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Selected Writings

Volume Two

E. M. S. NAMBOODIRIPAD

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The writings of EMS Namboodiripad have been divided into four sections in this volume. The first section contains a note that he submitted to the Planning Commission on its approach document and a note that he submitted to the National Development Council as the Chief Minister of Kerala outlining an alternative policy framework. This constitutes the broad framework and approach that EMS and the Communist movement in India have had on the question of planning and path of development in India the original basis of which was laid by the 4th Congress of the Party (1956). His subsequent writings on the subject (Indian Planning in Crisis. 1982, National Book Centre, New Delhi) and other articles in the Party's journal Peoples' Democracy and elsewhere have had the same thrust.

In the second section are included his writings on the political developments in Kerala, which in no small measure he himself shaped as the leader of the undivided Communist Party and later the Communist Party of India (Marxist). These articles apart from mapping out the changing political contours of Kerala at various stages also provide an insight into the kind of problems that a Communist government in a State in the overall bourgeois-landlord set up faced.

The third section contains material relating to the historical and deeply penetrating study that EMS has made of the agrarian question and the peasant struggles in Kerala. Starting since 1940 when he submitted his dissenting note to Kutti Krishna Menon Committee on the question of Land Tenure in Malabar to A Short History of the Peasant Movement in Kerala written in 1943 EMS has continuously studied this central question of Indian revolution. The last piece in this section is his 1981 article on Land Reforms and the Peasant Movement in Kerala in the Indian context The last section contains his note submitted to the Asoka Mehta Committee on the Panchayati Raj and an article he wrote on the collapse of administrative morality during the emergency. In the preparation and collection of material for the two volume selection for EMS' writings, we have been helped by a number of Comrades of which C. P. Narayan (Kerala) and Dr Mahadevaprasad Saha deserve special mention.

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TOWARDS AN ALTERNATE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR THE FOURTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN*

The starting point of this paper is the following assessment of the planning and developmental process in India:

(a) The postponement of the date on which the Fourth Five Year Plan is to start (from 1966 to 1969) indicates a serious crisis in the whole planning process in the country.

(b) We will be deluding ourselves and deluding the people if we were to blame this crisis of the planning process on the border conflicts with China and Pakistan or on the two years of drought, or on both combined.

(c) The root of the crisis in the planning process lies in the fact that the policies pursued were inadequate to serve the main objective of planning—the optimum use of the material and human resources of the nation for the most rapid industrialisation of the economy and modernisation of all fields of socio-economic activity.

2. It will be preposterous for the political leadership of the nation (either of the ruling party or of the opposition) to abjure its responsibility for laying down correct policies as if it is for the experts to lay down the policies and to elaborate the plan on the basis of these policies. The basis of planning being correct policies, it is for the political leadership to create conditions in which experts in the various fields can jointly and separately elaborate plans for developing the natural and human resources of the nation. The failure of the planning process symbolised by the three-year postponement of the Fourth Five Year Plan should therefore be considered as the failure of the political leadership of the nation.

3. A word about the relation between the planning process and ideology. It is ridiculous to talk of "planning minus ideology". Even those who plead for freedom from any ideology have their own ideologies. Their plea is, in fact, for freedom

* Note submitted to the National Development Council.

from all ideologies except their own. For instance, the Chief Minister of Orissa was one of those who denounced the "ideological considerations" which, according to him, have vitiated the planning process in our country. Is he himseff free from ideology ? On the contrary his own views on how the national plan should be evolved and implemented are based on what may be called "the ideology of private property in the means of production" ; the ideology of "freedom" for the owners of such private property ; the ideology of "equality" between the owners of big property and the owners of small or no property ; the ideology of "democracy" under a system of property relations in which the owners of big property control all the media of mass communication and are therefore in a position to mislead and confuse the people ; and so on. "Freedom from ideology" means to him freedom for this particular ideology to operate without interference from the ideology of abolishing private property in the means of production. Preservation of the rights of the former rulers is not ideology but their abolition is ! Maintenance of big landlord estates is not ideology but their confiscation (or even abolition with compensation) is !! Preservation of the factories, banks, plantations etc., owned by foreign monopolists is not ideology, but their nationalisation is !! So on and so forth. Such is the essence of "planning minus ideology" for which the Chief Minister of Orissa and friends of his way of thinking plead.

4. The concept of planning did, in fact, arise in the course of a world-wide struggle between two ideologies—those of private property (to which the Chief Minister of Orissa adheres) and the ideology of socialism. For several decades did a bitter battle continue as to which of the two ideologies is a more efficient tool of human progress, a better system assuring justice for the common people. The ideology of private property could not be defeated in this struggle so long as it continued to be efficient in bringing about technological and economic advance (even though at all stages it was not doing justice to the mass of working people). The system of feudal property was efficient in this respect for a time and was replaced only when it ceased to be efficient. The present is a stage in human history when the two systems—capitalism and socialism—are co-existing and contending between themselves for supremacy in the world. This struggle commenced on a world-wide scale with the establishment of

Soviet power in Russia and has been continuing since then. The development of the Soviet Union and the establishment of socialist society in several other countries (European, Asian and even American as in Cuba) intensified the struggle because it was becoming more and more clear to larger and larger sections of the people that the socialist system is more efficient ; the replacement of capitalism by socialism became a practical question.

5. One of the consequences of this struggle has been the impact of the planning process, started in the U.S.S.R. and subsequently adopted in several other countries. In our own country, serious thinking on planning started after the successful implementation of the first Five-Year Plan in the U.S.S.R. Occurring as it did against the background of the most disastrous crisis in the capitalist system (the World Economic Crisis of 1929-1933), the successful completion, by the U.S.S.R., of its first Five-Year Plan showed the thinking people in our country that our own backward economy can be transformed only through planning. It was therefore inevitable that all thinking on the planning process in India (beginning with the first major work on the subject by the late M. Visveswaraya) should draw inspiration from the Soviet model and therefore be not completely free from the much-detested "ideological considerations".

6. The ideology of socialism is superior to that of capitalism (of "mixed economy" as it is called in our country) precisely because the socialist system is more efficient in bringing about the most rapid increase in production, on the one hand, and in ensuring distributive justice to the majority of people, on the other. I would welcome an objective study of all relevant facts and figures to find out which of the two systems—capitalism or socialism—is economically efficient and socially just. I hope that the Planning Commission would collect all available material throwing light on this problem and enlighten us on the comparative efficiency of the two systems. I may, in the meanwhile, give some data which are very revealing.

7. According to a study conducted by the United States Library of Congress, Legislative Reference Service,* the rate of

* *Soviet Economic Growth : A Comparison with the United States*

growth of industrial output in the Soviet Union during the period 1928-1955 was 7.7 per cent per annum compared to 3.6 per cent for the United States in the same period. The relative rates of growth of the Soviet Union and the United States during 1950-1955, according to the same study, was 9.9 per cent and 4.4 per cent respectively.

Again, estimates made available by the United Nations indicate that in the 1950's, the overall rate of growth in income in all the socialist countries taken together was about 8 per cent compared with 4 per cent in the case of the capitalist bloc. The annual rates of growth of the developed market economies (capitalist countries), centrally planned economies (socialist countries) and the developing countries during 1963-1966, are shown below :*

8. A break-up of the figures will show that, but for the poor performance of Czechoslovakia (which was fast moving

WORLD PRODUCTION : ANNUAL GROWTH RATES
1963-1966

(Percentage change from preceding year)

Region	1963	1964	1965	1966
Gross Domestic Product at Constant Prices				
Developed Market Economies	5	6	5	5
Centrally Planned Economies	5	8	7	7
Developing Countries	4	5	4	3
Industrial Production				
Developed Market Economies	5	3	6	7
Centrally Planned Economies	7	8	9	8
Developing Countries	6	8	7	8
Agricultural Production				
Developed Market Economies	2	3	--	5
Centrally Planned Economies	-4	11	2	9
Developing Countries	4	2	1	-1

(a study prepared for the Sub-Committee on Foreign Economic Policy. 85th Congress, 1st Session) Washington, 1957, pp. 23-24.

* United Nations, *World Economic Survey*, 1967, p. 118.

towards a relapse into capitalism before the intervention by Warsaw Pact countries), the rates of growth in the socialist countries would have been even higher. Even as it is, the average growth rate of the socialist countries has been, in general, more impressive than that of the capitalist countries. As for the oft-quoted "exception" of Japan, it is interesting to note that the high average rate of growth of GNP, which has attracted so much attention actually, conceals the wide cyclical fluctuations over the years, a symptom of the serious malady of capitalism in general. For instance, the GNP of Japan increased only by 5 per cent in 1962 over the previous year. Though the rates of growth in 1963 and 1964 were as high as 12 per cent and 14 per cent respectively, in the next year, 1965, the rate slumped to a low figure of 4 per cent.* In the face of these facts. if somebody says that the ideology of private property is more acceptable, would it be wrong on my part if I consider that such a person is guided purely by "ideological considerations" favourable to the vested interests ?

9. The Chief Minister of Orissa is rightly agitated over the "ideological considerations" lying behind the planning process initiated under the late Prime Minister Nehru's leadership. For, it is a fact that the concept of planned economy developed in India out of the impact of Soviet planning on the thinking of the political leadership of the nation. It was then inevitable that planners in India would not share fully the ideology to which the Chief Minister of Orissa and his friends subscribe. That, however, does not mean that Indian planning has been based on the ideology of socialism. On the other hand, Indian planning initiated by the Congress party is based on the very ideology of private property to which the Chief Minister of Orissa and his friends subscribe, even though with some modifications which are not to the liking of the latter. That is why, though they denounce the "ideological considerations" lying behind the Congress planning, the Chief Minister of Orissa and his friends joined the "consensus" in favour of the Planning Commission's "Approach Document". I, for my part, consider it to be the main source of the weakness of Indian planning that, though it has taken

* Source : United Nations, *World Economic Survey*, 1966 & 1967.

many of the outer forms and techniques of socialist planning, it has consistently refused to adopt the essence of socialist planning. Even while consulting and taking the advice of the experts from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and adopting some of the techniques of socialist planning, our planners have refused to adopt such socio-economic policies as would help the optimum utilisation of all the natural and human resources of the nation for the most rapid development of the economy. It is this refusal to adopt correct planning policies that lies at the root of the present crisis of planning. My plea therefore is for such a radical change of policies as would make all those inroads into the rights and privileges of the owners of big property which are necessary to enable the optimum use of the natural and human resources of the nation.

10. A look at the history of economic development in the various countries of the world shows that two methods have so far been adopted—methods which may respectively be called capitalist and socialist. The former secures investible surplus through the appropriation of surplus value generated by the workers and the expropriation of the private property of the small owners—artisans, small and medium cultivators, etc.—and the accumulation of property in the hands of big owners. This is the typical process popularly known as "making the rich richer and impoverishing the poor". To this method of internal exploitation, is, of course, added the exploitation of foreign nations which, in one way or another, happen to become subject to the economic or political domination of particular countries. England, for instance, carried out its industrial and agrarian revolutions through the expropriation of the poor both inside the country as well as in such countries as India.

11. The second method is the one adopted first in the Soviet Union and then in the other socialist countries—the method of expropriating the owners of big property, making rational use of this property for the further accumulation of investible property, unleashing the productive enthusiasm of the mass of the working people and so on. There are of course a number of variants of both these methods. But everyone of them can be reduced to either the one or the other. The crux of the much-talked-of "ideological considerations" is thus

the question : Which of these methods is preferable ? The plea made by the Chief Minister of Orissa and his friends means that the capitalist method should consistently be adopted without those modifications which have been made by the leadership of the ruling Congress party. My plea, on the other hand, is for a basic change in the method—abandonment of the capitalist and the adoption ot the socialist method.

12. The leaders of the ruling Congress party would have us believe that their method is neither capitalist nor socialist. They claim to have adopted "a system which has the strong points but not the weaknesses of both". Government control on private property ; reasonable terms for tenants rather than abolition of landlordism ; nationalisation to the barest minimum possible and with compensation ; employer-employee relationship without unduly reducing the profits of the emplovers, etc.—such are the lines along which they would like the property relations to be regulated. All this, it is claimed, would help the countrv to march along the path of socialism but without going through the sufferings which are inevitable under the "totalitarian" socialist system. It is this so-called "third path" which has been tried during the last 18 years of planning and has, according to me, completely failed. The question is whether the political leadership of the nation would draw correct conclusions from this experience and adopt the socialist path of planning through which alone can the country get its economy industrialised and all fields of its socio-economic activities modernised. My criticism of the Planning Commission's "Approach" is that this question is not squarely faced.

13. The crucial weakness of our planning has been its dependence on foreign "aid" and loans for the public sector, combined with collaboration in the private sector. This is justified on the ground that our own national resources are inadequate and have to be supplemented by contributions from abroad. The rationale behind the policy apparently is that development with foreign "aid" or collaboration for some time would so strengthen the economy that, after a time, it would be no more necessary to have any assistance. "Dependence in order to end dependence" is the sloganised form of the entire argument.

14. Experience has proved the utter baselessness of this whole approach. After 18 years of "aid", loans and collaboration, the economy is still in need of more "aid", more loans and more collaborations. The notorious PL 480 "aid" has proved the ever-tightening noose around the neck of our people. The loans which are once contracted have to be repaid with still further loans. As for the collaboration between the foreign and Indian private capitalists, it is becoming the means through which the key sectors of our economy are gradually slipping out of our hands, falling into the iron grip of foreign monopolists. The result of this policy has been that, in the political sphere, our freedom of action is getting more and more restricted, while, in the economic sphere, the burdens on the national economy (by way of interest on and principal of the loans to be repaid) are becoming unbearable. The economic uncertainties and the political humiliation involved in the annual meetings of the so-called "Aid India Club" for fixing the quantum of "aid" for the annual plans are making a mockery of the "independent economy" which is supposed to be developing in the country. This is sharply underlined by the Deputy Prime Minister after his futile visit to Washington.

15. As against this picture of the so-called "non-totalitarian" India is the "totalitarian" China which in many respects is comparable with India. The need for assistance from abroad was as great for China as for India. China did, in fact, receive, in the early years of its planning, assistance from the Soviet Union. This, however, was not in the form of either "grants" and "aids" or collaboration in joint ventures. The bulk of assistance received by China from the Soviet Union was by way of loans repayable according to conditions stipulated. To this, of course, should be added the free supply of blueprints and designs for the various projects which played a big role in facilitating the development of Chinese economy. China's planned development was thus assisted form abroad by way of technical help (free supply of designs and blueprints, training of Chinese personnel, etc.) and repayable loans. The more important point is that whatever assistance China received from the Soviet Union was fully utilised to modernise and develop its domestic economic structure. The Chinese economy got thus developed and the loans taken could be repaid. In fact, even

the unilateral decision of the Soviet Union to withdraw all financial and technical assistance to China—a decision which came in the background of the strained relations between the two countries—did not put the Chinese economy out of gear. On the contrary, Chinese economy moved towards complete self-reliance faster than what many people anticipated. China did, in fact, practise what our planners and political leaders preach—taking assistance from abroad in order to end the need for such assistance.

16. India stands in marked constrast to this. A major part of what is secured by India is in the form of consumer goods or machinery for industries producing consumer goods. "Aids", loans and collaboration are either for importing foodgrains or other consumer goods (many of them, goods that are consumed only by the social elite), or for providing for maintenance imports, or for setting up industries which produce consumer goods. The result is that the longer the period in which "aid" continues, the greater is the need for such "aid". The devaluation of the rupee, to which our Government was obliged to resort to two years ago, the uncertainty of securing foreign "aid" even after devaluation and the consequent decision to postpone the date of the beginning of the Fourth Five Year Plan—all this shows that, as opposed to the promise to end the need for foreign "aid" if only we depend on such "aid" for a few years, in practice the noose of foreign "aid" has been getting tighter and tighter. The noose has to be broken, the whole policy completely reversed, if the nation is to be saved either politically or economically.

17. This is obviously a question of policy which has to be decided by the political leadership of the nation and not by the experts of the Planning Commission. For, whether the present policy of dependence on foreign "aid" is persisted in, or whether it is ended, in either case certain political consequences follow. If the present policy is persisted in, the Government would have to follow the logical conclusion of succumbing more and more to the pressures of those who give such "aid". On the other hand, the reversal of the policy and the adoption of a policy of genuine self-reliance, will involve certain radical changes in the methods through which the internal resources are

mobilised and efforts made to secure external resources in the form of enhanced export earnings, savings through import substitution, and loans and commercial credits on mutually beneficial terms. If the Government does the former, it will undoubtedly be subjected to criticism from the patriotic citizens of the country who would not like our country to be transformed into a satellite of one or more foreign powers. If on the other hand, the Government adopts the second course then the vested interests both within the country and abroad will mount a concerted offensive against it. In either case, the consequences will be political and the Government will have to meet them politically.

18. Assistance from abroad is however only one form of raising the necessary resources for the planned economy of the nation. More important are the methods of raising internal resources. Here again, the planning process has found itself in a serious crisis—a crisis which is deepening more and more. The crisis of internal resources is manifesting itself in that peculiar combination of inflationary conditions in the economy as a whole and recession in several fields of economic activity.

19. The continuously rising prices of all commodities, particularly of essential products, have, in fact, put the entire developmental process in India completely out of gear. On the one hand, the vast majority of poor people, fixed wage or salary earners, as well as peasants and artisans who find that the prices of consumer goods have increased far more than the prices of their own products, witness a decline in their real incomes and the consequent erosion of whatever additional money incomes they had already received. On the other hand, with higher prices and lower purchasing power, their demand for manufactures has dipped, thus contributing to recessionary trends in the industry. Deficit financing to meet the crisis in the Government's budgetary resources position, sky-rocketting prices of all products, increasing misery for the vast majority of toiling masses, high cost of production of exportable products leading to our exports being priced out of the international markets and consequent aggravation of foreign exchange difficulties—such are the manifestations of the bankrupt policy of inflationary financing pursued by the Government of India.

20. The experience of the last few years has clearly shown that the problems of recession or periodic slump in demand and supply, a phenomenon so characteristic of developed capitalist countries, are here to stay. Recession in the engineering industries as well as many other fields of economic activity in India is a reflection of the increasing maturity of Indian capitalism and the deepening crisis in the economic system. High prices of foodgrains even in a year of bumper crop ; shortages and high prices of consumer goods in general ; whole groups of industries (like engineering and textiles) feeling the impact of a serious recession, with scores of factories and mills closed and tens of thousands of workers thrown out ; engineering and other professional colleges being obliged to reduce their intake of trainees even when their outturn in terms of trained manpower is behind the requirements as had been envisaged in the "Perspective Manpower Planning" ; the number of employment-seeking men and women increasing every year—such are the indications of the basic malady which affects the system, a malady which cannot be associated solely with the so-called problem of foreign exchange and foreign "aid". This should make every serious student of economic affairs ponder over the question : What is wrong with our economy ? It is however precisely this question that is studiously avoided in the Planning Commission's "Approach" document.

21 The Government of India and the Planning Commission are totally oblivious of the profound economic crisis which is enveloping the international capitalist system. Their expectations of increased trade with Western nations, and loans and grants from these countries, are based on inadequate and faulty ideas about the real nature of the world economic crisis. The increasing gap between the income levels of the advanced capitalist countries and the under-developed nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the continued obduracy of the advanced countries in not relaxing the onerous conditions in their trading practices and to show a better dispensation towards the problems of the developing countries, etc., are problems to be taken serious note of. It will be a folly to work out a strategy of economic development for India based on the so-called "benevolent dispensation" of the advanced capitalist countries. Unless a major departure is made from our present commitments to the international monetary

agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF and get out of their entanglements, there is the real danger that the Indian economy will continue to be dangerously linked with the crumbling edifice of the trade and payments mechanism of world capitalism.

22. I have stated above that the crisis in the Plan, according to me, is a crisis of the so-called "third path" which the leadership of the ruling Congress party adopted after Independence. It is necessary at this stage to mention that the path and consequently the policies do not cover merely the economic aspect but embrace foreign political relations and such internal political questions as Centre-State relations, the language problem, the communal question and so on. For, the way in which these foreign and internal questions are dealt with affects the political basis on which the plans of economic development are formulated and implemented. The critique of present policies and the advocacy of alternate policies attempted in the following pages therefore embrace all these aspects.

23. Let us begin with the foreign policy of peace and non-alignment. This is supposed to be a unique contribution which India made to international politics at a time when the world was divided into two armed camps—those of capitalism and socialism. This was claimed to be in our national interests since it will make India a friend of all but enemy of none. After 20 years of pursuing this policy, we find ourselves in a position where we advocate peace in the world but are having relations of hostility with two of our neighbours. Our leaders in the ruling and most of the opposition parties have so adapted themselves to the strained relations with these two neighbours that they judge every country in the world from the point of view of whether it supports us in our struggle against these two neighbours. It is not a question of mere political relation between us and our neighours ; it affects the planned development of our economy in that :

(a) The absence of normal political relations with these two neighbouring countries creates so many problems of import and export of such commodities as can find natural markets within this region. To mention only a few of such problems, Pakistan could very well supply us foodgrains and raw materials

to industries like jute ; it could also be a natural outlet for several of our industrial products ; the timber and fruit of Kashmir could very well be marketed in Pakistan and fetch much better prices than now. Normal relations with China too could improve the chances of supply of commodities essential for us, as well as provide a market for our products.

(b) The strained relations with our two neighbours have made it necessary for us to utilise a sizable proportion of our resources to maintain a relatively huge army—resources which could well have been spent for productive purposes if the relations were normal. No effort however has been made to bring these relations back to normalcy.

24. It is not proposed here, nor is it possible, to state precisely how the relations can be normalised. These are undoubtedly difficult problems. Solutions for these problems can be found only through a detailed examination by ourselves and through continous contact and exchange with the leaders of the two neighbouring countries. It can, however, be definitely stated that the relations with the two neighbouring countries cannot be normalised unless our political leadership (both in the ruling as well as in most of the opposition parties) abandon the rigid positions which they have adopted and still continue to adopt. Flexibility of approach in dealing with the problems and a will to settle them on the basis of mutual accommodation are the essence of the policy of peace in the world. This is what our leaders had advocated in the matter of solving the problem of mutual relations between the capitalist and the socialist camps. Unfortunately, however, this basic approach which is the essence of the policy of peace is lacking in our approach to Pakistan and China. That is why our relations with the neighbouring countries have continued to be strained. (It is not suggested that, as soon as we abandon our rigid positions and adopt a more flexible policy, relations with the neighbouring countries will improve. One cannot rule out the possibility that, even after we adopt a more flexible policy, the neighbouring States may continue to adopt rigid positions. It is however obvious that there will be no improvement in the situation unless we adopt a flexible attitude).

25. As for non-alignment, though in the formal sense

we are not militarily allied to any of the military blocs, we are under terrific pressure from the capitalist bloc to which we very often succumb. The most notable evidence of this is that, while we have full diplomatic relations with West Germany, whenever suggestions are made that we should recognise both the German States, not only threats come from West Germany and her allies in the Western bloc, but, instead of standing up to these threats, we also succumb to them. There are ever so many other instances of orientation towards the West which is only partly offset by friendly relations with many of the socialist countries, particularly with the Soviet Union. This too has a direct impact on, and is in its turn influenced by, the economic relations that are steadily being built up with the Western world. The "aids" and loans from the Western governments and semi-governmental agencies, together with the ever-increasing agreements and collaboration between the Western and Indian private capitalists, lead to the ever-strengthening bonds between India and the Western world. The United States administration, the World Bank, the "Aid India Club" and the Western private capitalists who have entered into collaboration agreements with their counterparts have all become so many agencies through which non-alignment is steadily eroded, and alignment with the West gets strengthened.

26. For some time after the policy of non-alignment was laid down, it appeared as if that policy was paying dividends economically as well as politically. Non-alignment made the major countries of both the capitalist and socialist camps our friends. We could get assistance by way of "aids" and loans from both the camps. The second and third Five Year Plans were particularly noted for the implementation of several projects with such assistance from the two camps. Politically too, it appeared as if non-alignment helped us in our struggle with Pakistan, since we could use the Soviet Union against the Western powers on the disputed question of Kashmir. Later on, when our relations with China began to deteriorate, we could use, both the Western camp and the Communist powers headed by the Soviet Union against China. All this however proved a complete delusion. After several years of non-alignment, it has now been proved that (as had already been briefly outlined), foreign aid has not made our economy self-reliant. Politically too, friendship

with the Western and Socialist camps has not helped in achieving the declared objective of policy in relation to Pakistan and China. Peace and non-alignment as parctised so far have been proved an utter failure.

27. Real non-alignment (which should mean complete independence in foreign political relations) is inseparably connected with the building up of a completely self-reliant economy. Technical assistance is of course necessary for a backward country like ours. Even financial assistance in limited quantities and for limited periods need not be ruled out. Both of them can be made available on relatively easy commercial terms if the political relations with foreign countries are friendly. This is all the more true of the present situation in the world in which several powers (both in the capitalist and socialist camps) are to forge relations of friendship and co-operation with the developing countries. These opportunities however can be utilised in national interests only if the political and governmental leaders are vigilant and zealous of the sovereignty of the nation. "Aid" and loans on terms which may appear attractive if looked at superficially can be very deceptive. This has been the experience of many countries in the post-Second World War period. Our own experience is not different. PL 480, World Bank loans, etc., have been of this nature. Any hesitation to put an end to these (economically disastrous and politically humiliating) agreements would lead us into worse crises than we have so far experienced. Abandonment of this policy is thus an essential prerequisite for building a self-reliant economy and pursuing a policy of genuine independence and non-alignment.

28. Equally important is the reversal of the policy which facilitates the entry of foreign capital into our economy. During the days of our struggle for national freedom, we had realised how the British capitalists who had entrenched themselves in decisive fields of economic activity were as powerful as the British military and civil service personnel. After the attainment of independence, however, the domination of the British private capitalists was not ended but supplemented by private capitalists from other countries. The danger which this may constitute has been formally realised with the result that some legal provisions have been made, putting restrictions on the participation

of foreign capitalists in Indian business concerns (such as the provision that no Indian business concern should have more than 49 per cent participation by the foreign collaborator). This however has been nothing but a formality. Foreign private monopolists are coming in large numbers and entering into partnership agreements with Indian private capitalists. This is becoming a serious threat to the economic and political independence of the nation. The unrestricted right of the foreign investor to export profits and even to repatriate the invested capital is proving a source of such an annual drain of wealth that much more is taken every year from the country by way of profits and capital than is brought into it by way of fresh capital. Added to this economic drain is the fact that the close collaboration between the foreign and Indian private capitalists is creating new vested interests which may well develop into a serious threat to the political independence of the country.

29. These dangers to the economy and political independence of the country can be averted and the country made fully self-reliant only by a well-organised plan of increasing production, organising the rational distribution of the wealth that is produced, eliminating wastages and raising the level of savings, so organising the import and export trade as to conserve foreign exchange to the utmost, etc. Such a well-organised plan alone will eliminate the need for foreign "aid", help the payment of all those debts that have to be incurred in the process of planning. The absence of such a plan is the basic weakness which has led to the fiasco of the planning process.

30. The evolution of such a plan raises extremely important questions of policy. Issues of an economic and political character arise and have to be settled. On a correct solution of these issues depends whether optimum use is being made of the material and human resources of the nation. It is therefore proposed in the following paragraphs to examine some of these issues.

31. The question of increasing production is connected with what is usually called proper "incentives" to the producer. Everybody will agree that production cannot be increased unless the producer is satisfied that he will be rewarded for the additional efforts that he has to make in increasing production. This,

in fact, is the ground on which tax rebates, price fixation and other "incentives" are given to the industrialists, landlords etc. The policy pursued so far in this direction is, according to me, seriously defective in that it is not the actual producer—the worker, the working peasant and so on--who is given the incentive. This mass of real producers are, on the other hand, so dealt with by the Government that not only do they have no positive "incentive" to production but there are large numbers of "disincentives" in their case. It is therefore necessary to make a thorough review of, and completely overhaul, all those policies which are connected with the questions of incentives for the producer—policies connected with land reforms, rural and community development, prices, taxation, labour relations and so on. On every one of these questions, it is submitted here, the present policies are such that they become disincentives to the mass of real producers, while innumerable incentives are given to the landlord-capitalist classes.

32. Take for instance land reforms. It is true that various intermediaries on land—those who stand between the state and the actual cultivator—have been removed. But, in the process, large numbers of actual cultivators have been turned out of the land in order to accommodate these intermediaries who have been transformed into "cultivators". The result of this transformation is that many of those who were tenant-cultivators before the reform have become landless wage-labourers, while rent-receiving landlords have become "farmers" who get their land cultivated through wage-labour. Another consequence of the land reform is that the intermediaries whose rights have been abolished have received huge amounts as "compensation" and its burden put on the shoulders of the cultivators. All this have of course given big "incentives" to a section of the land-owning classes– those who were either landlords or well-to-do tenant-cultivators— and made their production more efficient. In the process, however, a much bigger proportion of tenant-cultivators have their living conditions further worsened and in their case the land reforms have proved to be a disincentive.

33 This is true of the various schemes of rural and community development as well. The claim being made for these

schemes is that it is bringing about a "silent revolution" in the countryside. This is true to the extent that the various strata of landlords and rich peasants are helped to improve their technique of production, raise the productivity of their land and thus to make their farms more and more profitable. The new technology based on the high-yielding varieties of seeds, use of an abundant quantity of fertilisers, pesticides and so on (all of which is helped by the provision of credit, subsidy for securing agricultural machinery and other materials, etc.) is, by and large, confined to the categories of "large" and "big" cultivators. The "middle" and "poor" peasants (who constitute the bulk) are unable to take advantage of all the facilities that are provided for improving the technique of cultivation and raising the level of production. The natural consequences of the "new technology" is that the gulf between the rich and the poor in the villages (which has already been widened by the character of land reforms indicated above) is further widened.

34. Coming to the non-agricultural and urban sectors of the economy, here too it can be easily seen that the whole system of regulating foreign and internal trade (import controls, export promotion, industrial licensing, control on movements, price fixation and so on) are all so operated that a narrow stratum of well-to-do businessmen, who can pull strings at the political and administrative levels, can secure all the benefits accruing from these measures. The unscrupulous businessmen with their "contacts" at the appropriate levels can defeat all the elaborate rules and regulations which are supposed to have been framed to control their activities, while honest businessmen and the large mass of consumers are made to pay the enormous cost of upkeep of this elaborate machinery. Regulation of and control on the profiteering activities of the trader and the industrialist are, in other words, being utilised by those very traders and industrialists to still further profiteer at the expense of the common people. The disastrous consequences of these activities are felt not only by the mass of the working people but even by the well-to-do cultivator, medium-scale trader and industrialist and the upper middle class professional. It is the height of cynicism to give such a policy the name of giving "incentives to the producer".

35. It is when we come to the question of mobilising the resources for the Plan that we see the totally unrealistic character of the policies pursued by the ruling party. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) and other left democratic organisations have made several suggestions for augmenting the resources for the Plan, such as prohibition of the export of capital, putting a ceiling on profits, utilisation of the surplus above the ceiling to form a national development fund, nationalisation of the major sectors of economy, including foreign trade and wholesale trade in foograins, and so on. All these measures would not only augment the financial resources of the Government for implementing the Plan but will help it in regulating the economy in the national interest. They would help the Government to exercise control over what are called "commanding heights of the economy". These proposals, however, have been consistently opposed by the Government. The result is that, while the Government is deprived of the financial resources that can be utilised for the plan, foreign and Indian big businessmen are able to exercise control over the entire field of national economy. Using their control over the "commanding heights" of the economy, they sabotage all the measures which, if properly implemented, would reduce profiteering to the minimum.

36. Coming to taxation proper, the policy pursued is such as to give big reliefs and rebates to the big businessmen who in any case are able to resort to various forms of tax evasion. At the same time, the large mass of poor and medium scale tax payers and the common people have to bear the ever-increasing burden of indirect taxation and deficit financing. The ever-rising spiral of prices (which are the inevitable consequences of deficit financing and heavy indirect taxation) has raised several socio-political problems arising out of the natural demand of workers and employees for D. A. which is resisted by the employers. What may well be called an "explosive situation" has thus arisen not only in the employer-employee relations in general but in the relations between the Central and State Governments, on the one hand, and their employees, on the other. The Central Government employees' strike of 1960 and the subsequent developments in the relations between the Central and State Governments and their employees have now

reached a stage when several State-wide strikes have already taken place and one-day token strike of Central Government employees has also materialised. The manner in which the Central Government has dealt with the problem has, in its turn, raised very difficult problems of Centre-State relations. While the Central Government itself recognises the need for conceding the demands of its employees, it refuses to help the State Governments in conceding the demands of their employees. This is resented by all State Governments (including those ruled by the Congress). As for such State Governments as do not see eye-to-eye with the Centre on the issue of employees' demands, the threats held out against the Kerala Government show the "explosive" implications of the policy.

37. Not only on the questions of price and demands for D.A. but on several other questions of employer-employee relations, the policy pursued has been that of making the mass of workers and employees thoroughly discontented. The workers and employees see from day to day how the employees are also to get their ever increasing demands accepted by the Government. On the other hand, the demands of workers and employees are not only not accepted, but their organisations, agitations and struggles are treated with hostility. The machinery for conciliation, adjudication and arbitration of employer-employee disputes is heavily weighted in favour of the employers. The employers who refuse to abide by the directions and decisions of the labour department are allowed to go scot-free, while the whole force of the Government is brought on the heads of the workers and employees whenever they resort to agitations and struggles. The large number of strikes which have of late taken place in various industries (including the latest lock-out in the newspaper industry) show the determination of the employers to crush the employees' movement and the helplessness (if not worse) of the Government in this respect. It is obvious that, if this continues, the declared objective of maintaining production without interruption and increasing productivity will be defeated. For, production cannot continue uninterruptedly unless the relations between the employers and employees are smooth and cordial. Such cordial relations can be expected only

if labour is given an increasing share in ownership and management of industries.

38. I have so far referred to certain aspects of economic policies. The economic policy, however, does not stand in isolation from political policy. After all, the main tasks in the economic sphere —augmenting production, organising proper distribution, avoiding wastage and extravagance etc.—are all tasks which can be performed only if there is perfect co-ordination of the activities of the Government and the people. Enthusiastic work for augmenting production ; the spirit of service and sacrifice which is the inevitable prerequisite for avoiding wastage and extravagance ; the patriotic and public-spirited work which alone will help the elimination of corruption and black marketing, and so on—all this requires a basic understanding between the people and the Government, making the people feel that the plan which the Government is carrying out is their (people's) own plan. In the absence of such an atmosphere of co-operation between the people and Government, the so-called "people's participation" in, "popular contribution", to the implementation of the Plan have been turned into a farce. The formal and routinised "people's co-operation", organised through the District Development Councils, Block Development Committees, Bharat Sevak Samaj, etc., have all become at best new cogs in the wheel of bureaucracy and at worst the mechanism through which sections of vested interests can carry on their nefarious activities.

39. The main obstacle in the way of evoking the enthusiasm of the common people in the planning process is the narrowly partisan way in which the ruling Congress party has dealt with the people in general and the Opposition parties in particular. Disregarding the incontrovertible truth that the Congress is only one of the political parties in the country (though, of course, the biggest), its leaders behave as if they constitute the nation. The steady erosion in the prestige and authority which they had at one time enjoyed among the people (as is evidenced by the slow and steady fall in the electoral strength of the ruling Congress party) is sought to be compensated for by vicious attacks on those sections of organised public opinion which are developing into serious threats to the conti-

nued domination of the Congress party. The unscrupulous way in which the results of the first, second, third and fourth general elections were dealt with by the Central Congress Government; the opportunistic alliances and the use of the Central Government's authority in order to prevent the formation of non-Congress governments and to topple them when they get formed; the scandalous use of Preventive Detention Act and Defence of India Rules against opposition parties—all this has created an impenetrable barrier for genuine co-operation between the people and the Government.

40. Political relations, however, do not remain confined to relations between the ruling and opposition parties. Equally, if not more, important are the relations between the various linguistic groups in the country as well as between the various castes, religious communities and tribes which constitute Indian society. Here again, the policy pursued by the Central Congress leadership and the Central Congress Government has been so unrealistic that the louder they talk of "national integration", the more complicated become the problems that threaten the unity of India. It is enough to make a mere mention of the problems of official language, the constitutional status of Kashmir, the strained relations that have been continuing between the Centre on the one hand and such sections of the people as the Nagas, Mizos, Assam Hill Tribes, etc., on the other, the ever increasing demands of all the State governments (including the Congress-governed State governments) for greater power and greater financial resources, the ever-recurring and serious communal riots and caste conflicts, and so on. One would then see that, unless something radically new is done, the unity of India (in the name of which the leaders of the ruling Congress party always talk) will be broken. The truth is that it is the forces of disintegration, rather than of integration, that are growing.

41. What I have attempted here is a critique of the basic policies on which the ruling Congress party has built up the whole edifice of planning. It is obvious that, if the weaknesses and difficulties revealed in the process of planning have to be removed, the present policies have to be replaced by other policies. What those policies should be have been elaborated by the seminar on "Alternate Policies for the Fourth

Five Year Plan",* the main conclusious of which are presented here It is for the acceptance of such an alternate set of policies that I am pleading.

* A four day seminar on "Alternate Fourth Plan Policies" was held under the auspices of the Kerala State Planning Board at Trivandrum during October 9-12, 1968. On the basis of a detailed and critical examination of the existing policies and programmes, the seminar arrived at certain conclusions regarding alternate policies. Participants in the seminar included the following : Shri E. M. S. Namboodiripad, Dr K. N. Raj B. V. Krishnamoorthy, Dr A. R. Desai, Prof. V. Y. Kolhatkar, Prof. A. R. Kamat, Dr. Amalendu Guha, Dr. Boudhayan Chattopadhyay, Dr. Barun De, Dr. Paresh Chattopadhyay, Dr. Nirmal K. Chandra, Shri Asok Sen, Shri Ajit Roy, Prof. N. S Ramaswamy, Shri M. N. V. Nair, Shri P. V. S. Namboodiripad, Dr. M. J. K. Thavaraj, Dr. Amit Bhaduri, Dr. M. K. Pandhe, Dr. S. Ganguli, Dr. Subhas Chakravarthy, Shri Aurobindo Ghose, Shri Aravind Vyas, Shri Aswani K. Roy, Smt. R. A. Menon, Shri K. P. Subramania Menon, Shri P. Govinda Pillai, Dr. P. A Nair, Prof. Joseph Mundassery, Shri T. P. Kuttiammu, Dr. P. K. Gopalakrishnan, Dr. Jacob Eapen, Prof. K. S. Lakshmana Panicker, Dr. K. Mathew Kurian.

AN OUTLINE OF ALTERNATE POLICIES FOR THE FOURTH FIVE YEAR PLAN

I. Foreign Policy

1. Take positive steps for the normalisation of relations with Pakistan and China. End the policy of reliance either on the Western Powers or on the Soviet Union for diplomatic and military aid and co-operation as against Pakistan and China.

2. Pursue an independent foreign policy and take such concrete measures as recognition of the German Democratic Republic, stoppage of the supply of war materials to South Vietnam, and establishment of normal relations with Cuba, North Vietnam, NIF of South Vietnam and North Korea.

3. Establish a common front with all those governments in Asia, Africa and Latin America that are following a resolutely independent and anti-imperialist foreign policy.

4. Give diplomatic and other support to all freedom loving nations and peoples of the world in their struggle against imperialism. Full support to the fighting people of Vietnam, the African peoples, and so on.

II. Self-Reliance and Foreign Aid

1. Stop all forms of foreign economic "aid" (e.g. PL 480, World Bank loans, US AID loans, etc.) that infringe on national freedom and also impede economic growth in the country. Negotiate fresh agreements with all countries for the supply of technical know-how and capital goods on reasonable commercial terms.

2. Attempt should be made for cent per cent Indianisation of know-how in all its forms. Take immediate steps for improving the existing know-how. Design and engineering work should be done completely by our personnel. No foreign consultant should be employed in these fields. Erection and commissioning of plants should be entirely the work of Indian personnel.

III. Private Foreign Capital and Foreign Collaboration

1. Cancel all non-financial collaboration agreements between the Indian and foreign monopolists. Foreign financial

collaborators must be divested of all controlling powers immediately, while negotiations are held for gradual repayment of their actual financial contribution which should be assessed not at the existing book values, but according to some more realistic and plausible criteria.

2. Declare a moratorium on exports of profits and repatriation of foreign private capital, while negotiating for rescheduling repayments for past loans, foreign private capital and also for reduction in the interest rates on loans. The repayments should start immediately and be made through additional exports (i.e., in excess of the "normal value") fixed on the basis of a 10 or 15-year bilateral trade and payments agreements with each of our creditor nations.

3. Withdraw from the International Patents Convention and make all technical know-how available inside the country accessible to all on the payment of a relatively small fee to a central agency which shall be the repository of all know-how purchased from abroad or developed in public-owned research laboratories.

4. Reshape the structure of new investments in such a way that indigenous technical know-how, capital equipment and raw materials are utilised to the maximum possible extent.

5. Enforce a complete ban on the import of consultancy services and on projects handled by foreigners on a turn-key basis.

6. Enforce a complete ban on the export of surplus capital by the Indian monopolists in the form of "joint ventures", etc.

7. Technical assistance to less developed countries may however be given on a government-to-government basis for strengthening the public sector industries in those countries.

Since the above measures in the field of foreign policy, foreign aid and private foreign capital will be resisted by the capitalist Powers who would do their utmost to starve us of the resources for development, it is necessary to conserve and mobilise all the available resources in the country and to this end the Government has to take the following measures :

IV. Export and Import Policy

1. Nationalise import and export trade and all other transactions with foreign countries.

2. Minimise import costs by purchasing from the cheapest possible source (with due regard to the availability of the particular foreign exchange) and by enforcing a policy of rapid and all-round import substitution. Substitute imported raw-materials by Indian ones by enforcing a "forced crisis", if necessary.

3. Requisition for export of a part of the domestic supply of all non-essential and non-priority goods for which there is a foreign demand.

4. Develop bilateral and multilateral trade relations, if necessary on terms of deferred payment, with all the newly independent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Special emphasis should be placed on trade with China and Pakistan. Wherever feasible mutually beneficial long-term trade agreements should be drawn up with these and all other countries.

5. Desist from cut-throat competition with other underdeveloped countries, particularly in regard to commodities for which world market prices tend to fall.

V. Domestic Resources Mobilisation

General :

1. Stop the payment of privy purses to princes and compensation to big landlords and zemindars.

2. Impose a ceiling on the profits of all big industrial and commercial undertakings owned by Indian businessmen.

3. Take over the profits in excess of the ceiling as compulsory loan.

4. Create a "national development pool" out of the compulsory loans formed out of the excess profits and the reserves of big companies. Use this pool for investment in the public sector in accordance with national interests.

5. A drastic review of the system of subsidies is essential with a view to helping the medium and small industries and middle and small peasants.

6. Redesign the pricing policies of the public sector undertakings with a view to helping the final consumers rather than the monopoly capital and U-sector industries.

7. End the policy of Prohibition.

8. End the policy of encouragement to Khadi and Village Industries and other items of Sarvodaya work which lead to avoidable waste.

9. End deficit financing.

10. Rigorous tax enforcement and deterrent punishment of tax evaders and corrupt officers.

Rural Taxation :

1. Repalce the regressive land revenue system by a graduated tax on the capital value of land.

2. Reduce inequalities in income through a steeply progressive agricultural income tax on the estates and plantations.

3. Impose a progressive system of levy on food-grains output.

Urban Taxation :

1. Impose a steeply graduated personal income tax.

2. Impose prohibitive taxes on luxuries and comforts to discourage conspicuous consumption.

3. Exempt basic necessities from taxation and subsidise them if necessary.

4. Impose heavier taxes on corporate profits, personal wealth, estates and on capital gains.

Economy in Expenditure :

1. Review administrative expenditure at all levels with a view to trimming the top-heaviness and strengthening administration at the cutting edge (or grass roots).

2. Drastic reduction in public expenditure. Cut the salaries and allowances of highly paid officials, Ministers, MPs and MLAs, etc., as well as costly and luxurious buildings and other amenities for their residences and offices.

3. Cut defence expenditure by 10 per cent a year and put a ceiling at 3 per cent of National Income. Use the defence forces for peaceful purposes such as digging of canals and construction of minor irrigation projects, roads, schools, etc.

VI. Centre-State Relations

1. Revise the Constitution in such a way as to make India a real Federal State. The Centre must have only a minimum of functions, powers and resources, with the bulk of the powers and financial resources now vested with the Centre being transferred to the States pool.

2. Awaiting the revision, re-formulation of the Centre-State relations in respect of resource allocation and mobilisa-

tion should begin immediately, consistent with the requirements of centralised investment decisions (through NDC or other suitable institutions), on the one hand, and of ensuring the different States adequate financial resources to meet their Plan needs, on the other.

VII. Regional Imbalances

1. The industrial licensing policy of the Government should be directed towards channelling private sector investments to less developed regions with a view to reducing regional imbalances.

2. In deciding the location of Central sector investments the Government of India and the Planning Commission should not be guided merely by the static concepts of locational principles ; the location of such projects should, as far as possible, be used as a lever for reducing regional imbalance even if it means slight deviation from optimality at the national level.

VIII. Industrial Policy

Control over and Concentration :

1. Energetic and suitable measures must be taken to break the monopolies and prevent their growth :

(a) All big enterprises owned or controlled by any of the 75 monopoly houses listed by the Monopoly Enquiry Commission should immediately be nationalised. A national corporation for each industrial sector should be set up for managing all nationalised firms within the sector.

(b) Individual monopoly houses may be allowed to hold companies, the assets of which do not exceed a certain limit to be specified (in conformity with the policy of abolition of big business).

(c) Encouragement should be given to medium and small-scale entrepeneurs and industrial co-operatives. Facilities also must be provided for those who are trained in the technical institutions to set up their own small-scale units.

(d) Assistance must be given by the Central Government to the State governments for taking over factories and mills which are closed or are threatening to close

down and to work them as public sector undertakings.

(e) The public financial institutions that give loans to small and medium-scale industries should ensure greater public control over these industries.

2. Banking, general insurance, aluminium industry, manganese, copper, iron and coal mining, as well as British-controlled jute mills and plantations have to be nationalised.

3. All new undertakings in basic industry should be in the public sector.

4. Certain essential consumer goods industries and trade and distribution of all kinds of consumer and producer goods should increasingly fall within the public sector under the Central as well as State governments.

5. For the management cadre either in the private or public sector, a new national pay scale (both in money and in kind) should be laid down by Parliament. The new scales must drastically reduce the remuneration currently received by the higher cadre.

6. The policy of rapid industrialisation must be continued with adequate emphasis on all products, old and new, that form the base of such industrial advance. Through a forward planning of future technology in regard to the supply of raw materials and capital goods, the new industrial sector must depend on the country's own resources to the maximum possible extent.

7. Measures for correcting short-term imbalances must be in conformity with the long-term perspective. Any shortfall due to the deliberate policy, or inefficiency of the private sector must be made good by the creation of corresponding or near capacity in the public sector (e.g., fertilisers).

IX. Labour Policy

1. Ensure employment and minimum wages to the working class, interim relief to unemployed workers and employees; no wage freeze or deferred payment; full neutralisation of increased cost of living.

2. Speedy implementation of various schemes of social insurance and housing for the progress of employees.

3. Democratisation of the entire management of the public sector undertakings and the nationalised concerns of big business, both Indian and foreign. It will ensure creative participa-

tion of workers and trade unions in the management and running of these concerns.

4. Compulsory recognition of trade unions and their right of collective bargaining by the management.

5. Provision of adequate machinery to settle all the grievances of the workers at plant level, and Recognition of workers' right to strike in support of their demands.

6. Creation of suitable machinery for fixing the need-based national minimum wage for the entire working class and for ensuring its implementation by all the employers.

7. Measures should be taken for a continuous rise in the standard of living of the working class, and fixation of wage differentials on a national basis.

8. Effective steps to improve the working conditions inside the factories. Immediate implementation of all safety measures by all the managements.

9. Social security schemes should be non-contributory for the workers. The entire expenses of the scheme should be borne by the State and the employers. The Provident Fund has to be replaced by a new "old age pension scheme".

10. Implementation of a massive programme of housing for all the industrial workers is essential. Whenever a new factory is started the management must provide residential accommodation for all its employees.

11. Top priority should be given to ensuring workers' right to work. A nation-wide programme has to be prepared to ensure jobs for all workers in a specific period. Pending its full implementation some maintenance allowance should be given to a worker who is without a job.

12. Recognition of the principle of equal pay for equal work. No differentiation should be made in the wages of men and women.

13. Full facilities for craftsmanship training for the young workers.

14. Full trade union rights to the police and government employees.

15. Steps must be taken to ensure democratic functioning of trade unions. Consultations must be held with trade unions at all levels while chalking out the Government's policy concerning labour matters.

X. Agriculture and Land Reforms

1. Immediate stoppage of all evictions. Steps should be taken towards the consolidation of records of rights for all individual households so that it can be computerised and published.

2. Then throw open these consolidated statements of the record of rights for every village before the *Grama Sabha,* with legal provisions safeguarding the right of any member of the *Grama Sabha* to challenge the statement on the total land owned by a family.

3. Any such dispute and the ceiling for a particular family's total holding, must be settled by a Land Commission elected by the *Grama Shabha,* enjoying statutory powers, with majority representation for the poor peasants and agricultural labourers.

4. Distribute all cultivable waste lands to landless labourers followed by co-operativisation in appropriate forms.

5. All debts of landless and poor peasants should be annulled. For appropriate measures in this respect the legislation of the 1930's in Bengal may be referred to.

6. The strategy for increasing agricultural production, while being guided by technological considerations, should, at the same time, be linked with measures against concentration of prosperity in select pockets.

7. Adequate wages and humane conditions of service to agricultural labourers.

8. Poor and middle class peasant has to be provided with such facilities as irrigation, water, better seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, etc.

9. Supply producers' and consumers' goods to peasants at cheap rates and guarantee fair prices for their products.

XI. National Food Policy

1. Monopoly procurement of the entire surplus from big landholders.

2. More or less uniform procurement prices throughout India, fixed at the rates available to actual cultivators at the time of harvest.

3. State monopoly of wholesale trade in foodgrains.

4. Equitable distribution by statutory rationing in urban areas and industrial centres and by assuring adequate supplies in rural areas.

5. Effective action (including deterrent punishments) against hoarders, blackmarketers and profiteers.

6. People's Committees for dehoarding and for equitable distribution.

7. Import of foodgrains only on commercial terms.

XII. EDUCATION

General Education

1. Education to be an instrument of social change.

2. Crash programme for primary education. A campaign to eradicate illiteracy should form a part of primary education. The services of secondary school students and undergraduates may be enlisted for such a campaign as a first step.

3. Polytechnicalisation or vocationalisation of school education from bottom to top on a phased programme. Instead of the system of basic education which is linked with crude crafts, a system linking up the technical institutions like the junior technical schools, polytechnics etc. with secondary schools around them for a programme of work-experience may be adopted.

4. Revision of syllabus with a view to making it up-to-date with better emphasis on science and socialist values.

5. Transformation of the pre-degree course to suit class room teaching of the secondary school.

6. Declaration of higher secondary school courses (10+2 or 11+1) to be terminal and also to be the maximum general qualification required for Services.

7. Creation of local education authorities to take care of the quality of education and also to canvass public co-operation.

8. Adoption of mother tongue as medium of instruction.

9. Institution of merit-cum-means scholarhhip or concession.

University Education

1. Admission on the basis of merit and not on the economic standing of the candidate.

2. Rationalisation of post-graduate study and research under the universities and colleges. A board of research and and post-graduate studies may be created in every State.

3. Adoption of mother tongue as the medium of instruction at degree level on a phased programme.

4. Encourgement to degree holders and diploma holders

in engineering technology to form their own production units on a co-operative basis or otherwise.

5. University community should be encouraged to associate itself with the planning processes.

XIII Democracy and People's Co-operation

1. Cancel all legislations and executive orders which curb the right of the people to organise, hold meetings and demonstrations, etc

2. Drastically revise the Police Act and Rules with a view to curtailing the powers of the police to arrest, shoot, lathi-charge and ban meetings and processions. Bring the activities of district and local police officers under the control of elected administrative organs at the corresponding levels.

3. The Army should not be used for suppressing the class struggles and the various struggles of the masses of the people.

