagarha commenced from Pakkamudayanpet under the leadership of Rajaram and many others. Another Satyagraha commenced from Pakkamudayanpet under the leadership of Ranganathan alias Bernard Shaw which included M. Anandan, Malayappan, Namasivayam and Venkadesam. Similar Satyagrahas were conducted in Thengathittu and Murungapakkam by Ranganathan and Ulandai Narayansami.

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122 R. Ramaarivasan, op. cit., p. 114
On the 4th April 1954, Shri R.L. Purushothama Reddiar, Ansari, P. Doraisamy, S.R.Subramaniam, Thanampalayam Subbarayan, M.S. Annamalai of the Golden company, C.M. Achraf, A. Irudayaraj, and Kathu alias Vinayakamurthy of Vambakeerapalayam conducted a Bhajana, singing the national songs. Afterwards, i.e. on the 15th a Satyagraha movement was launched under the leadership of Shri A. Arulraj which included Shri Mariappa Subburathinam, S.K. Muthu, Srinivasan Nadarajan and Arumugam of Vaithikuppam, Shrimathi Alamelu, Kullapattu, Pavunambal, Rajeswari and Kannammal also participated in the police. Shri A. Arulraj and some others were tortured beyond endurance by being kept in the ‘‘Salt Store’’ and by passing electric current into their bodies.

On the 14th July i.e. on the “French Republic Day” the Indian National Flag was hoisted in Muthialpet near the border of Kottakkuppam by the nationalists, then a satyagraha was conducted opposite to the residence of the commissioner for the French Republic in India. As a result of violence used by the police on the peaceful agitators, Vivekanandan, received bleeding injuries and he was taken to Villupuram for treatment. M. Anandan belonging to Kurumbagaram Nedungadu, Karaikal played a vital role in the freedom-struggle in Pondicherry. During the absence of Shri A. Arulraj, he was acting as his emissary, to meet the Indian Consul-General and looking to the needs of the Satyagrahis. In his case, one peculiarity was, when Anandan and Achuthan were shot dead in Mahe, his parents in Karaikal had to lament for a while till the fact that their son, Anandan was alive let known to them. Shri K. Dhanaraj also has taken active part in the agitation in the year 1947 and 1954, he was forced to live in
self-exile in the border areas in 1954. Besides, Shri R. Ariaputhri, S. Arumugam, Bakthavathsalakkanan, Emmanuel, Thiruvengadam, S. Emperumal, Ervaikrishnan, S. Ethiraj A. Ettiappanaicker, A.P. Gandhi, G. Ganesan, J. Gangadhar Chettiar, S. Govindaraju, K. Jayarma Sharma, Manickam alias Mannagatti, Oma Virapathran, Patturaman alias Govindarasu, M. Thirukkami Asari, K. Sundaraja, Manickam Ammal with her two sons who were murdered by the miscreants during the Gandhi Jayanthi week in 1946, R. Raja Venugopal, K. Ramachandra Bagavaathar and Nataraja Raja also played a vital role in the struggle of emancipation of Pondicherry. On the 4th of April 1954, there was a move to form an “All party Action Committee”, on the advice of Shri K. Kamaraj. Accordingly, a meeting was held in Cuddalore which was attended by Shri R. Sellane Naicker, V. Subbiah, G. Ambroise, D. Zivarattinam, K. Sivaprakasam, Dorai Munusamy, Dadela Ramanayya, D. Mariappan of the Liberation front, A. Arulraj, Sabapathy M. Anandan, K. Karunanidhi, Anbarasan, Govandarasu Naicker, and K.S. Venkatraman, a close associate of Rajaji but the meeting ended without taking any decision. Then another meeting was held in the rice-mill premises of Shri Shanmuga Odayar, the then chairman of the Villupuram Municipal Council which was attended by Shri V.Subbaya, D.K. Ramanujam, D. Mariappan, Cleamenceu, Vathilingam of Mudaliarpet, Dr. N. Ranganathan, A. Arulraj, M. Anandan, K. Karunanidhi, Anbarasan, and Dr. Thinigaraian, Dr. Thiagarajan was very kind enough to give treatment to the injured nationalists, free of cost.

In a rehearsal conducted by Shri Dorai Munusamy how to withstand the police lathi charge, he beat N. Damodaran with a small
log on his two elbows and later as the police also beat him on the same places the elbow-joints were dislocated. The refusal of N. Damodaran to hand over the flag to the police till he became unconscious reminds us of the act of patriotic fervour and heroic act of "Tiruppur Kumaran". The other stalwarts of the Students Congress were Shri Paramel Shatrugh, Dr. Raman Itte candy, Dr. Michilotte Mukkundan, Haridosss, V. Ramanathan, N. Govindan, A. Kalathi, G. Ganesan, G. Devanathan and V. Munusami. In the actual functioning, these youngmen worked on the advice and guidance of Shri Dorai Munusami. A Journal by name "Jeunesse" was also Published by the Students Congress.