4. Revise the legislations and executive orders connnected with the co-operative movement, rural and community development, Panchayats and Panchayati Raj etc., in such a way that the possibilities of their being dominated by a narrow stratum of rural society is eliminated and the mass of poor and middle peasants, artisans, agricultural labourers and so on, get adequate share of the benefits accruing from these activities.

5. End the policy of putting obstacles in the way of opposition parties and non-Congress governments Give them full freedom of action.

6. Revise the Consititution in such a way that radical socio-economic legislations are not challenged in courts of law.

7. Decentralise powers from the State to district and lower levels under a system of elected administrative organs at all levels.

XIV National Integration

1. A national and democratic language policy consisting of the immediate replacement of English by the regional language as the official language and medium of instruction ; complete equality of all the regional languages with none of them being considered as a superior "national" language ; the question of link language to be decided after the replacement

of English by the regional language and with the willing consent of all the linguistic groups in the country.

2. Democratic solution for the problem of border States and areas (such as Kashmir, Nagaland, Mizoland, Assam Hill States, etc.) on the basis of maximum autonomy for the States and minimum power for the Centre.

3. Regional autonomy and other safeguards for all the tribal peoples.

4. Energetic measures to eliminate all traces of caste domination. Observance of caste rules involving caste superiority or inferiority to be made a punishable offence. Encouragement to inter-caste marriages.

5. The principle of secularism should be put into practice. No mixing up of religion and the State. The freedom given to all religious groups to believe in and practise their faiths to be extended to non-believers also. The practice of associating public and official functions with religious ceremonies to be strictly forbidden (not only because such ceremonies are repugnant to non-believers but because the ceremonies of a particular religious group very often offend the sentiments of other groups).

6. Firm action against those who incite caste and communal rivalries and indulge in riots.

Note on The Planning Commission's Approach to the Fourth Five Year Plan

1. (i) In the document on "Approach to the Fourth Five Year Plan" the Planning Commission has suggested an overall rate of growth of national income in India during the Fourth Five Year Plan of 5-6 per cent per annum (compound). This involves a 5 per cent growth in the agricultural sector and a growth rate of 8-10 per cent per annum in the industrial sector. The Planning Commission has also set forth, as the main objectives of the Fourth Plan, "growth with stability" and "self-reliance as speedily as possible" by reducing foreign aid (net of interest and loan payment) to about half the present level by the end of the Fourth Plan. This also implies that all imports of foodgrains under concessional terms such as foodgrains imports under PL 480 should cease within the next three

years. Further, to ensure self-reliance and the desired rate of growth of national income, it is proposed that there should be a concerted programme of import substitution and increase in exports by about 7 per cent per annum and mobilisation of additional domestic resources by the public sector to the extent of Rs. 200 to Rs. 300 crores every year of the Fourth Plan.

1. (ii) The "Approach to the Fourth Five Year Plan" is a disappointing document inasumuch as it repeats the same old platitudes, peripheral policy issues and general statements of Plan objectives without taking adequate note of the objective realities. The emerging Indian economic situation, the continued crisis in all the major sectors of economic activity in India, in spite of three Five Year Plans and three Annual Plans, and the impending crisis in the international trade and payments mechanism of world capitalism, are objective facts against which the Planning Commission and the Government of India are fighting shy.

1. (iii) The "Approach to the Fourth Plan" is now being considered at a time when the Indian economy is passing through a serious crisis. This crisis is also reflected at the social and political levels ; the inability of the Central Government to maintain unity of the nation, the problem of border States like Assam, Nagaland and Kashmir, the continued backwardness of the majority of States in India resulting in violent controversies on questions of regional rights, etc.

1. (iv) All earlier Plan documents contained a review of Plan performance in the earlier Plan period. This is the first time, and that, too, following the most serious crisis in planning resulting in the postponement of the original Fourth Plan by three years, that the Planning Commission is putting forward an "Approach to the Fourth Plan" as if nothing serious has happened. Without a detailed review of Plan performance in the past it will be meanigless to discuss as to whether we should have a 5 per cent rate of growth or a 10 per cent of growth or any other rate of growth. Unless we make an honest analysis of the objective realities and the basic reasons for the serious crisis into which Indian planning has sunk, we shall not succeed in putting forward the correct perspective for the future and the necessary guidelines and policies.

1. (v) The "Approach to the Fourth Plan" does not take any serious note of the deep economic crisis now enveloping the international capitalist system, of which India is but an integral part, the disruption of the international monetary system so meticulously built up by the advanced capitalist countries ever since 1945, the virtual collapse of the Pound Sterling and the persisting danger to the United States Dollar. Experts on problems of international monetary system have observed that the crisis which the advanced capitalist countries are today facing is as serious as that of the crisis of the 1930's. If this is so, how realistic can the export targets envisaged by Planning Commission be ? If the Planning Commission's approach is without reference to objective realities, both in terms of the crisis in the Indian economy and serious crisis facing the world capitalist system, even if the Planning Commission succeeds in publishing the Plan documents it will not have any impact on the people of our country or on their living standards.

2. Lack of Perspective

2. (i) The present exercises of the Planning Commission are based primarily on "short-range alternatives", thus completely losing sight of long-term perspective and the attainment of a national minimum in terms of living standards within a reasonable time horizon. In the long-term projection made in the First Five Year Plan, the Planning Commission had held out the prospect of doubling the per capita real income of 1950-51 by 1977, i.e., in 27 years Subsequently, the Second Five Year Plan promised to bring about this doubling of income per head by the middle of the Fifth Five Year Plan.

2. (ii) The Third Plan envisaged that national income at 1960-61 prices will rise to Rs. 25,000 crores in 1970-71 and to Rs. 34,000 cores in 1975-76 Similarly, the per capita annual income was to rise to Rs. 450 in 1970-71 and to Rs 530 in 1975-76. But the experience of the last three years and the serious crisis into which Indian planning has sunk have completely shattered any hope of reaching the above targets by 1975-76.

2. (iii) The national income in 1967-68 at 1960-61 prices is expected to be of the order of Rs. 17,300 crores. In

1968-69 it is expected to be Rs. 18,300 crores. During the 15 years between 1950-51 and 1965-66, per capita income in India at constant prices rose by 21 per cent only The rate of growth achieved was, thus, less than 1.29 per cent (compound) instead of 3.2 per cent (compound) necessary for doubling the per capita income by the middle of the Fifth Plan. At the prevailing rate of increase it will take nearly 55 years from 1950-51 to attain the target of doubling the per capita real income of 1950-51.

2. (iv) The leaders of the Union Government, including the Prime Minister, are never weary of exhorting the people to imbibe a National Will for the realisation of our goals. But they conveniently forget the fact that by their own wrong policies and actions, both in respect of domestic policies and foreign policy, they have undermined the very basis of National Unity and the potentialities for developing National Will. Besides, the attitude of the Central Government to non-Congress governments in the States is not conducive to the growth of a National Will.

2. (v) The most glaring example of the overt and covert attempts of the Government of India to undermine the emergence of a National Will is the callous way in which the nation's goal of socialism or socialist pattern has been allowed to be trampled under foot by vested interests and the inertia of the bureaucratic machine. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Planning Commission and the Union Cabinet, which is reported to have approved the Planning Commission's Approach document, completely forget to even mention the professed objective of socialism. While one may be tempted to assume that this is a casual omission, the conclusion remains that this is a direct reflection of the utter lack of perspective of the Planning Commission and the Government of India.

3. The Size of the Plan

3. (i) In spite of prolonged discussioins, the Planning Commission have not been able to arrive at any "finality" regarding the size of the Fourth Five Year Plan. However, it is understood that, for attaining a 6 per cent growth rate, a total financial outlay of the order of Rs. 22,000 crores during

the Fourth Plan would be required. This is on the assumption that, with relatively low increase in the investment cost and an increase in efficiency of capital, the capital-output ratio has come down from 2.8 : 1 to about 2.3 : 1. It is also understood that, in the opinion of the representatives of the Union Finance Ministry, the total resources that can realistically be mobilised during the Fourth Plan will be of the order of Rs. 18,000 cores, which would sustain an annual growth rate of only 4 per cent per annum.

3. (ii) It is true that the growth effort does not depend exclusively on the total size of the Plan. Had it been so, the widening gap between Plan projections and Plan achievements, which has been characteristic of Indian Planning during the last 17 years, would not have occurred. We should be aware of the danger of grabbing the old and futile controversies about Plan size which resulted in abandoning of the original Fourth Plan three years ago. But the Planning Commission cannot, and should not, fight shy of indicating the total financial outlay required for achieving the suggested objectives of the Plan and the inter-sectoral allocations and priorities. By avoiding a straight answer to the problem of Plan size and the inter-sectoral allocation of investments the Planning Commission has slipped into the same old passive attitude which characterised the thinking of the Planning Commission three years ago, causing the postponement of the Fourth Plan.

4. Restricted Concept of "Growth with Stability"

4. (i) "Growth with Stability" is suggested as one of the major aims of the Fourth Five Year Plan. The concept of stability and the ingredients of a policy of attaining growth with stability, as implied in the statements of the Planning Commission, are rather vague and unduly restricted in their meaning. Truly, the attainment of "stability" in a country like India, plagued by serious structural imbalances, cannot be viewed as a simple process of modulating agricultural prices through buffer stock operations. Such seems to be the innocence of the Planning Commission as evidenced by the following statement in the Approach document :

> Growth with stability is the main aim of the Fourth Five Year Plan. Experience of recent years has emphasised the importance of maintaining relative stability. During this period instability has been associated chiefly with wide fluctuations in agricultural production and with a rapid rise of prices. To meet the situation arising out of such fluctuations in agricultural production it appears necessary to build buffer stocks of the main agricultural commodities. However, for doing this adequately it would also be necessary to guard against the generation of any strong inflationary pressures. This can be done if the programme of investment in the public and private sectors is backed by adequate mobilisation of resources in both sectors (p. 3).

4. (ii) If the concept of "Growth with Stability" is to be operationally valid, a much more meaingful identification of the elements of instability and the policy prescriptions necessary for rectifying them is unavoidable. The main elements of instability should include, in addition to the seasonal and secular changes in agricultural output and prices, such factors as unbalanced sectoral growth, the predominance of uncontrolled private production sectors in industry, agriculture and services, mounting defence expenditure beyond our means, instability in the relationship between investment outlays and growth of income, skewness in income distribution, irregularity of inventions and induction of technology, the flexibility of credit in spite of Reserve Bank's control mechanism, the inflationary and deflationary policies implicit in the irrationality of Governmental expenditure, and above all the cyclical fluctuations and business recessions in the advanced capitalist countries into which the Indian economy has been increasingly getting entangled through trade and aid. To assume relative stability on the basis of an expected continued rise in agricultural production (which continued to depend upon the vagaries of nature) and buffer stock operations is rather naive, to use a mild expression.

4. (iii) While it is true that absolute stability is neither attainable nor desirable for economic growth, because economic growth itself brings with it certain structural changes in the economic system from which there is no escape, it should be the aim of planning to bring these wide fluctuations under control. But the ability and determination of the Government of India to

implement effectively any scheme for controlling such phenomena are limited. Both in the matter of ensuring that the movements of relative prices accord with the priorities and targets set in the Plan and in the matter of preventing any considerable rise in prices of essential goods that enter into the consumption of low-income groups, the Government of India has failed miserably. This is seen from the fact that during the Third Plan, despite the hopes of the Planning Commission to contain inflation, the imbalance between money supply and aggregate output sharpened and both the index of wholesale prices and the consumer price index number of working class showed alarming increases. Index of wholesale prices which stood at 124.9 in 1960-61 rose to 191 2 in 1966-67 and the 1967-68 index is estimated at 214.3. Similarly, the consumer price index number of working class increased from 171 in 1960 to 255 in 1966 and 298 in November 1967.

5. Serious Resources Crisis

5. (i) The approach of the Planning Commission to mobilisation of resources for the Plan, both from domestic and foreign sources, is characterised by the same poverty of thinking which resulted in the abandoning of the Fourth Five Year Plan three years ago. Apart from indicating the overall magnitude of Rs. 200-300 crores of additional domestic resources per annum to be raised by the public sector, and the imperfectly worked-out and unrealistic export targets and the mirage of import substitution, the Planning Commission have not put forward any specific proposal or policy prescriptions to ensure that the country is taken out of the deep financial crisis into which it has sunk.

5. (ii) Unlike in the Second and Third Plans the primary constraint in the investment programme of the Fourth Plan is likely to be the domestic resources. The seriousness of the problem of domestic savings is brought out by the fact that both the average rate of domestic savings and marginal rate of savings have shown an alarming tendency to decline. Domestic savings, which increased from 8.5 per cent to 11.5 per cent have slumped to 6.4 per cent. Unfortunately, the Planning commission have, as a tactical step, desisted from suggesting any concrete measure to raise domestic savings and to ensure that

the present declining trend in the rate of savings is arrested. The Planning Commission's "Approach to the Fourth Plan" does not provide us with any guideline as to how the rate of domestic savings can be raised to the 20.2 per cent level required for sustaining the investment programmes under the Fourth Plan and how the marginal rate of savings, which has been of the order of about 11 per cent during the last decade, can be raised to at least 25 per cent so that the minimum targets of domestic resource mobilisation are achieved. By refusing to take the responsibility to suggest ways and means of raising additional resources needed for achieving the desired rate of growth, the Planning Commission and the Government of India are leading the nation again to the "brink of uncertainty" which witnessed the premature death of the Draft Fourth Plan three years ago.

6. Danger of Deficit Financing

6. (i) If the investment programmes implied in a 5-6 per cent rate of growth of national income (compound) per annum are to be carried out without solving the problem of real domestic savings, the net result will be the continuation of the present policy of dificit financing and the consequent inflationary pressures on economy.

6. (ii) Contrary to the Government's declared policy of eschewing deficit financing, the gap to be filled by creation of currency is expanding year after year. In the Third Plan the Planning Commission decided to have only a limited recourse to deficit financing, but unlike in the Second Plan there was no cushion of foreign exchange reserve that could be drawn upon. The Commission held that deficit financing within moderate limits had a place in developmental planning, but if it added to the purchasing power unduly, the consequence could be highly deleterious. This caution of the Planning Commission did not have much weight in the actual implementation of the Plan. During the Plan period the phenomenal increase in non-developmental expenditure by way of defence expenditure and the abnormal increases in prices did upset the original estimates of the Planning Commission. Consequently, the budget deficit of the Central Government increased to an unwarranted level of Rs. 1150 crores during the Plan period. Throughout the Third Plan

period, as also during the First and Second Plan, there was no proper and definite policy towards deficit financing. It was undertaken in an unplanned manner, without linking the volume of deficit financing year by year to any specific criterion. The shortfall in resources raised through taxation, borrowing, etc., was made good by the creation of additional money. Though it was laid down by the Planning Commission that only if the cost of living index did not increase and a large buffer stock of foodgrain was available, recourse to this method should be taken, this precaution was neglected in the actual implementation of the Plans.

7. Drastic Changes in Centre-State Financial Relations Needed

7. (i) The problem of domestic resource mobilisation cannot be effectively tackled unless drastic changes are made in the present pattern of Centre-State financial relations. Without a realignment of functions and resources as between the Centre and the States and without introducing the necessary constitutional amendments, the States cannot be expected to play a more effective role in raising additional domestic resources. While the Central Government has recourse to the printing press for undertaking deficit financing and has PL 480 counterpart funds for budgetary support, and has even the most elastic taxes under its jurisdiction, the States are left with inelastic taxes and inadequate sources for resource mobilisation.

7. (ii) A purposive improvement in Centre-State financial relations is not only desirable but also feasible. But this presupposes a substantial change in the Central Government's present intransigent disposition to the States. The concrete lines on which purposive modifications can, and must, be made are contained in the Memorandum on "Union-State Financial Relations" submitted by the Government of Kerala to the National Development Council and the Government of India in December, 1967.

8. Uncertainty of Foreign Exchange Resources

8. (i) The Commission's "Approach to the Fourth Plan" has completely glossed over the serious foreign exchange crisis which is fast developing. The target of 7 per cent rate of growth

in exports, though desirable in itself, has obviously been suggested without taking adequate note of the crisis in the international trade and monetary mechanism of the world capitalist system, the prolonged tendency of fluctuating commodity prices of primary producing countries, the worsening of their terms of trade, the bitter experiences of UNCTAD-II, and the impossibility of any scheme of export expansion of developing countries based on the benevolent disposition of the developed capitalist countries. In the short run, the vulnerability to the violent fluctuations in the world market prices of primary products is the most serious problem facing the traditional exports. It not only introduces serious instability into the consumption and living standards within the country, but also creates formidable difficulties for maintaining a steady flow of investment for long-term economic development.

8. (ii) During the Third Plan Period India's exports as a proportion of world exports declined from 1.2 per cent to about one per cent. The commodity composition of our exports, with the predominance of traditional commodities, showed little variation. Attempts to diversify our exports in terms of markets, with expanding trade with the socialist countries and a corresponding decline in our trade dependence on the capitalist countries, has got bogged down under pressures from vested interests both in India and abroad. The predictions of the votaries of Rupee devaluation regarding substantial increases in export earnings have gone awry. Instead of the expected increases in export earnings and the two-fold increase in income through increased output in actual user industries and the multiplier effect through several inter-industry linkages in the economic syetem, and instead of greater manoeuvrability in exchange assignment as a result of larger quantum of foreign exchange, we are today confronted with recession, idle capacity and prohibitive increase in unit costs of export industries. The continuance of inflationary pressures in the economy has further offset considerably whatever advantages that could have been reaped by the devaluation of the Rupee. In the Third Plan. the total import requirements were estimated at Rs. 5750 crores. However, in reality, it turned out to be much higher at Rs. 6208 crores, mainly due to increased imports of cereals. But these figures cannot be taken at their face value, for they exclude the

enormous imports under the PL 480 programme (which has been entirely excluded from the import bill prepared by the Planning Commission) and the unrestricted flow of gold and other smuggled articles, in respect of which no trustworthy data are available. During the Fourth Plan period, import requirement of the economy particularly if we assume an upward swing in industrial activity after recession, will further increase by roughly $ 500 million (roughly Rs. 400 crores). Imports at the end of the Fourth Plan will, thus, remain about $ 2,700 million (roughly, Rs. 2,160 crores). If our dependence on net foreign aid is to be reduced from the present level of $ 600 million to $ 300 million by the end of the Fourth Plan, exports will have to increase at an annual rate of 8 per cent in order to pay for the enhanced import bill of the country. To expect such a rate of export expansion or even a growth rate of 7 per cent, assuming some success in import substitution, is completely unrealistic in the context of the bankrupt export-import policies and programmes pursued by the Government of India. This conclusion is further strengthened by the reported view of the Union Ministry of Commerce that it will not be realistic to expect more than a 4 per cent rate of growth in exports during the Fourth Plan.

8 (iii) The experience of the recent UNCTAD conference clearly demonstrates the poverty of any future plans of developing countries based on the benevolent disposition of the developed or advanced countries Even the developed countries are developing and it will be unrealistic to expect the advanced countries to sustain the developmental efforts of the poor nations either through trade preferences or through aid.

8. (iv) It is now becoming increasingly clear that so long as the present structure of the economy continues and so long as the Government of India's attempts to build a capitalist society tied to foreign monopoly capital- and that too on the slender base of feudal relations in agriculture—persists, and so long as foreign companies are allowed to transfer abroad huge amounts as profits and dividends, we will not be able to raise additional domestic resources at a scale necessary for even the minimum rate of growth. The attempt to put more and more burdens on the common people and to achieve capitalist accumulation, or the resort to inflationary financing under the pretext of the

"Keynesian Model", will only result in social tensions. So long as Indian economy is tied to the world capitalist system through trade, aid, and private capital movements, external resources mobilisation at the desired rate cannot be expected.

9. SELF-RELIANCE

9. (i) The Planning Commission has made assumption that foreign aid (net) can be reduced to about half during the Fourth Plan period by resorting to self-help measures. Acceleration of the pace towards self-reliance has been an objective which the Government of India has been professing for several years by now, but here, as in many other fields of basic national economic policies, the divergence between professed objectives and actual practice has been very glaring.

9. (ii) No amount of pious wish will ensure a reduction in our present abject dependence on foreign aid. Unless the Government of India changes its policies regarding domestic resources mobilisation and is prepared to tax the rich sections of the community more adequately rather than increasing the burdens on the poor sections through bestowing concessions on foreign monopoly capital, and unless there is a determined policy of eliminating PL 480 imports forthwith, the objective of self-reliance will continue to be a mirage Unfortunately, the Planning Commission's approach does not give us any confidence that self-reliance will be realised during the Fourth Plan; nor do the actions of the Government of India in the current year. Despite a record production of 95 million tonnes of foodgrains in 1967-68, the food imports under PL 480 agreements are going to be 7.5 million tonnes in 1968. The continued dependence on PL 480 imports has not only adversely affected all attempts at generating self-sustained growth in agriculture, but it has also eroded our sense of national self-respect and economic independence.

9. (iii) The greatest danger to India's economic independence arises from the increasing penetration of foreign private monopoly capital in both the public and private sectors in India The Planning Commission has completely neglected this problem and have considered the problem of self-reliance only in terms of a 50 per cent reduction in net foreign aid. Apart from the fact that the gross foreign aid will still continue to be

much higher in view of the mounting repayment and interest payment obligations, it means that the growth of private foreign monopoly capital will be allowed to strengthen its position, thereby defeating the very objective of self-reliance.

9. (iv) Movement towards self-reliance also assumes decreasing dependence of the Indian economy on a few advanced capitalist countries as our major markets for export and import trade. The export-import policies of the Government of India have so far made no appreciable dent into the present geographical concentration of our foreign trade. Further, the Government of India is pursuing a capitalist path of development based on increasing foreign capital penetration, thereby cutting at the very roots of economic self-reliance. The unfortunate fact is that such a path is being followed in a period when the world capitalist system itself is fast disintegrating.

9. (v) The objective of self-reliance in the field of planning and economic development is linked with the question of India's foreign policy. While the Indian economy during the last 17 years of planning was getting more and more dependent on private foreign capital, joint ventures and financial-technical collaboration with private big business abroad, the concept of "non-alignment' and "independent foreign policy", so laboriously built up by Pandit Nehru, was forgotten. In fact, whatever "national consensus" was built up in the country on questions of foreign policy has been eroded by the increasing economic dependence of the country on foreign capitalist countries.

10. No Advance towards Industrialisation

10 (i) One of the glaring omissions in the Planning Commission's document on "Approach to the Fourth Plan" is the desired pattern of industrialisation and the changes envisaged in the distribution of national income by industrial origin. During the first three Five Year Plans, though the share of "agriculture and allied activities" in national income declined from 48.9 per cent (1950-51) to 38.7 per cent (in 1965-66), there was only a nominal increase in the percentage share of "mining and manufacturing sector". The share of the "services sector", on the other hand, has been steadily increasing. In 1950-51 income from this sector formed only 34.4 per cent of the net domestic product. By 1965-66, this rose to 43.3 per cent.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL INCOME BY INDUSTRIAL ORIGIN (AT CONSTANT PRICES)

	1950-51	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66
1. Agriculture	48.9	47.9	46.2	38.7
2. Mining and Industries	16.7	16.8	16.5	18.0
3. Services	34.4	35.3	37.3	43.3
4. Net domestic product	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

10. (ii) The significant expansion of the tertiary sector or services sector only indicates the disproportionate growth of all kinds of non-productive services, including the expansion of the bureaucratic machine. It also indicates that, unless the outlays under the Plan are utilised judiciously for building up a modern industrial base with due priority given to basic and key industries, particularly machines which produce machines, and all forms of unproductive investments are avoided, it will not be possible for the country to make any advance in the foreseeable future on the road to industrialisation and modernisation.

10. (iii) Instead of taking bold steps, towards industrialisation, indicating clearly the lines on which the Indian economy can be freed from the grip of recessionary trends, thereby giving a perspective for dynamic industrial growth, the Planning Commission has taken the passive approach of bringing about "conditions within which the maximum utilisation capacity already built is achieved" and of ensuring that "new investments are undertaken in accordance with Plan priorities" without specifying these priorities. The total inadequacy of this approach should be viewed against the background of the persisting recessionary trends and the imbalances between the major sub-groups in the industrial sector. It should also be remembered that the scramble for unwarranted capacity creation has been the mechanism by which the private sector in India has pre-empted capacity and prevented the public sector from attaining its "commanding heights". With substantial capacity remaining unutilised and unit costs high, the private sector has succeeded in blackmailing the Government of India into accepting demands for all

sorts of concessions, tax reductions, cash subsidies and export incentives and assistance.

10. (iv) The claim of the Government of India that as a result of a number of steps taken to arrest the recession, the trend towards improvement of industrial production, which was noticeable in the second half of 1967, has been greatly facilitated by "bumber crops" in agriculture is as flippant and unreliable as the expectations of continued good harvests based on the vicissitudes of monsoons. The average index of industrial production for 1967 has reported a nominal gain of 1.4 per cent over the preceding year. It is hazardous, therefore, to expect a dynamic industrial growth rate to emerge during the Fourth Plan period unless a radical departure from the present industrial policies and programmes of the Government of India is made.

11. Crisis in Agriculture

11. (i) Just as no appreciable advance towards industrialisation can be expected during the Fourth Plan if the Planning Commssion s approach is to be accepted, in the field of agriculture also the acceptance of their approach would amount to the continuation of the present crisis and the perpetuation of an agricultural production "strategy" based mainly on good weather and expectations of uninterrupted "bumber crops". While placing emphasis on technological aspects of production strategy such as high yielding varieties, the application of inputs and the expansion of credit facilities, the Planning Commission has paid only lip service to institutional factors such as changes in agrarian structure and speedy completion of land reforms. Without removing all forms of concealed tenancies and all sources of feudal oppression it will be unrealistic to expect any noticeable expansion in agricultural production on the basis of technological escalation in agriculture.

12. Widening Gap between Plan Projections and Plan Performance

12. (i) The depth of the crisis into which planning in India has sunk can be best demonstrated by a detailed study of the gap between Plan objectives and projections, on the one

hand and Plan performance, on the other. There have been serious short-falls in the case of many important sectors and commodities. This has been visible even in the case of important industrial products such as finished steel, aluminium, nitrogenous fertilizers and electricity, to mention only few*. Moreover, the original targets have often been revised during the Plan period even to the extent of upsetting the priorities and inter-sectoral balances. Thus, planning in India (which by definition involves a set of definitive methods for achieving stated objectives) has certainly failed in a big way.

13. The Spectre of Increasing Unemployment

13. (i) The gap between Plan projections and Plan performances has been particularly evident in the case of employment creation. In spite of the Plan efforts the volume of unemployment has been persistently growing all these years. The general aim of the Five Year Plans on the employment front has been to absorb at least the equivalent of new entrants to the labour force in gainful economic activities. But in actual practice the Five Year Plans have miserably failed to expand employment opportunities commensurate with the increase in labour force in each Plan period. Additional employment generated in the First Plan in the Public and Private sectors (excluding trade and commerce) was of the order of 4.5 millions. As against an increase of 12 million in the labour force, employment opportunities created in the Second Plan was of the order of eight millions. Starting with a backlog of 5.3 million unemployed, the Second Plan ended with a backlog of seven million. Against a further addition of 17 millions to the labour force, the Third Plan set the target of new jobs at 14 millions. The additional employment created during the Third Plan period was more or less equal to this low target. This leaves a backlog of 10 millions at the end of the Third Plan period. By now, i.e., in 1968, the backlog of unemployment might have swelled further. In addition to the unemployed, there was also the under-employed whose number is officially reckoned at 15 to 18 millions. So the outstanding unemployment (including

* For details see Annexures III, IV and V.

under-employment) at present may be anything around 20 millions.

13. (ii) The present steady growth of unemployment and under-employment, in spite of successive Five Year Plans, constitutes perhaps the most formidable indictment on Indian planning. While millions of common people with employment eke out only a meagre subsistance, the unemployed face grinding poverty. It is surprising that the Planning Commission has not given serious attention to this problem, not to mention the fact that no targets for additional employment creation and reduction in unemployment has been attempted in the Approach document. The poverty of the Planning Commission's approach to the burning question of unemployment is seen from the following casual and general remarks contained in the document :

> The provision of larger employment opportunities is one of the main objectives of a plan of development. At the same time, the pattern of employment has to be such as to promote further development. In the agricultural sphere, the emphasis on non-irrigated agriculture, on the small holder, on the fuller utilisation of labour as a resource, would help to spread the benefits of development and provide opportunities for gainful employment. In the industrial sphere, apart from the development of the infra-structure, the emphasis on the dispersal of industries and the encouragement to the small scale sector will have a similar effect. If ways can be found to canalise the increased incomes of these categories in savings or insurance, this would give them greater security (p. 50).

14. Uneven Distribution of Income and Undue Concentration of Wealth

14. (i) In the "Approach to the Fourth Plan" the Planning Commission has made passing references to the problems of distribution, the "prevention of the growth of disparities and possibilities of restraining incomes and standards of consumption of the affluent sections of society". But the Planning Commission has failed to examine the root cause of the prevailing disparities, namely, the uneven pattern of property ownership

and the process of feudal and capitalist appropriation of economic surplus. With regard to the problems of economic concentration and monopoly in the industrial sector, the problem of Governmental and quasi-governmental institutions such as IFC, NIDC and ICIC functioning in a way which promotes and further consolidates the monopoly groups in India, etc.. the Planning Commission has found it fit to remain silent.

14. (ii) In fact, the series of suggestions made by the Planning Commission regarding the "Operation of the Mixed Economy", if implemented, will only aggravate the problems of monopoly concentration and the uneven distribution of incomes and opportunities. Apart from the generally acceptable proposals relating to fair distribution of scarce imported materials through public agencies such as the State Trading Corporation, the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation and the Food Corporation of India, the Planning Commission's proposals regarding the reduction of "price and allocations control to the minimum" in many fields, the exemption of industries requiring no foreign exchange or only marginal assistance by way of foreign exchange for capital equipment from the need to secure industrial licensing, and the reduction in import control in the case of certain categories of maintenance imports, will only further accentuate the existing unevenness in distribution.

15. Regional Disparities in Income Levels

15. (i) Reduction in regional disparities has been one of the professed objectives of the earlier Five Year Plans. But in reality regional imbalances and disparties in India have been accentuated during the last 17 years of planning*. It was expected that, at least in the Fourth Five Year Plan, effective measures would be taken to progressively reduce the existing disparities in income levels as between the various regions and States in India.

15. (ii) From the prescriptions given in the Approach document it is clear that neither the Planning Commission nor the Government of India has made any detailed diagnosis of the problem. Unless we detect the root cause of widening regional

* See Annexures I and II.

disparties and understand it in its various ramifications and take drastic action, the problem is likely to stay with us indefinitely, The fact is that under capitalism, which the Government of India has helped in strengthening with the support of private foreign monopoly capital and foreign aid, there is an inherent tendency for regional imbalances to get accentuated. Just as the international capitalist system, wherein the advanced or developed countries tend to develop faster while the backward or underdeveloped countries remain poor, within a capitalist country, regions which are already developed tend to develop faster while the backward regions remain stagnant. Uneven development of regions is, thus, a basic law of development under capitalism. The above tendency has been further aggravated by the pattern of Central-sector investments in the States followed by the Government of India during the last 17 years of planning.

15. (iii) In the Approach document, the Planning Commission has taken a completely restricted and narrow view of the problem of regional disparities. This is evident from the following statement :

> The obvious first step in correcting regional and area imbalances is to provide the appropriate infra-structure needed for development. This has to be accompanied by programmes of agriculture and industry which will be generally based on conservation and development of natural resources in the area.

Thus, the Planning Commission's view seems to preclude the possibility of any change in policy relating to the allocation of Central-sector investments in industry in less developed regions specifically ment for quickening the pace of industrial development of these regions. If this inference is correct, the majority of less developed States in India, whose per capita incomes are below the all-India average, cannot expect a better deal even in the Fourth Plan. In the guise of static concepts of industrial location, Central-sector investments will continue to flow to States and regions which are relatively more developed, thus further accentuating regional disparities.

16. Need for Radical Revision of National Policies

16. (i) The basic defect of Indian economic planning during the last 17 years has been the continued implementation

of wrong economic policies at the national level and the complete callousness with which even those aspects of national policies on which certain amount of consensus was evolved in the country were altered and mutilated from time to time in the name of "pragmatism". In many important spheres of developmental effort the last two decades witnessed periodic or seasonal fluctuations in national economic policies.

16. (ii) Probably no other aspect of national economic policy has undergone such periodic changes as the Government of India's policies in the field of food and agriculture. The Government of India has failed to provide the nation an equitable distribution of the cereals produced in the country. Prices of food articles have shot up to unprecedented level There is wide disparity among the States in the prices and avilability of food-grains. Deficit States like Kerala thus suffer in the absence of a national food policy and due to the frequent changes in whatever rudiments of policy the Government of India has announced. The people in Kerala are finding that in an year of "bumper crop" the rice ration is reduced and even for that reduced ration a higher price has to be paid. How can good and friendly relationship between the Central Government and the States develop under such conditions ?

16. (iii) One should have expected the Planning Commission and the Government of India to attempt an honest rethinking about the basic national economic policies and a clear exposition of the lines on which a radical departure from the present policies should be made. Instead, they have dilated upon a set of imperfectly worked out proposals and peripheral policy issues. What is needed is a radical revision of the existing policies and a plan of action to ensure that the accepted policies are given effect to and the present gap between plan objectives and plan performance is effectively bridged. Such a revision of policy is imperative not only in respect of economic policies, but the whole range of national policies such as political and social policies and even our foreign policy.

ANNEXURE I

Ranking of States according to Per Capita Income, 1960-61

Rank	*State*	*Per capita income* (*Rs.*)	*Index* (*All-India* :100)
1	Delhi	871.61	260.5
2	Maharashtra	468.54	140.0
3	West Bengal	464.51	138 9
4	Punjab	461.31	134.9
5	Gujarat	393.39	117.6
	All-India	334.54	100.00
6	Madras	334.09	99.9
7	Assam	333.34	99.6
8	Tripura	329.86	98.6
9	Himachal Pradesh	328.35	98.1
10	Kerala	314.86	94.1
11	Mysore	304.71	91.1
12	Uttar Pradesh	297.35	88.9
13	Jammu & Kashmir	289.02	86.4
14	Andhra Pradesh	287.01	85.8
15	Madhya Pradesh	285 35	85.3
16	Orissa	276 22	82.6
17	Rajasthan	267.43	79.9
18	Bihar	220 69	66 0

Source : National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi.

ANNEXURE II

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF STATE-WISE POPULATION PRODUCTIVE CAPITAL, EMPLOYMENT AND VALUE ADDED—1965.

State	*Population*	*Productive capital*	*Employ-ment*	*Value added by manufac-ture*
Maharashtra	9.05	17.29	19.83	25.62
West Bengal	8.03	19.65	22.00	22.88
Madras	7.49	7.74	8.39	8.51
Gujarat	4.75	6.47	8.63	7.97
Bihar	10.54	6.98	5.58	6.98
Uttar Pradesh	16.69	7.25	7.33	8.59
Andra Pradesh	8.07	3.88	5.04	2 95
Assam	2.75	2.27	2.02	1.63
Jammu & Kashmir	0.78	0.08	0.23	0.17
Kerala	3.86	1.41	3.86	1.93
Madhya Pradesh	7.39	8.38	3.90	3.18
Mysore	5.35	4.24	4.25	4.27
Orissa	3.97	5.95	1.62	1.98
Punjab	4.73	4.93	3.53	3.42
Rajasthan	4.66	1.93	1.71	1.20
Others	1.89	1.55	2.08	1.42

Source : National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi.

ANNEXURE III

PRINCIPAL PHYSICAL TARGETS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN

(1)	Production development in the base 1950-51 (2)	Target of additional production development in the plan (3)	Achievement in 1955-56 (4)	Percentage of achievement (5)
(i) Foodgrains (m.tons)	54.0	7.6	10.9	143.4
(ii) Cotton (lakh bales)	29.7	12.6	10.3	81.8
(iii) Jute (lakh bales)	33.0	20.9	9.0	43.1
(iv) Sugarcane (in terms of gur lakh tons)	56.2	7.0	2.4	34.3
(v) Oilseeds (lakh tons)	50.8	4.0	5.6	140.0
2. IRRIGATION AND POWER :				
(i) Area irrigated (million acres)	51.0	19.7	14.0	71.1
(ii) Electrical energy (installed capacity million KWt)	2.3	1.3	1.1	84.6
3. INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION :				
(i) Finished steel (lakh tons)	9.8	6.7	3.0	44.8
(ii) Pig iron (lakh tons)	15.7	12.6	2.2	17.5
(iii) Cement (lakh tons)	26.9	21.1	19.0	90.1
(iv) Aluminum ('000 tons)	3.7	8.3	3.6	43.4

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(v) Fertiliser :				
(a) Ammonium sulphate ('000 tons)	46.3	404.0	347.7	86.1
(b) Superphosphate ('000 tons)	55.0	125.0	16.0	12 8
(vi) Locomotive (Nos)	3	170	176	103.5
(vii) Cotton manufactures :				
(a) Yarn (million lbs.)	1179	461	454	98.48
(b) Mill cloth (million yds.)	3718	982	1384	140.94
(c) Handloom cloth (million yds.)	810	890	639	71.80
(viii) Jute manufactures ('000 tons)	824	376	230	16 17
(ix) Bicycle ('000 Nos)	97	433	416	96.07
(x) Sewing machines ('000 Nos)	33	58.5	78	133.33
(xi) Power alcohol (million gallons)	5	13.5	5.4	40.00
(xii) Sugar ('000 tons)	1100	400	760	190.00
4. TRANSPORT				
Shipping tonnage :				
(a) Coastal (lakh GRT)	2.2	1.05	0.2	19.50
(b) Overseas (lakh GRT)	1.7	1.15	0.7	60.87

ANNEXURE IV

PRINCIPAL PHYSICAL TARGETS AND ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SECOND FIVE YEAR PLAN

	Unit	*Production targets*	*Actual production*	*pecentage of achievement*
Steel (finished)	Million tons	4.3	2.2	51.2
Foodgrains	do	75.0	79.6	106.1
Cotton	Lakh bales	55.0	54.0	98.2
Jute	do	50.0	40.0	80.0
Sugarcane	Lakh tons of gur	71.0	104.0	146.5
Oilseeds	Lakh tons	70.0	65.0	93.1
Nitrogenous fertilisers (in terms of Nitrogen)	'000 tons	290.0	110.0	37.9
Phosphatic fertilisers (in terms of P_2O_5)	'000 tons	120.0	55.0	45.8
Textile machinery	Rs. crores	17.0	9.0	52.9
Cement machinery	Rs. crores	2.0	0.6	30.0
Paper machinery	Rs crores	4.0	—	—
Aluminium	'000 tons	25.0	18.5	75.0
Newsprint	'000 tons	60.0	25.0	41.7
Chemical pulp	tons	30.009.0	—	—
Soda ash	'000 tons	230.0	145.0	63.0
Caustic soda	'000 tons	135.0	100.0	74.1
Dyestuffs	Million lbs.	22.0	11.5	52.3
Cement	Million tons	13.0	8.5	65.4

ANNEXURE V

PRINCIPAL PHYSICAL TARGETS AND ACHIEVEMENTS THE THIRD FIVE YEAR PLAN

		Unit	*Plan target*	*Achievement*	*Percentage of achievement*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.	Foodgrains	(million tons)	100	72.3	72.3
2.	Oilseeds	do	9.8	6.1	62.2
3.	Sugarcane	(gur) do	10.0	12.1	121.0
4.	Cotton	(million bales)	7.0	4.7	67.1
5.	Jute	do	6.2	4.5	72.6
6.	Finished steel	(million tons)	6.8	4 6	67.6
6.	Aluminium	('000 tons)	80.0	65.0	81.3
8.	Nitrogenous fertilisers (in terms of Nitrogen)	('000 tons)	800	60	75.0
9.	Electricity	(million KWt)	12.7	10.2	80.3

Note : In a covering letter dated New Delhi, 18 May 1968, to all members of the National Development Council, E. M. S. Namboodiripad said :

The enclosed note had, in fact, been ready before yesterday's meeting of the National Development Council. I have, however, made certain modifications in the light of some points which came up during yeasterday's discussions.

There is one important point which came up in the course of the Orissa Chief Minister's contribution yesterday which has not been touched upon in the note but which I would like to mention here. His criticism of the planning process and its failures so far has been just the opposite of mine. If his advice is to be accepted, there will be an end to all planning. I am of the view that on his way lies disaster. What we require is not the abandonment of planning but planning on correct lines.

It is here that my point regarding lack of perspective and lack of socialist outlook becomes important. As the recent UNCTAD Conference has shown, every underdeveloped country outside the socialist camp is still lagging behind the developed countries ; the gulf that divides the "developed" and "developing" countries is still widening with the result that it may be truly said that it is the developed countries that are still developing. Can this state of affairs be changed without our country taking the socialist path, without adandoning the illusion that we can develop our country along capitalist path ? This is the straight question which any truthful student of Indian economy has to answer.

A word about the "ideological considerations" which, according to the Chief Minister of Orissa, have done havoc. Does this mean that he is prepared to consider questions of policy from the one and the only point of view of the results that can be attained through this or that policy and method of planning ? If so, he should be prepared to give up the capitalist method and adopt the socialist method. For, a comparison of the results yielded in the USSR and the capitalist world in the inter-war years, in Eastern Europe and the capitalist world in

the post-Second World War years, in India and China during the last 20 years—all these show that, whether it is in relation to the general rate of growth or the rate of industrialisation, the countries that have adopted the socialist system have shown a better record than those under the capitalist system. If my friend therefore goes by the practical experience and not by any "ideological considerations" he should be prepared to prefer the socialist to the capitalist system.

ANTI COMMUNIST GANG-UP IN KERALA

The Right Communist leader of Kerala, T. V. Thomas, concluded his speech in the Kerala Legislative Assembly on October 21, 1969, explaining why he tendered resignation from the Ministry, with the following revealing words : "If it took 20 years of hard effort to fight and defeat the Congress, I do not think even a period of five years would be too much to defeat the Marxists who are incessantly following anti-people policies".

We have quoted the above passage from the central organ of the Right Communist Party, *New Age*, dated November 2, 1969, lest we should be accused of misreporting. The very fact that the *New Age* gave long extracts from the speeches of all the mini-front Ministers who had tendered their resignations on October 17, including the above passage from Thomas's speech, shows the importance attached by the central leadership of the Right Communist Party to the hostility with which their party and its allies of the mini-front in Kerala treat the CPI(M).

A Peep Into the Past

This is nothing new for the Right Communist Party. Ever since the present leaders of the CPI(M) initiated their struggle against revisionism within the old united CPI, those who consitute the present leadership of the Right Communist Party have shown no scruple in trying to malign, discredit and destroy those who carried on the struggle against revisionism. One cannot but recall in this connection the campaign of slander and lies unleashed by the present Right Communist leadership on the issue of the India-China conflict—a campaign which was on all fours with the campaign of the Home Ministry headed by the infamous Nanda and such notorious chauvinists as the Jana Sangh. That was why it was very easy for Nanda and his Home Ministry to try to "prove" their charges against us by extensive quotations from the material produced by the revisionists.

It is not proposed here to trace the history of the bitter

battle that we had to fight against the revisionists from 1955 onwards (when they came out with the slogan of a "national democratic front" including the "progressive Congress led by Nehru at one end and the Communists at the other end). Nor do we propose to tell the story of how we had to face the combined assault made by the present-day Right Communist leaders on the issue of India-China and Indo-Pakistan conflicts in 1959-65. We would confine ourselves to the story of how, in the postfourth general election period, they used their position within the United Front and within the Government of Kerala to undermine our position among, and discredit us before, the people with a view to finally "defeating" us—exactly on the lines indicated in the above-quoted passage from T. V. Thomas' speech.

It is necessary in this connection to compare the political stand taken by the Right Communist leadership on the question of the united front of Kerala in 1964-65, i.e., on the eve of a mid-tem electioin. The all-India congress of their party, held in Bombay about two months before that election, made the following characterisation of the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress :

"..The 'Kerala Congress' (Rebel Congress) and the Muslim League, apart from the fact that they seek to divide the people in the name of religion and caste, their role had always been very reactionary whether it be in the matter of land reforms, Education Act. or state trading in foodgrains. ..That is why the Kerala State Council of our Party ..will have no truck with reactionary communal groups such as the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress. The Seventh Congress of the Party endores that stand" (Bombay Congress Resolution on Kerala Elections).

This was not acceptable to us. Our party wanted to take the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress at their word, i.e., their policy declaration that they wanted to inflict a crushing defeat on the Congress.

We were of course conscious that there were serious ideological-political differences between the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress on the one hand and the democratic opposition on the other. We, therefore, could not think of

having any electoral united front with them; we and they would have to fight each other in a large number of constituencies.

We, however, felt that there was a danger that this fight between them and us may, in a large number of constituencies, lead to the victory of the Congress candidates. Since it was our intention to avoid this if it was at all possible, we suggested that, in relation to such constituencies, there might be some understanding that neither they nor we would put up official candidates but would sponsor independents acceptable to both sides.

This, we felt, would help defeating the Congress on a much bigger scale than if the Muslim League-Kerala Congress alliance and the democratic opposition were to range themselves against each other in all the constituencies of the state. If would, however, leave us free of any political compromises with them, since they and we would be fighting each other in the majority of constituencies.

Such an electoral policy was not acceptable to the Right Communists. Not only did they refuse to have anything to do with us on the ground that we were following this policy, but they set themselves up as a "left-democratic front" simultaneously fighting the Congress and the "still more reactionary" Kerala Congress-Muslim League alliance.

The result of such a three-cornered contest all over the state was that, while the Right Communists suffered the biggest fiasco in their life (winning only three seats out of about 100 which they contested, losing depositis in 75 per cent of them) they helped the Congress to win a score of seats which it would have lost if they had joined us in fighting the Congress.

"RESPECTABLE" COMPANY NOW

It is necessary to recall in this chapter the history of the U. F. movement in Kerala because the Right Communists are today in the "respectable" company of those very two parties whom they considered the "sworn enemies of the demmocratic opposition" only five years ago. They broke with us in 1964-65 because we refused to accept their position that tht Muslim League and the Kerala Congress were so reactionary that the victory of the Congress was preferable to a limited electoral understanding with them. Today, however, these very two parties are their colleagues in the four-party Ministry formed after toppling the CPI(M) led Ministry.

Behind this apparent contradiction in their approach to the Muslim League and Kerala Congress is an outlook common to their policies of 1964-65 and 1969—the outlook clearly explained by T. V. Thomas in the above-quoted passage of his speech in the Kerala Legislature.

In 1964-65, they thought that they could discredit us among the people by telling them that we were trying to "collaborate with the two communal reactionary political parties" of Kerala, namely, the Muslim League and Kerala congress. They thought that such a campaign would so "isolate" us that we would be reduced to a negligible political force in the state.

The result of the mid-term elections, however, was an eye-opener to them. They therefore thought that it was necessary to project a new image of their party—the image of an active partner in the non-Congress united front. They retraced their steps and came to the U. F. including the Muslim League. They appeared to be in such a chastened mood that they were even prepared to accept the leadership of the CPI(M) in the U. F., as well as in the Government accepting the representatives of the CPI(M) as the Convener of the U. F. Co-ordination Committee and as Chief Minister.

As if to atone for the "sin" of considering the "reactionary communal organisations" as "untouchable" in the electoral battle at the time of the mid-term election in Kerala, they swung to the other extreme after the fourth general election by joining ministries dominated by the Jana Sangh, Swatantra and the Akalis in Bihar, U.P. and Punjab. They thus shifted from their original anti-communal reactionary stand to the subsequent anti-Congress stand.

Even at this stage, however, they continued to pursue the same basic attitude of hostility to the CPI(M). It is not proposed here to explain what they did in West Bengal before and after the fourth general election, in the critical days of 1967 when Ajoy Mukherjee was on the point of toppling the U.F. Ministry in collaboration with the Congress, in the days following the 1969 mid-term election in West Bengal and so on. We would confine ourselves to their activities in Kerala since the U.F. Ministry was formed in March 1967.

The 31-odd months during which that Ministry functioned showed how they continued to pursue within the U.F. and the

Ministry the same tactics of trying to "discredit and isolate" the CPI(M) among the people. The toppling of that Ministry in October 1969, the subsequent formation of the present mini-front-Kerala Congress Ministry and the scarcely concealed intention of further strengthening the Ministry by including the Indira group of the Congress Legislature Party in it are the culmination of these tactics.

SPEARHEADING THE ANTI-MARXIST CAMP

Before we start narrating the story of the disruptive activities of the Right Communist Party within the U.F. and the Government of Kerala, it is necessary to make it clear that the Right Communists' hostility to the CPI(M), their determination to "fight and defeat the Marxists" as was put by T. V. Thomas, arises out of the fact that just like the other bourgeois-petty bourgeois political parties and groups, the Right Communists too cannot tolerate the uncompromisingly militant class line adopted by us on every issue facing the nation.

They cannot tolerate our opposition to their line of "national democratic front" including the Congress led by Nehru once and by Indira Gandhi today.

They cannot tolerate our determined struggle against their national-chauvinistic stand on such issues as the India-China border dispute and the Indo-Pakistani conflicts.

They cannot tolerate us because, while rejecting the nihilist renunciation of the parliamentary form of struggle a la Naxalites, we do not accept the revisionist concept of subordinating the class struggle to the parliamentary form of struggle. Their own stand on this question was formulated by the Right Communist Minister, M. N. Govindan Nair, on the formula : "Administration and struggle cannot go together, either you leave the administration and carry on the struggle."

We, on the other hand, look upon our participation in Ministries formed wherever the people elect us by a majority, as "one specific form of struggle to win more and more people, and more and more allies of the proletariat and its allies in the struggle for the cause of people's democracy and at a later stage for socialism". (*New Situation and Party's Tasks*, Page 70).

The Right Communists, of course, are not alone in their opposition to our militant class line. Some other parties of the

democratic opposition, not to speak of such non-Congress parties as the BKD, the DMK, the Akalis, the Muslim League and so on are also as opposed to this militant class line as the Right Communists. That is why these parties are also ranged against us, ranged with the Right Communists, not only in Kerala, but in West Bengal and other places as well.

The Right Communists, however, are clearer and more consistent in their opposition to us and our militant class line than any other party. That is why, as opposed even to such parties as the Muslim League and the DMK (who have at times ranged themselves with us and against the Right Communists), the latter have always and consistently been hostile to us.

Although fundamentally opposed to the militant class line advocated and practised by us, parties like the Muslim League have often been swayed by such considerations as the need to fight and defeat the Congress, and, on that ground, been prepared to collaborate with us. The Right Communists, however, are consistent in trying to secure the objective clearly spelt out by T. V. Thomas. Having been a part of the communist movement for some time, they are more aware than other parties of the damage that can be done to the cause represented by them, if the militant class line represented by us are accepted by the masses of the people.

That is why, whenever the other parties (either within the non-Congress front or inside the Congress) want to fight us, discredit us and wipe us out if possible, they look upon the Right Communists as their logical leaders and mentors. The Baffaki Thangals, the Ajoy Mukherjees, the Nandas, the Indira Gandhis and so on find in the Right Communists the most consistent and effective fighters against the cause represented by the CPI(M).

Not only the Congress and the Kerala Congress who have always been opposed to us, but even the Muslim League and the ISP who collaborated with us in the 1964-65 electoral battle against the Congress, were feeling unhappy that we were rising in the esteem of the people of Kerala. They found that the emergence of our party as the biggest party in the legislature elected in 1965, the heroic ideological-political battle waged by us in the difficult days of the Indo-Pakistan war, the bold lead given by our party in the mass struggles for food and other demands of the working people in the 1965-66 Kerala *bandh* and

other struggles—all these had heightened our influence among the people.

This made it necessary for them to accept us as a very influential political party with which they should forge an electoral alliance for fighting the fourth general election. At the same time even while forming this alliance with us and even while conceding that we were the leading partner in the U.F., they felt that we should not be allowed to so utilise our position in the U.F. and the Government as to further expand and consolidate the militant movement of the working class and the peasantry as a force which will threaten their own line of class collaboration and compromise with the "progressive" Congress leadership.

FOOD PROBLEM—WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

Seen against this background, the significance of the assault against the CPI(M) Ministers, launched by the Right Communists within the first month of the formation of the Ministry, will become clear. We are referring to the vicious attack against the CPI(M) Food Minister, Comrade K. R. Gowri, on her handling of the food portfolio. The Right Communists were joined in this attack by the ISP, the Muslim League and the RSP within the U.F. as well as by the Kerala Congress and the Congress from the opposition.

This combined attack of the future "mini-front", in alliance with the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition, culminated in the demand made by the then Right Communist State Secretary and the present Chief Minister, Achutha Menon, that Comrade Gowri should be relieved of the food portfolio. This demand was immediately taken up by the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition. This combined offensive on the food issue, spearheaded by the Right Communists, took place in the first half year of the existence of the U.F. Ministry.

It should be mentioned in this connection that the statement of policy adopted by the seven-party United Front before the fourth general election—a statement signed among others by the then State Secretary and present Chief Minister, Achutha Menon, himself, had made it clear that the food problem of Kerala could not be tackled by any Government in Kerala except

with the solid support of the Central Government. We quote from that Policy Statement :

> A difficult problem which any Government in Kerala has to face is the food problem. That it has become so serious is due to the wrong policies pursued by the Centre. Though this state is deficient in food production, it earns foreign exchange so sorely needed by the country and as such it is the responsibility of the Centre to see that its people are not made to starve but enough foodgrains are provided to meet the needs of the state.
>
> The Government will demand of the Centre to provide in time all the rice requirements of the state's people at prices within the capacity of the poor people of Kerala and will seek the co-operation of the people to exert the necessary pressure on the Centre. It is our opinion that to solve the food problem, substantial changes have to be made in the policies at present pursued by the Central Government. For instance, it is necessary to bring wholesale trade in food grains into the State Sector, ensuring that small traders and co-operative societies are not adversely affected, guarantee fair prices to the cultivating peasants while at the same time organising distribution in such a way as to make food available to the consumers at low prices. All this cannot be done by a State Government alone, specially the Government in a deficit state like Kerala. What the Kerala Government will do is to exert pressure on the Centre to concede the demand that Kerala should get the rice it needs at low prices.

It was in consonance with this that the Food and Chief Ministers of the U.F. Government made persistent demands on the Centre that it should honour its commitments by making a steady supply of rice for maintaining a minimum rice ration of six ounces per head per day. The CPI(M) and its Ministers tried to impress on the people, as well as on the constituents of the U.F., that if the people of Kerala are to be saved from acute food famine and its consequence, they should put up a joint fight against the Centre.

This campaign of the party was so convincing that the very first session of the legislature adopted a unanimous resolution demanding of the Centre that it honour its commitments. The

State Food Advisory Committee also endorsed the demand. As for the United Front, it sent a delegation to meet the Prime Minister to protest against the Centre's callousness toward Kerala's needs and buttressed it by organising a one-day Kerala *bandh* on September 11, 1967.

From Free Trade to Rigorous Control

While the Right Communists were obliged to pay lip-service to this demand on the Centre, they based their entire mass campaign on the slanderous formula, "The Food Minister and her party are responsible for the difficulties faced by the people". Within the first few days of the formation of the Ministry, the Right Communists demanded that control on the movement of foodgrains within the state should be withdrawn.

This control, it may be mentioned, had been established under President's rule in order to facilitate procurement from surplus districts and surplus regions even in deficit districts. The CPI(M) was of the view that, if procurement was to continue, free movement of foodgrains from surplus to deficit districts had to be checked. The Right Communists, however, demanded that free movement should be permitted.

This was, of course, a popular demand. People in deficit districts thought they could get more foodgrains from the surplus districts if free movement was permitted. People even in the surplus districts found that movement control was a source of corruption. The Right Communists therefore thought that our party and its Ministers would be discredited if the people were told that movement control was continuing because the CPI(M) insisted on it.

They were emboldened in this because other constituents of the U.F. like the Muslim League and the ISP as well as the Kerala Congress opposition were in principle opposed to the very idea of food control; free trade was their panacea for all the ills on the food front. The Right Communists, therefore, found it very easy to rally almost the entire United Front as well as the opposition against the CPI(M) on this issue, although their all-India policy was rigorous control on foodgrains trade. The pressure built upon this issue was so great that, in the end, the movement control had to be lifted after the procurement season was over.

In a few weeks, however, the Right Communists began to sing another tune. The most unprincipled opportunists that they are, they swung from the demand for the lifting of movement control to the other extreme of demanding full control. Procurement of the entire surplus, nationalisation of the entire rice trade, taking over of rice mills, rigorous enforcement of control and rationing rules, etc., were the slogans with which they now thought they could beat us.

SHIELDING THE CENTRE

They conveniently covered up the fact that everyone of these measures required the legal-administrative sanction of the Central Government as well as financial assistance from the Centre. The protracted correspondence entered into between the State and the Central Governments on the taking over of rice mills, as well as between the State Government and the Food Corporation of India with regard to removing private traders from the wholesale trade in foodgrains, was placed before the Co-ordination Committee of the U.F. Those who read the correspondence came to realise that it was not lack of any effort on the part of the Food Minister and her department, but the definite policy pursued by the Centre that stood in the way of implementing the democratic slogans with regard to rice milling and rice trade.

But the Right Communists went on telling the people that the Centre did not stand in the way of the implementation of these democratic policies; it was the obstinacy of the Food Minister who was interested in maintaining private traders and rice millowners who were the sympathisers and supporters of the CPI(M) that was responsible for the non-fulfilment of these demands. In this campaign against the Food Minister and her party, naturally, the Right Communists were "ably" assisted by the spokesman of the Central Government who gave false figures of supplies from the Centre to Kerala and projected an image of an "inefficient" State Government blaming a "solicitous" Central Government.

The base treachery indulged in by the Right Communists was clear on September 11, 1967—the day on which, as has been already mentioned, the U.F. had called for the observance of a Kerala *bandh*. This was in protest against the failure of

the Central Government in fulfilling its promise to maintain its supplies—a failure which led to the totally inadequate supplies of just three ounces of rice in a week during which fell the national festival of Onam.

On that very day, which was being observed throughout the state as a day of protest against the Central Government's failure to fulfil its promise to supply rice, the Right Communist organ, *Janayugam,* came out with an editorial accusing the Food Minister of failure to discharge her responsibility due to which, it said, the people in Kerala were going without adequate food on the day of the national festival. No wonder they got unstinted support from the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition and its press for this "frank and forthright criticism" of the Marxists.

Just as on the question of food, so on other questions like employment, industrialisation, agricultural development and so on, the Right Communists tried to cover up the failure of the landlord-bourgeois policies of the Central Government led by the Congress. Despite the clear declaration made in the seven-party joint statement of policy, that "Food scarcity, industrial backwardness and consequent unemployment, etc., which are considered to be the 'special problems of Kerala' are an index of the all-India policies of the Congress Government. . . . To end this situation, it is necessary to form a stable Government in Kerala, for this Government to advocate strongly the legitimate needs of the state, to inform the people of the details of these demands and get them to exert their own pressure on the Centre. A Government of these parties would take the necessary steps towards this".

The Right Communists told the people that much could be done to improve the lot of the people if only the powers conferred on the State Government were properly utilised. "Efficient administration" by "Competent Ministers" rather than joint struggle waged by the people and Government of Kerala against the landlord-bourgeois policies of the Central Government—such was the way of advance mapped out by the Right Communists.

They therefore joined the chorus led by the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition that the CPI(M) was doing a disservice to the people of Kerala by trying to use the Government as

an "instrument of struggle against the Central Government".

In the early months of the existence of the U.F. Government, as has already been pointed out, the other constituents of the U.F., including the Right Communists, had to join the rallies, demonstrations and the September 11 Kerala Bandh in order to express the Kerala People's protest against the Central Government's neglect in the matter of food supplies for Kerala. On a few other occasions, too, they had to join the protest against the anti-people policies of the Central Government.

The most memorable of these occasions was in September-October 1968 when there was a countrywide struggle of the Central Government employees. All the constituents of the U.F., including the Right Communists, had then to associate themselves with the bold stand taken by the CPI(M) Chief Minister that the organisers and participants of the strike would not be proceeded against as was directed by the Central Government.

But, barring these very few exceptional occasions, the Right Communists expressed their opposition to the line of struggle against the Central Government. When the CPI(M) called on the people to mobilise themselves against the policies of the Central Government, the Right Communists and their allies characterised this as "Sectarianism and adventurism".

They went a step further and said that such sectarian and adventurist calls for a struggle against the Centre were the cover behind which the CPI(M) and its ministers were trying to hide the "inefficiency" and "failures" of the CPI(M) ministers. Taking the "generous" help extended to them by the bourgeois press and the Congress opposition, they denounced all departments administered by the ministers belonging to the CPI(M), and contrasted them with the "efficient" and "constructive" handling of their departments by the Right Communist ministers. This denunciation of the CPI(M) ministers, this showering of praise on the Right Communist ministers, were faithfully echoed in the bourgeois press which projected the image of "competent administrators" built up about the two Right Communist ministers.

Industrial Policy

This was not surprising because the Industries Minister, T. V. Thomas, and the Agriculture and Electricity Minister, Govindan Nair, handled their portfolios exactly the same way

in which the landlord, the rich capitalist farmer and the private industrialist desired these departments to be administered.

To the private entrepreneur in Kerala and outside, T. V. Thomas was an "efficient administrator" because his perspective of helping the existing industries to solve their problems and for new industries to be established was the same as that of the private entrepreneur. As for the Agriculture and Electricity Minister, Govindan Nair, he became the enthusiastic champion of the cause of landlord and kulak agriculture.

Both these "Marxist-Leninist" Ministers frowned upon the militant struggles of the industrial and agricultural workers, as well as of the small and medium peasants against their exploiters as "obstacles in the way of increasing industrial and agricultural production."

Special mention should be made in this connection of the Industrial Policy Statement formulated by the Government on the initiative of the Right Communist Minister for Industries, T. V. Thomas. The crux of that policy was to help the local entrepreneur (which includes big business firms outside Kerala) to set up industries in collaboration with foreign monopolies. Offering inducements by way of cheap electric power, raw material at very low cost, tax and rent concessions, etc., and taking away the hard-won rights of the working class, like the right to strike he wanted to get big business from outside Kerala to set up industries in the state in collaboration with foreign monopolies. The Industrial Policy Statement gave the green signal to this approach.

We do not hide the truth that the CPI(M) leaders working in the U.F. Co-ordination Committee and in the Council of Ministers did not show sufficient political awareness to see the dangerous game played by the Right Communist Industries Minister. That was why the Industrial Policy Statement got the endorsement of the United Front and the Government

The central leadership of the CPI(M), however, promptly pointed out the real character of the Policy Statement, and, together with the State Committee of the Party, took steps to correct it. It was pointed out that the main path of advance for an industrially-backward state like Kerala is to set up new industries in the public sector with financial and other assistance from the Centre.

One of the aims with which the democratic opposition in the whole country has been demanding the expansion of the public sector is that industrially undeveloped states and regions should be helped to catch up with the developed states and regions. The rationale behind the idea of public sector as an agency of developing the backward regions is that the profit-hunting private entrepreneur would not ordinarily invest in such regions but would prefer to earn higher profits by using the already-existing facilities in the developed regions. It is, therefore, important for a state like Kerala to demand from the Centre that the state should get a fair share of central sector projects in industries, transport and so on.

This, in fact, has been the demand of the entire people of Kerala who have protested against the step-motherly treatment meted out to this state by the Central Government in the matter of central sector projects. The formerly-united CPI has, in the early 1960's, carried on a statewide agitation for the immediate establishment of the second ship-building yard in Cochin and the location of other central sector projects. The parties that subsequently joined together in the seven-party United Front also took up this campaign and organised a huge demonstration in September 1966 when the All-India Congress Committee was meeting at Cochin.

The United Front Government, therefore, should have carried this forward by mobilising the people of Kerala in a joint movement for establishment of such central sector projects as would enable the state to catch up with the developing states and regions.

With Socialist Countries or Foreign Monopolies?

The CPI(M), however, did not confine itself to the suggestion that the Government of Kerala should exert pressure on the Central Government to locate central sector projects in the state. This should be supplemented by state projects to be established with such co-operation as can be made available from the socialist countries. Public sector organisations under the State Government like the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation can enter into agreements with public sector corporations in the socialist countries through which technical and

even financial assistance can be obtained from these socialist countries.

Whatever industries are set up under this scheme would be in addition to whatever industries are set up under the central and private sectors. What is more, all these units would be in the public sector owned by the State Government which will be a net addition to the assets and the income of the State Government.

The crux of the perspective outlined by the CPI (M) with regard to industrialisation therefore was that, while the State Government and the political parties that constitute the Government should exert the maximum pressure on the Central Government to locate as many Central sector projects as possible, initiative should also be taken to set up industrial projects in the state sector with the co-operation and assistance of socialist countries.

There is no doctrinaire opposition on our part to industries being set up in the private sector with whatever foreign aid is available so long as this continues to be the policy of the Central Government for the whole country. We would, however, insist that more and more central sector projects should be established in such an industrially-backward state as Kerala and also that our own (state) public sector should be helped to set up industries with the assistance of socialist countries.

In marked contrast to this realistic policy of industrialisation is the Right Communist policy of depending on collaboration between the foreign and Indian private capitalists for the establishment of new industries in the state. This Right Communist policy was initiated and given a big boost by the well-published visit of the Industries Minister, T. V. Thomas, to Japan. He was accompanied by a large number of private capitalists both from Kerala as well as from other states, including the representatives of some big business houses.

Much was made of the "negotiations" between the visiting Minister and leaders of big business houses in Japan such as Mitsubishi, Toshiba and so on. The agitators and propagandists of the Right Communist Party started telling the people that the "great mission" with which their leader had gone to Japan would herald "an era of industrialisation of the state, opening the possibility of tens of thousands for our young men and women get-

ting employed in these industries. The unemployed engineering and other graduates were made to shout such slogans as "it does not matter whether it is Japan or even Satan, what we want is that somebody should give us employment."

It speaks volumes for the "Marxist-Leninist" conscience of the Right Communist Industries Minister that, even after his "pilgrimage" to Japan in search of the benefits of industrialisation, he did not think it worthwhile during the whole 31-month tenure of his office to embark upon businesslike negotiations with any one of the socialist countries. To cap it all, his final speech in the State Legislature on October 21 (when he was explaining his resignation from the Ministry) was a denunciation of the Marxist Chief Minister for his efforts at trying to negotiate with such socialist countries as Romania.

Base Slander of Socialist Countries

Both in this speech as well as in several of his earlier public utterances, he denounced the Marxists for their "lack of patriotism". He accused the Marxists of trying to "mortgage the iron ore of Kerala" to these socialist countries which, according to him, are interested in getting iron ore as raw material for their industries and not in the processing of the ore in Kerala, going up to the establishment of steel manufacturing units here.

Behind this denunciation of the Marxist Chief Minister lies the fact that the Right Communist Industries Minister himself had originally conceived the idea of getting Japanese private entrepreneurs to interest themselves in the iron ore mines of Kozhikode and the neighbouring regions. These Japanese entrepreneurs naturally were interested only in getting the ore and in such ancillary processes, as are required for them to get the ore transported from the mines to Japan. It was at this stage that the possibility of developing the ore to the point of its being used for manufacture was explored by the Marxist Chief Minister with such socialist countries as Hungary, Romania, Poland, the Soviet Union and so on.

The most concrete proposals came from the Romanians who gave a blue-print of the way in which co-operation between their country and the Government of Kerala could start. If the proposals made by the Romanians were in the opinion of the Right Communist Minister defective, the point or points could have

been discussed with them and ways found to overcome the defects. But, far from taking this straight and honest course, he denounced the Romanians as people who are interested in keeping Kerala as a backward semi-colonial region which should be made to do nothing but export raw material—the very thing in which the Japanese private monopolists were interested. Blinded by prejudice and hatred for the CPI(M), he went to the extent of accusing the Marxist Chief Minister of "conspiring" with the "anti-Soviet" Romanians to keep Kerala backward!

Before closing this subject, it is necessary to mention that another leader of the Right Communist Party, T. A. Majid, in his speech on October 22 in the legislature, demanded that the Chief Minister should "subject himself to a probe into the charge of corruption" levelled against him by the Congress member, R. Gopalakrishnan Nair.

One of these "charges" which, according to Majid, deserved a probe was that the Chief Minister approved the payment of Rs. 4 lakhs to the Indopol, a public sector company owned by socialist Poland. This payment was made for a survey of the potentialities of minor ports in Kerala with a view to finding out which of them could be developed as fishing, freight and passenger ports. The obvious implication was that a public sector company from a socialist country—and that too not of "anti-Soviet" Romania but of Poland which collaborated with the Soviet Union in military action in Czechoslovakia—was so corrupt that it would bribe a Chief Minister.

Can the leaders of a "Marxist-Leninist" party go to such depths as the worthy Thomas and his worthy colleague Majid did in thus slandering two socialist countries?

A Kulak-Landlord Policy

The Right Communist Minister for Agriculture pursued in his department the same basic class policy as his colleague did in the Industries department. Closely following the Congress leaders who talk incessantly of the "green revolution" sweeping the countryside, the Right Communist Minister for Agriculture gave the alluring perspective of so increasing agricultural production that the entire food deficit of the state (amounting to a little more than 50 per cent of the requirement of the people) can be wiped out in a few years.

The methods proposed by him were also the same as those proposed and, in fact, implemented by the Congress leaders—assuring higher prices to the landlord and capitalist farmer; permitting them to sell in the open market rather than to the government at procurement prices; giving them large-scale subsidies for seeds, fertilisers, pump-sets and so on; constructing permanent bunds in *kayal* areas at Government cost, and so on. Like the Congress leaders, the Right Communist Minister, too, could not think of confining these benefits to the small and middle peasants and making the rich peasants and landlords make reasonable and adequate payments for the assistance received by them from the Government.

This class policy naturally endeared him to the rich peasants and landlords, who looked up to him for help in carrying out their policy of enriching themselves at the cost of the Government as well as at the cost of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants. It however alienated him and his party from the mass of agricultural labourers because he echoed the voice of the rich peasants and landlords with regard to "production being hampered" by the organised action of the agricultural labourers led by the CPI(M).

The Right Communist agitators and their newspapers, together with the bourgeois newspapers and their political parties, raised a hue and cry over the "unreasonable" demands put forward by the agricultural labourers' organisations and the "anarchical" struggles waged under their leadership in various parts of the state. Fire was particularly concentrated by the Right Communist Minister and his party against the protest raised by the agricultural labourers against the threatened large-scale displacement of labour through the introduction of tractors by the rich peasants and landlords.

They denounced this protest as a manifestation of the "antiquated Gandhian outlook of opposition to modernisation and mechanisation", although their own party had joined the LIC and other middle class employees in their campaign against the introduction of automation in offices. They also echoed the voice of those bourgeois "theoreticians" who claimed that tractorisation would not only increase production and thus solve the nation's food problem, but also open up the possibility of

creating new employment such as tractor drivers, mechanics and so on.

Since all these arguments would not convince the large number of actual and potential labourers who with their own eyes find that the use of one tractor in one village leads to the throwing out of scores of agricultural labourers, the high-power campaign of the Right Communists and their friends did not arrest the discontent among the rural poor. Naturally, therefore, the Right Communists as a party got steadily discredited and isolated among the agricultural labourers and other sections of the rural poor who are concerned at the growing unemployment in the rural areas.

It was against this background that the Right Communists initiated a campaign among the agricultural labourers on the slogan of housing, demanding that the government should get a large number of houses constructed for agricultural labourers.

This is of course a very serious problem since the rural poor find it extremely difficult to get a plot of land on which to build a house for themselves, not to speak of the money and materials with which to construct a modest house for themselves. The Right Communists, however think as if the problem of housing for agricultural labourers stands by itself in isolation from such problems as employment, higher wages and other conditions of work, etc.

In thus isolating the problem of housing from the other problems of improving the living and working conditions of agricultural labourers, they were trying to divert attention from issues on which there is a confrontation between the agricultural labourers and their employers. In place of this confrontation with their employers, they tried to rally the agricultural labourers around a demand on the government, in that it should spend its own funds for the construction of houses for agricultural labourers.

This demand naturally was not opposed by the rich peasants and landlords who are opposed only to such demands of the agricultural labourers as increasing rates of wages, human conditions of work, right to organise and fight for their demands, and above all, for assured employment which are directed against their employers. It was for these latter that the agricultural

labourers' organisations led by the CPI(M) were fighting. In this fight against the employers of agricultural labour, the Agriculture Minister and his party ranged themselves on the side of the employers in the name of "avoiding any threat to increasing production."

New Friends

Such a class policy pursued by the Right Communist Minister led to new relations of co-operation and friendship between his party and such other political parties as represent the rural gentry. Special mention should, in this connection, be made of the Kerala Congress.

The political assessment made of that party by the Right Communists has already been referred to. That characterisation was that it was a party which represented communal reaction. This characterisation, however, missed the most important aspect of the real character of the Kerala Congress. The crucial element in the class content of the Kerala Congress, in fact, is that it represents the rapidly-growing stratum of the kulak-landlord rural gentry.

This stratum is "modern" enough to catch up with all the new techniques of agricultural production and marketing, but is so mediaeval in its social outlook that it would not tolerate the emergence of an organised, class-conscious working class in the rural areas. The representatives of this stratum would not hesitate to resort to the most barbarous feudal forms of exploiting the rural poor, of harassing and persecuting the "low caste" agricultural labourers, even though they come out as the "finest representatives" of the "progressive" farmers using all the most up-to-date gadgets and techniques of increasing agricultural production.

It is to this stratum of the rapidly-growing rural gentry—a gentry that is growing at the expense of the tax-payer, on the one hand, and of the exploited rural poor, on the other—that the Kerala Congress appeals and it is this stratum that rallies itself behind that organisation.

It is necessary to recall that those who constitute the leadership of the Kerala Congress were the organisers and perpetrators of the most barbarous attacks on the harijan agricultural labourers in central Travancore during and immediately

after the "liberation struggle" of 1959-60. Hundreds of Harijans were beaten up and otherwise persecuted and several were killed in cold blood for no other reason than that, both as harijans belonging to an oppressed caste and as agricultural labourers, they dared organise themselves under the Red Flag and fought for their legitimate demands.

The present leaders of the Right Communist Party themselves and, together with those of us who are in the CPI(M) today, then denounced the *goondaism* organised by that section of the rural gentry in the central Travancore area who subsequently formed the Kerala Congress. These perpetrators of goonda attacks on the agricultural labourers have however now become "politically progressive" in the eyes of the Right Communists who have embraced their leader as a colleague in the new "non-Marxist" Ministry.

Characteristic Incident

A characteristic incident would reveal the real character of the new alliance between the Right Communist Party and the Kerala Congress The most notorious leader of the *goonda* attacks on the agricultural labourers in 1959-60, John Jacob, is at present the deputy leader of the Kerala Congress Legislature Party. The Right Communist leaders, including M. N. Govindan Nair, have, on innumerable occasions, denounced his attacks on agricultural labourers in the same terms as those made by many of us.

After the formation of the Marxist-led non-Congress Ministry, too, he continued his attacks on the agricultural labourers. On one occasion in 1967, he led a *goonda* gang which caught hold of and dragged an agricultural labourer through public roads. tied hand and foot and beaten up all through the road. This was part of an organised attack on a large number of agricultural labourers and their families.

Since however this happened at a time when the government was headed by a CPI(M) Chief Minister who was also in charge of the police portfolio, the perpetrator of such an atrocious attack could not go scot-free. He was arrested and charged under the law of the land. John Jacob himself and his party made a hue and cry over this "police persecution". On being bailed out of prison, Jacob made a vow in public

that he would do his best to throw the CPI(M) out of office and that, till he attained this objective, he would keep his beard.

He kept his vow for nearly two years and shaved off his beard only affter October 24, expressing his satisfaction that his sworn enemy, the enemy of his class, had been thrown out of office. He had the formality of shaving his beard demonstratively carried out.

In a couple of days of this incident, his own leader was taken into the Ministry headed by a Right Communist Chief Minister. Naturally, therefore, the toppling of the former Marxist-led Ministry became the signal for a new series of attacks on agricultural labourers, including many in the very area where John Jacob has always been operating.

ANTI-MARXIST PARTNER OF RIGHT COMMUNISTS

This being the class character of the Kerala Congress, it is not surprising that that party did not follow in the foot-steps of the Muslim League at the time of the 1964-65 mid-term election. The League responded to the call of the CPI(M) for such electoral understanding as to reduce the victory of the Congress candidates to the minimum. This was so effective that, in the entire Malabar belt where the Muslim League and the CPI(M) are the most powerful political forces, the Congress could not win a single seat except in one in which the Muslim League overestimated its strength, claiming that it would win even in a three-cornered contest and therefore there was no harm in a CPI(M)-Muslim League contest.

On the other hand, in the Cohin-Travancore region, where the Kerala Congress is more powerful, but where there were three-cornered contests because of the refusal of the Kerala Congress to have electoral understanding with the CPI(M), the Congress was able to win 35 seats; this could very well have been considerably reduced if the Kerala Congress were prepared to have the same electoral understanding for which the Muslim League was prepared.

The reason for this difference between the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress was that, being a more class-conscious representative of the rural gentry and more indoctrinated by anti-communism, the Kerala Congress was not prepared

to touch the CPI(M) even with a pair of tongs. The leader of the Kerala Congress did in fact make the fantastic proposal that, while his party could not have any understanding with the CPI(M), the latter should support his candidates in a few constituencies "in the interest of preventing Congress victory".

After the mid-term elections, too, the Kerala Congress persisted in its anti-CPI(M) attitude to such an extent that when the proposal was made to them by the ISP leaders that a Kerala Congress-Muslim League Ministry be formed on the understanding that the 29 CPI(M) MLAs who were in detention would be released, the proposal was rejected by the Kerala Congress. Never since then has the Kerala Congress changed from its basic hostility to the CPI(M) in particular and to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism in general.

It is amusing to recall that, in the final speech delivered by the Kerala Congress leader in the Legislature on October 24, he denounced the CPI(M) for being "anti-democratic and anti-god", making it clear that in his view "a person or a party which is anti-god can never be democratic". But, whithin a week after that, he himself joined a Ministry headed by one who claims to be a "Marxist-Leninist" and, if he is true to his profession, should be considered outside the pale in accordance with the dictum of the Kerala Congress leader.

We leave it to the reader to judge whether such a coalition between "an avowed anti-Marxist" and an avowed "Marxist-Leninist" party has been brought about because the former's hostility to Marxism or the latter's allegiance to it is false. In either case, it seems to be obvious that there is a common antipathy for the practical activities of a party which is genuinely committed to Marxism-Leninism and is therefore active in organising those classes and strata of society against which the vested interests entrenched in the Kerala Congress are fighting a determined battle.

Common Outlook

The new-found friendship between the Kerala Congress and the Right Communist Party—two parties who were sworn enemies of each other only five years ago—is thus not accidental. It arises out of the common class outlook, the outlook of the rich peasant-landlord rural gentry.

The present-day Right Communists were, at one time i.e., when they were part of the united Communist movement, fighting the present-day leaders of the Kerala Congress as the worst enemies of the rural poor. Later on, when these leaders of the Kerala Congress revolted against the ruling Congress Party, these very Right Communists called them "more reactionary" than the ruling faction of the Congress party. After a few years of bitter struggle between Marxism and revisionism, the Right Communists have now become so alienated from the rural poor that these avowed representatives of the rural gentry are their bosom friends and colleagues in a "non-Congress Ministry" which, it is claimed, would "carry out the radical minimum programme of the non-Congress U.F.".

The Kerala Congress and the Parties which subsequently constituted the "mini-front" find common ground with the Right Communists also on the basic question of state power which, as is well-known, is the point of departure between Marxism-Leninism and revisionism. Making a concrete analysis of the essence of state power obtaining in India, the Central Committee of the CPI(M) had stated in the political resolution adopted by it after the fourth general election, "The essence of state power, we know, lies in the army, police, bureaucracy, Judiciary and jails, and all this machinery belongs to the bourgeois-landlord state. In class outlook, composition and in several other respects it is not an instrument that is suitable even for the implementation of a consistently democratic administration, let alone any class policies decisively directed against the vested interests. A good and essential part of state power resides in the union centre and the Congress Central Government and whatever small share of power the State Government possesses, under the provisions of the country's Constitution, will have to be exercised within the confines of this over-all central power. Naturally, under these circumstances, to speak of real political power for the State Governments, that too, of non-Congress Governments comprising different opposition parties, is unreal and devoid of substance." (*New Situation and Party's Tasks*, pages 62-63).

The Right Communists, however, rejected the implications of this Marxist-Leninist analysis of state power. They shared the common illusion that, by winning majorities in the legislatures

and forming ministries, parties of the democratic opposition can bring about such changes in the socio-economic set-up in the country that, though not fully satisfying the aspirations of the people, much can be achieved by way of improving the living and working conditions of the people. The much-talked of "structural reforms" within the landlord-bourgeois state system were placed before the democratic movement as the possible objective.

In doing so, they missed the obstacles that would be put by the landlord-bourgeois classes who are not only powerful within the state but also control the Central Government (in whose hands lies not only the crux of the state power, the military and the police, but also the finances as well as control over the economic development of the entire country, including the states). The bitter lesson which the class-conscious working class learnt from the experience of Kerala in 1957-59 and of West Bengal in 1967 was forgotten. People were, on the other hand, told that, if only the Ministers discharged their responsibility "conscientiously and efficiently", considerable improvement could be made in the living and working conditions of the people of the state.

It was therefore natural that there should be an ideological confrontation between the Marxist-Leninist outlook of the CPI(M) and the revisionist outlook of the Right Communist Party. It was also natural that the Right Communist stand should conform to the outlook of not only the Congress and Kerala Congress in the opposition but also of the Muslim League and the ISP.

"Mini Front"—Ideological Basis

These two parties, it may be recalled, had been drawn into the line of co-operation with the CPI(M) at the time of the 1965 mid-term election only because the electoral-political line adopted by the CIP(M) helped the realisation of the immediate objectives with which they were fighting the election defeating the Congress and improving their own electoral and legislative position. Neither of these two parties could see eye to eye with the CPI(M) on the issues that divided the CPI(M) and the Right Communist Party.

On every issue about which reference has been made above, such as food, industrialisation, agricultural develop-

ment and so on, the Muslim League fundamentally agreed with the Right Communists. Unburdened as it was with the necessity to cloak its political attitudes with the cover of Marxist-Leninist analysis, the League in fact took a far more forthright position in favour of free trade in foodgrains, full opportunity for the private capitalists to grow at the expense of the tax-payers and of the working class, the need for collaboration between foreign and Indian private capitalists, the "harm" that is done by the militant struggles of the industrial and agricultural workers and so on.

The basic socio-economic outlook of the Muslim League has always been, and still is, that of such right-wing parties as the Swatantra all over the country, as well as of the Kerala Congress within the state. The only difference between them and the League was that, in its conflict with the Congress in the post-1960 period, the League got reconciled to co-operation and unity with the CPI(M). They found from experience that this co-operation and unity with the CPI(M) gave them the highest benefits in that not only were they able to double the number of seats since 1957 but were also able to get into the Ministry—an achievement unprecedented anywhere else in post-independent India.

They were, however, unhappy, and a little embarrassed that, in return for these political gains, they became participants in a political-administrative set-up to which, from a fundamental socio-economic point of view, they were stoutly opposed. The leadership of the Muslim League therefore proved to be a fertile soil on which the seed of hostility to the CPI(M) could sprout and grow fast.

The ISP, too, was extremely receptive to the anti-CPI(M) ideas propagated by the Right Communist. As part of the social-democratic movement in the country, the ISP of Kerala (which has at various times been known as the PSP, SSP and so on) is basically anti-Marxist. Its approach to all basic socio-economic questions is typically bourgeois reformist and liberal. While it had no hesitation to collaborate with the once-united CPI and recently with the CPI(M) whenever such collaboration helped the attainment of its own immediate political objective, the ISP, like any other petty-bourgeois reformist party, could never give up its struggle against the

militant class line adopted by the CPI(M). Naturally, therefore, the leadership of the ISP found common ground with the Right Communists in the confrontation between the latter and the CPI(M).

The result was that on the formation of the non-Congress United Front Ministry, the Muslim League and the ISP came closer to the Right Communists. As for the RSP, they had always been closer to the Right Communists whom they joined in the confrontation between them and the CPI(M) as early as in 1964-65. Sharing as they did the same fate as that befell the Right Communists in the 1965 mid-term elections, the leaders of the RSP had to join the Right Communists in reversing the earlier stand of considering the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress as untouchable.

Like the Right Communists, therefore, the RSP joined the seven-party United Front, won six seats while they had not won a single seat in 1957 and only one seat in 1960 and also secured a post in the Ministry together with the Muslim Leaque. Like the Right Communists again, they were opposed to the genuinely militant class line adopted by the CPI(M), and were pursuing the same revisionist and right reformist policies as the Right Communists. They therefore ranged themselves on the side of the Right Communists who were now supported by the Muslim League and the ISP in their common opposition to the class line adopted by the CPI(M).

Beginnings of Confrontation

Here therefore was the nucleus of that four-party "mini-front" which ultimately succeeded in toppling the Marxist-led non-Congress Ministry. While the four-party mini-front started functioning openly only in April-May 1969, its beginnings could be traced to the early days of the non-Congress Ministry.

As has already been pointed out, the first shot against the CPI(M) was fired by the Right Communists on Food Minister Gowri's handling of the food portfolio. The demand for the lifting of control on movement of foodgrains was the initial attack launched by the Right Communists. This, however, was not a solitary attack launched by the Right Communists but, as has already been mentioned, was the combined attack joined by the Muslim League and the ISP as well. It became the starting

point of a state-wide campaign run by the "non-Marxist" parties within the U.F. as well as the Congress and Kerala Congress opposition. While the ideological-political leadership for this combined attack was furnished by the Right Communists Party, it enjoyed the "able" and powerful support of all those within and outside the state who were interested in discrediting, isolating and if possible throwing the CPI(M) out of the leading position it occupied within the U.F. and its Ministry.

In the face of such a combined attack on the CPI(M), the latter was obliged to expose the disruptive design of this attack. The central leadership of the CPI(M) felt that any softness shown in exposing the disruptive game played by the Right Communists and their allies would do serious damage to the cause of the very struggle against the landlord-bourgeois policies of the Central Congress Government, against which the partners of the United Front had pledged themselves to fight unitedly. The General Secretary of our Party therefore made public statement drawing the attention of the people of Kerala to the damage done by those constituents of the U.F. who were mounting attacks on the CPI(M) and its ministers.

In doing this, naturally, he exposed the class character of the food, industrial, agrarian and other policies pursued by the Right Communists and their allies within the U.F. While thus publicly exposing the class essence of the policies pursued by the Right Communists and their allies within the U.F. he called for such a rectification of policies as would further strengthen the bonds that united the non-Congress parties in their struggle against the landlord-bourgeois policies of the Central Congress Gevernment.

This open exposure of their policies was resented by the Right Communists and their allies in the U.F. Hiding the fact that this was a reaction to the attack launched on the CPI(M) by the Right Communists and their allies, the latter denounced the General Secretary of the CPI(M) for "disruptive activities".

It seems that, according to the Right Communists and their allies, it was legitimate for them to mount attacks on the CPI(M)—and that too, attacks in combination with the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition—but the CPI(M) should never take the public into confidence on the issues raised in the course of

a public controversy between the CPI(M), on the one hand, and the Right Communists and their allies, on the other.

Public campaign among the people for lifting all restrictions on the movement of foodgrains is legitimate since it is undertaken by the Right Communists and their allies, but the exposure of the class character of this campaign by the CPI(M) is "disruptive"!

Making the Food Minister belonging to the CPI(M) the target of attack for failure to solve the food crisis—the crisis which, as is well known, is the creation of the landlord-bourgeois policies of the Central Government—is perfectly in consonance with the norms of behaviour of four partners of the U.F., but it is contrary to these norms if the CPI(M) hits back.

Such is the infamous doctrine invented by the Right Communists and their allies.

This was the beginning of a concerted attempt by what are called the "non-Marxist constituents of the U.F." to "isolate" the CPI(M) from the people and make it eventually possible to throw it out of the Ministry. These "non-Marxist constituents" of the U.F., among themselves as well as in collaboration with the Congerss-Kerala Congress opposition, mounted ideological-political attacks on the positions taken by the CPI(M) and, together with it, indulged in factional manoeuvres against it. Every one of these parties adopted different political positions but at the same time saw to it that all of them converged on the common line of opposition and hostility to the CPI(M) and its Ministers. We are giving below a few instances of the way in which this was done.

Police, Judiciary and Constitution

When the Home department headed by the CPI(M) Chief Minister laid down the policy that the police should not interfere in mass struggles except when there was an actual outbreak of violence, the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition raised a hue and cry over it. The slogans of "breakdown of law and order", "danger to person and property", etc, were raised.

The question of *gherao* was also brought to the forefront. The stand taken by the Government that *gherao* was a form of peaceful demonstration and was therefore legitimate unless it led to threat to personal life or safety was denounced as

"incitement to violence" : the argument was that *gherao* by itself was illegal and should be unconditionally banned.

This opposition to the policy of the Government was also endorsed by the Muslim League and the ISP whose leaders, too, came out in public against it.

The Right Communists and the RSP did not join the attack in this form, since, in other states, they too had to resort to *gherao* and other forms of agitation in the course of their trade union struggles. They, however, indirectly supported the campaign against the police saying that the CPI(M) Minister was using the police machinery in such a way as to protect his party and suppress other parties.

There was thus an apparent difference in the political positions taken by the Right Communists and other non-Marxist constituents of the U.F. as well as from the Congress and Kerala Congress opposition. But the parallel agitation conducted by them all was calculated to mobilise as big a section of people as possible against the CPI(M) handling of the police portfolio.

This was true also of the ideological-political position of the CPI(M) on the class character of the constitution, judiciary and so on. The pronouncements of the CPI(M) leaders against the "sacrosanct" character of the institutions of bourgeois parliamentary system, the "impartiality" of the bourgeois judiciary, etc., were attacked by the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition as indications of disloyalty to the democratic constitution of independent India. The leaders of these opposition parties went to the extent of declaring that members of a party having such a disloyal attitude to the constitution of India had no right to become Ministers in the state and should therefore be dismissed.

The leaders of the Muslim League and ISP, being part of the Ministry headed by a CPI(M) Chief Minister could not obviously go thus far. Even they, however, openly dissociated themselves from the position taken by the CPI(M). They expressed in unequivocal terms their absolute "loyalty" to the constitution of India and their determination to respect all its organs, and above all, the judiciary.

The Right Communists and the RSP, being "Marxist-Leninists" could not go even so far as the Muslim League and the ISP did : they had to pay lip-service to the theory that the

state, including the judiciary, is an instrument of class oppression. They, however, demarcated themselves from the CPI(M) by saying that the Marxists were ignoring the possibilities of using the parliamentary democratic system in order to bring about substantial changes in socio-economic relations. Adhering as they did to the concept of "structural reforms within the bourgeois parliamentary set-up", the Right Communists called for a "constructive" approach to the working of the Ministry.

It was with this approach that, as has already been noted, the so-called non-Marxist constituents of the U.F. opposed the CPI(M) call for struggle against the Centre. While the Muslim League openly dissociated itself from the very idea of struggle against the Centre, the Right Communists and their "socialist" allies (of the RSP and the ISP) took the position that the struggle against the Centre could be effective only after the State Government itself did all that was possible to do within the state. The net effect of all these differing attitudes to the question of struggle against the Centre was that all of them, in effect, opposed that struggle.

Slander Campaign, "Charge-Sheet"

The combined attack against the CPI(M), however, was not confined to such issues of ideology and policy. Day after day the Right Communist press came out with lies and slanders directed against the leaders of the CPI(M) and particularly Ministers belonging to that party. They and their "non-Marxist" allies worked in close collaboration with the manufactures of lies and slanders in the bourgeois press--all of whom together tried to discredit the CPI(M) and make it unpopular among the people.

The stories that thus appeared in the opposition bourgeois press as well as in the Right Communist and other "non-Marxist" press were then taken up within the Co-ordination Committee for discussion. Once again, the proceedings of the Co-ordination Committee were leaked out to the bourgeois press making it appear that the CPI(M) was thoroughly "isolated" within the U.F. that its "atrocities" and "misdeeds" were taken serious note of by the other constituents of the U.F. It was in this manner that what came to be known as "Srikantan Nair's

charge-sheet" got formulated, given wide publicity to and made the starting point of a concerted attack on the CPI(M).

The material for this so-called "charge-sheet" was taken by the RSP from the anti-CPI(M) press. The real target of attack in that "charge-sheet" was undoubtedly the CPI(M), though for the sake of appearance, some allegations against other parties, including the Right Communists, were also included in it That the target was the CPI(M) became clear when at a later stage only three charges were pressed and all these three were against CPI(M) Ministers. Framed in the form of a statement for the U.F. Co-ordination Committee that these allegations should be enquired into, this "confidential" document of the RSP was leaked out to the press on the morning after it was presented to the Co-ordination Committee.

It was therefore naturally taken up by the bourgeois press and by the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition to discredit and denounce the U.F. Government in general and the CPI(M) in particular. The "charge-sheet" thus became a weapon in the hands of the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition forged in the anvil of the RSP.

The Co-ordination Committee could not but take it seriously. It therefore appointed a sub-committee to make enquiries into the allegations contained in it. Those who made the allegations were requested to give whatever evidence they had to substantiate the allegations. They however failed to do so. The sub-committee therefore reported to the Co-ordination Committee that there was no evidence for it. It was thus proved that the much-publicised "charge-sheet" was a collection of vile slanders spread by those whose intentions were to discredit the U.F. in general and the CPI(M) in particular.

The Right Communists and the RSP, however, refused to accept the falsity of the allegations which formed the basis of the "charge-sheet". They went on to argue that the enquiry undertaken by the sub-committee was not thorough and, therefore, they cannot accept the verdict given by the sub-committee. That this was nothing but a cover to shield the inability to prove the allegations is clear from the fact that, in their subsequent demand for a judicial enquiry into the allegations of corruption, they did not include these allegations.

It is not possible or necessary for us to give a large number

of instances in which the constituents of what came to be the "mini-front" made vicious attacks on the CPI(M). It is, however, necessary for us to mention that, as early as in September 1967, the then ISP Finance Minister made a public statement that he was ashamed to be in the Ministry, since, according to him, the Ministry was guilty of several "misdeeds".

The target of this attack was obviously the CPI(M) and its Ministers, but the effect of the attack was to discredit the whole Ministry. Any self-respecting constituent of the U.F. and its Ministry therefore should have immediately taken it up as a serious development and pulled up the Minister who made such an atrocious statement. Not only did they refuse to do this but the Right Communist and ISP leaders denounced the CPI(M) for its forthright criticism of the Minister. The vile attack launched by these two parties against the CPI(M) showed that the original statement of the Minister was not a slip of the tongue, but part of a concerted and well-laid plan of attacking the CPI(M).

Having made several such attacks on the CPI(M), the Right Communists, the ISP, the Muslim League and the RSP proceeded to "informally discuss" the question of "fighting the domination and big party bossism" of the CPI(M). Individually, at the bi-party level and in the end collectively, these parties held a series of consultations among themselves as with the opposition with a view to finding out whether it would be possible to form a new Ministry headed by a non-Marxist Chief Minister.

The CPI(M) got information about it since some of the participants in these discussions themselves gave fairly detailed reports on what had actually taken place. The party therefore thought it necessary to warn the people that such moves were being made and that, if they were not thwarted in time, the non-Congress United Front and its Ministry were in danger.

This is what came to be known as the "T. V. Thomas conspiracy". The Right Communists denied the whole thing and accused the CPI(M) of slandering them with this false allegation. The U.F. Co-ordination Committee had therefore to take it up. In the course of the discussion on it, however, the then Muslim League Panchayat and Fisheries Minister (deceased since then), as well as such leaders of the ISP and the RSP as P. R. Kurup, P. K. Kunhu and Srikantan Nair said that informal consultations had, in fact, taken place.

THE REVELATIONS

"Let nobody take the innocent pose of nothing having taken place" was Srikantan Nair's characteristic remark. He went on : "I was disgusted with the way in which the CPI(M) was behaving. I therefore did not resist the idea of doing something to bring them to their senses. It was then that I was told by my comrades that some such discussions were taking place. I was advised that it would not be good for my party if it kept out of these discussions. I therefore joined one of these discussions, held in the chamber of the Speaker of the Legislature. Having listened to the various points made by the participants in the discussion, I asked M. N. Govindan Nair who was present, whether he thought that it was practicable now to have a new Ministry headed by a non-Marxist Chief Minister. M N. replied that that was not practicable, and so the chapter was closed."

The then Finance Minister, Kunhu, said : "On my return from Mecca (in March 1968) I was told that a move was afoot to have a new Ministry headed by a non-Marxist. I then told my friends that consideration should be given, in selecting the new Chief Minister, to the fact that nobody belonging to my community had so far become the Chief Minister of this state. Brahmins, Nairs, Ezhavas and Christians have all become Chief Ministers but no Muslim has ever become a Chief Minister. I therefore staked my claim for my community".

Muslim League leader Baffaki Thangal said that if some Ministers of his party participated in such talks, that did not mean that the Muslim League was a party to it.

Representatives of every party except the Right Communists told the Co-ordination Committee that some informal discussions did take place. They also agreed that these discussions were among the non-Marxist parties and to the exclusion of the CPI(M). Their only excuse was that these discussions did not go very far and the proposed change of Ministry was, in the end, abandoned.

These revelations were sufficiently damaging. Though nobody connected T. V. Thomas with initiating and leading the discussions, everybody except the Right Communists admitted the fact that things did happen which could not but be considered as an attempt at replacement of the Marxist by a non-Marxist

Chief Minister. Exposure of this fact to the public would, according to the majority of the constituents, be harmful to the U.F. itself. They therefore suggested that the whole question should be considered as a closed chapter.

The CPI(M) was at first opposed to this proposal because the party had been challenged by the Right Communists to prove the allegation which it had publicly made. Its representatives on the U.F. Co-ordination Committee therefore said that they were prepared to place all the facts before the people, including the revelations made at the meeting of the Co-ordination Committee. This would enable the people to come to a correct judgement as to what had, in fact, taken place within the U.F. The party, however, agreed, in the end, to consider the incident as a closed chapter as was suggested by its colleagues in the Co-ordination Committee.

Closed Chapter ?

Subsequent developments—the toppling of the Ministry in October 1969, followed by the formation of the "mini-front"—Kerala Congress Ministry on November 1, 1969, together with the public statements of the Right Communist Chief Minister and his National Council that this non-Marxist Ministry would have the support of the Indira Gandhi group of the Congress—show that the 1968 "consultations" did not, in fact, become a "closed chapter". The proposal had only been abandoned in 1968 because it was considered for the moment to be impracticable or inopportune. More time and greater political preparation were necessary for putting into practice the idea that had emerged out of the discussions that took place in the first half of 1968. They therefore adopted the tactics of lying low but slowly and consistently preparing the people for a final concerted attack on the CPI(M).

Even though they "closed the chapter" of trying to change the composition of the Ministry, they kept up their attack on the CPI(M) in various ways. The handling of the portfolios held by the CPI(M) Ministers became the target of attack by the "non-Marxist constituents" of the U.F. with the unconcealed support of the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition. On the other hand, the portfolios handled by the non-Marxist Ministers were claimed to be out of bounds for the CPI(M).

The CPI(M) support for the agricultural labourers' struggles and opposition to tractorisation were, for instance, denounced as deliberately planned to sabotage the development of agriculture, handled by the Right Communists Minister. The struggles of the industrial labourers were also denounced as sabotaging the phenomenal progress being registered in the Industries department handled by the other Right Communist Minister. The suggestion that the Muslim League Education Minister should discuss with all parties, including the CPI(M), his plan of opening new schools was also denounced as interference in the Education department handled by a non-Marxist Minister.

Yet, every meeting of the Co-ordination Committee was forced to discuss the working of the Food, Police, Revenue, Transport and other departments handled by the CPI(M) Ministers. A demand that everything that is done in these departments should be done in accordance with the decisions of the Co-ordination Committee, combined with a refusal to subject to the scrutiny of the Co-ordination Committee the sanctioning of loans, opening of schools, payment of subsidies, etc. in the agriculture, industries, co-operatives, education and other departments, showed that the "non-Marxist" parties were trying to exercise control over the CPI(M) Ministers, without themselves being subjected to the scrutiny and control of the Co-ordination Committee.

Reopening the Chapter

This ganging up of the four "mini-front" parties against the CPI(M) had, for two years, been at the informal level. It however, became a formal affair in April-May, 1969. The date is significant in that, by February-March, 1969, i.e., after the mid-term elections in the four states of West Bengal, Bihar, U.P. and Punjab, it became clear that the Congress would, in any future general election, require the co-operation of "like-minded" parties. The only question was "which are the like-minded parties?"

It became clear that sharp differences would break out among the all-India leaders of the Congress party. One section looked up to the Jana Sangh and Swatantra, while the other depended on the support of the other so-called "left-oriented" non-Congress parties, including the Right Communist Party, but excluding (and against) militant parties of the working class and

peasantry including the CPI(M). Such a development would obviously be to the liking of the Right Communist and the RSP who had originally preferred the whole Congress to "reactionary communal" parties like the Jana Sangh and Swatantra.

It would also be to the liking of the Muslim League and the ISP since their electoral understanding with the CPI(M) in 1965 and 1967 was more or less forced on them by the political circumstances of the developing non-Congressism. Now that it is possible for them to range themselves against the CPI(M) without being dubbed as part of the reactionary camp, they felt that a golden opportunity had arrived for them to build up a new "progressive" image for themselves.

The four parties therefore once again took up the thread which they had left in 1968 since it appeared that the attempt to throw the CPI(M) out of the Ministry was no more premature and inopportune. The new all-India political developments making it obligatory for a section of the all-India Congress leadership headed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to seek the co-operation of "left-oriented" non-Congress parties created an entirely new situation in which what was "inopportune" a year ago became opportune, now.

Even under these circumstances, however, it was not very easy for them to completely switch over from an anti-Congress to an anti-Marxist position, to shift from opposition to the Congress to co-operation with it. The basic political shift involved in this had to be carefully worked out and made through a phased programme. It was also necessary to pick up a specific issue on which the CPI(M) could be attacked and, in the process, the co-operation and support of the Congress and Kerala Congress could be mobilised. That was why in April-May 1969 they started evolving a common plan of campaign directed against the CPI(M) and to this end, took up the issue of the so-called "corruption" indulged in by the CPI(M) as a party and its Ministers.

Corruption—Wild Charges

It is necessary, in this connection, to mention that, as early as in March 1967 when the first session of the legislature met after the fourth general election, the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition called the CPI(M) and its Ministers

corrupt. The "evidence" tendered at that time was that some of the persons appointed in the personal staff of the Ministers were from outside the government services, many of them being personal friends or party colleagues of the Ministers concerned. Such appointments by Ministers are quite common and had been resorted to by even the Congress Ministers. But, when resorted to by the CPI(M) Ministers, it became an act of corruption—such was the logic of the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition.

Ever since then, the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition has been accusing the CPI(M) Ministers of corruption because many of those against whom discriminatory treatment on political grounds had been meted out by the previous Congress Ministry were rehabilitated. The very act of ending the system of police verification into the political antecedents of recruits to government service (a practice which had been deliberately used by the Congress Minstries against the Communist movement) was also mentioned as an instance of corruption. The Congress-Kerala Congress press also invented stories of "irregularity" and "corruption" indulged in by the CPI(M) Ministers. It was to this opposition campaign of lies and slanders that the Right Communist press and the notorious Srikantan Nair's "charge sheet" gave ammunition.

Principled Stand

The CPI(M) and its Chief Minister (who was in charge of the anti-corruption work of the Ministry) took the principled stand that while all charges of corruption levelled by anybody with a sense of responsibility and substantiated by reasonable proof showing the necessity of a further problem, should be examined, it was necessary to guard against irresponsible and wild allegations. Hence the offer repeatedly made on the floor of the legislature as well as outside, that any allegation made on the basis of concrete material evidence to substantiate it would be examined and if on such examination a *prima facie* case was made out, the allegation would be subjected to an enquiry under the Commission of Enquiries Act. Allegations made without any such material evidence would naturally be dismissed as irresponsible.

Neither the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition nor the non-Marxist constituents of the U.F. could substantiate any allegation made by them with such material evidence as to make out a *prima facie* case. The allegations of corruption therefore became wild charges and they were natually dismissed.

In one case, however, such material evidence was placed before the legislature. The former Finance Minister. P. K. Kunhu, belonging to the ISP was alleged to have discharged his old debts amounting to over a lakh of rupees after becoming the Finance Minister. It was alleged that he was able to do this because he resorted to corrupt practices. Some papers in connection with the allegations were also placed on the table of the House.

The Chief Minister, on the basis of a decision of U.F. Co-ordination Committee—the minutes of the meeting where the decision was taken were signed by Right Communist Minister, M. N. Govindan Nair who was in the chair that day—examined these papers, asked for certain clarifications from the Minister concerned and, on examining these papers together with his explanation, came to the finding that the case required further probe. An order was, therefore, issued constituting a Commission of Enquiry and the Minister was asked to leave his post pending enquiry.

Allegations had also been made against two other Ministers, one belonging to the CPI(M) and the other to the KTP. Unlike in the case of the ISP Minister, not a single paper was placed on the table of the House in relation to the CPI(M) Minister, while in the case of the KTP Minister, one paper was placed in contrast to nearly a dozen papers in relation to the ISP Minister.

The Chief Minister, however, sought explanations from these two Ministers as well. But, on examining these explanations, he found that the material evidence placed before him was not sufficient to warrant further probe.

While giving this finding, he made it clear that, if there were other charges or other evidence to substantiate these very charges in relation to these Ministers, they would be subjected to the same examination as allegations against other Ministers.

ANOTHER SLANDER CAMPAIGN

This was made the starting point of a high-powered campaign against the Chief Minster's integrity and against the alleged corruption of his comrades and colleagues inside and outside the Ministry. The reasoning in the findings of the Chief Minister could not, of course, be challenged, since the material placed on the table of the House, and therefore before the Chief Minister, was on all counts insufficient to warrant a further probe. But, it was argued that there are "widespread reports" about the various acts of corruption indulged in by the two Ministers whom the Chief Minister had cleared, particularly the KTP Minister. Ignoring the fact that a responsible person occupying the position of the Chief Minister cannot come to a *prima facie* finding on the basis of "widespread reports" unless there was some material evidence to substantiate the allegation, the detractors of the Chief Minister accused him of partiality towards the Ministers belonging to or supporting his party.

From this accusation against the Chief Minister of partiality and lack of integrity, they proceeded to charge his whole party with widespread corruption. The Right Communist press and its agitators surpassed everybody in calling the CPI(M) the most corrupt party in the political history of Kerala and saying that every office of the party from the Branch to the State Committee was a nest of corruption. A state-wide campaign was organised by the Right Communist Party to malign the CPI(M) and to demand a judicial enquiry into the charges of corruption.

Any honest observer of the political scene could see that, if this campaign was allowed to continue, the break-up of the U.F. and its Ministry was only a matter of days. One could therefore have legitimately expected that the non-Right Communist non-Marxist constituents of the U.F. and its sympathisers would take the initiative in putting their foot down on this campaign, in seeing to it that the question of how to deal with the allegations of corruption was settled through internal discussions within the Co-ordination Committee.

REASONABLE PROPOSALS

This was precisely what was proposed by the CPI(M). We made the following alternative proposals: Scrutiny by a

sub-committee of the Co-ordination Committee; examination by a committee of the Cabinet; or leaving it to a person qualified to be a High Court judge and elected by the legislature. If the finding arrived at by any of the agencies was that the case required futher probe, it should of course be handed over to an enquiry under the Commission of Enquires Acts.

If the "mini-front" parties were genuinely interested in tracking down and bringing to book those who are really guilty of corruption, they would have readily accepted this proposal. They, however, refused to accept it. Their demand was that, while no such machinery should be set up to examine the material evidence given to substantiate the allegations against other Ministers, the allegations levelled against the KTP Minister should be handed over to a judical enquiry even without a preliminary examination of the material and even without finding whether a *prima facie* case existed.

This naturally would not be acceptable to any reasonable person, since this amounted to laying down one rule for one Minister and another for other Ministers. The CPI(M) therefore firmly rejected this proposal and said that whatever procedure was adopted in relation to the KTP Minister should be adopted in relation to other Ministers also A deadlock therefore arose within the U.F. Co-ordination Committee on this issue.

The "mini-front" parties decided to break the deadlock by taking the help of the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition. On October 3, they got a resolution adopted in the legislature proposing that the allegations made on the floor of the legislature against the KTP Minister (with or without any material evidence to substantiate the allegations) should be enquired into under the Commission of Enquiries Act, even though nobody had made a preliminary scrutiny of the material in order to come to a finding whether a *prima facie* case existed.

This made it obligatory for the Government, through the Chief Minister who was in charge of the department, to order an enquiry into the allegations against this particular Minister, even though the Government had not satisfied itself on the nature of the evidence warranting a detailed enquiry. The Chief Minister etherefore thought it only fair that the allegations against other Ministers were also subjected to a similar enquiry

if the allegations were as serious as in the case of this particular Minister. He therefore simultaneously ordered enquiries into the allegations against this one Minister and three others.

The Voting

This action of the Chief Minister so infuriated the "mini-front" that, once again with the support of the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition, they got the legislature to approve a motion demanding enqury into the allegations against all other Ministers excepting the Chief Minister. Since this was a motion which amounted to an expression of no-confidence in the Chief Minister, he immediately tendered the resignation of his Ministry.

An analysis of the final voting shows that, out of the 69 votes polled in favour of the "mini-front" motion, 16 were from the opposition—nine Congress, five Kerala Congress and two independents, who have always voted with the Congress. Deducting these 16 votes, the members who voted with the "mini-front" from the non-Congress MLAs were 53. As against this, 60 non-Congress U.F. MLAs voted against the "mini-front". The motion could, in other words, be got carried only with the support of the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition.

It is also worthy of note that the spokesmen of the "mini-front" parties did, in the course of the debate preceding voting on the motion, demand the resignation of the Chief Minister on the ground that he had ceased to enjoy the confidence of the majority of the legislators. The earlier voting of October 3, followed by the joint resolution of the "mini-front" declaring that they would withdraw their support to the Chief Minister, had made it clear that the "mini-front" and the opposition in the legislature had come to an understanding that the so-called issue of corruption would be used in order to topple the Ministry. The Chief Minister, on his part, had also made it clear that he was not going to beg the "mini-front" parties to continue to give their support to him and that he would tender his resignation the moment the Assembly recorded itself against him on a motion which, in his view, amounted to "expression of lack of confidence in him".

In reply to this clear statement of the Chief Minister, the Right Communist leader, T. V. Thomas, asked : "Why should a dead man be killed again ?", meaning that it was not necessary

to have a formal voting but the Chief Minister should resign, since it was already clear that the majority was against him. The majority, as was noted above, was composed of 53 United Front MLAs plus 16 Congress-Kerala Congress MLAs, as opposed to 60 U.F. MLAs.

These very voting figures would show that the entire campaign on the so-called issue of "corruption" was the cover behind which the "mini-front", in collaboration with the Congress-Kerala Congress oppsition, was trying to practise in 1969 what they had considered inopportune in 1968. This was made still more clear when, immediatly after the CPI(M) Chief Minister submitted the resignation of his Ministry, the leaders of the "mini-front" as well as of the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition went to the Governor and asked for time to explore the possibilities of forming a "non-Marxist Ministry". After just over a week of hectic negotiations, they asked for and the Governor gave permission to form a Right Communist-led Ministry including the Kerala Congress.

Anybody could see that such a Ministry could not remain for a single day unless it secured the support of the nine-member Congress party as well. It was, however, necessary for the Right Communist and RSP constituents of the U.F. to make it appear that they were not seeking the support of the Congress party. The Right Communist Chief Minister made the brave-sounding declaration that the moment he found that he could not continue without Congress sopport, he would tender the resignation of his Ministry.

Bluff Called

This bluff however was called first by the deputy leader and then by the leader of the Congress Legislature Party who ridiculed the claim of the non-Marxist Ministry carrying on without Congress support. The leader of the Congress Legislature Party revealed, "We have been asking the non-Marxist constituents of the U. F. how they could tolerate rule by the CPI(M). Their answer was that they would withdraw support to the CPI(M) the moment they found that the opposition was prepared to support them. We told them that we would be ready to support a purely non-Marxist Ministry. On no

account, however, would we support a Ministry which keeps the door open for the Marxists to come in later".

The Right Communist-RSP claim that they would like the CPI(M) to take the initiative for "reconstructing and reorganising" the old non-Congress U.F. was thus nothing but the cover behind which they were forming a Ministry which is totally alien in character to the one that was formed in 1967. Behind the talk of the present Ministry being a continuation of the old Ministry, they were, in fact, replacing a Ministry of struggle against the Congress with the active participation and leading role of the CPI(M) by another which is directed against the CPI(M) and is supported not only by the Kerala Congress but the Congress itself.

This change in the character of the Ministry was, for a time, sought to be camouflaged by the wild talk of the Ministry having secured the support of individual MLAs belonging to the SSP and the CPI(M). These have been proved totally baseless. The Right Communists therefore have finally come in their true colours by making it clear that they are in reality depending on the support of the Indira Gandhi group within the Congress Legislature Party. If this fructifies, they hope, it will be possible for them to make the Ministry "respectable" in the eyes of the democratic opposition, since it would make them part of "the struggle against the reactionary syndicate". That, however, would not obviate the fact that the new Ministry would be essentially anti-CPI(M) and therefore totally different from the U.F. and its Ministry which came into existence in March 1967. The rallying together of the avowedly anti-Marxist Kerala Congress and Indira Gandhi Congress (both of whom have made the struggle against the CPI(M) an article of faith), along with the constituents of the former non-Congress U. F. would make this Ministry a new variant of the old anti-Communist front which came into existence in the days of the liberation struggle and after. The only difference would be that as opposed to the Communist Party of India being the target then, it is the CPI(M) that is under attack now. Furthermore as opposed to one solid anti-Communist front, there are today two anti-Marxist fronts, one composed of the syndicate Congress and such rightist non-Congress parties as the Jana Sangh and Swatantra, while the

other consists of the Indira Gandhi Congress and such other "left-oriented" non-Congress parties as the RSP, Right Communists and so on. As in 1964-65, the Right Communists and the RSP have, once again, joined the reactionary camp in its struggle against Marxism.

Wild and Baseless Allegations

Before we conclude this, it is necessary to deal with some of the wide allegations that had been made by the right Communist Party against the CPI(M) as part of their campaign to throw the CPI(M) out of the Ministry. It is also necessary to examine their claim that, while the Marxist-led Government did not carry out the agreed minium programme of the United Front during the 31 months of its being in office, the present Right Communist-led Ministry is vigorously implementing that programme.

Let us first of all take the question of food policy. As opposed to the wild talk of the Marxist-led Ministry having failed to procure paddy the Government records show that there has been improvement both in 1967-68 and 1968-69 over the previous years under President's rule. While the total procurement in 1966-67 was 93,107 tonnes of paddy against a target of 123,696 tonnes, procurement in the latter two years was 118,571 tonnes and 138,046 tonnes against targets of 103,580 tonnes and 110,547 tonnes, respectively. This improvement was registered, let it be added, in spite of the fact that the cultivators with holdings of less than two acres were exempted from procurement after 1967-68. The procurement target was reduced due to the actual procurement not only surpassed the targets during this exemption as can be seen, but what is to be noted is that these two years but was also higher than the highest figure under President's rule despite the exemption. In other words, even though the Marxist-led Government gave relief to the poorest section of the cultivators, procurement during the two years when that Ministry was administering the Food department was higher-in 1968-69, it being about fifty per cent above the record of President's rule.

The Right Communist leader and the present Chief Minister, Achutha Menon, therefore, resorted to the clever technique of comparing actual procurement during these two

years with the "marketable surplus" that should be available for procurement as calculated by statisticians. What should have been procured, according to him, is about 1.10 to 1.20 lakh tons of rice, while actual procurement never went beyond 80,000 tons of rice per year. Anybody who is familiar with the extent to which the statistically calculated "marketable surplus" in the agricultural sector is related to the actual surplus that can be procured by a government agency will see that, particularly in view of the exemption of cultivators below two acres, the actual procurement in Kerala is creditworthy. Achutha Menon himself would have hailed it as a remarkable achievement if only the Food portfolio had been held by a Minister belonging to his party. Since, however, it was held by a CPI(M) Minister, he demands that actual procurement should be judged in accordance with the statistician's calculation of available surplus.

Another allegation levelled by them against the Food Minister was that nothing was done to implement that item of the minimum programme of the United Front which relates to the handing over of the wholesale distribution of foodgrains to the Food Corporation. On the other hand, they claim, within less than a month of its assumption of office, the Right Communist Party-led Ministry completed all the formalities and signed an agreement with the Corporation.

The reality is that the descison to hand over the wholesale trade in foodgrains was taken in principle during the latter half of 1967. The Food Corporation, however, was not then prepared to take it up immediately. They wanted more time to set up the machinery. They took a long time also in negotiating with the state government the terms on which they would undertake the work.

Protracted negotiations at various levels (including those in which the writer of these lines, as the then Chief Minister, took part) had thus to be carried on. All this ultimately led to the preparation of a draft agreement between the Corporation and the state government. Even at this stage, the Corporation was not prepared to immediately undertake the entire wholesale trade in the state as a whole, but as a first step, to take it up in one taluk in each district—the taluk where the district headquarters is situated.

While the preliminaries connected with the finalisation of

the agreement between the state government and the Corporation were being carried on, however, the state government took the most essential step of giving notice to those wholesalers whose services would be dispensed with when the Corporation took it over. These notices were given in August 1969 and the three months period in which they could challenge the government decision was to expire in November. The wholesalers did, in fact, challenge the Government decision in the High Court. By the time the three-month-period was over and the High Court gave its clearance to the government decision by dismissing the wholesalers' writ petition, the Marxist Food Minister was replaced by a Right Communist Minister. The Food Corporation was also ready to sign the contract whose draft had been approved by the Marxist Food Minister. What the Right Communist Minister did was only to have the ceremonial signing of the contract.

The same thing applies to their claim that, while the Marxist Revenue and Forest Ministers had failed to give *pattas* (title-deeds) to cultivators who were in possession of government land, the Right Communist Revenue Minister did, in the very first month, give them in large numbers. The fact is that, in spite of the various difficulties that the Ministers had to face in the distribution of *pattas, patta* distribution had been done in 1968 and 1969, the total number of these *pattas* coming to about 50,000. Preparations had been made for the distribution of many more *pattas*. Such formalities as clearing forest land of standing trees, handing over such cleared lands by the Forest to the Revenue department and the preparation by the latter of the *pattas* for distribution on November 1 (the anniversary of the formation of Kerala State) had all been undertaken by the Marxist Ministers in charge of the Forest and Revenue departments. Since that Ministry was toppled, could, as in the case of the signing of the agreement with the Food Corporation, they claim credit for the distribution of those *pattas* which were under preparation during the previous Ministry.

Another allegation levelled against the CPI(M) and its Revenue Minister is regarding the inordinate delay in the adoption of the land reforms legislation. While our Party itself would have liked a speedier enactment of this legislation, it is

necessary to give here a few facts concerning the process of land reform legislation in 1967-69.

(a) The non-Congress Ministry of 1967-69 was not writing on a clean slate. The amendment legislation pushed through the legislature by the Congress Ministry which followed the "liberation struggle" had made serious inroads into the rights conferred on the peasants by the 1959 Land Reforms Bill. These inroads had been made under the cover of "protection to small holders", "encouragement of efficient cultivation" and so on. The non-Congress U.F. itself contained parties like the Muslim League which held that these arguments were valid. It was, therefore, necessary for the government to have detailed discussions within the United Front itself as well as with the opposition parties. Meanwhile, in May 1967 itself, i.e., within two months of the Ministry assuming office, an ordinance was promulgated, which was later enacted into a law, widening the definition of tenant to include tenants who had been left out of the Agrarian Reforms Act, giving them more rights prohibiting eviction of tenants and Kudikidappukars (hutment-dwellers) and collection of rent arrears.

(b) These discussions were started within the first few months of the existence of the Government. Following some informal discussions among the constituents of the United Front, a formal committee of political parties functioning in the legislature was constituted in November 1967. Views were invited and exchanged and those that emerged out of these deliberations formed the basis of the preparation of the Bill which was ready by 1968. The last meeting of this Committee was held on December 12, 1967.

(c) Since according to the provisions of the constitution, this Bill required sanction from the Central Government, it was sent to them on August 14, 1968. The Central Government, however, took a very long time and gave the sanction only eight months later, on April 10, 1969. The Centre returned the Bill proposing certain amendments which would have defeated some of the main purposes of the Bill. The Centre did not agree to the fair rent fixed in the New Bill and wanted the old provision to continue. It wanted plantations to be allowed to keep fallow lands without any limit, ceiling not be applied to pepper and arecanut gardens, that hutment-dwellers on plantation land

not be given ownership rights and so on. The Ministry, U.F. Co-ordination Committee and the Select Committee were all informed of the Centre's stand.

(d) Even before receiving Central Government sanction, however, the legislature took up the consideration of the Bill. The Select Committee carried on its deliberations and finally submitted its report and after its introduction on August 7, 1969, the Advisory Committee had decided that it should be taken up for discussion on August 11. This did not happen because the "mini-front" parties and the Congress did everything to prevent the Bill being taken up for discussion.

(e) The CPI(M) made the proposal to the other constituents of the U.F. in August 1969 that since the land reforms legislation was the most important legislation, consideration of the Select Committee report and the Bill as amended by the Committee should have priority over other Bills. The Muslim League, however, objected and demanded that its own Minister's Panchayati Raj Bill should get priority over it, and the Right Communists, among other, supported the League leaders. Only after vigorous mass campaign started by the CPI(M) and its allies did the League and the Right Communists agree to give priority to the Land Reforms Bill over the Panchayati Raj Bill. For such a party which in actual practice gave priorty to the Panchayati Raj Bill to denounce the CPI(M) of having delayed the enactment of the land reforms legislation is the height of dishonesty. Not only that. During the full eight months when the Central Government was delaying the Bill and when it sent back the Bill proposing certain substantive amendments, the Right Communist Party, leave alone organising a campaign, did not pass even a single protest resolution against the Centre's tactics. And they shamelessly blame the CPI(M) with delaying the Bill, the party which mobilised the people, fought the Centre, forced it to withdraw its proposals and got the Bill succesfully enacted.

These are only some of the wild allegations levelled against the CPI(M) by the Right Communist Party. We do not propose to go into all their allegations; the so-called "facts" adduced by them to support their allegations are contrary to truth. It is, however, necessary to debunk some of the claims that have been made by them.

One of them is that the two Right Communist Minsters—Agriculture and Electricity Minister M. N. Govindan Nair, and the Industries Minister, T. V. Thomas—are so efficient that, under their leadership, there have been solid achievements both in agricultural production and in industrialisation From making this claim for themselves they go forward to the denunciation of the CPI(M) and its Chief Minister by making the further claim that, if only the CPI(M) and its Chief Minister had not put obstacles in their way, their achievements would have been even bigger

Far more vocal than even his colleague, the Industries Minister, is the Agriculture Minister, M. N. Govindan Nair. Basing himself on the figures supplied by the Directorate of Agriculture, he claims that under his dispensation, there has been an upsurge in agricultural production. He then complains that the Bureau of Economics and Statistics, which was under the Chief Minister, gave figures of the agricultural production which were a few lakh tons less than what was calculated by the Agricultural department.

Anybody who knows anything about the figures of agricultural production in any state or the centre knows the divergences in the figures supplied by the various departments. This was a fact noted at Trivandrum by the Central Food and Agriculture Minister, Jagjivan Ram, who was asked by pressmen about these different figures. (It is a fact that at the centre, the Food Ministry, the Agriculture Ministry and the Central Statistical Organisation gave different figures). It is also well-known that the basis of calculation by various departments is different : the Agricultural department calculates it on the basis of acreage under irrigation, under new high-yielding varieties of seeds, the quantity of fertilisers consumed and other inputs used in agricultural production. The Statistical department, on the other hand, undertakes crop-cutting surveys in model plots selected at random. It is, therefore, not surprising that the results of these different calculations are different from one another. If under these circumstances, a particular minister claims that the figures supplied by his department should be considered as authentic and on that starts denouncing other ministers, knowledgeable persons would consider such ministers as nothing but pettyminded if not worse. Such, unfortunately,

was the conduct of the Right Communist Agriculture Minister in Kerala.

Leaving aside the basis and method of calculation, let us look at the facts as they are. There has undoubtedly been a sizable increase in agricultural production in Kerala, as there has been in all other states of India. It is precisely this that is claimed by the bourgeoise and its Congress leaders as the "green revolution". No credit can be claimed by any particular minister of any state for this increase in production, because it is the result of the "new strategy" evolved by the bourgeois leadership in its efforts to bring about a capitatist transformation of agriculture.

If the Right Communists were, in fact, Marxist-Leninists as they claim to be, they would have pondered over the question where this technological transformation is taking place—in the narrow layer of capitalist farms or in the farm sector as a whole. They would have considered whether the undoubtedly real increase in production is leading to the accentuation of class conflicts in the rural areas, since the advance in technique and increase in production do not percolate to the wide sectors of small and even medium-size farms. Even the bourgeois leadership of the country has started raising this question, as can be seen from the note of warning issued by the Central Home Minister Chavan that "the green revolution may well turn into a Red revolution, if the social conflicts that are breaking out in the wake of the technological change are not resolved in time". The Right Communist Minister and his party, however, are not bothered with all this, they being absolutely certain that Kerala is well on the way to a solution of its food and agricultural problems if only the Agricultural department is under a Right Communist Minister.

As for the Industries department, even this claim is not being made. It is realised that the perspective of large-scale industrialisation in the private sector with the help and collaboration of foreign monopolists has not materialised. The Central Government and the monopoly capitalists in India and abroad have not been so "co-operative" in seeing up new large-scale industries in Kerala as the Right Communists had expected them to be. Students of economics and politics of monopoly

capital in India will not miss the reality. The Right Communists, however, want to throw the responsibility for the failure of their policy at the "obstruction" placed before them by the CPI(M) and its Chief Minister.

It is necessary in this context to negate the idea that the non-Congress Ministry of 1967-1969 is completely barren of achievements in the industrial field. Several industries have undoubtedly been set up during this period, particularly in the small-scale sector. The intensive campaign for the setting up of small-scale industries under the guidance of the Central Small-Scale Industries Institute did indeed give a fillip to several small-scale entrepreneures. Much more could have been done in this field if only the Right Communist Industries Minister and his party had devoted more time and attention to this aspect of industrialisation than to their wrong and distorted idea of industrialisation in collaboration with foreign and Indian monopoly capital. More could have been achieved also if the Right Communist Minister and his party had placed before themselves the perspective of starting major industries in the public sector with the cooperation and assistance of socialist countries.

Real Face of "Achievements"

Let us now turn to the co-called "achievements" of the Achutha Menon Ministry during the two months of its existence. Some of the claims they have made would themselves show their utter political bankruptcy, subservience to the landlord-bourgeois leadership of the Congress and the Kerala Congress—the main characteristic feature of the Right Communist Party.

A pamphlet issued by the Ministry claims as one of its "achievements" that they have removed checkposts that have been in existence to control the movement of foodgrains. This has always been the demand of those who have been claiming that, if only free movement of foodgrains all over the country is permitted, there would not be famine and high prices. Free trade is the slogan of the Swatantra Party. Free trade at least within the Southern Zone has been the slogan of the Muslim League and Kerala Congress. Free trade within Kerala may thus be the beginning of the Right Communist surrender to the demand of the Muslim League, Kerala Congress and Swatantra Party.

Another achievement, claimed in the pamphlet, is that they have "reorganised" the State Planning Board set up during the previous Ministry under the Marxist Chief Minister. Though the word used is "reorganised" their actual deed is to abolish the State Planning Board. For the new "Board" consists of a few Ministers, a few secretaries and a few heads of departments. What is "abolished" is the four non-official experts each specialised in one aspect of planning and the staff working under them.

The setting up of such a body of experts, including the Economic Division of the Planning Board, was welcomed by those interested in planning in other states as well as at the Centre. It was, however, precisely this that was objected to by the Kerala Congress and Congress openly and some constituents of the U.F. secretly, when the former Ministry was functioning. The reason for this opposition was that, while the non-official members of the Board and the staff working with them did their work creditably in the matter of producing the Fourth Five-Year Plan for Kerala, the Board as a whole and its Economic Division in particular, became the centre of basic criticism of the landlord-bourgeois leaders of the Central Congress Government. "The Alternate Policies for Indian Planning" worked out on the initiative of the Economic Division of the State Planning Board did indeed make a sharp departure from the Central Government's policies.

The State Planning Board, therefore, was denounced by the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition as "a Marxist instrument". The Right Communists, true to their complete subservience to the landlord-bourgeois policies and practices of the Congress-Kerala Congress groups, obediently carried out their master's policy. Kerala is, therefore, back where it was with no machinery of planning.

Still another "achievement" of the present Ministry is the issue of several ordinances showing its claim that unlike the former Marxist-led Ministry, the present Ministry is energetic, getting things done quickly, without waiting for bureaucratic red-tape. The fact of the matter, however, is that almost every one of these ordinances was before the legislature in the form of Bills. The Debt Relief Bill, for instance, had been introduced in the legislature at its October sitting. It would have been finally passed in October itself, had it not been for the fact that

some members wanted more time to consider the Bill and in the meantime, the Ministry was toppled. This applies also to the gratuity and other labour legislations. The former Labour Minister, Mathai Manjooran, had prepared these Bills. They could have been adopted by the legislature if only the Right Communists and their "mini-front" partners had not toppled the Ministry. The present Ministry did, in fact, prorogue the Assembly which was to have met on November 17, thus actually delaying the adoption of these Bills by the legislature.

Having thus stood in the way of legislation in the normal process, they adopt the clever method of issuing these very same Bills as ordinances. This was doubly advantageous to them: first they could postpone the evil day of holding the Assembly session at which they would have to prove their claim of having a majority in the legistature; secondly, they could claim credit for adopting the quick and speedy method of issuing ordinances to help the people.

Mention should, however, be made of one ordinance which is the creation of this Ministry—the ordinance entrusting the Public Service Commission with the responsibility of making appointments to the Kerala State Transport Corporation. This has a history behind it.

One of the points of attack against the CPI(M) by the partners of the "mini-front" and Congress-Kerala Congress opposition was that the Transport Minister belonging to the CPI(M) was responsible for large-scale irregular appointments to the Corporation. The Right Communists have also been demanding that the appointments to the Transport Corporation should be handed over to the Public Service Commission. The CPI(M) was opposed to treating the Transport Corporation in a way different from other corporations, the largest number of these corporations being attached to departments handled by the Right Communist Party.

The Party, therefore, proposed that appointments to all corporations should be handed over to the PSC. The writer of these lines had, in fact, given directives to have the necessary preparations made to implement this objective. A statement to this effect had also been made on the floor of the legislature on October 17. If the Ministry had continued, therefore, a Bill would have eventually been introduced in the legislature

bringing all appointments to the corporations within the purview of the PSC. The "Mini-front" Kerala Congress Government, however, is not interested in bringing all corporations under the purview of the Bill. They wanted to make an exception of the Transport Corporation.

This was also done in the case of the post of the chairman of the Transport Corporation. Like other corporations such as the Agro-Industries Corporation, Plantation Corporation, and so on, the Transport Corporation had a non-official chairman. Unlike them, however, this Corporation had as chairman a Communist (Marxist) while the others were Right Communists, ISP and so on. One of the very first actions of the present Ministry was to relieve this particular chairman, while chairmen of other corporations belonging to other parties still continue.

Together with the chairman, several employees of the corporation are also being dismissed. The reason given is that they were irregularly appointed. The fact is that, as in the case of several other departments of the government and corporations, provisional appointments are made for short durations ; if regular appointments are not made for some time and these provisional appointees have to continue for a sufficiently long time, they are confirmed. This practice had been followed in the Transport Corporation even before 1967. Many of those who were thus "a regularly appointed" as is now suggested by the present Transport Minister were then confirmed because the then Marxist Transport Minister agreed with the trade unions that it was wrong to dismiss such persons who had remained at those posts for some time.

The present Transport Minister does not propose to follow this principle which had been accepted on the demand of all trade unions ; and some of the very trade unions (including the INTUC and the Right Communist unions) had taken that stand then but have now agreed with the present Kerala Congress Transport Minister. The only reason is that the appointments were made when the Communist (Marxist) Transport Minister was in charge ; furthermore, since nobody was barred on political grounds from appointment, as was the case in previous appointments, many members and sympathisers of the CPI(M) also got appointments. This, it may be seen, is a reversion to the old practice of screening of candidates for appointment with a view

to eliminating all those who are politically "dangerous" to the landlord-bourgeois regime, the practice that has become notorious as "police verification". The restoration of this practice and the unleashing of unprecedented police and *goonda* terror are the big "achievements" of the reactionary ruling class from the *coup d'etat* of October 24.

The developments of the last month-and-a-half have proved that the October 24 voting was a real *coup d'etat*. It was intended to reverse the political change that took place in March 1967. Replace a Government, which was pledged to serve the common working people by a Government pledged to serve the landlords and capitalists—such was the intention with which the 'mini-front' and the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition joined together in voting the Government out.

Police-Goonda Terror

The resignation of the Marxist-led Ministry following the October 24 voting was accompanied by attacks on agricultural labourers throughout the state. The incident referred to earlier (the demonstrative action of the notorious landlord bully John Jacob having shaved off his beard which he had started growing when he was arrested for his brutal attack on agricultural labourers) was indicative of the mood of the landlords and their bullies. Within a week of the resignation of the Ministry and during the first few days of the new Ministry's regime, three agricultural labourers or their leaders (including one woman labour) were done to death and hundreds subjected to brutal attacks. Those officers and men of the police force who were unhappy over the restraints put on them during the last 31 months heaved a sigh of relief and went back to their old traditional ways of beating up and terrorising the people.

Four MPs, headed by Comrade A. K. Gopalan, went round some of the areas of such incidents and told the people what they had seen. Three MLAs headed by Comrade Gowri visited another place and they, too, brought before the people what they saw. These statements of responsible leaders of the people were, however, dismissed with contempt by the Right Communist Chief Minister and the Muslim League Home Minister who repeated the time-worn justification of "organised violence and subversion" on the part of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

It became thus clear that, like all earlier bourgeois governments, the new "Communist"-led government considers it to be its foremost duty to keep the working people (particularly the rural working people) under the thump of the landlords and their rural bullies to suppress their rising movement.

This, however, was not all. The new government made it clear that it would not tolerate demonstrations against the new Ministry or its individual Ministers. It should be mentioned that every Ministry that has come into being in Kerala has had to face hostile demonstrations with black flags. The police, too, have acquired the necessary training to keep the demonstrators at sufficient distance, so that, while the demonstrators have full freedom to express their feelings, the minister against whom the demonstration is organised is protected from any physical attack. Such hostile demonstrations with black flags have been held even before the Prime Minister of the country. The new Ministers, however, are so "democratic" that they would not tolerate this. At Kozhikode and at Malappuram, those who waved black flags against ISP Minister, Koran, were beaten up by the police but not a gang of Muslim League *goondas* who had come in special vehicles "to protect" the League Home Minister. The attack was so violent that one of the demonstrators, Poulose by name, was killed.

These attacks reached their climax on December 1 when the Communist Party of India (Marxist) organised a statewide programme of picketing the district offices of the government in order to register the people's protest against these attacks on the people, against the unjustified postponement of the Assembly session (which had been fixed to be convened on November 17) and against the continuance of a Ministry which does not enjoy the confidence of the legislature. As in the case of earlier protests of the people, here, too, the demonstrators were brutally lathicharged and fired upon. Over a thousand people were seriously injured and hospitalised all over the state and four were killed in police firing. Never before in Kerala have so many been killed and so many injured in one day of protest. As for the severity of the lathi-charge, the "Communist"-led Ministry has surpassed all records, including those set by the old British and princely rulers.

The police-goonda raj has become even more intense since

January 1—the day on which the peasants and agricultural workers of the state began assuming the rights conferred on them by the Land Reforms Amendment Act on the basis of their organised strength in response to the historic declaration of the Alleppey convention to prevent the landlords from robbing them of the benefits of the Act. The Right Communists who have given a call at the national level for occupation of land, who in West Bengal have joined other parties to occupy illegally-held land are, in Kerala, using the Central Reserve Police to inhumanly beat up the peasants and agricultural workers for doing the same. That is the extent of their servility to the rural vested interests and their party, the Kerala Congress.

It is obvious that the Communist Party of India (Marxist) will not be cowed down by this kind of brutal attacks on the people. Together with all other parties, organisations and individuals (including groups and individuals from the 'mini-front' parties or even from the Congress and the Kerala Congress) who are horror-stricken at these brutal attacks, the Party would organise a broad united people's movement against this policy of the 'mini-front'-Kerala Congress Government. We have no doubt that those Right Communists and Revolutionary Socialists who have not yet forgotten the days when they and we together joined against the British, the princely and Congress rulers who had tried to drown our people's movement in blood, would join us in resisting this new wave of ruling class attack camouflaged by a "Communist"-led Ministry. We are also confident that the democratic conscience of the whole country would be roused against this brutality.

One is reminded on this occasion of a day in 1959 when the present chairman of the Right Communist Party, S. A. Dange, had said that the then Communist-led government of Kerala would have to be asked to resign if it could not continue to rule without firing on the workers. The occasion was that, due to reasons beyond the control of the then Communist-led government, fire was opened on workers during a strike. One or two other incidents also took place when fire was opened by the police. All these were deeply regretted by the then Government of Kerala.

Today, however, it is a "Communist"-led government whose head (Dange's own colleague in the Central Secretariat of his

party) is justifying the firings and lathi-charges in the same language in which the British rulers, the Dewans of princely states and Congress Ministers were justifying firings. Dange and his colleagues should know that firings and lathi-charges are resorted to in this state for nothing other than to suppress the struggles of the democratic parties to organise protest demonstrations against the Government collectively and against Ministers individually. A Ministry which does not hesitate to report to these methods and justifies all these in the same way as the earlier British Governments is nothing but an ordinary bourgeois Ministry with an outer coating of bogus 'communism'. This is a fact which the people have begun to realise.

They welcome political change that took place in March 1967 is being reversed. A government pledged to serve the common working people is being replaced by a government pledged to serve the landlords and capitalists. Such in short is the "record" of the "mini-front"-Kerala Congress-Congress collaboration which led to the toppling of the previous Ministry and the formation of the present Ministry.

APPENDIX

At the end of the first month of the "mini-front"-Kerala Congress Government in office, the Public Information Department of the Kerala Government put out a hand-out listing the achievements of the new Government. The Government is too modest; it does not claim the real achievements it has to his credit till then and afterwards.

For instance, the Government did not take credit for its police and the *goondas* of the ruling parties killing in cold blood :

Prabhakaran Nair (Ponnu Nair to the agricultural workers and others in his area) of Kunnukara in Ernakulam District.

Kutty, a 45-year-old woman agricultural worker, of Melpadu in Kuttanadu in Alleppey District.

Anthony Rajan, a cardamon estate worker in Vandiperiyar; Poulose of Nilambur killed by Muslim League *goondas* in the presence of the Muslim League Home Minister Mohammed Koya for showing black flags to the Minister.

Sreedharan, agricultural worker of Ward 2 of Kavalam Panchayat in Kuttanadu in Alleppey District.

Balan Pillai, a Branch Secretary of the CPI(M), in Trivandrum District.

Thilakappan, 19-year-old, a CPI(M) worker of Shertallai.

K. Sukumaran, Manickan, Chellan, Rajan, Killed in the wanton police firing in Palghat on December 1, 1969.

The Government has not taken credit for the brutal lathi-charges on December 1 all over the state, particularly in Kozhikode (where CPI-M MLAs M. K. Kelu, E. V. Kumaran and Dakshinamoorthy and district leaders of the party were made the special targets of attack by the Central Reserve Police); in Vaikom where Right Communist MLA P. S. Srinivasan sat in the Taluk Office and instructed the police officials during the lathi-charges in which over 250 people were seriously injured and admitted in hospital; in Irinjalakuda where a well-known Right Communist lawyer himself had to openly protest against the brutality of the lathi-charges; in Mukundapuram, Cochin, Trivandrum and Nedumangad—a day of statewide lathi-charges in which over a thousand persons were hospitalised.

Earlier on November 1, when the Achutha Menon government assumed office, police made lathi-charges in 18 places on those who were observing it as a Betrayal Day.

Cries of agony have again begun to be heard from police lock-ups, their walls have again begun to get spattered with blood, under the new Government as police beat and maim people P. R. Vasu and Diwakaran in Muthukulam, the tile workers of Manalur, agricultural workers' union leaders in Ollur, Pachar and a large number of CPI(M) sympathisers in Kuttiadi and around after some extremists made an attack on the police station there though the Government and the police know that the Party had nothing to do with the attacks; the CPI(M) volunteers who were arrested from a regular training camp in Kasargode; picketing workers in Badagara including women workers; and agricultural workers and others in dozens of places. P. R. Vasu was bound tightly with a rope and was beaten for hours while Pachar and some others, after hours of beating, were forced to eat rice mixed with human flesh and blood of the sub-

inspector who was injured in the attack on the Kuttiyadi police station.

About a hundred huts of agricultural workers were burnt down in Paraal near Changanassery while in Thykattusseri in Shertallai their homes were raided and men, women, and children were beaten. In the whole of Alleppey district, particularly in Kuttanad, the Kerala Congress landlords with the backing of the Right Communists and the active help of the CRP and the State police are making attack after attack on agricultural workers, beating the men, raping the women, and burning their homes. The heart-rending appeal from the women of these areas is, "save us from molestation by the police".

Since the kudikidappukars (hutment-dwellers) began to assume the rights conferred on them by the Land Reforms Amendment Act from January 1 onwards, the police attacks on them have been further intensified. Newly-erected huts have been demolished and those who erected them lathi-charged in hundreds of places, thousands have been involved in cases for "stealing cocoanuts" which rightly belong to them after the Act came into force on January 1. Thousands of others had already been involved earlier in cases for participating in protest demonstrations and movements.

The government, particularly its Revenue Minister, claims that it is distributing title-deeds to land to thousands. But in just over a month, this Government used the police to evict the families staying in government wasteland in Cheruthony in Idikki, 41 families in Thalappuzha, 700 families in Vellathuval, a number of families from Government wasteland in Meloor in Chalakudi, 38 families from panchayat wasteland in Pyngottu-kara in Muvattupuzha, 47 families from government wasteland in Chattangari, to evict the settlers in Jeerakappara for the big Muslim landlord family of Koyappathodi by burning their huts and beating them, from wasteland in Nedumbram, 30 families in Mannakandam in Devicolam and so on.

Students protesting against the High Court Judgement invalidating certain clauses of the University Act were brutally lathi-charged in Tellicherry on November 1; school boys fighting for cancellation of examination fees were lathi-charged in Kannapuram, and Socialist Youth Federation volunteers picketing Government offices demanding jobs or unemployment relief were

lathi-charged on January 5. The police made a wanton and indiscriminate lathi-charge on striking workers of Premier Tyres in Kalamassery during the course of which they entered a near-by madrassa and beat up small muslim girl ; they used their lathis on the heads of transport workers who were picketing Transport Corporation offices in protest against unjust dismissals.

The "mini-front"-Kerala Congress Government can also take the credit for reviving the hated practice of police verification for recruitment to government services. Near-about a thousand persons have already been thrown out of the State Road Transport Corporation on this basis including its chairman appointed by the U. F. Government. The police questioned many of them and the only thing the police wanted to know was about their connections with the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

The Achutha Menon Government, in the name of "reorganizing" the State Planning Board has, in fact, abolished it.

When the Board was set up, it had been welcomed by those interested in planning in other States and at the Centre. The Kerala Congress and Congress had opposed its formation. The Achutha Menon Government has satisfied their demand and there is no planning machinery for the state now.

The Gratuity Ordinance : The Labour Minister in the U. F. Cabinet, the late Mathai Manjooran, had already prepared a Bill regarding this. If the Assembly had been convened on November 17 as fixed earlier, the Bill would have been enacted. By postponing the Assembly to organize defections, to manufacture a majority for the Government, the mini-front-Kerala Congress delayed the enactment of the Bill and issued it as an ordinance in an attempt to earn some cheap popularity.

Handing over of wholesale distribution of foodgrains to the Food Corporation of India : The decision to do this had been taken in principle in the latter half of 1967 by the U. F. Government. It was the FCI which wanted time to set up its machinery and the Corporation took an inordinately long time to settle its terms with the State Government. Even when the agreement was ready, the FCI did not want to take the entire distribution, but only in one taluk in each district. Meanwhile, the U. F. Government had taken the most essential step of serving notices to wholesalers that their services would be dispensed with when the FCI took over. They challenged the Government decision

in the High Court. By the time, the High Court dismissed the petition, the U. F. Government had been toppled. All that the present Government has done is to sign the agreement which the CPI(M) Food Minister had approved and for the signing of which the ground had been cleared by the CPI(M) Ministers.

Distribution of *pattas* (title-deeds) : Despite various difficulties that the Government had to face, the distribution of *pattas* had been done in 1968 and 1969 under the U. F. Government, their total number coming to about 50,000. Arrangement were also made for distribution of more *pattas*. Forest land had been cleared and these lands had been transferred from the Forest to the Revenue department and the preparation by the Revenue department to distribute the *pattas* on November 1 had been made. The U. F. Government was toppled on October 24 and all that the present Government is doing is to distribute the *pattas* already prepared.

In short, the present government is trying to take credit for all the good things that the previous government has done while it maintains silence on the police-*goondaraj* which it has set up in total contrast to the police policy of the U. F. Government and its Chief Minister who held the Home portfolio in that Government.

TWENTY-EIGHT MONTHS IN KERALA

People Give us a Chance

"IT WAS A VOTE AGAINST THE CONGRESS, RATHER THAN for the Communist Party" was the assessment made by several Congress leaders, including Prime Minister Nehru, regarding the 1957 General Election in Kerala. They did not answer the question why, if that was so, the voters did not choose the P-SP, the Muslim Leauge and RSP—the parties which were in the field against both the Congress and the Communist Party.

The P-SP and the Muslim League who had an electroal alliance between them, had put up 80 candidates for a total number of 125 contested seats. Their candidates included several former ministers, including one ex-Chief Minister. The voters of Kerala could, therefore, have voted in such a way as to make the P-SP-League combination an absolute majority in the Kerala legislature, if their intention was only to defeat the Congress. As a matter of fact, this combination could secure only 17 seats ; even out of these 17, two were secured with the support of the Communist Party, which, in the special circumstances of those constituencies, supported the P-SP candidates.

The RSP too, entered the field with 28 candidates. The voters of Kerala could have returned a sizable number out of them to the legislature if their intention was only to defeat the Congress. As a matter of fact, however, none of their candidates was returned ; what is more, 22 candidates lost their deposits.

Another fact worth mentioning in this connection is that Communist candidates were returned with absolute majorities (50 per cent or more of the votes polled in the Constituency) in 34 constituencies. This, it will be noticed, comes to more than 25 per cent of the total number of constituencies in the State. In another eight seats the Communist Party secured between 48 and 50 per cent of votes.

What about other parties ? The Congress was in an absolute majority in only 20 constituencies ; the Muslim League in three constituencies, and the P-SP in two constituencies (of which one was won with Communist support). No objective student of Kerala can fail to see that these results of the 1957

General Elections were the logical culmination of the developments that took place since the Country attained to independence and the former Indian states of Travancore and Cochin got responsible Government.

The Congress had secured a big majority of votes polled in the 1946 Elections in Malabar, and in 1948 in Travancore and Cochin, but this unassailable position of the Congress was rudely shaken in the first General Elections under the new Constitution, which took place in 1952. It was in 1952 that the voters of the then States of Travancore-Cochin and Madras gave their first verdict against the Congress, though not for any one of the several opposition parties.

The formidable unity of the Communist Party and the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party of Malabar was able to secure as many as 16 out of 30 seats to the Madras legislature from the then Malabar part of the present-day Kerala. Added to these were four seats secured by the then Socialist Party of India and five seats by the Muslim League. The Congress was able to secure only the remaining five seats out of the 30 seats in that area. As for the Travancore-Cochin State, the United Letftist Front of the Communist Party, RSP and KSP was able to secure 37 seats. To these were added 11 seats secured by the Socialist Party and nine seats by the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress. Here again, the Congress was reduced to a minority in the legislature, while, of the votes polled, it could secure only 35 per cent.

This clearly was a vote against the Congress but not for any other party. The Communist Party tried to consolidate and strengthen this unity against the Congress. It called for the unity of the Opposition based on a unity of programme with a view to the formation of an alternative democratic government. That the Party was giving expression to the feeling that were universal among the democratic-minded people became clear at the time of the 1954 General Elections in Travancore-Cochin, when the slogan "WE WILL FIGHT TOGETHER, WE WILL RULE TOGETHER" resounded throughout the State of Travancore-Cochin. The voters of the then T. C. State reposed the confidence in the alliance of CPI, P-SP, RSP and KSP who raised this slogan and returned 59 of its candidates in a house of 117 legislators.

At this point, however, the P-SP played its treacherous role. The party that had pledged itself to the voters to form an alternative, non-Congress, leftist Government, formed a minority Government of its own, with the solid support of the Congress. Once the purpose of using the P-SP to break the leftist alliance was achieved, the Congress for its part played its own treacherous role by throwing the P-SP out of office, and installing the Congress—Tamilnadu Congress Coalition Government. As for the RSP and the KSP, they showed unmistakbly that their sympathies lay with the traitorous P-SP, rather than with their own electiontime ally the CPI.

It was these treacherous activities of the other non-Congress parties that the voters of Kerala had in mind at the time of the 1957 General Elections. Theirs was as much a vote against the Congress as against the P-SP and the RSP, which helped the Congress to resort to various intrigues during the five years between 1952 and 1957. The RSP was wiped out as an electoral force. As for the P-SP, it was able to secure only nine seats, and that too with League support in the case of four seats and with Communist support in 2 seats. The KSP did not dare set up even a single candidate; what is more, its leaders went about openly campaigning for the Congress as the only party that could save Kerala from the threat of Communist.

The shape of things that were to came in Kerala was already visible in the latter half of 1954, when an election took place for the District Board of the Malabar District of Madras. The Communist Party, together with democratic independents allied to it, emerged as the biggest single party in the Board having 24 seats out of 48; the Congress was the next biggest party with 15 seats. The Muslim League secured eight seats; the P-SP was left with one seat.

The Congress tried its best to have alliances with the non-Communist parties, and also to wean away a few members from the Communist Party, so that it could take over the administration. These efforts proved, however, a miserable failure. The Communist Party, on the other hand, was able, with just 50 per cent representation on the Board, to take over the administration and, what is more, to continue it for its full three-year term.

It was this accumulated experience of the people of Kerala that made them vote the way they did in 1957. The meaning of that vote was clear : finding the Congress and Left parties including the P-SP wanting, the people of Kerala decided to give a chance to the Communists.

THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS

April 5, 1957 was a day of rejoicing for the people of Kerala. For, on that day, the State which had been under President's Rule since its formation on November 1, 1956, was brought under an elected Government. To mark this occasion, the new Government decided to commute the death sentences on all those who were then awaiting execution.

A few months later, the whole country celebrated the Centenary of the 1857 Freedom Struggle. The President of India himself came to Trivandrum to preside over the celebration in the capital of Kerala. On this occassion, too, the Government of Kerala ordered clemency to the prisoners. Remissions of varying periods for prisoners undergoing varying terms of imprisonment were granted; and those who were undergoing the shortest terms of imprisonment were released from prison.

These are two forms of concession shown to prisoners in all the States of India on days of national importance. The inauguration of the newly-formed state of Andhra, in the year 1953, was marked by the Government of Andhra (headed by the late Sri Prakasam) by the total clearence of every jail in Andhra. The releases ordered by the Government of Kerala in commemoration of April 5, and August 15, 1957, were of far lesser magnitude than Andhra releases.

The Government of Kerala also ordered that all cases connected with election clashes should be withdrawn. The text of the Order issued in connection with this decision was, a word-for-word repetition of an Order issued by the Government of Andhra.

Another decision taken by the Government of Kerala was that cases arising out of labour or agrarian disputes which had been settled, as well as cases arising out of political struggle, would be withdrawn. This too is a procedure adopted by several state Governments in our country. In the former state

or Travancore-Cochin, for example, the then Chief Minister, Sri Pattom Thanu Pillai, ordered the release of prisoners convicted in the group of cases known as Punnapra-Vayalar cases. Sri Pattom's successor in Office, Sri Panampalli Govinda Menon, too, had agreed to withdraw cases and to release prisoners when strikes were withdrawn.

The decisions of the Communist-led Government of Kerala, however, came in for a good deal of criticism at the hands of the Opposition parties. This criticism has been repeatedly voiced by the leaders of the Congress, the P-SP and Muslim League parties and as repeatedly answered by the Government of Kerala on the basis of irrefutable facts and figures. And yet, the Home Minister of India thought it fit to repeat the same charge in his Lok Sabha speech. The "summary" of the report submitted by the Governor of Kerala to the Government of India also repeated it. Let us, therefore, examine this criticism.

The first point made by the critics was that a large number of criminals were released, thus giving them direct encouragement to continue to perpetrate such crimes. Facts, however, show that prisoners convicted for ordinary crimes were not released : it was only short-term prisoners (with less than three months or so) that were given full remission and that too only on one occasion, the Centenary of the Freedom Struggle. This itself was far milder than the total clearance of Jails ordered by the Congress Government in Andhra.

The next argument was that many prisoners who were released on the pretext of being convicted for labour, agrarian and political struggles had been charged with such crimes as murder, arson, etc. This is equally applicable to many political prisoners who had been released by Congress Governments in various states, including the Congress and P-SP Governments in the State of Travancore-Cochin. The third argument was that the Kerala releases were intended solely and particularly to benefit the members and active workers of the Communist Party. This too is contrary to truth. It is known, for example, that among the ten persons whose death sentences were commuted there was only one Communist.

As for the beneficiaries of orders releasing prisoners and withdrawing cases arising out of labour, agrarian and political

struggle, they belonged to all political parties. To take only one example, a large number of cases withdrawn by the Government of Kerala related to the "High Court Agitation". This was an agitation jointly participated in by all the political parties. The majority of the beneficiaries, therefore, were non-Communist, the proportion of Communist among them being relatively small.

It should be also noted that this policy of releasing prisoners and withdrawing cases in connection with labour, agrarian and political agitations continued through the entire period of the Communist-led Government of Kerala. It, therefore, benefited all the political parties, particularly the parties of the Opposition in Kerala, who were very active in organising such struggle even where the merits of the cases did not warrant the launching of such struggles. This has been admitted by the Governor of Kerala himself who, in the reported "summary" of his report, stated as follows :

"If the number of peaceful satyagrahis and picketers and others in the Kattampalli, Sitaram Mills and Students agitations are excluded from the list of prisoners released it will be found that it is mostly Communists who had been guilty of violent crimes that derived benefit from this policy"

One is surprised to find all the laborious efforts made by the Governor to prove the unprovable—that is, that the Communists were the beneficiaries of this policy : He does not care to explain why the Kattampalli and other cases should be excluded, unless of course he propounds the "theory" that crimes committed by the anti-communists are not crimes.

One fails to understand why the attack on the police made by anti-Communists should be excluded from the list of crimes, while any Communist who is charged with the same crime, should be considered a criminal. But then, it seems, that is the Congress conception of truth and non-partisan administration. The biggest refutation of the Congress charge in connection with the release of prisoners and withdrawals of cases consists in the fact that the President's rule has used the release of prisoners sent to jail in connection with the recent direct action.

Many of these prisoners were sent to jail on charges of attacking transport buses, causing personal injury to passengers, damaging such national property as school building and

furniture, aggressive mass entry into Government offices and obstruction to the Government servants.

It should also be noticed that the leaders of the movement had made it clear that they were resorting to these anti-social forms of Direct Action with a view to "paralyse the administration". And yet the Congress and other opposition parties who were loud in their denunciation of the Communist-led Government's policy of releases are still louder in demanding the release of these prisoners. As for the Home Minister who repeated this charge against the Government of Kerala, he sanctioned the release of nearly 6,000 prisoners immediately after the establishment of the President's rule. As for cases, over 2,000 of them were subsequently withdrawn, involving about 10,000 persons. This includes several cases involving violence against person and property committed during the direct action movement.

The Home Minister remarked in the Lok Sabha that the number of prisoners released and cases withdrawn by the Communist-led Government of Kerala within two and a half years of its administration exceeds the number of such cases during the whole 12 year period of the Congress administration.

The facts mentioned above would make it clear that the number of persons released and of cases withdrawn after President's rule was established, comes to more than the number during the 28 months of the Communist-led Government.

One is, therefore, constrained to ask the Home Minister and other leaders of the Central Government and Congress High Command : Is this not a clear case of one rule for Congress Governments and another for a non-Congress Government ?

Police in a Welfare State

The Kerala Government's decision to release prisoners and withdraw cases, and the criticism of that decision made by the Congress leaders have a wider and deeper significance than the mere question of whether or not to release a few prisoners and withdraw a few cases. As a matter of fact, it involves the whole question of what a democratic Government's attitude should be towards the struggles waged by the working people for the improvement of their living standards, and towards the political struggles and movements organised by the Opposition parties.

The question actually is whether a distinction should be

made between ordinary criminals—that is, those who are charged with crimes because of their trade union, peasant or other mass activities and political struggles. Such a distinction was undoubtedly made in the pre-Independence days even by the leaders or the Congress. No less a person than Mahatma Gandhi pleaded for the commutation of death sentence on revolutionary political workers for the reason that the crimes were committed with noble motives. Many of those "politicals" of the British regime were, in the post-Independence years, given the name of "political sufferers" and allotted land and given preference in Government jobs and various other concessions.

Is this distinction between ordinary criminals and the so-called "politicals" valid after Independence? Or, are all those who commit crimes to be considered alike, regardless of whether the origin of the case against them is political? This is the basic question asked by the leaders of the Congress when they objected to the Kerala Government's action in releasing prisoners and withdrawing cases. Their obvious answer to this question is that such a distinction is not valid now.

One, could have legitimately conceded the sincerity of Congressmen in raising this question, had not their own action in Kerala after the assumption of office by the Communist-led Government in April, 1957, belied their words. The very people who objected to the Kerala Government's action in releasing prisoners and withdrawing cases relating to the periods in which the Congress or the P-SP was in office demanded release of prisoners and withdrawal of cases in the period in which the Communist Party was in office.

Every time the Congress or the P-SP or other leaders of the Opposition negotiated a settlement of labour, peasant or other issues which led to strike or other forms of direct action—such as Kattampalli, Sitaram, Student's agitation, etc., etc., they made it a condition that cases arising out of these direct actions should be withdrawn and prisoners released. In making these demands they did not make any distinction between petty crimes and major crimes; they demanded the release of even those who were charged with assault on ordinary citizens and police officers, attacking and damaging private and public property etc.

All this came to a climax in July-August, 1959, when, acceding to their demands, the Central Government dismissed the

Kerala Government and. following it, released all prisoners remanded to custody, or serving their terms of imprisonment, in cases arising out of the direct action they organised. This is an implied admission that the distinction between ordinary criminals and "politicals" is considered by them to be valid even today. The only condition they attach to it is that the "Politicals" who are to be given special treatment should be those who have committed crimes as part of their struggle against the Communist-led Government of Kerala.

While the Opposition parties in Kerala adopted a policy so divorced from any principle, the Communist-led Government of Kerala adopted a principled approach to the question. The essence of its approach is that every political party, mass organisation, group or individual, carrying on their activities in defence of the common peoples living standards, has the right to carry on these mass activities in a peaceful and legitimate way ; if, in the course of those activities, they happen to resort to actions which are crimes in the eyes of the law, they will of course be dealt with in the normal way, but their cases will be considered in a way different from the actions of ordinary criminals. It was from this basic policy that a new practice was established : That cases arising out of labour, agrarian or other disputes will be withdrawn, and prisoners in connection with them released once the dispute is settletd, provided, of course, the case does not involve serious crimes like murder, arson, etc. This is applicable equally to all political parties, organisations and individuals engaged in trade union, agrarian or other mass activities.

A variant of the same policy is that cases arising out of political struggles should not be dealt with in the same way as ordinary crimes. In a country where different political trends and different political parties exist, and fight one another, two things are likely to happen : Either the parties of the Opposition sometimes transgress the limits of the law and therefore come within its clutches ; or the ruling party and its subordinate officers sometimes abuse the law and harass the workers of the Opposition parties. Cases arising in this way should not be dealt with in the same way as ordinary cases of crime. In those cases where the Opposition has transgressed the limits of the law, those who are committing the crime may be pardoned, once

the mistake is recognised by those responsible for it, provided, of course, there is a certain amount of assurance that such a transgression of the law will not be repeated. In the case of the authorities themselves abusing the law to harass the Opposition, there is no room for doubt that proper amends should be made by them.

It was on these principles that the Kerala Government evolved its "new police policy". The crux of that policy is that it is not the job of the police to suppress the trade union, peasant and other mass activities of any mass organisation, or a political struggle waged by any political party; it is the job of the police to track down and punish those who commit ordinary crimes. The settlement of the labour or other disputes is to be left to the labour or other departments of the Government and not to be taken over by the police; the police should arrive at the scene of any labour, agrarian or other mass or political struggle only in case these struggles lead to an actual, or imminently threatened, breach of the peace or violent action.

The Communist-led Government of Kerala, however, did not consider the application of the above-mentioned policy to be esay. It, on the other hand, bristles with difficulties. That was why the Government decided to appoint a special committee to make a detailed investigation of the constitutional, political and practical implications of this policy. Only such a detailed investigation will yield the guiding lines for the solution of the problem: How is a democratic government in a welfare state to use the police for suppressing crimes, without curbing the right of mass organisations and political parties to freely carry on their struggles?

This, it will be noticed, is a question which is of great importance not only for the Communist-led Government of Kerala, but for the Congress Governments in other States as well. One is only surprised that this basic question has not, up to this day, been seriously taken up by the Congres Governments; but that, on the other hand, the Congress Governments and the Congress Party are even attacking the Kerala Government for having posed this question and started investigating it.

PLANNING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

One of the First visitors to call on me after it was announced that the Communist Party was going to form a Ministry was a boy in his teens. He had just appeared for the school final examinations ; his family was in such poor straits that not only could he not continue his studies, but, for his very living, he should get a job immediately ; He hoped and expected that, when I assumed charge as Chief Minister, I would help him to find a job.

I still remember the face of that boy ; his pleading voice still rings in my ears. For, in him, I see the embodiment of the hundreds of young boys and girls, and relatively elderly men and women, who have approached me during the 28 months of the existence of our Government, asking me to give them a job. Each of them has his or her own tale to tell ; each has his or her own individuality, both as a person and as a member of the family to which he or she belongs. Yet they are all of basically the same type—people who are unable to eke out a livelihood and who think that the Government can do something for them.

Many of them even think that I, as Chief Minister, have the capacity to do anything and everything with regard to the distribution of governmental jobs. Many others, of course, know that I have not the authority to intervene in a sphere which has been left to the Public Service Commission, "but still—" ; the obvious implication of the words "but still—" is that I may somehow fix it up" with the Public Service Commission ; some of them made it explicit through a request that I may write a "letter of recommendation" to the Chairman of the Public Service Commission.

There is nothing surprising in all this. For Kerala is the land of unemployment par excellence—both educated unemployment as well as uneducated ; both rural as well as urban unemployment ; unemployment in all communities and in all walks of life. As a matter of fact, it would be no exaggeration to state that food deficit and unemployment are the two biggest problems which the State of Kerala has to face ; it is to the extent to which these twin problems are sought to be successfully tackled that any government would be judged by the people of Kerala.

It would be interesting, in this connection, to note that the first mass agitation that the parties of the Opposition launched against our Government was on what they characterised as our Government's "failure to solve the food problem". Within less than a month of the assumption of office by us, they started organising local food demonstrations and within three months, they took a demonstration to the State capital itself.

As for unemployment, the Opposition was insistently asking questions in the Legislature as to how many new industries have been established and how many new jobs created. In this respect, too, they characterised our performance as "full of failures". Let me readily admit that we cannot claim any notable success in respect of either of these two important problems. I cannot claim that food production in the State has made any sizable advance during our regime; nor do I claim that the effort at establishing new industries has led to any sizable increase in employment opportunities. But I would definitely claim that we have been able to bring about a very important reorientation in the State Government approach to planning which, if pursued and carried forward, would put the State on correct lines.

Planning and development has for long been considered by the Government and people of this State as equivalent to developments in the field of social services and communications. With regard to these two lines of activity, the former State of Travancore and Cochin are known to be far more advanced than the rest of the country; the district of Malabar, which was then part of the Madras State, was also known to be more advanced in these respects than the other parts of that State. However, there was no corresponding progress in such fields of economic activity as agriculture, animal husbandry, irrigation, industrialisation, co-operation, etc. The former States of Travancore and Cochin were behind such part A States as Madras and Bombay in these respects. Malabar too was much behind the rest of the composite State of Madras.

The First and Second Five Year Plans made no significant change. The big hydro-electrical and other construction projects which are described as "places of pilgrimage" for those who want to "participate in the great adventure" of nation-

building have all been located in other States; we have had a very small share of the national plans for progress. Far more important than this disproportionately small share allotted to our State is the fact that this inexcusable underestimation of the role of agriculture, industries, etc., was also visible in the way in which the amounts allocated were actually utilised. For example, while the percentages of fulfilment to tragets in the first plan period in Travancore-Cochin were 43.7% in Agriculture and Rural Development and 52.3% in Industry, it was as much as 89.3% in Irrigation and Power, 132.6% in Transport and 84.1% in Social Services. It would be interesting to note, in this connection, that the former State of Travancore-Cochin was at the lowest rung of the ladder in the fulfilment of targets in activities connected with agriculture and small and cottage industries.

This is a state of affairs which has to be put an end to if the twin problems of food deficit and unemployment facing our people are to be tackled. We, therefore, announced our intention to put greater emphasis on activities that will lead to an increase in the production of material wealth. This was such a correct position that, when this was clearly stated in the Governor's speech in February 1958, the other parties had to say that they agreed with it; they went to the extent of saying that there was nothing new in this policy declaration as they have always been of that view. It was, of course, difficult for them to explain how, in that case, the performance of the Congress governments during the period of the first Five Year Plan had been so pitiable.

Having thus laid down the policy, we tried to implement it. To this end, we took the following steps:

1. A vigorous drive was launched in order to push effective scheme of increasing agricultural production. The drive for the starting of a large number of small irrigation works with people's Co-operation and the drive for the large-scale use of green manures were very significant steps in this direction.

2. Efforts were made to organise various forms of co-operatives for the small and cottage industries.

3. Initiative was taken to get large scale industries started in the State in the private sector with or without State participation.

These are undoubtedly three directions in which our State has to proceed if food production and employment opportunities are to be increased. That we have been able to make a start in these directions is a great achievement, although it will take some time for these efforts to yield concrete results. I should, at the same time, make it clear that these measures would not more than touch the fringe of the problem. What is required for a State like ours, with such a mass of unemployed people but with such an abundance of some of the most valuable economic resources of the country—with such a deplorably high degree of food deficit, but with such vast potentialities for improving the technique of agricultural production and thus increasing agricultural production--is a dynamic programme many times the size of our present Five Year Plan and which should be carried out with a dynamism unprecedented in any part of the country so far.

We, however, had inherited a second Five Year Plan quite inadequate to meet our purposes and unsuited to the conditions of our State. We were, therefore, quite clear in our minds that a basic reorientation will be necessary at the time of the preparation of the Third Five Year Plan. We had just started thinking on the size, shape and pattern of the Third Five Year Plan by the time our Ministry was dismissed by the Centre

Besides thus drawing the attention of the people and the planning authorities to the need for such a reorientation of our approach to planning and development, I may claim with satisfaction and pride that we have been able to bring about an improvement in the capacity of the administrative machinery to fulfil the targets set in the Second Five Year Plan.

While the fulfilment to targets during the whole of the Frst Five Year Plan was 83.5 per cent and the corresponding figures for the first year of the Second Five Year Plan (the year before the assumption of office by our Ministry) was 64.2 per cent, the figure for the second and third years of the Second Five Year Plan (which happened to be the first and second years of the existence of our Ministry) were 84.5 per cent and almost 100 per cent (18.48 crores out of 18.51 crores) respectively. There was thus a steady rise in the capacity of our administrative machinery to fulfil the target laid down in the plan.

To look at the problem from another angle, our State was behind most of the other States in the matter of fulfilment in the first year of the Second Five Year Plan ; by the time the fourth year of the plan has commenced, the record of fulfilment of this State is exceeded only by the State of Madras. It was such an improvement in the work of planning and development that was interrupted on July 31, 1959, when the President established his own administration in Kerala.

TACKLING THE FOOD PROBLEM

The food situation in the entire country was getting difficult in the first half of 1957. All the more so in our State which, as is well known, is deficit to the extent of over 50 per cent of its food requirements. We, therefore, had to apply our minds to this problem as soon as we took charge.

Anybody who tries to tackle the food problem in our country should apply his mind to its three aspects. Increasing food production ; organising proper distribution of the available stocks as between surplus and deficit states ; and organising proper internal distribution in every State, so that consumers secure their supplies at prices which are within their reach, while being fair to the producer. We realised that it will be next to impossible for us to achieve any immediate success in appreciably raising production. We had to undertake that job as part of a long term programme.

While applying our minds to this first aspect of the problem, we stressed on the supreme importance of the second. No less than 35 per cent of our foodgrain requirements comes from outside. This was actually coming through the private trade channels when there was no control—before the war and after the decontrol. But, when the situation became difficult in 1956, the Central Government recognised its responsibility to this deficit State and supplied a part of its requirements. The supplies that were thus made in 1956-57 by the Centre came approximately to 25,000 tons a month.

This supply by the Central Government was suddenly stopped a couple of months after our Government assumed charge. Originally proposed in the National Development Council which met in June 1957, the Southern Food Zone became a reality some time in July. The assumption behind

the decision to create this Zone was that the heavy deficit of Kerala and small deficit of Madras and Mysore would be offset by the heavy surplus of Andhra if only movements from this Zone to other States were completely stopped and free movement allowed within the Zone. Our representatives in the National Development Council and in the subsequent discussions with the Food Ministry expressed apprehension whether this arrangement would work. They would of course, have no objection if it helped our State to get its requirements at prices at which the Central Government had been supplying to us. They, however, urged that the Centre should not absolve itself of its responsibility to undertake to supply this State in case this arrangement did not work.

Our apprehensions did unfortunately become true in actual practice. It was only for the first few months of the existence of the Southern Food Zone that supplies came from Andhra to Kerala through the normal trade channel at rates declared by the Central Government as ceiling prices. The "free movement within the Zone" did not keep the prices below the ceiling. While the private trader could pay this above-ceiling price and get his supplies, it was an illegal price. The private trader did, of course, buy in Andhra, bring it here and sell it to the consumer, but he bought it at rates which are higher than ceiling prices and sold it at still prices. We, therefore, asked the Central Government either to enforce the controlled prices in Andhra, so that we may buy at those rates ; or supply us from any other stock which the Centre may have. The Central Government, unfortunately, did neither.

It washed its hands of all responsibility for sending supplies to us. It asked us to buy in Andhra, but made it clear that we should make purchase at or below the ceiling rates ; while making this stipulation with regard to the price, however, they did not use their authority to see to it that our requirements are available in Andhra at or below the ceiling.

This, therefore, has been a continuing headache for our Government and the people of Kerala during the whole tenure of our office. Innumerable conferences were held of the Food Ministers of Andhra and Kerala, of the Food Ministers and Officers of the Central and Kerala State Governments, and a few meeting at which either the Prime Minister or the Home

Minister took part. In spite of all these conferences, however, the quantity of rice that we asked for was not forthcoming; the Central Government's order fixing the ceiling price in Andhra became a farce.

What about the third aspect of the problem, food distribution within the State? I have no hesitation in declaring that the arrangements made by us for this would have worked well if only the Central Government had discharged its responsibility of either itself suppiying our requirements, or seeing to it that our requirements can be bought in Andhra at fair prices.

We decided to cover the entire State with what are called "fair price shops". These are different from the old ration shops: they do not make supplies to every family in the village but only to those who are below a particular level of income; the rest were expected to depend on the normal private shop for their requirements. These shops did not exist in what are considered the surplus areas in this deficit State; the people in such areas were expected to depend on the working of the private traders. Nevertheless, the fair price shops were expected to partly meet the food requirements of 70 to 80 per cent of the people of the State. Their number was raised by our Government from less than a 1,000 to nearly 6,000.

This was an eminently successful arrangement so long as the State Government got physical possession of 20 to 25 thousand tons a month. Figures show that, whenever the Central Government's supplies or other stocks enabled us to run these fair price shops and supply two edangazhis (less than four lbs) of rice per family per week—which, on an average, comes to less than two oz. per head per day—the level of prices was sufficiently low; whenever this supply was disturbed (which often happened, thanks to the failure of the Central Government to give us supplies), prices went high. That is why the people of Kerala were unanimous—cutting across all barriers, political and otherwise—that the fair price shop system should continue.

There are, however, a few problems to be solved if the fair price shops are to work successfully. How are the families to be selected to whom supplies are to be made? How are the areas to be decided where fair price shops have to be set up? How would it be guaranteed that the supplies made to a fair price shop are properly distributed? The story

of "ghost-cards" in the days of rationing and the diversion of ration rice into the black-market is too well known for the above questions to require any further elaboration.

It was to solve these problems that we evolved the device of People's Food Committees. Committees composed of the representatives of all the major political parties are to advise the Tahsildar in fixing the number of fair price shops in his Taluk, in locating them where they are required, in selecting the person who is to run the shop, etc. Similar committees are also to be formed to help the local officers and Panchayats in selecting the families of the lower-income groups to whom identity cards are to be distributed and otherwise ensuring that the shops are run properly. These Taluk and Village Food Committees, working under the directions of an All-Party State Food Advisory Committee, were the means through which abuses in the matter of distribution were to be avoided, and thus the proper distribution of what is made available to us by the Centre was to be organised.

It was on the successful working of these People's Food Committees, which, in their turn, were expected to ensure the successful working of the fair price shops, that the solution of the whole problem depended. The question, therefore, was : would these committees work successfully ? The Congress and other Opposition parties in Kerala unfortunately showed that they were interested not in making these committees work successfully, but in attacking the very act of forming these committees which, according to them, was calculated to strengthen the Communist Party. How they managed to oppose even such a step of associating people's representative in the solution of properly distributing foodgrains, we shall see in the next article.

TAKING DEMOCRACY TO THE PEOPLE

Everything looks yellow to a jaundiced eye. The activities of the Government of Kerala appear to the anti-Communist opposition in their own way : they must attack it somehow or other ; if there are no adequate grounds for such attacks, they should invent them.

It is obvious that the association of people's representatives with the food administration will prove effective in finding

out the low income group families who require supply through fair shops, in supervising the way in which identity cards are issued to them and used by them in seeing to it that the dealers who run the fair price shops, and the wholesalers, who form the link between them and the Government, properly discharge their duties It was with these objectives that local, Taluk and State Food Commiitees were formed by the Kerala Government. Even this act of the Kerala Government, however, was attacked by the Opposition.

In attacking this, they put forward a funny argument: People's Food Committees were being set up by the Kerala Government in order to fill the coffers of the Communist Party! But how, you may ask. The answer is those Communists who are members of these committees will be enabled to draw travelling allowances from the Government which would be passed on to the Communist Party! If this argument were seriously made, the formation of these committees would fill the coffers of the Opposition more than those of the Communist Party. For, the number of Communists in them was less than the total number of those who belong to Opposition political parties. In almost every committee without exception, the Communist Party was in a minority. To this should be added that, at least in the case of Village Food Communities, members were not paid any travelling allowance.

What has been stated above with regard to Food Committees at various levels equally applies to committees formed in other fields as well. Our Government thought that the setting up of the People's Committees at various levels for discharging certain well defined functions would help every department being run to the satisfaction of the people. We, therefore, set up People's Committees to assit regular Government officials in the Forest, the Education, the Health, the PWD, the Land Revenue and other departments whenever they had to do some important job with people's co-operation such as distribution of waste lands, fixing the location of a new school or hospital to be opened, a road to be constructed, etc.

In forming such committees, our Government took particular care to see that the Opposition was given the representation which was its due on the bais of the support which it received from the electorate during the last general elections.

As a matter of fact, in most of the district and local committees, the proportion of members belonging to the Communist Party and the Opposition was, in general, even more favourable to the Opposition than the support which they received in the General Elections would justify.

To this reasonable representation given to the Opposition political parties should be added the representation given to unattached public figures who, because of their particular experience in the field, or knowledge of the affairs handled by the Committee, were suited to be co-opted to the Committees. (Statements have been made by the politicians of the Opposition giving wild figures of Committee members and the proportion of Communists in it. But the list of members of the various committees formed by the Government ever since its inception would show that the Communist members were in a minority in almost every one of them without exception). And yet, the Opposition has been repeating the argument that the formation of these committees is a device to strengthen the Communist Party !

This raises the question as to what exactly is the reason why the Opposition has raised the hue and cry against Kerala Government's action in associating people's representatives with the administration at all levels. Is it because they want somehow or other to denounce everything that the Communist-led Kerala Government does ? That, of course, is one of their motives. But I don't think that that is the only motive. They are opposed to the very idea of making the administration as a whole more in tune with the feelings and requirements of the people. They are of the view that administration is best left with permanent officials who should not be "bothered with" by the "interference" of people's representatives.

Mention should, in this conection, be made of the Kerala Government's proposals for democratising the administration at all levels. Following the report of the Study Team on Plan Projects set up by the Planning Commission under the leadership of Sri Balwantrai Mehta, a report which made proposals for what it called "democratic decentralisation" through the vesting of more powers on Panchayats and Panchayat Samities, our Government decided to draft two important bills, the Panchayat Bill and the District Council Bill.

The first Bill vested in the Panchayats all the functions that are today discharged by the village revenue officials as well as the officals of other departments at the village level. The second proposed to transfer all the functions which are today discharged by the district officials and others (this will be left with the Collector) to an elected District Council headed by an elected President, who will be assited by a permanent official of the status of Deputy Collector in carrying on day-to-day work.

These two bills would go a long way in extending the principle of the executive being responsible to the elected representative of the people at all levels of administration, rather than confine it to the Centre and the States as is now the case. These proposals were violently opposed by the leading members of the Opposition parties, although there were several members of these parties who were in sympathy with the idea of vesting the people's representatives with more and more powers. Many of these leaders drew a lurid picture of chaos and confusion that will set in if elected District Council were allowed to have such a vast field of activity.

They said that the unity of the country and the integrity of administration would be impaired if the authority of the State Government was allowed to be so dispersed among a large number of district bodies and further down, among a still larger number of village bodies. They also said that the set-up envisaged in this proposal would make administration at every level an arena of party and group conflicts, each party and group trying to have its own domination at each of these levels of administration. A few of them went to the extent of suggesting that even the conferring of the right of adult suffrage on the people was a wrong step. But even those who agreed on the need for it in relation to the Centre and the States, questioned the wisdom of giving power to elected representatives at lower levels.

This is obviously a stand which has nothing to do with the basic policy declaration of our national movement. We have been fighting for a democratic set-up which means taking democracy to the lowest levels. It was this idea of as fully decentralised and democratic administration as possible that was conveyed by the term Panchayati Raj.

It would appear that those who are today at the helm of affairs in the Communist and other non-Communist political parties in Kerala would rather have all administrative functions and privileges to the district and lower official who may do everything at their sweet will and pleasure; they may be subjected only to such remote control and guidance as may be exercised by the State and Central Governments. It was this basic opposition to the taking of democracy to the lower levels, combined with their anxiety to oppose everything that the Communist Government does that led the Opposition to denounce the formation of People's Committees at various levels.

Role of Officials in Administration

The dominant impression left in my mind after my work as Chairman of the Administrative Reforms Committee set up by the Government of Kerala is surprise at the strength of feeling in certain circles of our public that there is no need for administrative reforms. One of the witnesses who appeared before our Committee (a gentleman who has had ample experience both as a non-official politician as well as in the capacity of an official administrator) sharply posed the question: "Is there anything seriously wrong in the present administrative set-up? On the other hand, is it not true that the system is good but is being worked in a wrong way"?

The same idea was expressed by several other witnesses, according to whom the system as it existed prior to the attainment of independence and the establishment of responsible government in the former Indian states was good and efficient. This "good and efficient" system has been undergoing a process of steady but rapid deterioration since the attainment of Independence and the establishment of parliamentary democracy. These friends would have us believe that the main, if not the sole, defect of the working of the administrative system today is that the honest and efficient government offical is not allowed to work according to his conscience, but is constantly interfered with by the ignorant and selfish politician. Free the offical from this interference from the politician, they would assert, and everything will be all right.

This approach is sought to be supported by the dictum, "it is for the people's representatives (the legislature and the

minister) to lay down the policy ; it is for the permanent official to implement it". The implication is that people's representatives (Ministers and Legislators) should leave actual, day-to-day, administration to permanent officials.

Let me state at once that there is an element of truth in this. For, after all the job of the permanent official is a specialised one ; execution of policies and administration of day-to-day affairs cannot be carried out by somebody who has not had the benefit of some theoretical and much more of practical training in the art of public administration ; the average people's representative cannot be expected to have this training and experience. It would, therefore, be unwise for a legislator, or even for a minister, to arrogate to himself the job of carrying on day-to-day administration. An exceedingly capable and efficient political leader may well mess things up or he takes upon himself the jobs which are to be carried out by a permanent official.

Furthermore, permanent officials under the present democratic set-up are citizens enjoying all the democratic freedom of a free citizen, though these freedoms are undoubtedly restricted to a certain extent by the mere fact of their being Government servants. They are, therefore, men and women with partriotism, self-respect and personal initiative, they are not the self-like automatons that they were expected to be under the British or princely rule. That being so, they should be allowed so much freedom and personal initiative in carrying out their jobs as is consistent with the carrying out of the general policies laid down by the people acting through their representatives in the legislature and the ministry.

Having admitted this much, it is necessary to state that leaving all questions of implementation to the permanent official would make a mockery of democracy. For, as our Committee stated in the Report, "it is difficult to draw a line between policy and implementation and say where one ends and the other begins. Moreover, it is proper implementation that makes policy significant. The Minister who is constitutionally responsible for all the executive actions of his Department has to ensure that the policy laid down by him is properly implemented."

The correctness of this statement will be clear if one bears in mind that we are now having a planned economy and that,

therefore, the administrative apparatus can no more remain a mere 'revenue collecting and law and order maintaining' machinery. It should become a machinery for carrying out developmental activities. This has made a fundamental transformation in the jobs of government officials.

The jobs that the present administrative machinery has to undertake cannot be carried out by the mere process of "lightening up of the machinery" from top to bottom. Simultaneously with such a tightening up of the machinery itself, there is need for improving the relations between this machinery and the general public. This has been emphasised over and over again by the Planning Commission in the stress it lays on securing public co-operation in the implementation of plan projects. To this end, the key administrative cadres at all levels (from the Chief Secretary at the State level down to the taluk and village officials) have been asked to so readjust their tasks that they can become the "leaders of the team" carrying out developmental activities.

Now, the skill and experience which the permanent officials have acquired will not help them in carrying out this task. Even the most efficient among the permanent officials will lag far behind an average people's representative in his ability to feel the pulse of the people, to correctly assess the feelings, desires and even prejudices of the common people, to judge as to whether a particular proposal will be acceptable to the people, and on the basis of such a judgement, to take decisions and to carry them out.

Take a concrete example. The Agricultural Department has, on the basis of the scientific study made by it, come to the conclusion that a particular variety of green manure is the best suited for an area. The Department and, under its leadership, the extension officers and non-officials in the Blocks go on popularising this particular variety. In the course of their work, they come across a group of cultivators who think that there is another variety which is more useful. This particular variety suggested by the cultivators may have already been tried and experimented on before the Department has come to the conclusion that this gives less satisfactory results. The Department officials will, therefore, naturally reject the view of the cultivators as unscientific and technically incorrect.

But a non-official political leader may be of the view that there is no harm in allowing the cultivators themselves to try both in different plots, so that either they find on the basis of their own experience that the Department's conclusion is correct, or these experiments force the Department itself to re-examine the problem.

It is, however, just possible that such a decision would go against the instruction which the particular officer of the Department has received from above. The officers would, therefore, stick to the instruction that he has received, rather than making the experiment which a non-official political leader would make. The result will be that the cultivators do not have that sense of satisfaction that the plan of increasing agricultural production is their own plan ; the feeling, on the other hand, grows that they are asked just to carry out orders issued by the officials of the Department. This would prove a big hindrance to securing people's co-operation in fulfilling the task of increasing agricultural production.

Any number of such examples can be taken from every development department. The officials of the Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Co-operation, Industries and other Departments may each of them have received rigid instructions as to how schemes prepared above should be carried out not by the officials themselves but by tens of thousands of ordinary working people, the approach to the implementation of all these schemes should be as flexible as possible ; innumerable adjustments will have to be made at every step keeping in view the difficulties which the people are facing and the problems which they have to solve.

This is something which is beyond the capacity of the average permanent officials who is trained to do everything according to rules and instructions handed out to him. Let me take the most notable example which I came across when our Ministry was in office. According to the principles and policies laid down by the Community Development Ministry at the Centre, each Block is to prepare its own plans and frame its own Block budget in accordance with the "felt needs" of the people of that Block. The "Schematic Budget" which the Ministry framed for the guidance of the State governments was not binding on any single Block. This is a statement which was made

to me by responsible people in the Community Development Ministry.

Despite this, however, I found that there was a universal impression among responsible people in the State that the Block Committees have to make their plans within the four corners of the Ministry's "Schematic Budget". Extremely ridiculous situations arose because the peculiarities of the conditions of a particular Block were not taken into account. such as : large provisions are made for irrigation and very little for industries in a Block in the coastal region where there is little or no scope for irrigation but there is ample scope for industries.

It was after this that the appropriate bodies in the State took necessary steps to modify the 'Schematic Budget", broadly keeping in view the conditions of Kerala as distinct from the conditions of other States. Even after this was done, there was a tendency to overlook the differences between different regions in Kerala itself and the specific features of each Block ; the easier course was to rigidly stick to the pattern set forth and sent from above.

The reason for this is that the very strength of the permanent official—efficiency in carrying out clear orders according to rules—becomes a source of weakness in a situation in which the main job of the government official is to secure people's co-operation. Flexibility and willingness to make adjustments is of the greatest importance in the new situation and it is this that is lacking in the permanent official. This, on the other hand, is available in the non-official political worker. For, it is his daily and hourly job to deal with men and he knows how to make adjustments in accordance with the feelings of the people.

How is it to be ensured that this role of the non-official would be utilised along with the efficiency of the officials ? One possible suggestion would be to have democratic institutions set up at every level of administration. This would ensure that the permanent officials and elected representatives at each level will supplement each other and co-ordinate and co-operate with each other. This, however, is only the formal aspect of the matter. Even if these institutions are established, they may lead to conflicts and difficulties, unless a change is brought about in the attitude of both the permanent officials

and the elected people's representatives. Both should look upon themselves as participants in a common endeavour and should have a sense of mutual co-operation. The generation of this proper attitude is the all-important pre-requisite for the evolution of an efficient and popular administrative set-up.

THE BOOT IS ON THE OTHER FOOT

"You are no more the leader of the communist party : you are the Chief Minister of the state and, as such, our leader too"—several of my friends in the Congress and other Opposition parties told me when I assumed charge. The idea underlying this piece of advice is one with which I entirely agreed. The Government of the land should be carried on in the interests of all parties by persons who can rise above the narrow interests of their own party. It is only then that democracy will really become the rule of the people, rather than the domination of the majority over the minority. I was, however, tempted to exclaim, "Physician, heal thyself!" to those of my friends who belonged to the Congress Party. How I wish that the Congressmen who gave me this piece of advice tried to get that same piece of advice accepted by their own leaders, who have been in office at the Centre and in all the other States for over years !

One of the most striking evidences of the "nonpartisan" character of Congress Government at the Centre and in the States was the instruction issued by the Central Home Ministry to all the State Governments with regard to the screening of candidates for appointments in Government services. That instruction was as follows :

After the merits of the candidates have been properly assessed by the appointing authority, the "antecedents" of the candidates should be got verified through the agency of the police department. In this process of verifying the antecedents, care should be taken to find out the past political associations of the candidate. Anybody who had at any time been associated in one way or other with the Communist Party should be strictly debarred from service even if he or she has all other qualifications and has been already selected.

We have already had practical evidence of the way in which this instruction was being carried out all over India. It

was, however, after we took charge that I came across the copy of the circular issued by the Home Ministry. On an examination of the way in which this instruction was carried out in our State, we found a sizable number of candidates, who are not appointed on this ground; also a good number of people who were thrown out while in service on the same ground. We, therefore, proceeded to put an end to this discrimination against a political party and to re-examine and cancel the earlier order issued on its basis. (We as a State Government were perfectly entitled to do so). I do not know whether the present Government of Kerala under the President proposes to revert to the old practice and thus bring Kerala into the all-India pattern.

And yet, the leaders of the Kerala Pradesh and all India Congress Committees have no sense of shame in charging us, the Communist Government of Kerala, of discrimination in favour of the Communist Party and against other political parties. I publicly challenged the then Congress President, Sri Dhebar, (when he levelled this charge against us) to contradict the above-mentioned facts and to show that the Congress is not discriminating against the Communist Party in the matter of selecting candidates for employment under the Government. He has not done so for the simple reason that he cannot.

Wild charges have been levelled against our Government that we have so manipulated the process of appointments into Government Service as to facilitate "infiltration" of Government services by the Communists. The fact of the overwhelming majority of appointments in Government service are made by the Public Service Commission, which incidentally, was composed of three members appointed by the Congress Government. (One of these happens to be a person who was an active Congressman till the day of his appointment as a member of the Public Service Commission). And the report of the public Service Commission for the year 1957-58 (the first year of the duration of our Government) states clearly that there was not one single case of the Government over-riding the recommendation of the Public Service Commission.

This practice continued to the last day of our government: we adopted the practice of accepting the recommendations of the Public Service Commission in the matter of selecting of individuals; it was only in the matter of laying down certain

policies that there have been differences between the Public Service Commission and the Government, and even in such cases, it was only very rarely that the Government took the step of over-riding the recommendation of the Public Service Commission. As with appointments, so too with promotions, transfers and other administrative measures, our Government has strictly adhered to the normal rules of administration.

Promotions are made on the basis of certain rules which take account of the two factors of the order of seniority and merit and efficiency of the person concerned; there are also rules which provide for consultation with the Public Service Commission in certain cases and consultation with an inter-departmental committee in certain other cases All these have been strictly adhered to. As for transfers and other administrative measures, they are made by responsible officers in the interest of meeting particular situations in particular localities. It is possible that, in certain circumstances when these local situations assume larger proportions, the Minister concerned discusses the matter with the Head of the Department and sees that the necessary administrative measures are taken. All these are normal practices which are inevitable in any administration.

I quite concede that the ruling party can skilfully use all the provisions in such rules in its own narrow partisan interests. The Minister who is in over-all charge of the department concerned, and the leaders of the party who keep contact with and advise him, can see to it that the particular interests of their party are safeguarded. This is a possibility which should be provided against, if democracy is to be prevented from becoming the domination of the Party.

The question is: has our Government resorted to such manoeuvres when carrying on our administration? My answer may be summed up as follows:

1. We have conscientiously tried to prevent any such irregular practice; we have taken care to see that, in the process of remedying the injustice perpetrated on the Communist Party by the previous Congress Governments, we dot not proceed to perpetrate similar injustices on other parties; our conscious effort has been to treat all parties equally.

2. It is yet possible that, despite all the care that we have taken to make administration non-partisan, some injustice has

unconsciously been done to some elements outside the Communist Party. We would have been happy to make proper amends for them if they were pointed out to us; we would still be happy to learn about such concrete cases if they are pointed out to us, even though it is beyond us to make amends now.

3. I have no hesitation in claiming that such cases of injustice done by the ruling party to the Opposition parties will be far less in the case of our Government than in the case of all the other Governments in the country. I would, as a matter of fact, suggest that a Committee, composed of representatives of all the political parties in the country and a few experienced administrators, be asked to go into the complaints that have been made in relation to all the State Governments of India as well as in relation to the Central Government in this matter of political discrimination and injustice. Let the country know who is better or worse in this respect—the Congress Governments in the rest of the country, or the Communist Government in Kerala (and, that too, for a short while).

4. I would also suggest that a similar examination be made by a similar committee of the existing rules and practices of administration After all, many of these rules and procedures were laid down at a time when the problem now posed before us had not arisen—the problem of enabling the democratically-elected Government. (which in the present conditions of India, is bound to be the Government of a Party) to play an effective role in administration and at the same time of ensuring that the Government become really non-partisan.

That this is a problem serious enough to be examined by all those who are interested in the evolution of healthy conventions for the working of parliamentary democracy will be clear from the fact that the allegations made by the Congress against the Communist Government of Kerala are the same as are made against the Congress Governments in the country by the entire Opposition. Leaders of the PSP, Swantantra Party and others, who are notorious for their anti-Communism, have been exposing the partisanship and corruption of Congress Governments. The questions posed in these allegations are, therefore, not matters of ideology or political difference, but questions which require our serious study.

Failure to have this problem seriously examined with a view to evolving a proper system of administration is leading to serious consequences. People are coming to believe that parliamentary democracy being party rule is bound to be unjust to those who are not members or sympathisers of the ruling party. Cynical comments are being made both by sections of the people who are not attached to any political party, as well as by Government officials, that what they call "politics" is a dirty game and will lead to the country's ruin.

This tendency, if allowed to grow, is sure to breed anti-democratic movements as they did in Pakistan and in certain other Asian countries. These tendencies can be nipped in the bud only if all the political parties and non-party leaders of public opinion take timely measures to evolve healthy conventions guiding the behaviour of ruling and Opposition parties.

Land Reforms

The Kerala Legislative Assembly finally passed into law the controversial Agrarian Relations Bill on June 10, 1959. Within less than 48 hours, the Opposition political parties, in alliance with all the anti-Communist forces in the State, launched their "direct action" with a view to removing the Government which framed that Bill and had it passed through the Legislature in the teeth of vehement Opposition.

Prime Minister Nehru and other leaders of the Congress would have us believe that this sequence or dates is just accidental. They would violently protest at the suggestion that it was just because the Communist Government of Kerala had dared to have the Agrarian Relations Bill passed by the Legislature that the landlords of the State, acting through the Congress and other political parties, decided to launch a direct action, whose avowed objective was to "paralyse the administration". They would claim that, on the the other hand, the Congress was an ardent supporter of the Bill.

They, however, cannot deny that among the Bills passed by the Kerala State Legislature are two which have not yet received the assent of the President. They are :

1. The Jemmikaram Bill which completed the process, started nearly half a century ago, of emancipating the Kanam-

dars and tenants holding other similar tenures from the Jemmis of former Travancore.

(The legislation adopted nearly 20 years ago in the former State of Travancore had alredy brought these tenants in direct contact with the Government by fixing the Jemmikaram, i.e. dues to the Jemmi, to be paid to the Government who, after deducting the collection expenses, would hand it over to the Jemmi. The Bill unanimously adopted by the Kerala Legislature provided that the Jemmikaram payment will be put an end to on payment of compensation at rates which are within easy reach of the tenants.)

2. The Agricultural Debt Relief Bill, which provides for reduction in interest rates as well as for scaling down of old debts in certain cases.

(Left to itself, the Communist Government would have provided for the scaling down of old debts on a far vaster scale, but had to satisfy itself with much less, since it knew that Presidential assent would not be forthcoming if these were provided for. The Opposition in the Legislature attacked the Government for this, saying that it was championing the interests of bankers and moneylenders! Government spokesmen clarified the stand of the Government that it would be better to have a more modest measure become law and really enforced than to have a more ambitious measure passed through the State Legislature, but blocked by the Central Government).

Both these Bills have been in the hands of the Central Government for the last several months. They are not prepared to give assent to them and yet they are afraid of refusing assent. This would be the fate of the Agraian Relations Bill too, if we are not on the eve of a very hotly-contested general election.

The Congress Party in the State Legislature had made suggestions and moved amendments which, if adopted, would have made all the vital provisions of the Bill utterly ineffective. They, for example, made the suggestion that, before the ceiling provisions of the Bill are brought into operation, the landlords should be given sufficient time to sell their lands to those who have less lands than the ceiling, thus defeating the very purpose of fixing the ceiling taking over surplus lands and distributing them to the landless and land-hungry rural poor. They also

demanded much higher rates of compensation, much wider fields of exemption and so many other provisions which would have together made the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill as ineffective as land legislations in the Congress governed States.

The Congress Opposition in Kerala as well as the Congress Government at the Centre were put on the horns of a dilemma when our Government prepared our agrarian legislations. On the one hand, their legislators being in full conformity with the declared policies of the Congress as an organisation and of the Central Government and the Planning Commission, they could not raise any objection to them. On the other hand, they could not enthusiastically support them or allow them to be passed and fully implemented. For, that would rouse the anger of those very sections in society on whom they depended for support—landlords, money-lenders, large-scale employers of agricultural labour, etc.

My memory goes back to an event that took place 20 years ago. The then Madras Government had appointed a Committee to examine the question of reforms in the tenancy system in Malabar. That Committee was as sharply divided within itself as was the Government and the Opposition in the State of Kerala during the 28 months of Communist Government. The issues on which it was divided and the standpoint of each on those issues can be seen in the Majority Report and the Minutes of Dissent of that Committee.

On the one side was the Majority Report which was jointly signed by the majority of Congressmen in the Committee (who happen to be Congress leaders today) and all the non-congressmen, including the one member of the Madras Legislature who was elected from the landlords' constituency. On the other side were the Minutes of Dissent by three Congressmen who were members of that Committee. (These three Congressmen included the present writer, who was then the General Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee and Congress MLA; the other two were the then President of the Provincial Congress Committee and the only Harijan MLA from Malabar).

The Majority Report virtually advocated the maintenance of the status quo, suggesting only very minor changes in the position as had been existing for nearly a decade. To the suggestion made by the peasant organisations that rents on

paddy fields should be reduced from two-thirds to half, they gave the answer that that would not give adequate return for the capital invested by the landlord in buying his land. It was this and other arguments advanced in the Report that brought the majority of Congress members of the committee and the Jemmi representative together in signing the report.

The dissenting minutes, on the other hand, advocated, for the first time in the official records in Kerala, the complete abolition of landlordism without payment of compensation to the big Jemmis. However, since this was too radical a measure for its immediate implementation being considered practicable, they made other suggestions which would give greater immediate relief to the tenants.

This division between what was then the Right and Left in the Congress has continued since then—continued, however, not as a division between the Right and the Left in the Congress alone, but as a division between the camps of (1) the Communist and other Left Parties together with the large majority of ordinary Congressmen and (2) the leaders of the Congress and the vested interests outside the Congress. It was this that was clearly visible when the Agrarian Relations Bill was being discussed in the Kerala State Legislature.

In all this controversy between the advocates of agraian reform and its opponents, the clear issue underlying the demand for reforms is: will the cultivator be allowed to keep to himself and enjoy the fruits of his labour, or will he be forced to part with the lions share of it as rent to the landlord, interest to the money-lender, tax to the Government and unequal exchange and the consequent double loss in this dealings with the trader? Again, will the large mass of the rural poor who have absolutely no land, or so little land that a moderately decent living cannot be made out of it, be allowed to have, or augment, their land holdings by the distribution of uncultivated land and surplus land owned by big landlords?

The Congress does not take this as the main objective of land reforms. For, giving relief to the peasants from the rent and other burdens would deprive the landlords and other exploiting class of the fruits of the exploitation that they have been carrying on for several centuries. This would deprive the

Congress of the support which it has been enjoying from these exploiting class. It has this solicitude for the income of the landlords that was visible when the majority of Congress members of the Malabar Tenancy Enquiry Committee opposed any rent reduction.

It was again because of this that the Congress Ministries in the former Travancore-Cochin State were not able to have any agrarian legislation passed during a whole decade of their existence.

It was this again that made the Congress in the legislature make suggestions to the effect that the landlords may be allowed to sell their lands, so that they may get far higher rates of compensation that was allowed in the Bill. It was finally this attitude of the Congress leadership that has made the Central Government block the Debt Relief and Jemmikaram Bills.

It is now reported in the papers that the Central Government is not going to block the Agrarian Relations Bill and that Presidential assent will be forthcoming in the next few weeks. If these reports are correct, thanks for it are due to the electorate of Kerala, whom the Congress leaders know very well that any attitude of indifference, not to speak of hostility, to the Agrarian Relations Bills would lose them lakhs of votes in what they consider as the "crucial" midterm election in Kerala.

While our Party and other champions of land reforms would be happy if immediate assent is given to the Agrarian Relations Bill, they cannot afford to be indifferent to the motive with which assent is now being given. For, the same reports go to show that, while the Central Government would now give Presidential assent, the Congress Party will persist in making such "amendments" to the Bill as had been advocated by it when the Bill was being discussed in the Assembly The idea seems to be that, while Presidential assent now would help their Party to catch votes in the coming elections, the Congress can, after the elections, continue to fight for the interests of landlords by subsequently making the Bill ineffective. This game of sabotaging the Bill behind the cover of giving assent to it has to be fought and defeated.

ATTITUDE TO THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM

The former state of Travancore-Cochin had always been considered a "problem State". It was known not only for the continuous ministerial instability which was a feature of its political life, but also for the acutely communal nature of its politics. Politics in the State, it is said, centered round certain castes and communities. People thought in terms of the Christians, the Muslims, the Nayers, the Ezhawas, etc., rather than in terms of political parties. As a matter of fact, the old Travancore State Congress was the further development of an earlier organisation called the Joint Political Congress—a federation of the Christian, the Muslim and the Ezhawa caste or communal organisations. The only visible improvement upon this earlier organisation was that a section of the Nayers also came into the State Congress, and along with them, the founder-President of the Congress, Sri Pattom Thanu Pillai.

Naturally, therefore, the State Congress had this caste or communal complexion haunting it at every step; important policy questions as well as questions of organisation were always considered from the point of view of their impact on this or that community. This heritage of the Travancore State Congress was naturally handed down to the Congress organisation and Government of the Travancore-Cochin State and subsequently to the State of Kerala which was formed on November 1, 1956. Our Party and the Government that we formed had, therefore, to take this factor into account.

We could not take the highbrow attitude which certain other parties were taking in the name of nationalism—the attitude of dismissing the caste and communal organisations with an air of contempt and of claiming for themselves the virtues of a national approach. Nor could we succumb to the ideas propagated by certain leaders of caste and communal organisations, according to whom, all talk of nationalism and non-communal approach was bogus. We had, on the other hand, to make an objective assessment of the historical process through which such development took place in our State.

Having made such an assessment, the Party came to the conclusion that caste or communal politics is the natural result of the caste or communal character of the society that has

existed for centuries. When people are divided into caste and religious communities in their day-to-day social life, the caste and communal psychology that is generated by it is bound to reflect itself in political life too. The solution for the problem of caste and communal politics is, therefore, the abolition of caste and communal distinctions in daily social life.

A socio-cultural movement against caste had already emerged in Kerala, as in the rest of the country, long before the Communist Party came into existence. Many of those who had actively participated in that movement subsequently joined the ranks of the Communist Party. But the Communist Party improved upon this anti-caste and anti-communal movement by bringing to the forefront the unity of the working class, peasantry and other sections of the toiling people.

The Party tried to point out to the poor, downtrodden millions that they are being oppressed and exploited, not because they belong to a particular caste or religious community, but because they are poor and propertyless; that there are people belonging to other castes also who are as poor and propertyless as they themselves are; that, therefore, it is in their interest to unite with all the poor people in the country regardless of the caste to which they belong and regardless of the religion in which they believe. It was with this appeal to the class instincts of the overwhelming majority of our people that the Communist Party tried to counter the prevailing caste and communal feelings among the people.

The Party, at the same time, saw that there are certain forms of oppression which the masses belonging to certain castes and communities are undergoing because they belong to those castes and communities. The scheduled castes and certain other non-caste Hindu sections have to bear the double burden of economic exploitation (since they belong to certain exploited classes) and of social oppression (since they belong to certain oppressed communities). It would therefore, be idle to just preach the unity of the common people belonging to all castes and communities without taking steps to see that the common people themselves begin to see their unity. This will not happen so long as social oppression of certain communities continues. That is why the Communist Party supports the demands of these backward communities and scheduled

castes for certain special concessions for a temporary period to enable them to catch up with the forward communities.

This broad policy of the Party was sought to be implemented fully and in real earnest by our Government. We enlarged the scope of educational concessions, of facilities for entering Government services and of other means of helping the members of the backward communities, kept backward by the old rigorous caste system, to catch up with the rest of the society. (Let it be mentioned, in this connection, that, till two or three decades ago, most of the Government services in Travancore and Cochin were monopolised by the Caste Hindus; even today, the overwhelming majority of these posts are held by the Caste Hindus and Syrian Christians; the non-caste Hindus, the Muslims and the non-Syrian Christians are still very inadequately represented in Government services).

The steps taken by our Government to enable these backward communities to catch up with the forward has made them see in the Communist Party and its Government their champion and supporter. Caste and communal leaders of the so-called forward communities naturally used this as an opportunity to mobilise the masses of their communities against the Communist party and its Government. They tried to portrary our Government as an enemy of the forward communities. It was this line of attack that was taken up by Sri Mannath Padmanabhan when he attacked the scheme of reservation of a certain percentage of posts for members of backward communities.

The majority of caste Hindu masses are, after all, workers, peasants or middle-class intelligentsia. They see how the measures introduced by our Government give relief to them. They also see how the caste and communal leaders who shed tears in the name of their community are opposed to the socio-economic reforms which benefit them. So, despite all the demagogy indulged in by Sri Padmanabhan and others, larger and larger sections of the caste Hindus (whose interests are supposed to be adversely affected by our policy of benefiting the backward communities) are beginning to see in us their champion and protector.

In adopting this correct method, however, we had to reckon with the leaders of certain castes and communities who used the very caste and communal outlook of the masses

in order to wean them away from the progressive democratic measures which benefit those masses. For example, the leaders of the Nair Service Society went on campaigning among the Nair masses that the agrarian legislations which we introduced were harmful to the Nair community. For, according to them, the majority of the Nairs are small landlords and would, therefore, be ruined if these agrarian legislations are implemented. Combining this argument with opposition to reservation for backward communities (which would lessen the chances of the Nair middle class securing Government jobs), they tried to rouse the anger of the Nair masses against the Government which, according to them, was acting as an anti-Nair Government. The Christian clergy too tried to whip up the passion of the Christian masses.

Despite the fact that the Education Bill, which we framed contained the same provisions as had already been accepted and implemented by such a Congress Government as that of Andhra; despite the fact that some other State Governments and the Central Government have introduced measures more or less similar to the Anti-Dowry Bill that we framed; despite the fact that the Christian community did not actively campaign against these measures of the Congress Government, the Catholic clergy not only in Kerala but in other States too pointed out these measures of our Government as examples of our 'anti-Christian' attitude.

They carried on the lying propaganda that the Education Bill was intended to enable the Government to take over all Christian schools which would itself subsequently develop into the taking over of all churches. As for the anti-Dowry Bill, it was said that this would disintegrate and ruin the financially strong Christian families and the community.

The fact of the matter is that the Education Bill, as certain other measures framed by our Government, attacked certain vested interests. The exploitation of the poor, unpaid teachers carried on by the school managers was so notorious that certain previous Governments in the former State of Travancore-Cochin had attempted to put curbs on them. But, every time any such measure putting curbs on vested interests (like school managers and landlords) was prepared by these Governments, certain groups inside the then ruling party manoeuvred in such

a way as to create trouble in the party and brought about a change of ministry. The groups that had indulged in such activities inside the ruling party were known as 'King-makers' and 'powers behind the throne'.

Sri Mannath Padmanabhan was always known as one of these 'powers behind the throne', so was the Catholic clergy. These, however, were then rival powers behind the throne; each wanted power for itself as against the other. It was when our Party formed its Government that these king-makers ceased to have any voice in the formation of the government and control in its day-to-day work. This, naturally angered them.

All the more were they angred when they found that our Government was intent upon, and powerful to carry out those measures which they had previously tried their level best to prevent from being implemented. This was how the leader of the Nair Service Society, Sri Mannath Padmanabhan, and the leaders of the Christian clergy, who had for nearly three decades been on inimical terms with each other, joined hands and formed the *Vimochana Samara Samithi*, under the leadership of the former.

The Forthcoming Mid-term Elections

Three-and-a half months ago, the Government of Kerala was dismissed. Neither the President's Proclamation, nor subsequent speeches and statements of the leaders of the Central Government, gave the reasons for such an extraordinary action—extraordinary because the dismissal of a Government which continues to enjoy the confidence of the legislature has not been provided for in the Constitution.

It is significant, in this connection, that the Memorandum submitted by the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) to the President of India, containing a number of allegations against the Government, has not been taken by the Government of India as the cause of action; obviously because the reply given by the Kerala Government makes it clear that the KPCC allegations are wild and irresponsible.

Nevertheless, the speeches and statements of the Prime Minister make it appear that what he had characterised as the 'mass upsurge' against the Government of Kerala, which took shape since April 1959, was the single factor which led

the Government of India towards such intervention. The allegations contained in the KPCC momorandum, it appears, were relevant only to the extent that they gave birth to this 'mass upsurge'.

But, what exactly was this 'mass upsurge'? The congress leaders and other opponents of the Communist Party and the Government of the Kerala would have us believe that it was the expression of discontent universally felt by the people of Kerala for the Communist Government. It is said that sections of the people who had voted for the Communist Party during the last elections and who had supported the Communist Government, since its formation, became disgusted of that Government, and therefore, decided to join the parties of the Opposition in 'liberating' Kerala from Communist rule.

A moment's reflection would be sufficient to expose the utter baselessness of this claim. It is well-known that the Communist Party was returned as the majority Party during the last election on a minority of votes (41 per cent); what is more, its majority in the Assembly was slender (only 4, the Party getting 65 out of the 126 elected seats; this majority of 4, however, was turned into 2 by the addition of a nominated member and by the election of the Speaker).

Therefore, if large sections of the former supporters of the Party had shifted themselves away from the Party and towards the Opposition, it would then have been unimaginable that the Opposition should consider the Party too strong to be defeated without the unity of all anti-Communist forces. But the Congress, which did not seek any united front with other parties in the last election and contested as many as 125 seats out of 126, is today making frantic efforts to have alliances with all the anti-Communist parties and elements in the State. Even at the risk of opposition from the nationalist democratic public opinion, the Congress has come to an electoral understanding with the Muslim League.

While thus conscious of the further accession of the Communist Party's strength and the weakening of the Congress since the last General Elections, the Congress believes the Communist Party to be too weak to face the combined forces of the Congress, the PSP and the Muslim League. They have, therefore, come to an understanding with the P-SP and the

Muslim League with a view to avoiding triangular contests. They hope that his will be a formidable force which would guarantee their victory.

They, however, are making a grave miscalculation. For, the intelligent voter of Kerala knows that the unity that they have forged among themselves is built on extremely weak foundations. Their unity is based on the purely negative slogan of 'keep the Communists out'. On every issue which affects the life of the people such as food, agricultural production, agrarian reforms, development of industries, extension of the democratic rights of the people, etc., etc., they are so much at variance with one another that views ranging from those of the Swatantra Party to extreme left revolutionary slogans may be found among them. They are unable to offer any constructive solution for any single problem that is facing the country.

How utterly bankrupt their policies are can be seen from the fact that the central issue on which the so-called 'mass upsurge' took place in June-July—the issue of the Education Act—still remains unresolved. The Christian Bishops and other leaders of the School Closure Movement refused to accept our Government's invitation to attend the conference to discuss the issue involved in their agitation; they demanded that the entire Education Act should be withdrawn, and even certain executive orders that had been issued by the Government should be cancelled, as a condition precedent for their attending the conference. They had been told that all this can be done if only the Communist Government was removed from the scene.

That Government, of course, has been out of the scene for three-and-a-half months and, yet, the Education Act and the Executive orders remain even now. The Conference which the Governor convened with a view to amending the Education Act (which, incidentally, was attended by the representatives of the Bishops and other school managers without any pre-condition) could not come to any agreement, because acceding to the demand of the managers would be so undemocratic a step that President's rule cannot dare take this step.

The Congress Committee too is finding it extremely difficult to state clearly and categorically as to what it proposes to do with the Education Act, for, the Congress finds that the slogans which it had used against the Communist Government

cannot be implemented without raising a storm of protest from the vast majority of school teachers and from the backward communities, both of whom derived much benefit from the Education Act.

The same is the case with the agrarian legislation. The Nair Service Society, headed by Sri Mannath Padmanabhan, had demanded the scrapping of the Agrarian Relations Bill along with the scrapping of the Education Act. Even after the dismissal of the Ministry, he had asked the President to withhold assent to the Bill. The Congress, however, cannot dare take such a stand.

There are ever so many such issues on which it is impossible for them to make a positive approach to the electorate. But the most vital of them is: what will be the character of the Government to be formed, if their United Front is returned by a majority: will they form a Congress Government, which would be supported by the P-SP and the Muslim League, or will they have a P-SP Government with Congress and Muslim League support; or will they allow to form a Muslim League Government which will be supported by the P-SP and the Congress or, will they have a Congress-P-SP, or a P-SP League Government with the support of the party that is left out in the coalition; or, lastly, will they have regular coalition Government of the three parties? This is the central political question to which they have not yet been able to find a clear answer.

Even supposing that, after a good deal of protracted discussions, they accept any one of these alternatives and state so clearly, what is the guarantee that the Government that will be formed in this fashion will not share the same fate as had befallen to the earlier Congress Governments in the State, i.e., continuous instability, the coming to power and upsetting of one Government after another?

The straight question which the electorate faces now, therefore, is, will they choose a combination of political parties, which, on their own admission, will find it impossible to give a stable Government, carrying out progressive democratic policies, or will they once again return to power that combination of Communists and progressive independents who had formed of stable Government and started carrying out progres-

sive policies? I am confident that the intelligent electorate of Kerala would choose the latter.

I would however, admit that this would be, by no means, easy. For, behind the combined forces of the Congress, P-SP and the Muslim League stands the combination of big money and power in the State: the big landlords, the big bankers and moneylenders, owners of big plantations, determined to use their full resources in order to assure a victory for the United Front of anti-Communist forces.

The landlords in several parts of Kerala have mounted a concentrated offensive against the agricultural labourers who, they expect, will vote for the Communist Party. Hundreds of them have had to leave their homes and villages because of organised physical attacks launched against them by the landlords and their armed gangs. Several houses have been burned and scores of families forcibly evicted from their homes. These attacks have been made with the double purpose of (i) forcing them to leave their unions and join the INTUC, and (ii) terrorising them out of going to the polls on the polling day.

The powerful Catholic Church has involved religion to forbid all its followers voting for the Communist Party and all those who associate themselves with the Communists. The authorities of the State Government and the Election Commissioner plead helplessness in preventing such obvious election malpractices—tactics resorted to by the followers of the Congress and its political allies to wean the voters away from voting for the Communist Party. The question is: shall we be assured of free and fair elections? Will the people be allowed to vote as they please, or will the Catholic clergy and other religious authorities, money, Governmental authority—all be used against us?

This being the crucial question, we require all the sympathy and support which our friends in the rest of the country can give us in the difficult struggle that is ahead of us. It was their sympathy and support which had helped us to weather the many storms which we had to face at the time we were in office and we are grateful to them for all this sympathy and support. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to them all

once again to continue to give that sympathy and support in this most difficult of our struggles.

Let me recall in this connection with a sense of heartfelt gratitude, the warm and affectionate welcome which was extended to me in all the States of India which I had the opportunity to visit during the last two months. It was a great revelation for me to find that large sections of Congress Praja-Socialists and other non-Communist friends have departed their differences with the Communist Party on innumerable issues, particularly on the question, and expressed their sympathy to us.

Many of them, I understand, have made their own contributions to the Kerala Election Fund which our Party is now collecting. While expressing our appreciation and gratitude to them for this, I would like to appeal to them to continue to do so.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PEASANT MOVEMENT IN KERALA

DEDICATION

To the kisan family of a father, a mother and six children who sheltered me for twenty months of my underground life; who inspired me with the heroism, courage, resourcefulness and political consciousness characteristic of the toiling masses: who taught me living Marxism through their daily life of intense devotion to the revolutionary cause.

And to so many other families of kisans, known and unknown, who have made the growth of the Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party in Kerala in the period of severe repression possible.

I dedicate this History of the Peasant movement in Kerala.

April 1943 Author

The peasant movement in Malabar, South India, is almost a century old. Its slogans have changed, its plan of action has changed, and above all, it has advanced from a *movement* to an *organisation*. Nevertheless, its essential characteristics as a movement aimed against the Jenmi (landlord) system have not changed. Liberating the entire people of Malabar from the iron grip of the Jenmi has been likewise the central objective of the spontaneous individual actions of the militant Moplah of the last century; elaborate reports of enlightened civil servants at the close of the last century; organised agitation of the rising middle tenantry of the last quarter of the 19th and the first three decades of this century; concerted action of the politically awakened and organised Moplahs of 1920-21; and the modern form of class organisation and struggle which had its origin in the thirties of this century and which continues to this day.

THE MOPLAH REBELLION

It is to the illiterate, backward Moplah of the Ernad and Walluvanad taluks that the honour goes of having raised the

initial voice of protest against the oppression of the Jenmi. His very backwardness, his inability to see the might of the new state built up by the whiteman, his ignorance of the intricacies of the new legal concepts introduced by that State, made him rise individually against individual acts of oppression indulged in either by the Jenmi or by the new bureaucratic State. He did not organise himself and his brethren into a peasant movement; for, in his ignorance, he only saw a particular Jenmi or a particular official oppressing him; he could not see the Jenmi system or the bureaucracy which supported it. At the same time he acted firmly against his own immediate oppressors because he was not sophisticated enough to submit himself to the new oppressive system.

Between 1836 and 1898, as many as 45 cases of criminal action by Moplahs against Hindus are recorded in the Ernad, Western Walluvanad and North Ponnani taluks (an area with a dominant Moplah population). The official historians of Malabar draw the conclusion that the Moplahs are a fanatical band of lawbreakers. The Government have accordingly enacted special laws (Moplah Outrages Act) to protect the decent and law-abiding citizens from them.

A careful analysis, however, shows that 80 per cent of these crimes are those committed by Moplah tenants against Hindu jenmis or their agents or servants or the Adhilgari (village headman) or a revenue official or a police party. And remember that almost all the Jenmis in this area are Hindus—Nambudiris, Rajahs and Temples particularly—and most of the tenants are Moplahs.

It is not, of course, denied that a certain percentage of the crimes are of a purely fanatical type. There are for instances, cases of Cheruma (Harijan) converts having been attacked by bands of Moplahs for having reconverted themselves to Hinduism. Such instances are, for one thing, very rare, and, for another, we should remember that Moplah priests are working with the deliberate purpose of clouding the vision of the Moplah peasants. It is to the interests of these priests to turn the anti-Jenmi sentiments of the peasants into the anti-Hindu sentiments of the Moplahs. And it is no wonder that the backward Moplah fell a victim to this propaganda. The wonder is, rather, that such fanatical outbursts are so few in proportion to their

anti-Jenmi and anti-official actions. It clearly shows that with all his traditional illiteracy, backwardness and priest-riddenness, the Moplah peasant is much more a class-conscious peasant than a community-conscious Moplah.

19TH CENTURY CIVILIANS WHO SPOKE UP

The latter half of the nineteenth century is remarkable in Indian history of the rise of a type of civilian who became the mouth-piece of the rising national movement. One of these, A. O. Home, is supposed to be the Father of the Indian National Congress. He saw the necessity of creating an organisation which would prove a safety-valve for the rising national sentiment and confine it within safe limits.

The same tendency is visible in Malabar—not in her national politics but in her agrarian movement. It was Mr. Logan, a civil servant, who first gave form to the anti-Jenmi sentiments of the people of Malabar. His report on the causes of Moplah outbreaks (into which he was commissioned to enquire) and the historical chapter of the Malabar Manual which he prepared at the Government's instance are two classical documents bearing on the agrarian question in Malabar. They are quoted and re-quoted even today by the supporters of tenancy reform while the opponents of that reforms have taken great pains (with very little success) to refute them.

A few more civilians followed in Logan's footsteps, while some took the other side and opposed any change in the tenancy system. But none of them—nither supporters nor opponents—equalled Logan in the penetrating analysis of Malabar society before and after the advent of the British regime.

What were Mr. Logan's chief conclusions?

(1) That the British jurists did not understand the system of landownership in Malabar. They imported conceptions of the British feudal system and absolute property rights into Malabar, thus clothing the old indigenous terms and expressions denoting landed property with a new and alien meaning.

(2) That there was no absolute proprietorship in land in Malabar. The Jenmi was only a co-proprietor with two classes of cultivators—tenants and agricultural labourers. His rights are limited to taking one third of the produce as *Jenmabhogam* which is not rent in the British sense of the word. He cannot

raise the *Jenmabhogam* above this one-third, nor can he evict his tenant from the land.

(3) That the decisions of Courts making the Jenmi absolute owner, the right of eviction at will and with the right of taking as much rent as he can, were a wrong interpretation of the law.

(4) They were also a social and political blunder of the first magnitude. They are the real reasons for the Moplah outbreaks.

(5) The solution is to restore the tenants to their old position, i e. give them fixity of tenure, fix rent at old rates and give compensation for tenants' improvements.

Rise of the Kanamdar

Meanwhile a new force was slowly evolving in Malabar society. Out of the womb of this old feudal society emerged the elements of the new bourgeois society and this gave a new form, a new leadership and an organisation to the hitherto unorganised spontaneous peasant movements.

The *Rajahs* and *Sthanis* (chieftains) formed the political superstructure of the old, pre-British society while the Nambudiris and religious institutions formed its cultural superstructure. The British regime gave a stunning blow to both and constructed a new superstructure politically and culturally. British power, however, kept the elements of the old superstructure intact as the base of its own economic superstructure. The contradictions involved in this gave birth to a new class—the rising bourgeoisie—and laid the basis for a great social upheaval.

It was the middle strata of the old society that constituted the cadres of the new political and cultural machine. The Rajahs, Sthanis and Nambudiris did not take up English education and secure administrative posts. They held on to their economic and social predominance and pooh-poohed the alien tongue. It was their dependents, tenants and poor relatives that went to schools, passed examinations and secured Government posts.

Now this created a new situation. The new class of educated young men and officers were politically and culturally far more advanced than their landlords who, however, were

economically and socially dominant in the countryside The very state which made them politically independent of the Jenmis made them much more dependent economically on these same Jenmis.

A Tehsildar or a Police Inspector or a Sub-Judge is part of a machine which deals with Jenmies as with any other citizen, but individuals who are appointed to these posts are socially and economically dependent on some of these Jenmis. The officer has innumerable opportunities of bossing over the Jenmis as over the rest of the people, but the Jenmi can evict his family from the house in which it lives. The educated and professional man with a wide outlook and a sturdy sense of self-respect has to humiliate himself before the narrow-minded and conceited ignoramus who is the landlord.

It was this conflict between the new rising bourgeoisie and the old decaying Jenmi that gave a new leadership to the peasant movement. The most outstanding individual of this type is the late Sir C. Sankaran Nayar.

The slogans and demands of this class, however, were very different from those raised by Mr. Logan. They, of course, quoted Logan when it was a question of refuting the arguments of the Jenmis, but they did not demand what Logan had demanded.

Now to get a clear understanding of the difference, it is necessary to bear in mind that there are two main classes of tenants in Malabar. One of these is called *Kanamdar*, who had certain privileges, pays less rent and has invested a small sum with the Jenmi. The other is *Verumpattamdar* with no privileges, paying the full rent and cultivating on a theoretically year-to-year basis. Many of the Kanamdars are themselves not cultivators, but lease their lands to *Verumpattamdars* for cultivation, while most of the Verumpattamdars are actual cultivators. All the Kanamdars are thus directly under the Jenmis while Verumpattamdars are both under the Jenmis and the *Kanamdars*. It was thus the Kanamdar, the prosperous middle tenant, that formed the soil out of which grew the rising bourgeoisie. While many *Kanamdars* remained on the land as actual tillers of the soil, there were few, among the other classes,—either *Jenmis* or *Verumpattamdars*—who rose to the position of the new bourgeoisie. Thus the struggle of the

Kanamdar for economic equality with the *Jenmi* was the struggle of the bourgeoisie for domination all along the line. This domination naturally necessitated that the *Verumpattamdar* should not have equality with the *Kanamdar*. The rich *Kanamdar* did not mind equality of the poor *Kanamdar* with the *Jenmi* but he did object to the *Verumpattamdar* being equal to himself. So the slogan was 'Fixity of Tenure for the *Kanamdar*'.

Logan had, however, recommended no concessions to the Kanamdar, but only to the *Verumpattamdar*.

This struggle was bitter and prolonged. It took over half a century (from the latter part of the last century to 1930) to see the end of the struggle in which the Kanamdar emerged victorious. The struggle was not confined to British Malabar but took the same form and intensity in the States of Cochin and Travancore where, however, the struggle ended more than a decade before it did in British Malabar. The chequered history of their struggle by means of reports and memoranda, brochures and tracts—newspaper articles and platform oratory, petitions and counterpetitions, draft-bills and debates, committees and conferences, vetoes and recommendations which at last resulted in three separate Acts for the three separate political divisions of the Malayalam speaking area. All this need not be detailed here. Sufficient to say that the Malabar tenancy question was as recurrent and persistent a subject in Madras for half a century as the Irish question was (for 4 centuries) in London. And yet its solution did not touch the fringe of the problem even as the Anglo-Irish treaty has not touched the fringe of the British colonial problem. What is more, the solution of the tenancy question in 1930 had to be preceded by the Rebellion of 1921 even as the settlement of the Irish question in 1921 had to be preceded by the Easter Rising of 1916. We will, therefore, now refer to this historic rising which was the fiercest struggle against the British authority since 1857.

THE COURSE OF THE REBELLION

It is the fashion among certain "Marxist" circles (e. g., Soumyendra Nath Tagore's "Peasant Revolt in Malabar") to speak of the 1921 rebellion as a purely peasant uprising against the *Jenmis*. Facts, however, tell a different tale. What is

more, these "Marxists" seem to disregard the clear warning of Engels against applying the theory of historical materialism as if it were "easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree".

Engels says : "According to the materialistc conception of history the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determining factor, he transforms it into a meaningless abstract and absurd phrase. There is an interaction of all these elements (political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas, etc.) in which amid all the endless bursts of accidents (i. e., of things and events whose interaction is so remote or so impossible to prove that we regard it as absent and can neglect it) the economic movement finally asserts itself."

Now there is no doubt about the fact that it was the anti-Jenmi struggle of the Malabar peasants that gave birth to the great mass upheaval of 1920-21 which resulted in the five months' rebellion in South Malabar. Since this is not a detailed history of the 1921 rebellion (which unfortunately is yet to be written apart from those booklets by official apologists) I cannot give here the innumerable facts and figures to refute the lies and slanders of those who would have us believe that the Moplahs as a community are undesirable law-breakers. I would, quote the late C. Gopalan Nair, a Government pensioner who wrote a booklet on the rebellion defending the official view. It may be stated that this booklet has been commended to the reader by no less a person than the then Collector of Malabar.

"The house of V. Mohammed, the local Khilafat Secretary, was searched by the police for a gun alleged to have been stolen from the Pookttur Palace of the Nilambur Thirumulpad and this gave the Moplahs the opportunity for which they were waiting, of asserting the authority and force of the Khilafat movement. On the pretext that the search was unjust and uncalled for, a crowd of several hundred of Moplahs armed with knives, swords and spears, collected with astounding rapidity and advanced to the Palace. It transpired that they had been summoned from various neighbouring and

outlying villages by a tocsin of drums beaten in local and neighbouring mosques. They levied blackmail from the landlords on threat of murder and also threatened to murder the Circle-Inspector of Police who recognised the necessity of dealing tactfully...

"No evidence has yet been forthcoming to warrant the allegation regarding agrarian discontent, but it would appear that there was some trouble—what it was, it is not possible to say—between Pookottur Moplahs and the Manager Thirumulpad of the Pookottur Estate. Their lack of cordiality was aggravated by the police search instituted at the instance of the manager and V. Mohammed exploited the Khilafat Movement and the factious temper of his co-religionists to wreak vengeance. The Moplahs demanded their wages at 9 o'clock that night, threatened the manager and became turbulent. And in this jungly, remote and fanatical hamlet of Pookottur, the civil administration practically ceased to function from 2nd August, 1921". (pp. 21-23)

On page 30, he says : "In the realm of industry, the Moplah has no rival, his good qualities in ordinary life are admitted ; *during the rebellion several instances have occurred of Moplahs having helped Hindus to escape,* but individual instances do not prove the rule."

The short biographical sketches that he gives on pages 76-80 of some of the rebel leaders are illuminating.

"Variankunnath Kunhamed Haji, of a family of outbreak traditions, as a lad was transported with his father for complicity in a previous outbreak ; on his return 6 or 7 years ago he was not allowed to settle down in his native village but after a time he went up to his village and started life as a cartman.

"On the introduction of the Khilafat movement, he joined it and became one if its chief workers, organised Sabhas and became the guiding spirit of the Khilafat in Ernad. On the outbreak of the rebellion he became King, *celebrated his accession by the murder of Khan Bahadur Chekkutty, a Moplah retired Police Inspector.*

"He styled himself as the Raja of the Hindus, Amir of the Mohammedans and Colonel of the Khilafat Army. He wore a fez cap, wore the Khilafat uniform and badge and he had sword in his hand. He enjoyed absolute Swaraj in his

kingdom of Ernad and Walluvanad. *He announced that he was aware that the inhabitants have suffered from robbing and looting, that he would impose no taxation on them this year* (1921) save in the way of donations to the yudha fund and that next year the taxes must be forthcoming. *He ordered members of agricultural labourers to reap and bring in the paddy raised in the Thirumulpad's lands,* the harvesters being paid in cash and the grain set apart to feed the Haji's forces. *He issued passports to persons wishing to get outside his Kingdom and the cost of the pass was a very flexible figure, according to the capacity of the individual concerned.*

"He was captured on the 6th January and shot on 20th January, 1922."

This was the most outstanding of the rebel leaders. Now about two of the lesser ones :

"Seethi Koya Thangal of Kumarampathur set himself up as the Governor of a Khilafat principality. *He issued fatwas warning his men against looting, and other depredations pointing out that the country had become theirs. Three of the rioters implicated in Elampalasseri were punished by him holding his own court-martial.* The offenders were ordered to be shot, taking care only to use blank cartridges. The men terrified fell down. When they rose there were no injuries which the Thangal attributed to his own marvellous powers and added that his men will similarly be immune from British military attacks. He was captured and shot.

"Chembrasseri Imbichi Koya Thangal held his court about midway between Tirur and Karuvarakundu on the slope of a bare hillock with about 4,000 followers from neighbouring villages. *More than 40 Hindus were taken to the Thangal with their hands tied behind their back, charged with the crime of helping the military by supplying them with milk, tender coconuts, etc., and 38 of these were condemned to death.* He superintended the work of murder in person and took his seat on a rock near a well, witnessed his men cutting at the necks of his victims and pushing the bodies into the well. 38 were murdered, one of whom a pensioned head-constable, to whom he owed a grudge, had his head neatly divided into two halves. Surrendered at Melattur and shot on 20th January, 1922." **(Emphasis added)**

Forces Behind the Outbreak

What then, was the main force which led to the outbreak of 1921? The so-called Marxists would say that it was agrarian discontent. Nor do I wish to contradict it. Had it not been for the agrarian discontent whose causes and extent had been correctly stated by Mr. Logan half-a-century ago but whose remedy was not applied by the Government, the Moplah would not have rallied round the Khilafat and Congress flags in such large numbers and with such firm determination. It should also be remembered that most of the Congress and Khilafat leaders in Malabar (e.g. late K. Madhavan Nair, U. Gopala Menon, K. P. Kesava Menon, etc.) were also leaders of the Tenancy movement. The two most controversial resolutions considered and ultimately passed at the Malabar District Political Conference held at Manjeri were those supporting non-cooperation and Tenancy Reform. And it was after this Conference that Congress and Khilafat Committees sprang up in South Malabar in such large numbers as were not rivalled even in 1938-40. Every speech of every Congress-cum-Khilafat leader was a two-edged weapon aimed against both the British Government as well as the *Jenmi*. It was this that gave a new hope and new slogan to the oppressed Moplahs who joined the movement in such large numbers. It was a fine example of an agrarian political mass movement.

The "Marxists", however, have to answer certain simple but relevant questions. Why was it that the movement was confined to an area with a Moplah majority? The British bureaucrary and the Jenmi system which it set up cannot be said to be partial towards the Hindu peasants who are as numerous in other Taluks as the Moplahs are in Ernad and parts of Walluvanad and Ponnani. The oppression and exploitation of the *Jenmi* and the officials are as bad for the Hindu peasants as for their Moplah comrades. Why is it then that Moplah peasants rose almost to a man while the Hindu peasants fell victims to the propaganda that the rising was not anti-Jenmi or anti-Government but anti-Hindu? For it cannot be denied that the Hindus as a whole kept aloof from the Rebellion and were far behind the Moplahs in the pre-rebellion period of Agitation and organisation. The number of Congress and Khilafat sabhas organised and members enrolled in the Moplah

area, was far higher than the corresponding number in other areas. And, finally, why was it that a certain number of forced conversions took place, which as I have remarked before, cannot by any stretch of imagination be explained away as part of a purely agrarian movement ?

I have posed the question which every Marxist historian worth the name should answer. I do not, however, pretend to answer them here. It requires much better and more careful study than I have been able to give to the subject. But the little study that I have made has led me to certain conclusions which I set forth below :

1. The Moplahs as a community have a much higher sense of organisation than the Hindus. Their congregational prayers, their common feasts and dinners, their conception of equality among themselves, etc., make them much more amenable to organised work than their brethren of other communities. So when the message of organisation and struggle was preached by political leaders, the Moplahs took it much more easily and with much firmer determination than others.

2. The Moplahs had more reason to rally round the Congress and Khilafat than the Hindus. For, one of the slogans raised by the nationalist leadership was "hands off the Turkish Khalifa", a slogan dear to the hearts of every pious Muslim. While for the Hindu peasant it was only a question of freedom from bureaucracy and the *Jenmi,* it was to the Moplah a question of defending his religious head, a question of sacred war against the desecrator of his creed.

3. While the above two reasons give adequate explanation for the more solid organisation in the Moplah area, they do not explain the course which the rebellion took. This is much more complex a question than the one answered above.

4. The key to the whole question as to the course of the rebellion is supplied by the different strata of society which rallied by the Congress-cum-Khilafat-cum-Tenancy movement. These can be divided as follows :

(a) The Hindu elements of the central leadership in Malabar. They were vakils and intellectuals drawn from among the Kanamdars. They were the typical bourgeois nationalist leadership. Furious against the bureaucracy, earnest about the struggle against it, elated at

the staggering response to their call for struggle, sanguine about their own ability to control the masses within the four corners of non-violent non-cooperation, indignant against oppressive Jenmi yet blind to the demands and aspirations of the Verumpattamdars, they went forth to the masses with the message of organisation for a struggle. They were with and among the masses, till the latter began to adopt their own methods of struggle, i.e., went beyond the creed of non-violence and then left them to their fate.

(b) The Moplah elements of the same leadership. Closely akin to their Hindu counterparts, but with firmer roots in the masses, they stood for the Verumpattamdars and were therefore more progressive. They did not leave the masses, but tried to bring them into the limits of non-violent non-cooperation. The most outstanding of these, Mr. Mohammed Abdur Rahiman is even today the hero of the Moplahs.

(c) The middle leadership in the rebel area consisted mainly of Musaliars, Thangals, Hajis and other saintly Moplahs. Sincere anti-imperialists, they, however, think and speak in the terms of religion which had tremendous effect in rallying the Moplahs. Some of them have had the adventurous and the careerist in them, but most of them were good material as peasant cadres if only there had been a good and efficient central leadership. Their loss is irreparable to the peasant movement as they showed their mettle as good organisers both before and during the rebellion.

(d) Rank and Filers. These may have naturally included a certain percentage of unsocial and individualist elements but most of them were typical anti-*Jenmi* and, therefore, anti-Government peasants.

(e) Hindu elements of middle leadership and rank and filers were on the same pattern as their leaders and left the movement altogether after the outbreak and the arrival of the military.

It is not difficult to explain now why the movement in its later stages took a partially communal turn The Moplah found that his Hindu compatriots both the leaders and the rank and file

deserted him; the military arrived to hunt him out of his abode; his Hindu neighbours helped the military as against him. He naturally got enraged at them. This was worked upon by fanatical and adventurous elements among the rebels. No wonder then if anti-Hindu actions took place. The wonder is, rather that they were so few in number and proportion.

It was thus that the greatest mass movement in British Malabar was diverted into the most tragic and most futile mass action. Did anybody divert it deliberately and, if so, who, is a question for a penetrating study of facts, but one can definitely say that behind the whole tragedy can be seen the colossal ignorance of the central political leadership in Malabar and India as to the actual character of the mass force roused by them. The leaders got a following of a very different character from what they wanted, yet thought it was what they wanted. South Malabar had to wade through blood and get its civil liberties suppressed for over a decade in order to learn that leadership is not all-powerful nor the masses a herd of sheep. Thousands of lives had to be lost and many more to sufer untold privations because the masses had an organisation of their own but a different type of leadership.

II. New Peasant Movement Rises

With the passing, in 1930, of the Malabar Tenancy Act, one epoch of the peasant movement of Kerala comes to an end. Almost all the demands which the Kanamdars had been making for half-a-century have been conceded. He can no more be evicted by a capricious Jenmi at his sweet will and pleasure; his interests in the land get as much as the Jenmi's own; the professional and commercial people who accumulate decent amounts seek him out and try to purchase his interests thus converting him into the possessor of almost liquid cash. His rents cannot be enhanced, nor can the Jenmi make arbitrary levies on him as he used to do. The renewal fee that he was to pay to the Jenmi every 12 years had lost all the terrors of a periodically erupting volcano ruining his entire family as it could now be correctly calculated according to well-known and fixed principles in contrast to the arbitrary and unknown whims of the *Jenmi*, as hitherto.

It was over a decade since exactly the same reforms had been made in the State of Cochin and Travancore. There the *Kanamdar* had already become socially and economically independent of the *Jenmi*. The *Jenmi*, in relation to the *Kanamdar* had ceased to be the all-powerful autocrat that he had been and turned into a mere receiver of rent which itself was fixed. As in the case of other social legislations like the Marumakkathayam and Namboodiri Acts, so in the case of Marumakkatoo, the feudalistic States of Cochin and Travancore were a couple of steps in advance of the bourgeois state system of Madras. It was the feudalistic system of the two States which dealt the first blow alike on the autocracy of the joint family system as on the autocracy of the system of land ownership.

It was, however, British Malabar which, once it entered the fold of social reform went a few steps ahead of the States. The Madras Marumakkathayam Act, extending as it did to all communities following the Marumakkathayam (matriarchal) law of inheritance, was more comprehensive than the Nayar Regulations of Cochin and Travancore. The Namboodiris Acts of Cochin and Travancore conferred only limited rights of maintenance to members of families while the Madras Act conferred on them rights of outright partition; what is more, it brought the women of the community into equality with the men by conferring on them equal rights of property as also by an almost absolute prohibition of polygamy.

So was it in the case of the Tenancy Act. In Cochin and Travancore, it is only the *Kanamdar* who is made independent of the *Jenmi;* the *Verumpattamdar* is entirely out of the picture of Tenancy Reform. The Madras Act of 1930, on the other hand, did confer fixity of tenure and fair rent on the *Verumpattamdar*. Not only the *Verumpattamdar* but any imaginable class of tenants was given the right of fixity of tenure and fair rent. The fair rent fixed was, in other words, the rent payable by the actual cultivating tenant to his immediate landlord whether the latter be the *Jenmi*, the *Kanamdar*, the non-cultivating *Verumpattamdar* or any other intermediate tenant. And everyone, irrespective of the actual tenure on which he holds the land, was made immune from arbitrary eviction by his landlord.

The difference between the feudal states and the bourgeois

state is no pure accident although certain comparatively accidental factors were working. The blow struck on the outworn family and land system was, in the States, a blow struck from above by a partially bourgeoisfied feudal monarchy while the same was done in British Malabar from below by the growing bourgeois popular forces in opposition to a decaying bourgeois state which relies for support more and more on the remnants of tottering feudal society. The Madras Act of 1930 was passed into law after a series of interventions by the Governor in favour of the Jenmi (one particular bill was actually vetoed by him) while the Cochin and Travancore Acts were known to have had the personal support of the then Maharajas even before it was drafted. Thus the legislative proposals became law earlier in the states. They were, however, of such a nature that the blow struck would only smash away feudal opposition which the partially bourgeoisfied feudal states might, and some times did, encounter but did not smash feudalism as a whole. To create a form of easily negotiable property on land was an economic and political necessity for the 'enlightened' (i.e. bourgeoisfied) states but it could not and should not release the overwhelming majority of peasants from the clutches of the *Jenmis* and the states.

It should not, however, be understood that the *Verumpattandar* in British Malabar was free from the grip of the *Jenmi* and the intermediary tenant. Far from it. The fixity of tenure and fair rent secured to him under the Act were in actual practice illusory. For, one of the "reasonable grounds" for eviction was his failure to furnish one year's rent in cash as security. This means that over 95% of the *Verumpattamdars* were liable to eviction at the sweet will and pleasure of their immediate landlords. Nor did it rest at that. Even if one could furnish security, one could be evicted if the landlord wanted that plot of land for his own cultivation which was another of the "reasonable grounds". This right of eviction made the provision for fair rent and any other rights almost nugatory for the entire class of tenants other than *Kanamdars.* It, however, made a distinction between the small proportion of rich and powerful *Verumpattamdars* and the poorer and weaker ones of the same class. While the former could make his legal rights real and valid the latter had as much fixity of tenure

and other rights as have the common people civil liberties in a bourgeois democratic state. It is this distinction that is of supreme importance for the future history of Malabar. For, it creates a powerful bloc of *Jenmis, Kanamdars* and other classes of rich noncultivating majority of the cultivating *Verumpattamdars*. It is this bloc, as we will see, that is the main force which subsequently rallied itself against Kisan Sanghas.

Thus the 1930 Act was the end of the epoch of the *Kanamdar's* struggle against the *Jenmi* and the beginning of the new epoch of his struggle against the Verumpattamdar in cooperation with the Jenmi. It is his Magna Carta both as against the Jenmi as well as against his own subtenant.

It is also the end of the epoch of the struggle of the *Jenmi* for his social authority over all his tenants and the beginning of his struggle for the continuance of his rights of economic exploitation of his tenants. No more does he claim to be the social superior and natural leader of his tenants but only as one who has legitimate rights of getting his rent. No more do we hear him say (as one *Jenmi* witness told the Raghavayya Committee in 1928) that "if any of his tenants shaves his face (without shaving the head also), he is entiled not only to evict him but even to shoot him". We heard on the other hand, as we did in his evidence before the Tenancy Committee in 1939, one Jenmi witness after another declaring that, if his rents are properly safeguarded and promptly realised, he does not mind whatever legislation is passed into law. The Jenmi has, in other words, reconciled himself to his dethronement as Jenmi adapted himself to his own bourgeoisfication.

Thus it is the end of the epoch of the feudal Jenmi and the beginning of the epoch of the bourgeois rent receiver.

It is also the end of the epoch of the *Verumpattamdar* being the camp follower of the *Kanamdar* and the beginning of an epoch in which he should carry on his struggle on his own or else remain as miserable as before. No more can he hope to get emancipated under bourgeois leadership. He has to organise himself on new lines and under a new leadership.

The Rise of New Leadership

The new leadership was not long in rising. The national struggles of 1930 and 1932 gave rise to a new type of Congress cadres which ultimately developed into the leadership of the new peasant movement.

The social composition of the Congress volunteers in Malabar was predominatly rural middle class. What does this actually mean? It means that, apart from a few individuals from among the progressive Jenmi and bourgeois elements and also a number of nationally conscious (but not class conscious) workers, the great majority of *Satyagrahis* were connected with land as tenants. They were, however, junior members of their families, who had job as local school teachers. They were in consequence connected with the peasantry but were not themselves working peasants. They did understand the problems and feelings of the peasants but had risen sufficiently above the ordinary peasant to think more of national than of agrarian problems.

The course of the national struggles, the heated discussions over it inside the jail and outside, the earnest study of political questions and the close contact with some revolutionaries, made these Satyagrahis into convinced revolutionaries by the time they came out of jail. The point need not be further elaborated here, since it was the same tendency as was observed all over India. Sufficient to say that this proved adequate material for the building up of the Congress Socialist Party. Almost the entire ranks of the *Satyagrahis* joined the Party and became its active workers. And their social composition made it inevitable that they turn their main attention to the peasant movement.

This character of the new leadership determined the area in which the new peasant movement should rise and grow. It was in North Malabar that the national struggles of 1930 and 1932 were stronger. The Congress leadership was in indescribable terror about the movement in the South, they were afraid of another 1921. They, therefore, carefully omitted South Malabar from the area of civil disobedience and asked volunteers from the South to go to Calicut or some 'safe' centres in the South itself and not to have any movement in their own village. Not so in the North. Sri Kelappan's march to Payyan-

nur electrified the whole North. The Salt satyagraha in the Payyannur camp, the Forest Satyagraha in Hosdurg Taluk and other actions like the Cannanore Youth Conference gave rise to large numbers ot cadres even apart from the 1000 or so of actual jailed satyagrahis. This formed the nucleus out of which the latter peasant movement arose. Every satyagrahi, on coming out of jail, set himself up in his own village. He started a small reading room where the young men of the locality would gather every day, read the daily paper and discuss politics. He would also tell them what he learned in jail, who he met, what they talked about, what they had decided to do. This reading group gradually grew in number and this reading room became ever more and more the centre of political activity. Perhaps some Satyagrahis go out of the picture some times, some reading room goes into disuse but others rise up elsewhere, and those that already existed grow in strength and popularity. Here it is a boisterous K. P. R. Gopalan setting up a Sri Harshan Reading Room, or organising a Kalleisseri Youth League, running and participating in football matches; there it is the venerable Bharatheeyan with his Ashram and Bhagavat Gita and Mahabharatham, reciting Sanskrit *slokas* to prove that the peasant has his rights, going from village to village with his pious and humble personality but effective and uncompromising speech; in a third place it is A. V. Kunhambu building his Yuvak Sangham to a position unrivalled anywhere else in Kerala; and so on and so forth. Everywhere the youth in North Malabar was showing its mettle as organiser of itself which was later to come out as the new organiser and leader of the new peasant movement.

Now this was lacking in the South. No doubt the Satyagrahis there were as good material as in the North. But, not only did the number of *Satyagrahis* in the North far exceed than in the South, the movement itself created half-a-dozen other Congress workers for every imprisoned *Satyagrahi* in the North, which from the very nature of the struggle was absent in the South. Thus the proportion of cadres was almost 1 to 10 as in South and North Malabar. The result was this: while most of the best cadres, in the North set themselves up in their own area and created other cadres thus laying the basis of a mass movement there, most of the best cadres of the South became

Taluka or all-Kerala leaders thus necessarily neglecting the creation of a local mass movement anywhere. This, among other reasons, led to be interesting result that, in the period of agitation and formulation of demands (1934-36) the southern taluks of Walluvanad and Ponnani were on a level with the northern Taluks of Chirakkal and Kottayam, but in the period of actual organisation and struggle (1937-42), they were far behind the North.

The Depression

While the epoch of Kanamdars' struggle was coming to a close, while the new leadership of the new peasant movement was slowly evolving, the great Economic depression set in. The price of paddy, coconat and pepper—Kerala's staple crops—had fallen to more than half its pre-depression prices. Commitments in cash like revenue, debt and cart rent more than doubled in value.

This began to draw the upper sections of the landed elements themselves into some sort of agitation and organisation. Import of rice from Burma and copra from Ceylon was pointed out as the reason for this phenomenal fall in prices, and heavy tariff was demanded to stop this import and protect the cultivator. They did not care to answer the question why pepper also fell in price, nor did it matter to them how the one crore of people in Kerala whose annual paddy production is less than half their annual requirements, are to live.

Four distinct forms of organisation and agitation were visible in Kerala during this period as a direct result of the misery caused to the people by the depression :

(1) Coconut Growers' Association in Travancore led by late Changanasseri Parameswaran Pillai, a retired judge of the Travancore High Court. Its demands were centred round raising the price of coconut. This had some contacts and tried to build up an organisation in Cochin and British Malabar also. It, however, did not grow into a mass movement drawing large masses of peasants. Of the same character and on minor scales were some agitations set up by the arecanut growers in Cochin State and paddy growers in Malabar. But, in both cases, growers meant only a few landlords or merchant contractors and hence

these did not acquire even as much of the mass character as the Coconut Growers' Association did. The reason is that the price of coconut is a subject which deeply affects even the poorest peasants since they have to sell in for purchasing daily necessaries while in the case of paddy it is only the richer tenants and landlords that have any surplus left for sale.

(2) Of a similar character but with a different platform was the land revenue agitation set up in British Malabar. This was started by the *Jenmis* and rich *Kanamdars*. It was primarily directed against the new enhancement of land revenue under the periodical revenue settlement. That the fall in prices should be accompanied by an 18.75 per cent increase of revenue was intolerable not only to the over-taxed people as a whole but to the most prosperous sections among them.

The course of this agitation is very interesting reading. It was started by Mr. R. M. Palat, the then President of the Malabar District Board and the Jenmi representative on the Madras Legislative Council, both to ventilate the grievances of the Jenmi as well as to lay basis for himself as against the Congress for the future elections. The Gandhist Congress leaders on coming out of jail in 1933, took it up and gave it a mass character, thus effectively foiling Palat's game. The Congress Socialists, for their part, worked it up as Congressmen, got experience of mass agitation and organisation and as we will see, developed it into a movement embracing other peasant demands (like debt, rent, etc.)

(3) The third type was again in Travancore. Its leadership was reformist bourgeois (Christian clergymen) and the platform centred round debt relief. It was confined to one area (Kuttanad, near Alleppey). Kuttanad figured subsequently (1938) as an area of a heroic struggle of peasants for democratic reform and recently it again became the scene of a determined and victorious struggle of agricultural labourers.

(4) The most radical and at the time the most significant movement was the widespread Karshaka-Thozhilali (i.e., Peasant-labourer) movement in Cranganore (Kodungallur) in Cochin State. Started by Mr. K. M. Ibrahim, M. L. C. (Cochin) originally for Debt Relief it was the first general anti-landlord, anti-money-lender movement that Kerala has had. Its slogans were on a par with the general socialistic slogan although the

emphasis was much more on debt relief. The movement rallied a great number of cadres and developed into Civil Disobedience. It, however, collapsed as rapidly as it grew. Too much reliance on one or two individual leaders, too much of demagogic methods of agitation, too little of substantial and solid organisation, too little of an understandable programme made it a nine day's wonder. Not a single one of its leaders and no more than two or three of its rank and filers are now in any mass movement although it was at the time supposed to be the model for the Congress Socialists in Malabar. Very close to the Socialists then, Mr. Ibrahim later became a Gandhist and now is a Muslim Leaguer.

Congress Formulates Demands

As we have seen, Congressmen tried to make the land revenue agitation a mass movement. Meetings and *jathas* were organised in different Taluks not only protesting against the enhanced land revenue but also demanding substantial reduction in the pre-settlement revenue itself.

In this movement, naturally, the Socialists were very strong both as regards number as well as energetic activity. Older Congress leaders were 'recouping' themselves from the hardships undergone during the Civil Disobedience. They, of course, graced the occasion when the Land Revenue Conference was organised. It was however, the Younger Socialist Congressmen who went from village to village and popularised the slogans of land revenue agitation. And it was they who, through their reading room and Youth Leagues, took the slogans to the ordinary peasant.

This agitation itself taught them many lessons. It brought them into closer touch with the peasants and thus enabled them to appreciate the actual demands and conditions of the peasantry. It was in this school of practical experience that future leaders like Keraleeyan, Bharatheeyan, K. P. R. Gopalan and A. V. Kunhambu were reared. They found that it was not land revenue that was oppressing the cultivating peasants so much as debt and rent. This led to a recasting of the demands of the Malabar Peasants' Association (the organisation

set up to demand of the Association but one of the demands). The nature of the demand itself changed from a mere demand for land revenue reduction to a wholesale recasting of the land revenue system by introducing a graduated land tax with exemption for the poorer peasants. Other demands included moratorium for debt, drastic scaling down of debts, provision for easy instalments of the repayment of the debts thus scaled down, cheap credit and control over money-lenders, irrigation facilities and tenancy reform.

Now what exactly was demanded by way of tenancy reform? They are :

(1) Abolition of the periodical renewal of *Kanam* lands, an occasion on which the *Kanamdar* had to pay $2^1/_4$ years' rent (minus certain minor reductions) as renewal fees to the *Jenmi*. A failure to renew the lease on their term was one of the "reasonable grounds" for eviction with the result that several poor *Kanamdars* were either actually unable to hold the land or mortgage it for getting it renewed. The richer *Kanamdars* were, of course, agreeable to the abolition of renewal but they were not so anxious for it as their poorer brethren. They were more or less satisfied because the renewal fee has been reduced from the arbitrary amount fixed by the *Jenmi* to an exactly calculable amount. This was, therefore, the last demand of the bourgeois section of the tenantry for which it would not itself fight but would support others when they fought for it. The poor Kanamdar, on the other hand, was deeply interested in it as on it depended the question of whether he should continue to hold the land or be evicted. And poor cultivating *Kanamdars* were of a considerable number, some 60% or so of all the *Kanamdars*, being themselves cultivators. The new leadership of the peasant movement, therefore, concluded that the poor *Kanamdar* was the natural ally of the *Verumpattamdar* in his struggle against the Jenmi.

(2) The second demand was that the landlord's power of eviction for his own cultivation should be abolished or at least severely curtailed. This was a common demand of all classes of cultivating tenants and was therefore another link between the poor *Kanamdar* and *Verumpattamdar*. It was a demand which was opposed by the *Jenmis* and non-cultivating

tenants and this opposition was therefore a link between all the non-cultivating classes of landowners.

(3) Abolition was also demanded of the provision for one year's rent as security from Verumpattamdars which, as has already been pointed out, nullified his fixity of tenure. This was naturally objected to by all classes of non-cultivating tenants and was therefore another link connecting them.

(4) Rent rates were also demanded to be reduced from those fixed under the Act. More important still, it was demanded that *punam* cultivation (a peculiar form of cultivating forest lands which required clearing of the jungle areas every year) and other cultivations which were exempt from the fair rent provisions of the 1930 Act should be brought under it.

It should not, however, be understood that these demands were brought forward at the very outset. Far from it. They took concrete shape only after a couple of years' practical experience was gained by the Socialist Congressmen. In fact, it was only by the time of the general elections (1937) that they had been put in such concrete form. But, even at the outset, some of these demands were made in a vague form.

Another thing to be noted is that it was as Congressmen that the Socialists formulated these demands. It was the Left Congress Committees that raised the slogans and popularised them. Although peasant conferences were held and even peasant committees set up in some places, it was the Congress that took the lead. It may be remembered in this connection that from 1934 to 1936, the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee had a socialist majority while from 1936 onwards, the Malabar District Congress Committee and 50 per cent of the Taluka Committees had a socialist majority. It was through these Committees that peasant demands were popularised.

Gandhite Congressmen did not, at this stage, openly oppose this programme. It is true that their affiliation to the Kanamdar was very strong. Most of them belong to families of *Kanamdars* themselves and move in that circle. They may therefore be expected to, and did later, oppose this new peasant programme. But, for the moment, they did not consider it dangerous enough to require opposition. They had also an eye on future elections of which a vague peasant programme was

useful. Their attitude to it was therefore, one of benevolent neutrality.

ALL MALABAR PEASANTS' UNION

The general election to the Provincial Assembly under the Government of India Act was no mere general election, it was a great peasant rally. The clarion call of the Congress election manifesto roused the peasants in every nook and corner. As one of the popular orators said at the time, the peasants "refused to consider their vote as one of the innumerable levies that the Jenmi periodically made on them and gave it instead as a contribution to the anti-imperialist struggle." Congress candidates received thumping majorities in every constituency in Malabar except in the *Jenmi* constituency where Mr. Palat defeated the Congress candidate.

The most remarkable result was that of Ernad-Walluvanad Muslim constituency where Mr. Abdur Rahiman was the Congress candidate, and a rich man and a retired Government official were his rivals (it was a double-member constituency for which the Congress put up only one candidate.) It was the first occasion since 1921 when meeting and demonstrations were organised in that 'dangerous' area. It was fondly hoped by the enemies of nationalism that the Moplahs who had suffered so much from the 1921 rebellion would be hostile to the Congress which led them to such a pass. It was also feared by the nationalists that this might be the result. The Congress candidate there was, besides, the poorest of all Congress candidates in Malabar. His supporters and propagandists were contemptuously referred to as "Beedi boys", the most "respectable" and powerful Muslim being ranged against him. With all this, however, the result was astounding. Mr. Abdur Rahiman got 28,000 votes while one of his rivals got 12,000 and the other 10,000. The leader of the "Beedi Boys" triumphed over the bigwigs of the two taluks. The Moplah proved that he had learned the lesson of 1921 allright, that he did not hold nationalism responsible for his sufferings, that he had great regard for the fighter against authority that Mr. Abdur Rahiman was reputed to be. The heart of the Moplah peasant beats right; he

is still the militant fighter that he had always been; he will not leave the Congress although the Congress leaders left him 16 years ago.

Similar, though less significant, results followed everywhere. Here it was an eminent lawyer and old (e.i. pre-non-co-operation) Congressman that was defeated; there the representative of a very influential Thiya communal organisation; in a third place a huge money-bag with great influence among the people. Almost everywhere the Congress candidate was by himself inferior in one or more respects to his rival, but he had immense superiority over him in one respect; he had the enthusiastic support of the awakened peasantry.

1937 was, therefore, the beginning of a new stage in the development of the peasant movement. No more is it the affair of a few young men who have accepted Socialism; its slogans have reached the peasants. No more are the taluk peasant unions semi-independent top organisations working in close co-operation with Congress Committees. No more is their membership confined to a few who stand for the demands of the peasants; they already contain large numbers of actual peasants who are also elected to leading posts in the organisation.

1937 was thus the Great Rally of peasants not only around Congress Election Manifesto but also around the slogans and demands put forward by the Socialist Congressmen during the preceding 2-3 years. Ask any peasant in Malabar what it was that he voted for in 1937. He may or may not speak in terms of the Congress Election Manifesto but he will certainly speak in terms of the demands of the Malabar Peasants' Union.

THE PEASANTS SQUEEZE OUT A BOGUS BILL

The Gandhites got what they wanted, the Congress came out victorious at the polls. The peasants were also determined to get what they wanted; they used the election victory for strengthening their organisation and press on the new ministry to carry out their election promises. Demands were made on every platform that the peasant programme formulated before the election by Congres Committees be implemented.

The Congress Ministry came out with a bogus bill for amending the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930. It touched none

of the problems that required solution, but simply made verbal changes in a few places. It was, in other words, not a statesman's amendment but a draftsman's, since it only removed certain "anomalies found from actual working of the Act" in the drafting of certain clauses. This was to be palmed off as the great Tenancy Act Amending Bill conferring untold blessings on the peasantry. As if it was for a draftsman's amendment that the peasants had rallied round the Congress.

The peasants were determined to foil this game. A series of meetings were held all over Malabar asking the Ministry to bring forward a bill to implement the actual demands of the peasants. Some of the Taluk Peasants' Unions actually drafted amending bills (crude and clumsy drafts, if you like, from a draftsman's point of view; nevertheless, concrete drafts not to be ignored by any legislator) and sent it forward to the Government. The objection was not to the bill drafted by the Government, but to the pretension that it was the bill which the peasants had been asking for. By all means, pass this bill, the peasants said; improve the present. Act from a draftsman's point of view; but improve it also from the point of view of the majority of peasants.

The agitation was so widespread that the Government withdrew the bill immediately. The squeezing out of this bill was the first victory that the peasants secured through their class organisation and action while the smash-up of the reactionary candidates at the polls a few months back was their first victory secured through their national organisation. They were, of course, a very long way from realising their own demands through a proper amending act, but they have shown that they cannot be duped as hitherto by reforms in their name but in effect ignoring their demands. This is the significance of the withdrawal of this bogus bill.

BEHIND THE MINISTRY, AGAINST THE JENMIS

The next draft bill published by the Congress Ministry was the Madras Agriculturists' Debt Relief Bill. It really sent a thrill of joy in every peasant's heart just as it evoked the most bitter resentment in the *Jenmi*'s. The peasants or their leaders were not under any delusion that this would completely

emancipate them from the clutches of the money-lenders and the *Jenmis;* it was, nevertheless, a big step forward. The recognition of legislative standards other than the rights of Jenmis and moneylenders was the great merit of the bill which endeared it to the peasants just as it made the Jenmis bitter against it.

A strong agitation was set up by the *Jenmis* against the bill. The Zamorin and other *Jenmis* poured forth money to organise meetings and deputations. Their scribes began to prepare memoranda against the bill. A subtle form of propaganda was started that it was mostly undeserving debtors that got the benefit while a large class of poor creditors stood to lose by the bill.

The peasant movement set up a much stronger organisation in favour of the bill. For every meeting organised by the *Jenmi,* there were 25 organised by the peasants' unions and Congress Committees. For every single member of the audience at Jenmi meetings, there were a thousand at kisan conferences. For a couple of deputations that waited on the Prime Minister on behalf of the Jenmis, there were a dozen Taluk wide marches of peasant workers exhorting peasants to drown the voice of the Jenmi by louder voices raised by thousands of throats. Memoranda prepared by the *Jenmis'* scribes were countered by eloquent agitation and propaganda carried on by eminent organisers like Comrade A. K. Gopalan whose biting sarcasm tore every page of the learned memoranda to shreds.

There was, after all, this difference between the two (*Jenmis'* and peasants') agitations; the former was intended to appeal to the ministers, the powers that be and the latter was meant to rouse the people, the creators of the powers that be. The former, therefore, confined itself to a narrow circle of 'respectable' people who had to put on the pose as spokesmen of the people. The latter's strength lay in effectively annihilating the so-called voice of the people and assert the real voice of the people. This task was brilliantly carried out by a host of propagandists and organisers

What was the result? Certain amendments which the ministry actually gave notice of at the second reading stage in deference to the demands of the Malabar Jenmis were ulti-

mately withdrawn. This bill passed by both Houses practically in its orginal form. The Jenmis got a signal defeat at the hands of the peasants. The people's support saved the measure brought forward by the popular Ministry.

ALL-MALABAR PEASANTS' UNION FORMED

All this was carried on under the leadership of Taluk Peasant's Unions; there was, as yet, no central co-ordinating organisation for peasants' unions in Malabar. The leadership thought that it was useless and unnecessary to have a top organisation unless and until the basic units were organised and functioning. Whatever co-ordinating work there was could very well be done by the Executive of the Congress Socialist Party. This arrangement worked well so long as agitation for and popularisation of peasants' demands was the only task which the peasants' leaders could carry out.

But things changed with the actual formation of functioning units in the villages and Taluks. It was necessary that their activities should be co-ordinated by a central organisation serving as a link between the All-India Kisan Sabha and the Taluk unions. This was set up in May 1938 with Comrade Keraleeyan as the Secretary. Comrade Keraleeyan had already served as the Secretary of the Chirakkal Taluk Peasants' Union, proved his great organising capacity and became the leading peasant organiser in Malabar. He continued in that post till he had to go undergound two years later. Not a little of the credit for the efficient functioning of the organisation goes to him.

The organisation had efficient and functioning Taluk Unions in three northern Taluks—Hosdurg, Chirakkal and Kottayam. It had also a very good organisation in one of the firkas in Kurambranad Taluk. In South Malabar, as a whole, it was much weaker but had some sort of Taluk organisations, although there were few lower units. The result was that South Malabar as a whole remained at the pre-1937 stage of agitation for and popularisation of the peasants' programme while North Malabar advanced from that to the stage of actual organisational functioning from top to bottom. Every village had its peasant union in Chirakkal and Kottayam and their

Taluk offices were a veritable beehive of activity. The peasantry looked upon the village *sanghams* as the one organisation whose decision was the law to him; expulsion from it was a calamity several times worse than imprisonment for an offence awarded by a court of law: enemies of the Sangham were automatically the enemies of every peasant household and lack of cordiality to them was worse than abetment of a serious crime.

It will thus be seen that the peasant union gave them a new code of morality and a new sense of social and political conduct. It is remarkable that this was much more revolutionary in its social implications than the constructive programme of the Congress. Aged peasants long addicted to drink either gave it up altogether or were at least ashamed of this habit. Orthodox peasants gave up their belief in old social codes; a large number of them gave up the observance of untouchability after joining Sanghams rather than at the time of the great temple-entry campaign. The orthodox peasants of a village in Chirakkal Taluk who had beaten up Comrades Keraleeyan and A. K. Gopalan unconscious while they were carrying on temple entry work, later built up a local Karshak Sangham and became its enthusiastic followers. Instances could be multiplied of whole families discarding their old outworn belief and habits after joining the Sangham. And yet the peasant unions had none of these in its programme. A member of the organisation could, if he wished, observe untouchability, drink toddy, etc., but the class solidarity built up in the course of struggle and organisation inevitably revolutionised the peasants' social conduct.

The Great March

December 1938 saw the historic march of the peasantry of Malabar, a march which symbolised alike the awakening of the peasants as well as the organising capacity of their leaders. Two streams of the peasantry converged on Calicut on December 18 and held a joint Kisan-labour rally on the beach. One batch of less than 200 peasants—old men with tufts on their heads as well as young boys of 18, 20 and 25—marched for a week from Karivellur to Calicut—a distance of about 100 miles. Another batch of less than 100 started from Kanchikode (on

the border between Malabar and Coimbatore districts) and made a similar march. A week before that, the peasants of Hosdurg Taluk (administratively part of South Canara District but inhabited by Malayalam speaking people) organised a similar march to Mangalore. Over 300 peasants on the whole from all taluks (except Wynad, the jungle area) of British administered Malabar made a great march through the entire District. Over 200 youths all over the district participated in the great movement as organisers of local and central reception to the marchers. As to the number of those who participated in it as audience in the innumerable meetings, local and central, it could not have been less than a lakh.

Such a march is unique in the history of Kerala. Not that this is the first march of any kind here. Kelappan's Salt *Satyagraha* march from Calicut to Payyannur (1930), A. K. Gopalan's Temple entry *Jatha* to Guruvayoor (1931), one more temple entry *Jatha* in 1932 and the great hunger march to Mardas (1936) under Comrades Chandroth and A. K. Gopalan had made Kerala familiar with marches. But all of them were not only led by but also contained youths of the middle class, while this was the first march which included actual working peasants. All the earlier marches were calculated to do propaganda among the people and to rouse them from their age long slumber, whereas this was the result of the awakening and organisation among the people. The leaders and participants in all previous marches were acting for the masses while the masses were themselves participants in this. No previous demonstration had so many actual peasants in it as this one.

What was the purpose of the march? It was to draw the attention of the Government to the grievance and demands of the peasantry and to ask them to take legislative and executive actions for redressing the grievances and conceding the demands. The march also converged in a village in Calicut taluk in the First All-Malabar Kisan Conference presided over by Comrade A. K. Gopalan.

The bureaucracy could not tolerate this. The Collector was very anxious to prevent the March. But he realised that, with the Congress Ministry in power, he could not prevent it by force. So he adopted a trick.

Comrade Keraleeyan, Secretary of the Kisan Sabha, had written to him asking for a convenient date on which he might receive the jatha. The Collector said that he would receive him and asked him to fix the date and inform him about it. But Comrade Keraleeyan was on tour and therefore he could answer it only 2 or 3 days later. Meanwhile, the Collector fixed his own programme for the whole of December and wrote to Comrade Keraleeyan that since his programme had been fixed, he could not receive the jatha. He knew that arrangements for the *jatha* were well advanced and therefore this 11th hour refusal would cause confusion among the peasantry. Comrade Keraleeyan, however, announced that they were approaching the Government through the people if the bureaucracy refused to act as the medium and that the *Jatha* programme would be carried out. The only difference was that, instead of the Collector receiving their memoradum, the people of Calicut would receive it and that is enough since they were under a people's ministry.

And so it was done. As one of the speakers remarked wittily, "When people try to get out of the way of court peons bringing summons, the summons is served in absentia, likewise, we are serving our memorandum to the Collector in absentia."

The Collector was ably seconded by his subordinate officials, revenue and police, who went about the villages saying that the *Jatha* would not be received and that, therefore, it was useless to go in the *jatha*. One of the Deputy Tahsildars in Chirakkal taluk actually issued a circular to the same effect. Some officials went so far as to suggest that jatha would be banned. But the peasants knew what is what. It was for nothing, said they, that they had voted for the Congress so solidly.

Official-Jenmi Conspiracy

Meanwhile, the officials and the Jenmis were conspiring against the Kisan Sabha. The Collector's attitude to the *Jatha* was but one of its symptoms. Criminal prosecutions against the Kisans (not kisan leaders, for the conspirators knew this stuff were directly and had hopes of demoralising kisans only if the latter were directly dealt with) on various pretexts. Intimidation, looting,

social boycott of various sorts—such were the charges levelled against them.

Contrary to the hopes entertained, the conspirators found, however, that this only sharpened the edges of the Kisans' weapon of organisation. Defence committees were set up everywhere, collections were made, lawyers were engaged and cases fought, with the result that the majority of the cases were found baseless and the accused acquitted. Comrade K. P. R. Gopalan proved that a leading mass mobiliser like him could not only speak eloquently to thousands, shout slogans and sing songs inspiringly but also instruct lawyers and fight out cases. Peasants found that their leader was not only a fine speaker and able organiser of committees but a very competent friend on whom they could rely for support in cases of hardships. In defending these victims of the official-*Jenmi* conspiracy, Comrade K. P. R. Gopalan and his colleagues saved the karshaka Sangham and thus dealt a heavy blow to the bureaucracy.

Now a word on the Gandhites. It is remarkable that it was at this time that the Kerala Gandhi Sangham was organised and in many places it was they who spoke for the Jenmis. Their leaders like Kelappan issued statements condemning certain aspects of Kisan Sabhas as contrary to the creed of non-violence. Their speakers took up the lead and used all available platforms to carry on a tirade against Karshak Sanghams. Jenmis of Hosdurg and Chirakkal taluks joined the Gandhi Sangham in large numbers. This, however, instead of strengthening the Gandhites organisationally, exposed them in the eyes of peasants as the true agents and allies of the *Jenmis*.

The Tenancy Committee

As we have seen already, the centre of the peasants' demands was a proper amendment of the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930. It was this that had fired the imagination of the peasant masses in North Malabar and made them go all the way to Calicut and Mangalore in jathas. The very progressive recommendations of the Zamindari Committee presided over by Mr. Prakasam raised high hopes that, with this ministry in power peasants could secure their demands.

There was, however, one difference. The upper layers of tenants in Zamindari areas had still to fight their

battles as they were entirely under the *Zamindars* while *Kanamdars* in Malabar have, by the 1930 Act, already got almost all that they wanted. Any further amendment to the Bill would be dangerous to their interest rather than helpful to them.

Hence the difference in the Ministry's treatment of the agrarian question in zamindari areas and that of Malabar. It took more than six months after the publication of the Prakasam Committee's report for the appointment of the Malabar Tanancy Committee. And what was the position when it was actually appointed? There were on it two avowed *Jenmis*—both the Jenmi representatives in the Legislature but not a single representative of the All-Malabar Peasant Union. True enough, three M. L. As had been appointed, who supported the peasant union through thick and thin, but as against this, there were a dozen others who represented the *Kanamdars*. Thus, it was a committee of *Kanamdars* with 2 Jenmis, 3 supporters of the Karshaka Sangham and a dozen *Kanamdars* that the Congress Ministry appointed to enquire and report on tenancy reforms in Malabar.

Though they were dissatisfied with the composition of the committee, the peasants decided to make it a lever for building up a mighty mass movement around it. At every centre visited by the Committee, there were huge rallies and demonstrations welcoming the committee and urging on it to concede their demands. While there were one or two among the witnesses who tendered evidence before the committee formally, those who supported these witnesses were not less than 25,000. Comrades Narayan Nair Keraleeyan and Bharatheeyan were among the witnesses.

The conduct of members of the committee at its meetings and their recommendations were as expected. The Chairman and members (i.e., all except the three who supported the case of the Karshaka Sangham) were very careful to avoid demonstrations as far as possible. And, in examining the witnesses, they conducted themselves more as lawyers cross-examining in a court of law than as people's representatives arguing the people's case and exposing the enemies of the people. With the exception of K. Madhava Menon, all the Gandhite members on the committee used their skill at cross-examination against representatives of Karshaka Sanghams.

The committee's recommendations tell the same tale. Mr. R. M. Palat, the *Jenmi* representative, in his minute of dissent, said that he had no idea of dissenting from the majority report but that he was writing it because the representatives of Karshaka Sangham are writing their own dissenting minutes. That is, he is prepared to agree to the majority report. There is nothing to be wondered at in this, for the majority refused to grant the main demands of the peasants. Minor changes in status were of course, recommended but the main demands were turned down. No abolition of renewal of *Kanamdar,* no abolition of one year's rent as deposit from *Verumpattamdar,* no reduction in rent rates, etc., etc. If the Karshaka Sanghams were prepared to accept them, said Mr. Palat, he was quite willing to bless them, but if they did not, he would oppose even the minor changes proposed by the *Kanamdars.* The *Jenmi-Kanamdar* agreement at the expense of *Verumpattamdar* was thus sealed. The process that began in 1930 was completed in 1940.

III. Imperialist War and Repression

Scarcely had the Malabar Tenancy Committee started its work when the Second World War broke out. The Viceroy's declaration of India being in a state of war with Germany, the Wardha Resolution of the Congress Working Committee, the defence of India Ordinance, banning all possible forms of political activity and other political consequences of the war were deeply felt by the Kisans. Further they were agitated over the rising prices of all commodities which they had to purchase, without corresponding rise in the price of their own produce. The result of this was that the Kisans organised in All-Malabar Peasants' Union were drawn into the political movement. Their demonstrations and rallies before the Malabar Tenancy Committee itself were, to a very great extent, political demonstrations against the war.

Kisans in the Forefront of Anti-War Struggle

Even before the outbreak of the war, the peasant movement in Kerala was largely political. In the taluks of North Malabar where the peasant movement was the strongest, Kisan Sabhas and Congress Committees were, in most places, indis-

tinguishable from one another. Not only were the two organisations manned by the same people, not only did members of the Kisan Sabhas join the Congress *en masse*; but the overwhelming majority of the Congress volunteers in the northern taluks were sons of the *Kisans* who got political consciousness through *Kisan* leaders who were at the same time Congressmen.

The whole of this Congress-cum-Kisan Sabha movement had got educated in the twin slogans of struggle against feudalism and struggle against war. Now that feudalism had died a natural death and war had become no more a distant menace but an immediate reality, the Kisans and their volunteers began to feel that it was for them to resist the war.

The first few months of the war, therefore, awakened the whole *Kisan* movement into intensive anti-war activities. Rallies, Conferences, *Jathas* (cross-country marches), etc, to explain the imperialist character of the war, the attitude of the Congress towards it and the ways and means of translating the Congress declaration into practice were held all over Malabar. The whole volunteer movement got up on its feet and tirelessly worked to give a conscious form to the political ferment which was spreading in the country.

Elections to the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and to the Ramgarh Congress were a sure index of the extent to which the Kisan movement helped the growth of radicalism in Congress ranks. The elections held that year were the most keenly contested ones in the history of the Kerala Congress. Mill-owners and capitalists like Samuel Aaron, Shyamji Sundardas, etc., Jenmis and feudal reactionaries of all sorts, all vied with one another in shelling out money for organising the election campaign of the Gandhites and to defeat the Socialists. But, inspite of all this, the Socialists swept the polls and captured all the seats in those constituencies where Kisan Sabhas were strong. Equally sweeping and complete was the victory of the Gandhites in those constituencies where the Socialists had failed to organise the Kisan Sabha.

Kisan Sabha Movement Enters Cochin State

All this while, the Kisan movement was confined to Malabar, particularly to North Malabar. However, towards the

end of 1939 and the beginning of 1940, it began to spread to Cochin State, too.

It was described in Chapter II of this booklet how Cochin preceded Malabar in the matter of putting a Tenancy Act on to the Statute Book, which, however, did not emancipate the overwhelming majority of those tenants from the clutches of the Jenmis. A movement had been afoot for some time to amend this Act in such a way as to afford relief to the *Verumpattamdars* also. This movement, however, had been confined to a few leaders and had not become a mass movement.

The growth of the peasant movement in Malabar, the agitation for the amendment of the Malabar Tenancy Act and the appointment of the Malabar Tenancy Committee drew the attention of people in Cochin State. The movement for fixity of tenure and fair rent for *Verumpattamdars* began to attract wider and wider sections of the people. An organisation (Cochin Karshak Sabha) was created to co-ordinate this movement. A *jatha* was led from all parts of the State to Ernakulam, the capital of the State. The Government itself drafted a bill to confer fixity of tenure on *Verumpattamdars*. After three years of tedious procedure this bill has now been placed on the Statute Book.

It is true that this Act does not fix the rate of rent which the *Verumpattamdar* had to pay. The existing rents have all been sanctified by the provision in that after the passing of this Act, no increase or decrease in rents will be allowed. Fixity of tenure itself is, therefore, largely farcical, since an overwhelming majority of tenants have no other alternative than to surrender the land in face of the exorbitant rates of rent they have to pay.

It is, however, a great achievement, because this Act has now recognised the *Verumpattamdars* as a class of people whose interests are worthy of protection at the hands of the State. It has, therefore, put hope in the minds of peasants, that, if they go forward and organise themselves, they will be able to get their legitimate rights.

This movement is particularly remarkable since the founder and the present President (now in jail) of the Cochin Karshaka Sabha is a Gandhite while the Secretary (also in jail) is a Communist.

UNITY OF ALL CLASSES AGAINST ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE WAR

In April and May 1940, the war entered a new stage. The whole of Western Europe became a theatre of war and the Allies began to suffer successive reverses. This had its immediate reaction on the peasant movement. For one thing, imperialism started repression first against the revolutionary sections of the National movement and later against the entire National movement itself. In Malabar, naturally, it was on the Kisan Sabhas that the heavy hand of repression fell first. The President, Secretary and Volunteer Captain of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee were arrested. Other kisan leaders too were either arrested or had to go underground as warrants were issued against them. House searches for hunting down the underground leaders and for illegal literature became the order of the day.

Along with this tale of repression against the Kisan Movement was also the increasing misery of the people as a result of the war. Workers in many places were thrown out of work because the markets for their produce were closed on account of enemy occupation; other sections of workers and salaried employees found it difficult to live on their meagre wages because the cost of living was increasing daily; as for the peasants, the price of what they had to buy was out of all proportions to the slight increase in the price of their own produce. Added to this was the War Fund collection and other things which contributed to the misery of all sections of people.

The working class and kisan leaders from all taluks in Malabar, therefore, took the initiative in starting a movement not against the war as such but against the economic misery caused to all sections of the people by the war. A programme of people's demands was formulated which included, among other things :

1. Dearness allowance to all workers and salaried employees, in proportion to the rise in the cost of living.
2. Cheap grain shops in all towns and villages.
3. Stern action against officials who use coercion in collecting the War Fund.
4. Reasonable prices for agricultural produce.

A committee was set up to organise agitation for these

demands. Comrade K. P. R. Gopalan was elected the Secretary of the Committee. A campaign of collecting signatures to a memoradum setting forth the above demands was started. A series of meetings were held all over Malabar to popularise this. Enrolment of members to trade unions and kisan sabhas went on at a rapid pace. The movement seemed to get a new tempo.

THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 15, 1940

It was at this stage that the now well-known incidents of September 15, 1940 took place.

Working class and kisan leaders of Chirakkal taluk thought that the movement against the economic effects of the war had gone so far that time had come for a review of the whole work and for the chalking out of a new programme. They, therefore, fixed September 15, 1940 as the date on which the taluk Kisan Conference should be held. Keecheri, a village near Cannanore, was decided to be the venue of the Conference.

While arrangements for this conference were going on, the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee fixed the same day for a province-wide demonstration of protest against the August Order made by imperialism.

Two days before the Protest Day, the District Magistrate of Malabar issued an order under Section 144 prohibiting the Protest Day celebrations. Although this did not apply to the Chirakkal Taluk Kisan Conference for which arrangements were being made at Keecheri, the local Sub-magistrate issued an order prohibiting this as well.

Meetings were cancelled in many places. Gandhite Congressmen issued press statements advising people not to disobey the order. But it was disobeyed in 15 or 16 places all over Malabar resulting in the arrest of over 200 Congressmen on that day. Clashes between the authorities and demonstrators took place in many places but it was in three places that they took serious proportions.

The first was Morazha, village in Chirakkal taluk near Keecheri. Since the Conference was banned at Keecheri, its organisers changed it to the adjoining village of Morazha..

But the authorities followed suit and prohibited the meeting there too. About 2000 people—peasants and volunteers—were present and they decided to disobey the other. A clash ensued in which an Inspector of Police and two constables were killed. This led to the now well-known Morazha Rioting case in which Comrade K. P. R. Gopalan was the first accused.

The second was Mattanur village, in Kottayam taluk. All the Kisan organisers and volunteers in that locality were present there. The order was disobeyed. A clash took place and a constable was killed.

The third was Tellicherry town in Kottayam taluk where, too, there was a clash in which not the police but audience who suffered casualties. Two kisan volunteers—Abdulla and Chathukutty—were shot dead.

Kisans face Repression

These incidents naturally led to servere repression. Meetings and other forms of protest were prohibited. Police and M. S. P (Malabar Special Police)—a semi-military organisation formed at the time of the Moplah Rebellion of 1921 started a reign of terror in all the villages in Chirakkal and Kottayam taluks. Arrests and house-searches, beating and initimidation of innocent people became the order of the day. Some officials and their 'Yes'-men used this opportunity to extort money from innocent people. Almost all the top and middle leaders of the kisan movement had already been arrested before September 15 or were arrested in the first two weeks after it.

The reports of this repression were so widespread that the Gandhites also came out against it. Their daily organ, the *Mathrubhoomi,* protested against it, and demanded an enquiry into it while at the same time. it condemned those who were responsible for the violent clash of September 15. The Congress Working Committee condemned the disobedience of the prohibitory order on September 15, held the leftist Congressmen responsible for it, dissolved the Provincial Congress Committee and appointed an ad hoc committee to take its place. But one of the first resolutions of the ad hoc committee at its first meeting was to set up a committee to enquire into the reports

of repression received from Chirakkal and Kottayam taluks. This Committee, however, could not conduct the enquiry as planned because the District Magistrate prohibited the enquiry itself.

Though the *kisans* were thus denied the protection of the Congress, though most of their own leaders were removed from their midst, they did not lose heart; they refused to be cowed down by repression. They evolved new methods of keeping their organisation in tact, took great care in saving those of their own leaders who were not yet arrested, from the clutches of the police. The manner in which Comrade K. P. R. Gopalan was saved for 8 months which enabled him to give personal and direct guidance to the kisans and the volunteers in several villages in his own taluk not only kept the organisation intact but electrified the whole country. The kisans knew that, if only they surrender the person of K. P. R., most of the repressive acts of the authorities would come to an end but they preferred to keep and develop their organisation rather than save their own skins.

It was the heroism and resourcefulness of the peasants—men, women and children—of North Malabar in this period that enabled the Socialists of Malabar to build up an illegal organisation worthy of the Communist Party whose political and organisational leadership, as opposed to the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party, they had accepted towards the beginning of 1940. Not only were they able to build up a sound illegal apparatus, but, basing themselves upon this organisation, they could save the whole *kisan* cadre and *kisan* masses from demoralisation. Through illegal literature, through small but organised groups of *kisan* militants, through occasional illegal tours of underground leaders, all the former volunteers and local organisers of the *kisan* movement were kept in regular and systematic contact with one another. New leaders and organisers of the *kisan* movement were thrown up; old ones were steeled in the face of repression; the character of the whole *kisan* leadership underwent a basic transformation. The *kisans* of North Malabar had to go through severe ordeals in these months but they came out of it not only unscathed but also tremendously strengthened.

THE OFFENSIVE OF THE JENMIS

The *Jenmis* of North Malabar thought that repression against the *kisan* movement was so severe that they could do what they pleased with them. They had to yield, in 1938, 1939 when the Kisan Sabhas were strong, on many issues before the united will of the *kisans*. None of their feudal oppressive activities would be tolerated by the *kisans* when they were well-organised and led by their well-known and beloved leaders. But now that their leaders were in jail, their organisation had no freedom of speech, and assembly, they could take back whatever concessions they were forced to give in 1938, 1939 and 1940.

They, however, soon learned that they had made a grave mistake. The absence of their leaders did not smash the Kisan Sabhas, nor did the lack of civil liberties deprive them of ways and means to act in an organised manner. The moment the *Jenmis* started their offensive, the peasant hit back with devastating effect.

The first *Jenmi* to take up the cudgels against the *kisans* was Kalliat Nambiar. He demanded that all his tenants should immediately renew their leases which means that they should pay him "renewal fees." He expected to get a substantial amount from this and offered to the officials to pay part of it to the War Fund. In this way, he hoped to get the support from the officials in case it was needed to suppress any opposition. But the Kisan Sabha immediately took up the question, carried on a systematic campaign among the peasants, and put courage and confidence in their minds. The result was that every peasant individually expressed to the *jenmi* his inability to pay the renewal fees. The *Jenmi* saw that the *kisans* were so firm in their resolve that not to accede to their demand would cost him much more than what he might recover by recourse to long and tedious processes of law. He, therefore, gave up the proposal for collecting renewal fees.

The second *Jenmi* to do this was Karakattidathil Nayanar. His demand was not for payment of renewal fees, but for payment of all levies which he had to give up in 1938, 1939 and 1940 when the Kisan Sabha was strong. He coupled this with the threat that, unless these payments were made immediately, they would not be allowed to clear the jungle and bring the *punam* lands under cultivation. Hundreds of *kisan* families

were thus faced with the alternatives of either giving up all that they had gained two to three years ago or getting starved because no land was available for cultivation. The Kisan Sabha took up the question and mobilised all the peasants for their demands. The *kisans* resolved that they would cultivate the lands in spite of the *Jenmi's* ban. The *Jenmi* got the police and the M. S. P. to enforce his ban. But he found that the Kisans were so united in their organisation that repression would not crush them. He, therefore, adopted a policy of "conciliation plus repression". He decided to give concessions to a section of his tenants, thus driving a wedge into the ranks of the *kisans*. A section of the backward *kisans* (including some of the local leaders of the Kisan Sabha) were taken in by this and advised a policy of compromise with the *Jenmi*. The class conscious section found that opposing this compromise with the *Jenmi* would be directly playing into the hands of the enemy because it would disrupt the Kisan Sabha. They, therefore, agreed to the compromise but carried on a vigorous explanatory campaign among peasants to the effect that it was the organised strength of the Kisans that forced the *jenmi* to make concessions. The Kisan Sabha got new cadres out of this, vacillating elements were thrown out of the leadership and a new revolutionary leadership was thrown up.

This was a great lesson to the other *Jenmis* in the neighbourhood who were awaiting the result of this *jenmi's* offensive to adopt the same tactics against their own tenants. They all decided that it is better to give the *Punam* land for cultivation. An organised offensive of the *Jenmis* was thus averted by the organised counter-offensive of the kisans in one Firka and today the *kisans* of this Firka are in the vanguard of the kisan movement in Kerala.

THE KAYYUR INCIDENT

It was in this background that the now well-known Kayyur incident took place.

Kayyur is a village in the Hosdurg sub-taluk of Kasaragod taluk of South Canara district. Adjoining as it is to Chirakkal taluk of North Malabar, and having an overwhelming majority of Malayalam speaking people, this sub-taluk has the same

social, cultural and economic structure as prevails in Malabar. But it is administratively part of South Canara district. The tenancy law which is in force in Malabar is not applicable there because it is part of the South Canara district.

Although it is administratively part of Karnatak and, therefore, its land tenure is the usual *Ryotwari* system, it is in actual fact groaning under the *jenmi* system. The *Rayotwari* system of Karnatak, like the same system in other places, has a substantial percentage of cultivating owners. In Malabar, on the other hand, most of the land is owned by non-cultivating owners who take exorbitant rents from their tenants. The result is that the few *Jenmis* who possess all the land are considered as *ryots* and not landlords. Their tenants therefore, did not get any benefit from the Malabar Tenancy Act 1930. The rights of the *Jenmis* with regard to enhancement of rent, eviction of tenants, etc., were in no way restricted. The *jenmis* there could do what their brethren in Malabar could do before the Act of 1930.

The main demand of the Kisan Sabha for this area was that the provisions of the Malabar Tenancy Act should be made applicable to Hosdurg also. It was on this basis that the Kisan Sabha and Congress movements were built up in this area in 1938 and 1939 when Hosdurg was next only to Chirakkal and Kottayam taluks in regard to organisation. In spite of the fact that the *jenmis* were legally entitled to do what they pleased with their tenants, the organisation and struggles of the kisans forced them to make the same concessions as the *jenmis* of Malabar were making. The difference in the legal status of peasants in Hosdurg and Malabar was overcome, in fact, by the united will of the kisans.

After September 15, 1940, the *jenmis* here also tried to take back what they had lost on the previous two years. The method that they adopted was to harvest the crops sown by the tenants on the plea that they had evicted the former tenants and replaced them with new ones. The Kisan Sabha took steps to see that this does not take place. They sent volunteers to protect the crops of the *kisans* from the *jenmis'* men who came to harvest it and when the time came for harvesting, volunteers came to the help of the *kisans* in harvesting it themselves. This was in the first week of Februrry 1940.

This led to repression. The *jenmis* sought and received

the help of the police in intimidating the *kisans,* arresting some leaders, beating up others, etc. Police enquiries were going on into some of the incidents relating to harvesting by *kisans* with the help of the volunteers. In the course of one of these enquiries in the village of Kayyur, in the third week of March, one volunteer was severely beaten up by the police. To protest aginst general repressions and against this particular incident, a meeting was fixed for March 28 at Kayyur. A procession of 200 to 250 people—*kisans* and volunteers—was marching to the place of the meeting. A police constable who had visited the village more than once in connection with some of the enquiries came on the scene. The people got agitated and went to him. He considered discretion the better part of valour and joined the processionists in shouting slogans but at the first available opportunity extricated himself from the crowd and began to run. He was hotly pursued by the people. In the struggle between the infuriated people and the fleeing policeman the latter was killed.

This led to repression much more severe than in North Malabar after September 15, 1940. Arrests and beatings were being put into the shade by other forms of terror—a terror which is unexampled in the history of Kerala except in South Malabar in 1921/1922. Whole villages were deserted; men, women and children left their hearths and home and took shelter in the jungle. A correspondent of the *Mathurbhoomi,* the Gandhite daily, who reported one of the innumerable instances of high-handedness of the M. S. P. was punished for this "sin" by being beaten up by Jamedar. The *Jenmis* themselves found that, instead of extorting rent and other levies, from the kisans, this sort of repression held them united to such an extent that not even the usual rent could be collected. Individuals and organisations of all sorts joined in the demand for the immediate withdrawal of the M. S. P. from the area and the restoration of normal life.

Such severe repression was a blow to the *kisan* movement in this taluk from which it has not yet completely recovered. It was not so much the reign of repression which smashed the Kisan Sabha. It was the fact that all the leading *kisan* organisers of the taluk—60 of them were involved in this case and all of them were arrested at the first blow. Unlike Chirakkal

and Kottayam taluks where a large number of taluk level leaders and a majority of local organisers were saved from arrests and were thus able to move about and infuse confidence and courage in the people, Hosdurg taluk had a complete black-out of all its *kisan* leaders and militants.

It, however, does not mean that this was the end of the Kisan Sabha in that taluk. Peasants came to know that, in spite of repression the *kisan* movement was going on vigorously in all taluks. They were perhaps doubtful whether anything could be done in their taluk, but they had no doubt in their minds that the Kisan Sabha was their own movement which should be strengthened. They were afraid of giving shelter to under-ground leaders coming from outside; still they knew that they were working for the cause which is dear to their hearts. It was this loyalty to the Kisan Sabha and their leaders that stood in good stead in later months when attempts to rebuild the *kisan* movement could be made. Steady though slow progress is being made today by the *kisan* leaders and organisers.

Kisan Sabha Banned

The Government of Madras took this opportunity to deliver the final blow to the *kisan* movement in the province. It issued an order declaring the All-Malabar Peasants' Union and all its branches illegal organisations. The reason stated for this action of the Government was the Kayyur incident. It also stated that the Peasant Union was "communist controlled".

This ban did not, in fact, make much difference, because, since September 15, 1940 Kisan Sabhas were practically unable to function legally. What had been a *de facto* ban on kisan Sabhas became a *de jure* ban—that was all the difference which the Government order meant. The Kisans refused to be cowed down by the *de jure* ban just as they had not been crushed by the *de facto* ban.

Distress Relief Committees Champion the Cause of Kisans

Ten days after the Government communique declaring the Peasants' Union an illegal body, a terrible cyclone played havoc all over Kerala. This was followed, a fortnight later, by a

flood. Both these affected all parts of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore.

Damage to persons and property was terrible. In Malabar alone, according to Government's reports, over 160 people had died on account of this. The value of houses fallen, gardens and paddy fields destroyed, cattle and other animals killed came to several lakhs. An equal amount of damage was done to person and property in Cochin and Travancore.

The three governments in Kerala, the Congress and the Muslim League made enquiries into the extent of damage, gave publicity to their reports and made some arrangements for relief. Relief Funds were collected from Bombay, Madras and other cities outside Kerala and handed over to voluntary citizens' committees which supplemented the relief work done by the governments.

All this, however, did not touch the real problem of *kisan's* distress because it did not dare touch the all-important question of remission of rent and debt. The Government gave some partial relief in the matter of land revenue but did not insist that what it was prepared to do in respect of revenue should be done by the *jenmis* in respect of rent. Nor did it declare a moratorium on debts.

It was these and other demands that were formulated by the underground leaders of the kisan movement. They were appreciated by the *kisans* who responded to the call for agitation behind these demands. A series of meetings were held in all Taluks to ventilate these demands. Processions and demonstrations were led to local officials to ask them to move the Government along these lines. Out of this agitation were formed local Distress Relief Committees which became the rallying points in the countryside for all classes of the rural poor. These local committees were later co-ordinated into Taluk Committees and ultimately into District Committee in Malabar.

These Distress Relief Committees took up price control and other questions—in fact, all qestions which were of vital concern to the people. They, therefore, functioned in place of Kisan Sabhas in rural areas, while in towns they were united organisations of workers, employees and other sections of the people. They continued to function till very recently when Kisan

Sabhas themselves began to function and when Food Committees were formed to tackle the question of food.

IV. People's Mobilisation for People's War
Defend the Soviet Land

Within a few weeks after the All-Malabar Peasants' Union was banned, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union. The one country where the peasants had been freed not only from feudal landlords but also from money-lenders, profiteering merchants and other sections of capitalists, was attacked. News of gigantic battles between the Nazi hordes and the heroic army workers and peasants began to pour in every day.

These events naturally moved the *kisans* of Kerala as they moved all sections of toilers the world over. Not only did they feel concerned over the fate of the Socialist Fatherland but they got inspired by the heroic deeds of the Soviet soldier, the guerrillas, men and women, the worker in the Soviet factory, the peasant on the collective farm and all other sections of Soviet citizens who were sacrificing their all to defend their Fatherland.

Demonstrations of solidarity with the Soviet Union were, therefore, started all over the country. Trade Unions which were still legal, reading rooms and clubs which were functioning in several places, Distress Relief Committees, individual admirers and supporters of the Soviet Union—all these took the initiative in organising meetings and passing resolutions extending solidarity with the heroic Red Army and the Soviet Government. Newspaper articles, small pamphlets and booklets describing the different aspects of Soviet life began to appear. These activities began to crystallise themselves organisationally in Soviet Aid Committees which not only popularised the Soviet Union in the country but made collections for the Soviet Aid Fund.

Kisans all over Kerala naturally took part in all this. They, however, could not do it from their own platform since their organisation was illegal. In some places in the interior, even other organisations or individuals could not convene meetings because of repression. (In one or two places, purely Soviet Aid meetings were prohibited). But they overcame all this difficulty by holding "Guerrilla meetings" attended by 50 to 100

people. Evading police informers, the *kisans* would individually or in small groups collect at the time and place previously fixed, one comrade would speak for half an hour on the Soviet Union, the audience would perhaps put questions to him and then the meeting would disperse.

While this was possible where organisation had reached an advanced stage, the technique of group discussion was adopted to educate the people on the Soviet Union. One comrade would sit at a local tea-shop or other rendezvous of the public, read the day's newspapers, explain each item of the news, etc. This was most effective in removing many doubts created by all sorts of rumours deliberately spread by enemies of the Soviet Union and in correcting the impressions created by the wrong lead given by daily newspapers.

The result of all this was that, at a time when Hitler was boasting of his smashing victories, when the local enemies of the Soviet Union were spreading the 'news' that there was no more a Soviet Union, when learned men all over the country were crediting Hitler with superhuman powers of invincibility, the "illiterate" and "backward" *kisans* knew that Stalin and the Red Army were digging the grave for Hitler and his men. They also realised that digging Hitler's grave was in fact delivering a smashing blow to world imperialism.

DEFEND OUR MOTHERLAND

While all this was being done, there was no change in the attitude of the *kisans* to war as a whole. They still regarded the British war efforts as efforts of an imperialist power to carry on an imperialist war for the maitenance and extension of its imperialist interests. Opposition to war efforts in India, therefore, continued as before. The only difference was this: instead of the previous attitude of neutrality in the world war, even if India was declared independent, and an independent Government came to power, the new attitude was one of opposition to war efforts only so long as Britain continued her imperialistic hold on India.

But developments both in the international situation as well as in India led to a radical change in the whole attitude to war. The Anglo-Soviet Pact, the Atlantic Charter, the Moscow Con-

ference, etc., as well as the declarations of leading Soviet statesmen like Stalin, Molotov, Litvinov and Maisky showed that the entry of the Soviet Union into the war meant the biggest opportunity to the peoples of the world to unite among themselves and with the Soviet people and win freedom for all in the very course of winning the war. The Jap declaration of war against America and Britain as well as the lightning speed of the Jap advance in the Far East brought India herself into the orbit of Fascist invasion.

The release of Congress leaders and unequivocal statements of Congress leaders in favour of a people's defence of India against Fascist invasion, the new line of national unity for the formation of a National Government of National Defence popularised by the Communist Party of India, the visit of General Chiang kai-Sheik to India, etc., clearly indicated that it was not a question of defending Soviet land but one of forging national unity in India with a view to the effective defence of her own borders that was on the agenda. The path of national unity and national defence became marked out as the path of National Freedom

The resolution of the Patna Session of the All-India Students' Federation in January 1942, the resolution of the Nagpur Session (February 1942) of the Central Kisan Council, the speeches made by Communist leaders at the AICC, AITUC and other meetings—all helped in crystallising the attitude of the kisan movement in Kerala to the World War which had entered a new phase in 1941.

Briefly stated, it was summed up in the following statements :—

(1) That the war has, since the Nazi attack on U.S.S.R. become a People's War. It can be won only as a war of liberation all round. For any people to lose the war means themselves getting black fascist enslavement. On the other hand, for every people to unite themselves and with each other on the common issue of winning the war and to progressively strengthen national defence means strengthening themselves and marching forward to their own freedom. National freedom through the war, fascist enslavement outside it.

(2) That, since the Jap attack in the Far East, the war has directly become a war of defence of India.

(3) That, for these reasons, it is for the Indian people to mobilise themselves for the war of national defence against the Fascists.

(4) That such a mobilisation of the Indian people can be effective on a nationwide scale only by the declaration of Indian independence and the formation of a Provisional National Government in India.

(5) That, for the defence of the country and for compelling Britain to form a National Government in India, Congress-League unity should be built up on whose basis all-in National Unity should be brought about.

(6) That, for facilitating such a unity, Congress should accept the principle of self-determination for nationalities in India.

A countrywide campaign was carried on to popularise these basic ideas. Anti-Jap conferences, processions, rallies, etc. were held all over the country. Songs, games, dances of all sorts, pantomime plays, dramas, cartoons, in short every form of art was used to make this programme sink in the minds of the people.

Out of this agitation and propaganda arose the Anti-Jap Committees and volunteers. In every village where there was a nucleus of the *kisan* movement, an anti-Jap Committee was set up, volunteers were thrown up and trained, women and children were approached and organised, Jap agents were isolated and exposed. Activities of Distress Relief and Price Control Committees were co-ordinated and linked up with mass mobilisation for National Defence, National Government and the principle of self determination to nationalities.

It was this campaign which saved the province from the tragic incidents which followed the arrest of National leaders on August 9 in other provinces.

Not a single case of collective fines, not a single case of firing on the people, very few minor cases of sabotage, comparatively few number of lathi-charges, a series of meetings demanding release of national leaders and the starting of negotiations with the Congress for the formation of National Government, intensive campaign for the principle of self-determination of nationalities—this was the record of Kerala during the

National Crisis, thanks to the intensive anti-Jap campaign that was carried on since the beginning of the year.

Release our Leader—Legalise our Organisation

As part and parcel of this campaign for National Defence, a campaign was run for the release of all leaders of the people, for the legalisation of all people's organisations for the restoration of all civil liberties.

In the first period of the campaign, it was only the communists and those congressmen who worked in close collaboration with them who were in jail. It was the Communist Party and the Peasants' Union which were illegal. All Congressmen in Kerala who were not suspected to be sympathetic towards communists had come out in December 1941 and January 1942. And Congress was functioning legally. Naturally, therefore, in this period the release and legalisation campaign took the specific character of a campaign for the release of communist leaders and legalisation of the Communist Party and the Peasants' Union.

In the second period, not only communists but congressmen were also in jail. The Communist Party had been legalised but Congress was declared illegal. Although the ban on the All-Malabar Peasants' Union was not formlly lifted, units of the All-Kerala Kisan Sangham could function legally. In this period, therefore, the campaign was for the release of communist and congressmen from jail and for the legalisation of the Congress.

Reviewing the whole campaign, one finds three specific campaigns which united the whole country.

(1) The 'Release K. P. R. Gopalan' Campaign.

This was, in fact, the first mass campaign which united all sections of the people not only in Kerala but also throughout India. Although this was not effective in the sense of getting him released, it was sufficiently strong to get the death sentence passed on him commuted into one of transportation.

(2) 'Release the Kayyur Comrades' Campaign.

This also began as an all-parties' campaign with the Right-wing congressmen at the head of the Kayyur Defence Committee. This, however, could not be continued since, a week

after this committee was set up, the national crisis of August 9 began and the Congress leaders were arrested. Still, the Kisans and other sections of the people carried on a countrywide campaign, collected funds for filing the appeal before the Privy Council, tried every possible legal means to save them. They themselves wrote to Comrade Joshi that they were prepared to go in Suicide squads and sacrifice themselves at the altar of National Defence. But their death sentence had been confirmed and they were boldly and cheerfully awaiting the gallows.

(3) The third was the 'Release Gandhiji' campaign which was started soon after Gandhiji began his fast. This had united all sections of the people and broken the wall of distrust and suspicion which existed between the different sections of the patriots.

FEED THE PEOPLE

All this, however, was not a specific *kisan* programme. It was a national programme in which *kisans* as part of the people participated.

But the *kisans* have their own programme in this period of people's war—to 'grow more food'.

The Bitha Session of the All-India Kisan Sabha put that programme before the *kisans* in every province; the stoppage of export of rice from Burma on which people of Kerala lived for 4-5 months in the year underlined the importance of that programme. The absolute lack of rice from the markets which began to manifest itself in several places in Kerala as early as October 1942 put this as the single item on the agenda of the *kisan* movement.

It was to this that *kisan* leaders bestowed their attention when they were comparatively free to organise the Kisans.

In the last week of September a representative meeting of delegates from all taluks in Malabar as well as from Cochin and Travancore was held.

The meeting decided to form an All-Kerala Kisans Sangham with Comrade Narayanan Nair as Secretary. It appointed Taluk Organisers for every Taluk in Malabar and for Travancore and decided to take steps to get the Cochin Karshaka Sabha affiliated to the All-Kerala Kisan Sangham which itself was to be affiliated to A.I.K.S.

The main item on the agenda of the Sangham was how to implement the Bitha programme of the A.I.K.S. with regard to the 'Grow more food' campaign Ultimately it came to the conclusion that it should approach the Government with concrete proposals to be taken immediately. Local units of the Kisan Sanghams should, on their part, approach local *jenmis* and others and ask them to co-operate with the Sangham in making the programme of 'Grow More Food' a success.

The Sangham, therefore, submited a memorandum to the Government of Madras suggesting that immediate effect be given to the majority report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee. Now the majority report was signed by all the members representing the *jenmis* and the *kanamdars* (the minority being supporters of the Kisan sabha) and were, therefore, agreeable to every section of landed interests. These recommendations included, among other things, one to the effect that the Collector should be empowered to assign any plot of waste land which was in possession of *Jenmis* to any cultivator and that, in such cases, the cultivator need not pay any rent for 5 years, nor should he be liable to eviction under any circumstances.

The Government, however, did not agree to this. It was not prepared to implement a unanimous report of the Tenancy Committee even when it was necessary to increase the quantity of food available for the people in these times of food scarcity.

But the local units of the Sangham began to work on their own to move the local *jenmis* and other sections of the people.

They asked the *jenmis* to give waste land for cultivation, to make necessary concessions to tenants with respect to payments, to see that stocks of foodgrains were not allowed to go out of the locality unless and until the local requirements were satisfied.

They asked the local merchants to take a patriotic view of things, refuse to be a party to hoarding of grain and to sell necessaries at a reasonable rate of profit. They came forward with programmes of how to distribute the things that were available to all the people in the locality and organise such distribution. They took a census of the local needs of the people and approached the authorities with demands for adequate supply of necessaries.

In this work the Kisan Sangham is not alone, because it

is not done in the sole interests of *kisans*. Production and distribution of food and other daily necessaries are equally in the interests of the *jenmis*, the moneylenders, the middle class and the peasants.

All these sections of the people are, therefore, co-operating in forming Food Committees, organising Food Volunteers and otherwise taking effective steps to tide over the crisis.

The *jenmis* too have begun to see that the policy of insisting on their pound of flesh is, in reality, one of killing the hen that lays the golden eggs. In several villages therefore, they have agreed to make the concessions as demanded by the Kisan Sangham.

While the programme of growing and properly distributing food is thus building the widest possible unity in the village, it is the Kisan Sangham units that play that most vital role in this village unity. Not only do they represent the most numerous section of the people in the village but are also the best organised section. Kisan Sabhas, therefore, are growing into the organs which represent and lead the entire people of the village.

THE QUESTION OF LAND TENURE IN MALABAR

Minute of Dissent to the Kullikrishna Menon Committee Report on Malabar Tenancy Reforms, 1937

INTRODUCTION

I would have been extremely happy if I could sign the report without striking a discordant note. But I find that the gulf which separates me from my colleagues is so wide that avoiding this, my separate note, would be shirking my duty to the public.

My colleagues have confined themselves to the problems of immddiate importance but have avoided the basic question of land teunre. Whether landlordism as an institution serves any useful social function or whether it is parasitic in nature, whether its continuance is a necessity for society at large, or whether it should be ended with or without compensation, these basic questions of land tenure have been omitted. They proceed on the basis of the existence of landlordism as a fact and the necessity of any legislation, within the four corners of that institution alone as practical politics. That explains why, instead of expressing itself clearly on it, the majority report simply gives a brief description of the various theories about the origin and nature of the several interests held by the *jenmis,* intermediaries and cultivators. I propose to address myself to these basic questions not because they come strictly within the purview of the terms of reference to the committee, but because an explanation of my viewpoint on the basic questions will help in clarifying the reasons for the changes which I set forth at the end to the concrete proposals made by the committee in Chapters VI to XIV. I also feel that in a world of rapid changes where old systems and institutions are tottering under the irresistible impact of new social forces, where basic questions stare you in the face, demanding rational solutions, avoiding them will simply add to the complications already existing.

The following are, in my opinion, the basic questions

whose answers should form the foundations for all proposals of tenancy legislation :

1. Whether the *jenmis*, in their present form, existed before the British occupation of Malabar.

2. Whether the social, economic, political and other changes brought about in Malabar after the advent of the British justify the creation of *jenmis* in their present form, if answer to (1) is in the negative or its abolition if the answer is in the affirmative.

3. How far the existence of landlordism as an institution (apart from its abuses) leads to the misery of the people of Malabar described in Chapter IV of the Report.

4. Whether, having regard to the needs of social progress, landlordism as an institution should be allowed to continue in any form.

5. What should be the basic nature of agricultural economy obtaining in Malabar ?

After expressing myself on these, I shall briefly explain my difference with the majority on Chapters VI to XIV.

Nature of Janmam Property in the Pre-British Days

I do not presume to have made any original research into the historical aspect of land tenure in Malabar. As every other student of the subject, I have to fall back upon the brilliant contributions of a host of witnesses from Mr. Logan to Sir Charles Turner. And as the majority report itself states, no fresh evidence has been collected during the course of the labours of the present committee. But I belive that if a proper outlook is taken on the subject, the evidence already collected is sufficient to show that *janmam* right, in the present form, and with its present incidents, did not obtain in early days.

Now, what is the proper outlook that should be taken ? I feel that most witnesses on either side have taken certain things for granted which are quite unwarranted so far as society in these days is concerned. The most important of these is that there was a definite written code of laws which was enforced by a specific authority. This is obviously a false assumption. As in all medieval societies it was custom and

not law which ruled the country. The very power of custom even in these days in those fields of social activity which are yet unaffected by British rule or British culture shows the enormous lengths to which custom can go in regulating the social relationship of man in a medieval country. I do not think anybody can quarrel with Mr. Logan when he says : "If it were necessary to sum up in one word the law of the country as it stood before the Muhammadan invasion, and British occupation, that would undoubtedly be the word custom".

To expect that documents of these days would specifically state the exact relationship between landlord and tenant, would be the greatest mistake. To argue that because the *janmis* are not able to produce documents showing their right to *janmam* property, they had no right whatever in early days would be as absurd as to argue that because the tenant's rights to perpetual and undisturbed enjoyment of the leased land is not mentioned in the documents, he can be evicted at the sweet will of the *janmi*. The fact of the matter is that the rights of both were well defined by custom and accepted universally as a matter of course. We have therefore to fall back upon not any written documents, but on custom.

If this fundamental fact is clearly borne in mind, there will be no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that, whatever other incidents it had, landlords in Malabar had not the right to arbitary eviction and arbitary increase of rents with which it has been clothed by British jurists. Whatever the theoretical position, it is undeniable that eviction was most uncommon in practice, even Sir Charles Turner admits that :

"Although a right of occupancy was then unknown, to the law of Malabar, it practically, to some extent, existed".

For various reasons, like the abundance of cultivable land, no *janmi* could afford to evict a tenant except for non-payment of rent or on other grounds which society at large would justify as sufficient for eviction. Likewise was it the case in respect of rents. Whether or not the *janmi* had the theoretical right to enhance the rent, he could not afford to raise it above a certain customary rate. Rack-renting and arbitracy eviction were not in practice, the incidents of *janmam* right. Even to-day, good *janmis* (i.e., those *janmis* who consider themselves above the modern notions of social habits and who would like

to have the old customs maintained in their pristine glory) consider it beneath their dignity to rack-rent or arbitrarily evict their tenants. I therefore think that *janmam,* as understood according to ancient custom, is different from *janmam,* as defined by British jurists.

The same fact may be stated in another way. Right of private property as an economic institution is a modern conception. What obtained in medieval days was not a legal relationship between one individual and another, but a social relationship of members of a social organism. If follows from this that right to property (either of the *janmi* or the *kanamdar*) was a right on society which had along with it a corresponding obligation to society. While society would scrupulously protest the rights, it would jealously guard itself against violations of obligations. The *jenmis* who arbitrarily evicted or otherwise oppressed a tenant would as surely be dealt with by society as the tenant who did not pay the customary rent or pay the customary allegience to the *jenmi*. When custom as law and society as its guardian gave place to written code and modern courts, the *janmis,* as the stronger party, were not only relieved of thier obligations but as Sir T. V. Madhava Rao brilliantly sums up :

"Those causes which prevent the dispossession of landed property and which concentrate landed property, and which tie it up in hands of the *jenmis* have been too rigidly maintained or enforced by the courts. A strictness or rigidity has been imparted to them which they formerly did not possess".

If certain new incidents of *janmam* right were added on by British jurists to the rights already existing according to the old customary law, be certain other incidents which obtained as per custom were put an end to by it. The *jenmi* of old (i.e., pre-British days) was not a mere landlord ; his only privilege was not receiving rent. He was the centre of a system around whom the people of the locality gathered to regulate their social conduct. He collected around him a host of scholars who provided the cultural centre for the whole society. That centre itself functioed as the place wherefrom justice was meted out to the people. He was also the agent of the Raja or Zamorin (whatever it may be) in the matter of collecting an army for the purpose of war. He was, in short, not a rent-receiving landlord, but the head of a social system based on feudal relationship

which regulated not only the economic but social, political and cultural life of man. He was more of a *Naduvazhi* or *Desavazhi* than a landlord.

What the British occupation of Malabar did was to wrest from the *jenmis* all such powers and privileges. The *jenmi* was no more to act as the agent of the Raja or Maharaja ; the redivision of the country into revenue areas and paid officers to look after their affairs placed the whole administrative system on an entirely new footing and the *jenmi* had no place in it, except that of an influential man of the locality. His hold on the people was slowly but surely being destroyed by modern notions of social relationship. The western culture based on individual liberty and democratic relationship between man and man replaced the ancient native culture which had the *jenmi's* small selected circle of scholars as its nucleus. All this was not completed in a day. It could not be done even in a few years' time. Much of it remains yet to be done. But the British advent laid the foundation for these things. And no power on earth could stop its uniterrupted operation which would result in the complete elimination of the *jenmi* from the social and cultural scheme of things. Here is a higher and more advaned form of society and its perfected machinery of state and culture acting as the tool of history in destroving a decadent social system and a dead or dying culture. Feudal society and medieval culture cannot for long resist the triumphant march of capitalist society and modern culture.

Thus, in short, the British rule made a two-fold change in land tenure. (1) It took away certain rights and privileges of the *jenmi* which were social, politicial and cultural in character. (2) It gave him new unrestricted rights on the landed property held by him. That is, from a relationship based on status, land tenure was turned into one of contract. The advocates of different interests forget this fundamental fact when they argue that their right in the soil is admitted by history. A relationship based on contract, however natural to us in modern days, was unthinkable in those days.

Accustomed as we are to modern conceptions of property, we are often likely to be misled into the belief that the property in its present form existed at all times, even as we are likely to be misled into the belief that law, as opposed to custom,

ruled our mutual relationships at all times. This assumption accounts for the fallacious arguments on the existence of private property in land in Malabar from very early days. When the advocates of the interests of the *jenmis* argue that Malabar was never a land of state ownership of land, they may or may not be right; but when they go a step further and say that therefore all land in Malabar was private property, over which the predecessors of the present-day *jenmis* had an unrestricted right, they are obviously forgetting the basic principles of the history of human development. They forget the irrefutable fact that property, like other social institutions, is ever-changing, over-developing. Property, or the laws which govern its possession and use, is as much prone to changes as any other social institution. It did not practically exist in early days, but it arose at a particular stage in the history of social development and began to develop with society. I do not propose to refer to the writings of the various historians, economists and sociologists in this regard. I would, however, like to quote the following extracts from "Wealth", by Edwin Cannan, Emeritus Professor of Economics in the University of London, which summarises the development of property in land :—

"The idea of property in land does not appear to come quite so early. Primitive mankind was in much the same relation to the land that mankind at present is in relation to the sea. The men were few, the land was big; the number of men using the land was not large enough to make them any appreciable inconvenience to one another. But when numbers grew, each other began to feel itself menaced by and therefore to resent the appearance of strangers in the district over which they were accustomed to roam, and which they had accustomed themselves to call 'their' hunting grounds.

"In regard to land, however, there was much less possibility of sympathy from disinterested persons than in regard to movables. The dispute involved two whole groups, one of which was interested in making, and the other in resisting the invasion. Opinion outside these two groups would be distant (having regard to the facilities of communication) and probably ill-informed, especially if languages differed. Moreover, the causes of disputes were not so simple in themselves. There is not likely to be much difficult in ordinary cases in deciding who is the per-

son usually in the habit of carrying a particular bow or spear or of occupying a particular cave or house. But there may easily be great difficulty in deciding whether the one or the other group is the one which usualy hunts in some particular valley or on some particular mountain side. Quarrels were frequent and could not be settled by a trail of forces between the two interested groups. If the victory of one side was decisive, it often led to some sort of incorporation of the vanquished which led to the amalgamation of the two territories into one so that now a larger teritory would be held under one authority against all invaders. When two territories were amalgamated into one, it would not necessarily or probably follow that the whole territory would be one property; much more often the old line of demarcation would be preserved or in some cases, it would even happen that entirely new divisions of the territory might be made for its convenient use by several groups, each under a subordinate authority or in some way united together and divided from the rest. The land held by each of these groups is 'their' in a somewhat different sense from that in which the land of all the groups now under one authority is **'theirs'**. It is their property while the whole land is their country or territory.

"It was long before the difference between property in land and territory was grasped. It is scarcely grasped at the present time in many minds when acquisition of territory by a sovereign state is in question. But in practice the distinction has been recognized over since conquest or other acquistion of territory ceased to carry with it the entire dispossession of the properties of the land annexed.

"While the territories of small groups, defined only by force of arms against external aggression, were thus being transformed into collective property recognized by the governing authority of the larger territory of which they now formed a part, the idea of property in land was gaining strength in another direction, owing to changes within the areas occupied by the small groups. The site of a house with some small curtilage must necessarily by subject to the same idea as the house itself, so far as the 'right' to undisturbed occuption is concerned. It is practically difficult to differentiate the house and its site.

"So people early began to regard the homesteads as 'theirs' and to be supported by the authority of the group in maintaining their position not only against outsiders but even against other members of the same group. But at first there could be no similar ideas with regard to the rest of the land of the group; land being plentiful and men few, a single person or family would not be likely to claim a particular stretch of land as land which it had occupied, and which, therefore, should not be touched by others. In search of game every man would desire to roam over the whole of the land wherever the quarry happened to take him. So too pastoral people would turn out their flocks and heards with the idea that they should all be able to go where they would in search of pasture. Even arable cultivation could be carried on in common by groups consisting of moderate number of persons without any very great problem of organization being encountered. As time went on, however, it was found practically convenient to allow permanent occupation of plots of land for arable purposes by individuals and their heirs, and eventually, even the pasture was divided up with the small exceptions which we see in the commons of the present day".

One need not subscribe to every detail of what Professor Cannan says, but all students of the development of economic institutions must admit that property (much less individual and private property) did not exist in early days; that property in land arose much later; that property in other things and the character of property itself is changing with changes in the environment of man. It is this general statement of a historical fact to which I want to draw attention. If this is borne in mind, much that is otherwise inexplicable would become quite clear. The conflicting theories deduced by various writers from seemingly contradictory facts become explicable. That, whereas in most documents collected by research students on Malabar Land Tenures, the character of the property is not mentioned, there are certain of them which go to show, as says the Fifth Report, that "the lands in general appear to have constituted a clear private property, more ancient and probably more perfect than that of England" becomes no more a contradiction when it is remembered that we are dealing with a society developing through the course of centuries; that gradually the

institution of private property is developing in the impact of modern social forces; and that it begins to take deep roots in the people and expreses itself in various ways. Although it was the advent of the British that became the main agent of this development in its modern and perfected form, it should be remembered that the same forces which operated in Britain since Renaissance, operated in Malabar also, though in a weak and undeveloped form. The forces which gave rise to Reformation, which sent the Pilgrim Fathers to foreign countries, and colonized America and established commercial contacts with India, which waged a relentless struggle against despotism, and wrested political power for the rising middle-class, which carried out the great industrial revolution and changed the whole face of the earth, did operate in Malabar although not in the same form and to the same intensity as in the case of property and as that on land. A rigidity is gradually given to social relationship which was unheard of before. People who would rest content with custom and pledged work begin to emphasize their right not only on the soil but on everything above and below it, including snakes, stones, thorns and caves, as is seen in certain old documents collected by Mr. Logan. When and how this change was brought about, why it had to wait for the British to come before it had completed—these and other allied questions are irrelevant for the moment. What I want to emphasize is that land tenure is not a static phenomenon but an organic institution of a dynamic society.

It should be treated as such. We cannot treat it away from its social backgound and hang it in the air. The forces which lie behind it at this stage must be closely studied if we want to arrive at correct conclustions.

I, therefore, approach the problem, not from a legalist point of view, but from a sociological one. It is not the legality or otherwise of the existing right of present-day *jenmis* which I am interested in, but the forces which gave rise to it and the forces that work behind it now. That, I feel, would go a long way in the solution of their problem. Because, even if innovations have been made by British Courts, the restoration of the *kanamdar* to his old position is unthinkable to-day, not because it would deprive the *jenmi* of his existing rights, but because it would not solve a single problem among the many which

have arisen during the last century and a half. I would now address myself to the task of examining these new problems which give the clue to a rational solution of the question of land tenure in Malabar.

Effects of British Occupation on the Economy of Malabar

I have already stated in brief outline how the social and cultural changes brought about by the advent of the British entrenched landlordism in full and unrestricted mastery over agricultural land in Malabar. But that is not the only result of the advent of the British; it brought about a veritable revolution in the economy of the whole country. It has affected every department of man's activity in India and a consideration of the same is intimately connected with an examination of Land Tenure.

The Indian Industrial Commission of 1916-18 in their Report (Chapter I) after stating that:

> "The coming of the railway and steamship, the opening of the Suez canal, and the extension of peace and security by the growth of British power have brought about very great changes",

and describing the state of things in "India before Railways" (Paragraph 3), examine in what way the state of affairs has been modified.

About *Economic changes in rural areas* they say:—

> "Turning in the first place to the rural areas, we find an increasing degree of local specialization in particular crops, especially in those grown for export. Cotton is now no longer planted in small patches in almost every village where conditions are not absolutely prohibitive, but is concentrated in areas which are specially adapted to its various types. The dry plains of Central and Western India are admirably suited to a short-stapled but prolific kind; while the canal fed zone of the Punjab, the United Provinces and Sind are producing an increasing quantity

of large-stapled types which are also grown in the retentive soil and moist climate of Gujarat and the well-irrigated areas in Madras. The peculiarly favourable climate of Bengal has tempted the ryots to extend their jute cultivation often at the expense of their foodstuffs, while sugar cane is disappearing from tracts not specially suited for it. A visible sign of this movement may be seen in the abandoned stone-cane mills lying near villages in arid plains in central India which now prefer to keep their scanty stores of water for other crops and pay for their sugar by the sale of their cotton. The people have been led to make this change by the cheap railway and steamer transport and by the construction of roads, which while facilitating the introduction of foreign imports, also render available to the farmer in his distant and landlocked village a large share of the price offered by far-off nations for articles which once merely supplied the needs of Indian rural life. Markets have sprung up on or near the railway, where the foreign exporters or the larger Indian collecting firms have their agencies; and the ryot is now not far behind in his knowledge of the fluctuations in the world prices of the principal crops which he grows.

"Improved means of communications have had another important effect in altering the nature of the famines to which so large a part of India is exposed and in lessening their disastrous results.

The development of irrigation and the improvement of agriculture enable the conutry in a normal year to grow a much larger quantitv of foodstuffs than before, and it is now possible, thanks to the railways, to divert supplies from the export trade to the faminestricken tracts. Famine now connotes not so much a scarcity of entire absence of food as high prices and a lack of employment in the affected areas. The terrible calamities which from time to time depopulated wide stretches of the country need no longer be feared. The problem of relief has been scientifically studied, and a system worked out which can be put into operation as soon as the recognized signals of the approaching distress are apparent. Failure of the rains must always mean privation and loss of life. It is clear that,

if the basis of employment also be widened, crop failures will lose much of the severity of their effects, and the extension of industries, in as great a variety as circumstances will permit, will do more than anything to secure the economic stability of the labouring classes.

Scarcity of Capital for Agriculture

"The capital in the hands of country traders has proved insufficient to finance the ordinary movements of the crops and the seasonal calls for accomodation from the main financial centres are constantly increasing. This lack of available capital is one cause of the high rates that the ryot has to pay for the ready money which he needs buy seed and to meet the expenses of cultivation. On the other hand, money is largely invested in the purchase of landed property, the price of which has risen to very high figures in many parts of the country. Proprietors freely spend their savings from current income on the improvement of land in their own cultivation, but loans from private persons are obtainable as a rule only on terms quite disproportionate to the value of the improvements. These are also most invariably made on land in the investor's own possession, not in that of his tenants. The magnificent irrigation system of India, the drainage works of Bengal, and the relatively small amount that has been advanced by Government as improvement loans are almost the only instances where public funds have been definitely devoted to this end. The demand for capital for land improvement had hitherto perhaps been modest but the stimulus afforded by the various provincial Agricultural and Industrial Departments, especially in Madras, has led to the introduction on a small, but rapidly increasing scale of modern appliances to replace labour, improve cultivation ; something has been done by the co-operative movement, initiated and fostered throughout by Government action, and far more may be hoped from it in the future. But the no less urgent necessity if relieving the ryot from the enormous load of debt, with which he has been burdened by the dearness of agricultural capital, the necessity of meeting periodical demands of rent, and his local habits, has hitherto been met only to a very small extent by co-operative organization.

Labour and Wages in India

"It is impossible to pass from this brief sketch of the agricultural position without some allusion to the rise in the level of wages and the growing scarcity of labour in most parts of the country. The rise in the cost of labour is due mainly to the increased demand but in some places to the decline in the labouring population consequent on the ravages of plague during the past twenty years and on famine in the last decade of the nineteenth century, although we do not forget that the population as a whole increased by some twenty millions between 1901 and 1911. This period of distress was followed by a sequence of more favourable seasons combined with higher world-prices. This prosperity in its turn led to greater expenditure by Government, railway companies, and private enterprise, necessitating increased employment. Simultaneously, the increase in world-prices which became effective in India owing to the rapid extension of communications, brought the cultivator some money, and the consequent rise in the cost of living furnished an additional argument to the labourer in his claim for higher wages. This tells heavily on those sections of the population which are not benefited by increased agricultural and industrial production, and has accentuated the tendency of the village artisan to migrate to the towns where better pay is obtainable."

Middleman and the Export Trade

"The export trade from country districts generally suffers from the existence of an undue number of middlemen, who intercept a large share of the profits. The reasons for this are various. In the first place, it must be remembered that a great number of Indian cultivators are indebted to a class of traders who not only lend money, but lend, purchase and sell grain, and sell articles as cloth, salt and oil to small consumers. The position of a peasant farmer, with grains, seeds or cotton to sell. and at the same time heavily indebted to his only possible purchaser eventually prevents him from obtaining a fair market price for this crop. Even where the farmer is not burdened by debt his business with the dealer is still very often on a per contra basis,

his purchases and sales being alike reckoned in cash in the dealer's books at a rate which is always known to the customer at the time. The farmer, owing partly to poverty and partly to the extreme subdivision of land, is very often a producer on so small a scale that it is practically impossible for him to take all his crop to the larger markets, where he can sell at current market rates to the agents of the bigger firms. This is especially the case in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and the United Provinces. Here most of the articles for export are purchased from local dealers by the exporting agencies. The larger markets are usually frequented by an unnecessary number of brokers and touts; and there are almost always one or more intermediaries between the purchaser who moves the grain to the point of consumption or export and the producer or other persons who actually bring the crop into the markets. The market rules and organization do not usually provide means for preventing or punishing fraudulent trade methods: While the multiplicity of the local weights and measures in many cases it must be admitted the natural desire of the seller not to be the only person defrauded, contribute still further to an undesirable state of affairs. Complaints are frequent but all parties accept what appears to them the inevitable But, where a better organization has been established the ryots thoroughly appreciate the benefit."

Effects of Imports

"Such are some of the far-reaching effects of the increased flow of exports from India. The greater number and variety of imports have also had their influence though in a less marked degree. Vessels and implements of iron, brass and copper are now commonly used in vilages and their price is within the reach of almost all classes. Petty articles of domestic use or personal ornament, such as scissors mirrors, bangles, and the thousand and one cheap and glittering trifles with which the rural huckster decks his stall, have poured in from abroad. Drugs and patent medecines of all kinds, Indian and foreign, command a ready sale. Sewing machines are found nearly everywhere, and bicycles are ever in increasing demand.

"The effect on small industries in India has been considerable, but has not always been in the same direction. The imports of brass sheets, for example, has reduced the demand for the services of the brass founder, but has greatly extended the business of the maker of brass hollow-ware. Cheaper iron obtainable inconvenient sections has helped the cultivator to buy more and better carts, and diminished the cost of many of his indigenous implements. The position of the village artisans is changing. The tendency is for them to lose their status as village servants, paid by the dues of the village community, and to become more and more ordinary artisans, who compete freely among themselves for custom; in some cases, notably that of the village leather-worker, they are disappearing under the conpetition of organized industries. The influx of mill-made piece-goods not only of foreign, but of Indian manufacture had before the war cheapened the price of cloth in comparison with other commodities and had enormously extended its use by the poorer classes but had at the same time prejudicially affected the communities of weavers scattered over the country in the towns and larger villages. In India a far greater degree of resistance has been offered by the handloom to the aggressions of the factory than in England. This is attributable to the greater number of specialized types of cloths of which slow-moving Indian custom decrease the use; to the fact that the demand for many of these is on so small a scale, while the types themselves are so special as to render it difficult for the power-looms to produce them at a profit: to the faithfulness of the weavers as a caste to their hereditary trade, and their unwillingness, especially in the smaller towns, to take up factory work; and to a less extent to the money locked up, on a vicious system, it is true, in the financing of the weaver by his patron and incubus, the money-lending cloth-merchant."

Standard of Living Affected by Imports

"The effect of the use of imported and factory-made aricles on the standard of comfort of the rural population has been however small. The poverty of the Indian peasant precludes most novel forms of expenditure while lack of education and the prescriptions of custom make him slow to accept any

innovations in his food or clothing or in the habit of his daily life. But the enormously extended use of cotton cloth, especially of the finer counts, of woollen clothing, the introduction of kerosene oil, matches, collapsible umbrellas, and of better and cheaper cutlery and soap have added appresiably to the comforts of the people.

"The increase of exports and imports has facilitated the provision of funds for communications, the existence of these communications has itself had an educative effect on the people, had gradually helped to render labour more fluid and incidentally more costly and has added to the sense of political unity among the more educated classes".

The extracts given above go unmistakably to show that the changes brought about in the rural economy of India are fundamental; that, in place of the indigenous and medieval economy based or the close harmony between agriculture and cottage industries, a new economy was built upon the basis of a dominant foreign industry to which the whole Indian economy was subjected both as a cheap source of raw material as well a vast market for finished products; that, though the feudal relationship between the various component parts of society was maintained in form (and virtually strengthened as in the case of the intensification of the power of the landlords which we have already observed), Indian economy was, in fact, placed under the subjection of a capitalist system which dominated over feudalism itself. Although modern industries did not spring up in India, although landlordism was not abolished in form, it was the power which smashed feudalism and built up the huge industrial undertakings in other countries that began to control Indian economy. The very landlords created or maintained by British rule came under the way of capital, the very agriculture became a handmaid of industry, with this difference that this capital which controlled feudalism and this industry which dominated over agriculture were foreign.

Here is the great contradiction in history that while the British power destroyed feudalism in its social, political and cultural aspects, it installed it (where it did not exist) and strengthened it (where it existed) in its legal aspects; that, while the British administrative system dethroned the political

power of the native feudal nobility, while it supplanted the old medieval culture with its own culture, while it subjected the native feudalism to its economic domination, it strengthened the landlords who should naturally have been completely done away with by it. To go into the causes thereof is not my purpose here. But I must draw attention to the fact that it has affected our economy to a great extent.

According to the statistics collected by the committee, the *jenmis* had under their direct cultivation, 171,662 acres of land out of a total of 1,506,992 acres of cultivated land in Malabar in *fasli* 1347. This means that they have leased out 1,335,327 acres to tenants under them. It is difficult to find out how much they receive out of this as rent. Assuming, however (as the Majority Report shows), that the average yield of paddy lands is 150 *paras* per acre, and that the average yield per acre of coconat garden is Rs.30 worth of nuts, assuming again that the *janmi* gets rents at rates prescribed under the present Act, the *janmis* in Malabar would be getting roughly Rs. 20 lakhs from wet coconut garden lands (352,132 acres in *fasli* 1347 at Rs. 6 per acre) Rs. 225 lakhs from wet land (561,550 acres in *fasli* 1347 at Rs. 40 per acre), another Rs. 63 lakhs on dry land (at three times the assessment on dry land which is, in *fasli* 1347, Rs. 21 lakhs), the total amount on leased land would come to Rs. 308 lakhs. Deducting out of this Rs. 45.5 lakhs for revenue (which is the amount for *fasli* 1347) the *janmis* get a net rent of Rs. 252.5 lakhs or about Rs. $2\frac{1}{2}$ crores. I am conscious of the inaccuracies in these calculations, but since these are based on the existing provisions in the Act, and since rents actually collected are higher than at this rate, they can be taken as roughly correct. Assuming, however, that this is not correct and the actual rent collected is only Rs. 2 crores, it does not affect my arguments.

If the payment of this amount goes in hand with some social service rendered by the landlords as a class, it would be quite justified. That was the explanation for payments made in medieval days. That is also the justification for Rs. 45 lakhs paid by the cultivators into the Government coffers as land revenue. In the medieval days landlordism was a social, political and cultural institution, as well as economic. But

shorn of all these functions, the Malabar *jenmis* of today are only dead corpse of their own forefathers; and it is this dead corpse that has given added importance to it. But does it justify its economic importance by performing any useful function in that sphere as does the entrepreneur in modern capitalist industry? Does it provide capital, either short-term or long-term, to the cultivator who needs it? Does it construct and improve irrigation sources and prevent the preventable drought? Does it carry on any research work to make agriculture up-to-date and scientific? Does it do anything towards organizing the marketing of agricultural produce and thereby see to it that the cultivator gets a fair value for his produce? Does it organize or encourage cottage industries so as to provide some subsidiary occupation to the cultivator? In short, if, by an act of legislature, the *jenmis* of Malabar are today deprived of this Rs. 2½ crores which they get as rent, will the effect be similar to that on the industry if the entrepreneur is, by an act of legislation, suddenly removed and not replaced by a rational alternative system? The answer to the questions raised above would show sufficiently well that landlordism does not justify itself economically; that it gets its rent for no service rendered to society, that therefore it is parasitic in nature, and that any scheme of economic planning should include its abolition.

Abolition of Landlordism—A Pre-condition for Economic Planning

The appropriation by the *jenmis* of Malabar, as a class, of Rs. 2½ crores out of the annual agricultural production of the country without any return to the cultivator; this tribute which he pays to this decadent class, is the core of rural economy in Malabar. How does its abolition help our economy to improve itself and develop on up-to-date lines? In other words, how would the tiller of the soil stand to gain if he is allowed, instead of the *jenmi*. to appropriate this Rs. 2½ crores?

Lack of finance is notoriously the basic factor which keeps our agriculture so backward. When the cultivator does not get sufficient returns to maintain himself and his family at a reasonable minimum standard of living, he cannot be expected to invest money on improved methods of cultivation.

Nor is he in a position to put something by for use in lean years. He is, therefore, not only obliged to keep his cultivation at a very backward stage but to rely on the rural money-lender for credit. Several experts have gone into the question of agricultural improvement and the solution of the problem of rural-indebtedness. Excellent schemes have been put forward, but unfortunately all of them lack the essential prerequisite to carry it through. What is the use of carrying on research into the possibilities of agriculture and giving wide publicity to new attractive schemes, unless the majority of cultivators who should apply them have the wherewithal to do so? And what is the use of scaling down agrarian debts unless the debtor-peasant is in a position to pay it off even after its being scaled down? And, finally, what is the use of Co-operative Societies and Land Mortage Banks unless the cultivator who is supposed to benefit by it is allowed to have sufficient resources to offer as security? All the grandiose schemes of agricultural improvement and co-operation come to nothing not because our peasant is by nature immune from such influences, not because he is illiterte and dull-witted, but because he is financially unable to make use of them.

By abolishing landlordism, the Rs. $2\frac{1}{2}$ crores which he now pays will be available to him. By a judicious use of this, his position can be very much improved. Let us make a rough calculation.

Applying the tests used by the provincial Banking Commitee report (Debt per head of population, Debt per acre of land and Debt per rupee of assessment) the total indebtedness of the Malabar peasant would roughly come to Rs. 15 crores. Allowing Rs. 4 crores for the indebtedness of non-cultivating agricultural classes, and Rs. 4 crores for the amounts which could be scaled down under moderate provisions, the peasantry would still have to pay Rs. 7 crores as its debt. If the Government came forward with the bonds to the creditor, to which the land would stand as security, the whole of this debt would be wiped out in 30 years if the peasant was asked to pay at the most 9 per cent including interest and the annual instalment towards principal. This would work out at Rs. 63 lakhs. Let us set it apart out of the Rs. $2\frac{1}{2}$ crores. Let us set apart, out of the balance, Rs. 50 lakhs for the peasantry's

contribution to various forms of co-operation (short-term credit, agricultural improvement, dairy and poultry-farming, housing, education, etc.) the co-operative movement would then be taken out of the depths to which it has fallen, a new spirit would pervade the whole countryside, and agriculture will begin to become a business proposition. And, finally, let us lay aside the balance of Rs. 137 lakhs for the actual consumption of the peasant. With more food for himself, his family and his cattle, he will become a sturdy and independent peasant. All the annual Baby-weeks and shows have not been able to make our rural children really healthy, but this one will, because it will make nutritious food available to them. Children will flock to the schools ad sick ones will be properly attended to.

The abolition of the appropriation by the *janmis* of this 2½ crores, therefore, is the key to the whole problem and therefore the pre-condition for any economic planning. But it is not the peasant alone who stands to gain by it. Industries, large and small, will also get their share with the improvement of the countryside. The higher standard of life of the peasant would make industrial labour itself much more efficient than it is today, because the major part of its inefficiency consists in poor physique and a great majority of the workers in India, according to the Whitley Commission (a much higher percentage in Malabar than elsewhere) "are at heart villagers, they have had in most cases a village upbringing, they have village traditions and they retain some contact with the villages". Any improvement, therefore, in the condition of the villagers will have its influence (in most cases perhaps indirect, but in many cases direct) on the efficiency of labour. Much greater than this is the benefit accorded to the industry by the wider market. The Rs. 137 lakhs laid aside for the peasantry's consumption would provide for its products. Special mention should be made of the textile and tile industries, because the first thing that the peasant would, perhaps, do is to house himself and clothe himself better. Above all, this will furnish industry with additional capital. When one is not allowed to take rent out of land which he does not cultivate, capital will not flow towards land as it does today. The man who has grown rich either by profession or business does today invest his earnings

in land because, although the capital thus invested is not productive, from the veiw-point of that industry it is as productive of profit for him as it would be if he had invested it in industry. How much money is thus invested every year, it is difficult to find. But the statistics of registration show that, in 1938, 22,601 sale-deeds had been registered in Malabar at an aggregate value of Rs. 89,62,288 and 42,077 mortage-deeds at an aggregate value of Rs. 75,85,359 in North and South Malabar together. This being by no means an abnormal year, let us take that approximately Rs. 160 lakhs is being invested every year in land by new owners. Let us deduct out of this 25 per cent (I personally feel that this is rather high but still for lack of reliable data, I take a high percentage for being on the safe side) or Rs. 40 lakhs for genuine purchases by those who want to cultivate it themselves. Rupees 120 lakhs would still be available for productive investment in industry, trade, banking, etc. Let us take that 50 per cent of this or Rs. 60 lakhs alone will be available for industry as such. Still it will be a great thing and the proverbial shyness of Indian capital will at one stroke be removed. The "potential capital" of which the external Capital Committee observes as sufficient to "meet the larger part of India's industrial requirements" will become not potential, but actual and Sir Basil Blackett's observation that "India could not only supply the whole of her capital requirements, but might also become the leader of capital for the development of other countries" will be justified, provided only that the present flow of capital to unproductive channels is checked by the abolition of landlordism.

The improvement in the standard of life of the village is, in short, the cure of the economic development of our country. Without it, no amount of planning will bear fruit. It is not, by itself, a socialistic experiment, but a part, an essential part, of the development of capitalism. This is why the French Revolution and other bourgeois revolutions carried out this essential task. India has also to carry it out if she has to develop economically on essentially bourgeois lines.

The Question of Compensation

Are the landlords entitled to compensation if they are deprived of what they are now getting, and which many of them

purchased in the firm belief that they will be allowed to enjoy it unhindered? It remains for me to answer this question.

I look at it, not from any legalistic point of view, but it is for me a pure question of practicability and expediency. Can the peasantry afford to pay compensation? If compensation is to be paid even at the minimum rate, how will it stand in relation to the appropriation of the existing rental, for re-vitalising agriculture and building up industrial trading institutions? That seems to me the essential question. And, from that point of view, the question of compensation can easily be dismissed as impracticable, since that compensation would raise the same dangers and difficulties which we have at present in a new from. Of course, it will be hard in the case of many families not to get compensation. But, if it is provided that the families of the present landlords will have the first choice of taking a maximum extent of land (say 20 acres) for their own cultivation (this will be reverted if they lease it to others) it will be a great relief in most of such genuinely hard cases. I cannot really think of any other form of compensation.

I know that such a drastic reform will not be undertaken at present. Still, I felt it my duty to give expression to my support to it, lest in the mass of detail as to legal and practical questions, the fundamental question should be lost sight of. I also want to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that the reforms suggested even in my notes given below will not be the last word in tenancy reform. There is no use of fighting shy of it.

I, therefore, make certain suggestions with regard to the actual recommendations made by my colleagues. These suggestions are put forward only because, even for the limited purpose of redressing certain glaring injustices, the majority recommendations do not go far enough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Six

The majority report proceeds on the basis that since the tenant in Malabar is entitled to the value of his improvement, it matters little to him whether he is given occupancy right or fixity of tenure. I agree that it is the substance that matters. But I

am afraid there is no substance of fixity in the proposals evolved by the majority of colleagues. In fact, the net result of the proposals is not even fixity of tenure, but restricted right of the landlord to evict the tenant. The tenants may feel relieved that arbitrary eviction has been reduced by putting further restrictions on the landlord, but to suggest that the proposals contain fixity of tenure which differs from occupancy right only in name, is to deceive oneself because the fixity conferred upon the tenant is quite illusory.

There are three conditions on which the tenant may be evicted according to the majority report: (1) failure to pay rent, (2) failure to furnish security in case default is made in the payment of rent for one year, (3) necessity of the landlord for bonafide cultivation. Now, the net result of all these is that fixity is nullified in a larger number of cases.

I agree that the landlord should get his rent regularly. But the penalty attached to non-payment of rent, according to the majority report, is, I feel, too severe. I have no objection if the systematic defaulter is evicted or security is demanded of him. What the majority report, however, does is to club together the systematic defaulter with the man who defaults even for a year for reasons beyond his control. Even in the case of a tenant who could not pay his rent because there was sudden calamity in his family (say, the death of a member), even for a year, not only does the engine of eviction begin to operate, but security is demanded of him. The tenant who is not for some reasons able to pay by 30th *Kumbham* will be evicted even if he pays up the arrears by *Medam*, because his failure to pay rent in Kumbham makes him liable to security and non-compliance with it to eviction. Thus, even a genuine failure to pay at the fixed time makes him liable to eviction.

I suggest the following changes:

(1) Failure to pay by the 30th *Kumbham* would entitle the landlord to sue for arrears.

(2) Failure to pay one year's rent together with the interest thereon by 30th *Kumbham* of next year will make one liable to eviction.

(3) Failure to pay in full or in part for any three years during a decade will make one liable to furnish security

As regards bonafide cultivation, I have the following suggestions to offer :

(1) The limit of 5 acres per individual is too high. I have no objection to make it 5 acres per individual provided a maximum is fixed for the extent of land a landlord may evict the tenant from whatever the number of members of his family. An undivided family consisting of say, 30 members can, according to the majority report evict a tenant from 150 acres. In a majority of cases not more than one or two members of a landlord's family whose members may be staying in Madras or Singapore would evict from lands tenants calculated at the rate of 5 acres for every man, woman and child who does not interest himself or herself in cultivation. This is likely to happen in a number of cases. To call this eviction for bonafide cultivation is a misnomer. I therefore suggest that a maximum of 20 acres per family is put whatever the number of members thereof.

(2) Restriction of the right of eviction for bonafide cultivation to poorer landlords is not so impracticable as the majority report suggests. If, instead of the assessment basis, the annual income basis is taken, I have no doubt that to distinguish the poor landlords from the rich will not be at all difficult. I would suggest, for instance, that any landlord who gets an annual income (land reveune and interest on debts may be deducted out of the gross income) of Rs. 100 per individual or Rs. 2,000, whichever is higher, by rent or otherwise, should not be entitled to evict the tenant for bonafide cultivation.

If at least the suggestions made above are accepted, i.e. (1) eviction is restricted to failure to pay one year's rent by the next year, (2) security is demanded only on the regular defaulter, (3) only poor landlords are allowed to evict for bonafide cultivation and (4) even that is limited to 5 acres per individual or 20 acres per family whichever is higher, I think some real relief will be obtainable for the tenants.

Chapter Seven

Rent and Revenue

With regard to the rates of fair rent, I have these suggestions to offer :

(1) The expenses of cultivation should be fixed at 25 Palghat paras instead of 20. For one thing, it has been proved by all witnesses who have any experience of actual cultivation that $3\frac{1}{2}$ times the seed is the minimum required for cultivation expenses and that, if anything, it should be raised. For another thing, 20 Palghat paras are in most cases less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ times the seed actually required. It is only in rare cases that 6 Palghat paras are sufficient per acre. The seed actually required varies from 6 to $7\frac{1}{2}$. Even if 6 is taken as the invariable rule, 20 is less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ times of 6. I, therefore, feel that it is quite reasonable to raise it to 25.

(2) With regard to the sharing of produce, I feel that the net produce should be divided equally between the actual cultivator and his immediate landlord. I do not see how it is reasonable or practical to take the return on investment which the landlord has made on land as the criterion for fixing fair rent. On this basis I am afraid, no fair rent can be fixed because the land has been over-capitalized. Land has been bought and sold at high prices on the basis of the landlord's right to rack-rent the tenant and now to go upon the basis of a fair return on investment made on that basis is simply to sanctify rack-renting. The basic question in this connection, is to my mind, whether the productive labour of the tenant gets a fair return and not, whether the non-productive capital of the landlord should get a sufficiently high rate of interest. In this connection, I should also state that the present tendency is for a rise in the rate of wages of both the urban as well as the rural labour. And that tendency should be encouraged in the interest of general economy. The least that can be done to this end is to provide that half the net produce both on wet lands as also on *punjalol* shall be given to the tenant.

(3) It is possible that in many cases, particulary on dry lands, the present contract rate of rent is less than the formula suggested by the Committee. As the majority report itself states in another connection, the return to the landlord from dry land is quite negligible. If, now, the landlord is empowered to take three times the assessment, it will be very hard on most tenants, particularly on the lowest and poorest of them. Hard, indeed, would be the case if those Harijans and other rural labourers, who, instead of getting exemption from rent and

revenue as they desire, are suddenly asked to pay much more than they are now asked to. I therefore, suggest that in the case of all pending tenancies, fair-rent shall be that calculated on the basis of the several formulae suggested by the Committee or the contract rate, whichever is less. *Laissez Faire* and freedom of contract should be interfered with in the interest of the weaker party. If, for historical reasons, a particular tenant is allowed to pay less than the fair-rent, there is nothing unreasonable in allowing him to enjoy that privilege for the future also.

(4) With regard to fair-rent on pepper lands, I find that there is a suitable difference in the rate. While the customary rate is 1 to every 5, it has been manipulated as 1 *in* every 5. In other words, 1 : 5 has been changed into 1 out of 5, or 1/6 has been raised to 1/5. I recommend the restoration of 1/6. That is, the year in which the landlord should have his share should be 11th, 17th, 23rd, etc., and not 11th, 16th and 21st, etc., as the majority recommends.

With regard to fixing of fair-rent, I feel that it would be most unfair to recover the cost of fixing it from the actual cultivator. I do not object to a nominal fee (say, 4 annas for every application) being levied on every holding. Nor do I object to it if the maximum cost to be recovered from the tenant is fixed at a certain percentage (say, 10 per cent) of the total fair-rent fixed for his holding. But to provide that the whole cost of the Rent Settlement Commission should be recovered from him and his immediate landlord is very hard indeed.

The proposal of the majority report that the tenant should pay the whole assessment, even if it exceeds fair-rent, is, I am sure, quite unreasonable. Of course, it is not the fault of the landlord that the Government have assessed unreasonably. But, then, neither is it the fault of the tenant. It is unfair that the landlord who claims absolute ownership on land should ask himself to be relieved of liabilities on it. It is the common obligation of both the landlord and tenant to get the assessment revised. Till that is done, the landlord should bear, at least, half of the difference between assessment and fair-rent.

Chapter Eight

RENEWALS AND RENEWAL FEES

When fair-rent is fixed, the *kanamdar* or other intermediary

who has made a much more productive investment of land than the landlord stands to lose, because he gets less from his under-tenant while he has to pay the same amount to his superior. In all fairness, he should be asked to pay less to his landlord in exact proportion to what he loses by way of reduction in what he gets from his under-tenant. If this is not done, it will be some relief to him if at least renewal fee is totally abolished and thus a longstanding demand of his conceded. I therefore do not agree with the majority that renewal fee should be collected even in its reduced form.

Chapter Nine

INTERMEDIARIES AND UNDER-TENURE HOLDERS

Although I do not agree with the several arguments used and statements made by the majority, I feel that so far as what could be done practically to protect the under-tenure holders, the proposals in this report are acceptable.

Chapter Eleven

The Majority report says

"It would not, in our opinion, be just to exempt *kudiyiruppu* holders from the payment of rent altogether".

I feel that the gentlemen of the majority have not seriously considered the problem of the rural labourer and the Harijan who has no property except his own willingness to work for others. The lot of these people is deplorable. They are serfs if not actual slaves. To ask them to pay rent and revenue is just to hand them over to the landlord who can treat them in any manner he likes. All the arguments used by the advocates of the tenants' cause with respect to arbitrary eviction and its social consequences in the 1920's apply with much greater force in the case of these rural labourers. Unless they are protected from eviction from their miserable huts on any account, they will be under the village official. I would also like to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that the landlords do not stand to lose much by this, because the rent realized from *kudiyiruppus* is negligible. By making the landlord incur a small loss, the lowest of the low in the villages will be released from social serfdom. I may conclude by saying that I want

this exemption from rent and revenue to be granted only to those tenants who have no other property except *the kudiyirup-pus* and who have no other occupation but wage-labour. In the case of others, I agree with the majority report.

I am for giving fixity to *Ulkudi*-holders also. In a condition where all lands available for house-sites are monopolised by a few people, it will be hard for the poor man who is an *Ulkudi*-holder if he is to be turned out from the only habitation which he has. He may be turned out provided the landlord gives him another site whereon to put a house.

Chapter Twelve

Forests, Waste Land and Irrigation Sources

I have only to make the following additional suggestions :

(1) In continuing the practice of allowing tenants to take leaves for green manures, and pasture the cattle, "the restrictions as may be necessary to protect forests from destruction and denudation" should not, it should be made clear, include any levy of grazing or manure fees.

(2) Government should control not only sources of irrigation, but channels and small waterways in such a way that no landlord or tenant through whose field water has to pass to another man's field should be entitled to obstruct.

Paper for the Calicut Seminar, March 7,1981

LAND REFORMS AND THE PEASANT MOVEMENT IN KERALA IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

It is of course a coincidence that the centenary of the Logan Commission on agraian relations in Malabar falls in the year of jubilee of the formation of the Kerala State. This coincidence, however, is of some political significance.

Though many changes were made in the Tenancy laws of Malabar by the Government of the composite Madras Presidency before Independence, the process could be completed only after the country attained Independence, the old "British Indian" Madras Presidency and the two princely states of Cochin and Travancore were reorgainsed to form the linguistic State of Kerala. Within a couple of years of the formation of the new Kerala State, however, its first elected government initiated action for amending the existing laws on land relations in the former Malabar, Cochin and Travancore parts of the new State.

Let us at the same time add that, even though a big push was given to agrarian legislations during the last 24 years, the mass of the rural poor in Kerala today are as exploited as, if not more, as they were at the time when Logan submitted his report on Malabar.

The Logan Commission's report, of which the centenary is being celebrated now, was a pioneering work so far as Malabar is concerned. It, however, does not stand alone. In fact, similar studies of agrarian relations were made in several other parts of the country.

The decades that followed the historic Mutiny and popular Revolt of 1857 in North India made the British authorities aware of the rumblings that had made their appearance in rural India. Just like Logan in Malabar, so in several districts of other British Presidencies, the administrative officers concerned made serious studies of the socio-economic factors that gave rise to acute discontent which broke out in serious disturbances.

The conclusions arrived at after these studies were digest-

ed by their superior authorities who prepared plans to contain the growing discontent among the rural masses. Among the measures taken in pursuance of these recommendations were tenancy reform legislation in some parts of the country like Malabar, relief from indebtedness in certain others and formation of co-operatives in several parts of the country and so on.

Parallel to such initiatives in "British Indian" presidencies, Princely India too had its share of ameliorative measures. The former Cochin and Travancore parts of the present Kerala State in fact, went even further ahead of "British Malabar" in tenancy reform.

Realising that these measures of economic relief alone would not stem the tide of popular discontent, the British authorities hit upon the plan of helping the formation of a constitutional opposition, a safety valve for the gathering popular discontent. As is known, this plan developed into the Indian National Congress which in the beginning was exclusively a "petitioning" organisation.

It does not fall within the purview of this paper to trace the development of this "constitutional opposition" into the fighting organisation, a change from "mendicancy to militancy", to quote Lokmanya Tilak, which stood at the head of three waves of the anti-imperialist national upheaval, i.e., the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movement of 1921-22, the Salt Satyagraha and Civil Disobedince of 1930-33 and the Quit India movement of 1942. Nor is it necessary here to explain how the 'loyal opposition" to British authorities gradually embraced all currents of modern radical democracy such as all-out attack on caste oppression, equality of man and woman, cultural renaissance, etc., helped the formation of trade unions together with the fighting organisations of all other sections of the working people and finally, roused the common people of the princely states whose struggle for democracy integrated itself with the struggle for freedom from British rule.

Suffice it to note that within less than 70 years that separated the formation of the Indian National Congress and the end of British rule, Indian polity underwent a thorough-going change. The changes that took place within the short period of nine years since the attainment of Independence too were deep-going.

The changes that took place during the 75-years period between the Logan Commission report and the formation of the Kerala State may be summarised as follows.

(a) A series of land reform legislations in the three parts of the present Kerala State—Malabar, Cochin and Travancore—which gave sections of tenants such new rights as were not available earlier. These were broadly in line with the recommendations made by the Logan Commission, i.e., they provided for compensation for tenants' improvements, reduced the rent payble to the *Jenmi*, put restrictions on evictions, and so on.

(b) The setting up of local self-governing institutions in all parts of the present Kerala State as well as legislative bodies in the princely states of Cochin and Travancore, along with those of the then "British" India.

(c) The setting up of co-operative societies which sought to associate the people in governmental activities as they relate to the rural economy.

(d) The heightening of the political consciousness of the people which was facilitated by the above-mentioned structural changes and by the rapid spread of education, the growth of newspapers and journals, etc., the formation of political parties as well as such fighting organisations of the working people as the trade unions, tenants' associations and Kisan Sabhas, etc.

(e) Division of the political and mass movement in the state (as in the rest of the country) into a Right and a Left; the origin and growth of political parties and groups based on such distinct ideologies as Gandhism, majority and minority, communalism, casteism, socialism, communism, etc., the influence exerted by these ideologies and the organisations committed to them on the mass organisations of the various sections of the people.

The most important among these major changes is the origin and development of the socialist and communist parties which exercised their influence on the nature of the political movement for freedom and democracy as well as on the mass movement for land reforms. Uncompromising struggle against imperialism in the world (not only against British rulers); championing of the cause of democracy in the "India" as well as "British India"; steadily improving conditions of working and living for which the workers and salaried employees carry on

militant struggles and for which the radical political parties give unqualified support; radical land reforms culminating in the complete abolition of landlordism, seizure of landlords' lands and their distribution among the landless and poor rural masses—these constituted a distinct political and social economic outlook with which the socialists and communists came on the political scene.

It was with this radical programme that the communists fought for the reorganisation of the old "British" and "Indian" states in order to form the Kerala and other linguistic states. They, however, were not alone. Other groups and organisations co-operated with them. Thus arose, in fact, a broad unity among the communists, socialists, other democrats on a programme of building a new democratic Kerala as an integral part of a new democratic India.

Although the electoral victory of the Communist party in the first general election held in the new State of Kerala could not be exactly foreseen, indications were available that such a consummation was possible. The elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Madras and Travancore-Cochin as well as to the Malabar District Board held in 1952 and 1954 respectively, showed that the Communist Party was powerful enough, under certain favourable conditions, to secure an electoral victory and form a government, as the party did take over the Malabar District Board a couple of years earlier. The 1957 electoral victory of the party was only a confirmation of what could have been visualised as a possibility.

The more important is that the Communist Party, with its powerful base in the organised working class and peasant movement, knew what it wanted in the agrarian sector. The various agitations and struggles of the peasantry particularly in Malabar but in the other two parts of the new state as well had made the party popular among the rural masses. These agitations and struggles together with the Marxist-Leninist ideology on which it was based, had given the party a clear idea of what to fight for. The variety and multiplicity of land tenures had been subjected to close scrutiny by the leadership of the party, the Kisan Sabha and other mass organisations who were able to give an integrated idea on how to amend all the existing laws on land tenure in the various parts of the state. That was

why, within a few months of being sworn in, the first Government of Kerala was able to prepare a draft agrarian legislation, get its clearance from the Central Government and have it introduced in the State Legislature.

This was facilitated by the fact that, not only in Kerala but also on an all-India scale, the freedom movement had identified itself with the aspirations of the rural people for land reforms. There were, of course, serious differences within the freedom movement on the extent to which land reforms should go. The movement however, was completely united on the need for land reforms. In such historic documents of the Indian National Congress as the Karachi Resolution, the Faizpur agrarian programme, various election manifestos, etc., radical reforms in land tenure had by and large been accepted.

The very first occasion when the Congress became the ruling party in several states (1937-39), it had initiated several measures by way of restructuring the rights of the *Zamindars* and other feudal landlords. It was, therefore, inevitable that, when the Congress became the ruling party at the Centre in 1947, it carried forward the work that had been disrupted when the Congress ministries in the provinces had to go out of office in 1939. Several state legislature enacted land reform measures which put limits on the rights of feudal landlords. The Planning Commission that was set up by the Union Government attached very great importance to land reforms without which, it said, no worthwhile planning of the economy was possible. It was in this all-India context that the Communist Party outlined its own land reform measures.

In the pre-freedom Congress organisation of Kerala, of course, there were sharp differences between the Right and Left on the extent to which land reforms should go. This came to a head in the Malabar Tenancy Committee of 1939-40 with the majority of Congress MLAs signing the Committee report along with the official representatives of the *Jenmis* and a minority of three writing their own separate minutes of dissent. Differeences appeared in the post-1946 years too, though by this time the communist had gone out of the Congress. The legislations that were finally adopted in this period, therefore, were rightist in content and did not satisfy the organised Kisan movement. The communist, therefore, had to plan how those inadequate

measures should be amended. They, however, could rely for this on the recommendations made by the Land Reforms panel of the Planning Commission.

It is interesting in this context to note that the Communist Party's spokesmen declared in 1957 that what they would try to do as the new ruling party in the state is "not to try to apply our own party Programme which is impracticable now, but to carry out those reforms promised by the ruling party and the Government at the Centre but which the state governments of the same ruling party have so far refused to implement". This approach of the ruling party of Kerala showed its strength as well as its weakness. Based as it was on the principles and policies laid down at the Centre, the proposed enactment could not be seriously opposed by the Congress which then was the main opposition in the state—this was its strength. Its weakness consisted in the fact that what could be done by the new government would fall short of what according to the communist and other radical parties are required to meet the situation.

Though the draft agrarian legislation based itself on the recommendations of the agrarian experts of the Central Government, the proposed measure met vicious opposition from the Congress organisation in the state. There were two understandable reasons for this.

Firstly, the feudal and other types of landlords whose rights and privileges were under attack were among the solid supporters of the Congress party in the state; they fought the new measure tooth and nail.

Secondly, even those Congressmen who were in support of the measure on merits saw that the smooth passage of the measure and its implementation by the Communist Government would deal a crushing political blow to Congress domination not only in Kerala but also throughout the country. It was, therefore, considered necessary that, before the Agrarian Relations Bill is enacted into law and is implemented by the Communist Government, there should be a change of regime. Once the Communist Government is overthrown, it was hoped, the more radical of the provisions contained in the legislation can be watered down, thus softening the attacks on the solid supporters of the Congress party among the landed vested interests. Still more important is the fact that this would be a serious political

blow to the communist movement, together with the militant working class and peasant movements, all over the country.

The story of the "liberation struggle" and its aftermath is not relevant for this paper. It should, however, be stated that the beginnings made by the first elected government of Kerala could not be completely undone by the regime that followed. Even though the dismissal of the Communist Government enabled the Centre to put off giving Presidential assent to the Bill as passed by the Legislature in 1959, and though an anti-communist government took over after the mid-term elections of 1960, the new legislation prepared by the new government and approved by the Centre had to retain many of the provisions contained in the old measure. They went much further than the rightist sections within the Indian National Congress had been prepared for in the earlier days. They, however, could not go back to the position adopted in the pre-1957 period.

Futhermore, subsequent political developments led to the formation of another left-oriented government in 1967 which reintroduced many provisions which had been abandoned by the anti-communist government.

The 1961 legislation, theretore, is rightly considered as one of the most forward looking among the state land reform legislations all over the country. It was the collective product of all the constituents of the 1967-69 coalition, including the two communist parties into which the old CPI had been divided.

The Government that piloted this legislation, however, had to resign in October 1969 and was followed by a Government of a quite different political complexion. This had its impact on the nature and content of land legislation, as can be seen from the much-talked of "Gift Deed" provision incorporated in a subsequent legislation.

The new anti-CPI(M) Government, however, took office against the background of a powerful kisan and agricultural labour movement which was spearheaded by the most popular political party in the state, the CPI(M). An alliance of this party, the mass organisations led by it and other non-Congress parties and mass organisations saw to it that all the positive provisions of the 1969 legislation were seriously implemented while resistance was organised by vested interests who, in collu-

sion with the bureaucracy, sought to sabotage the implementation of these positive provisions.

Struggle for the implementation of the 1969 legislation, struggle against the anti-peasant amendments (like the "Gift Deed" legislation) introduced by the anti-CPI(M) Government, unity of all the urban and rural sections of the people for agrarian reforms as well as for other democratic demands—these constituted the programme of action worked out by the CPI(M) and its allies. This had its impact on the government which had two left parties—the CPI and RSP—among its partners. Within the Congress too, the left was fairly strong. It, therefore, proceeded to implement the land reform legislation, though not to the expectations of the organised *kisan* movement.

This narration of the course of land reforms so far undertaken in Kerala in the all-India context raised the question: What have been the consequences of land reforms in Kerala? Have they solved the problem of rural poverty, as it should have been if the *Jenmi* domination was the sole cause of rural poverty? If not, what else prevents the complete abolition of poverty? What, in other words, was the basic weakness of the analysis made by Logan and other administrators of the British regime in all parts of the country, as well as of the leadership of the freedom movement?

Logan did a signal service to scholarship as well as to the evolution of practical policy when he nailed down the *Jenmi* as the centre of rural exploitation and exposed the fact that the earlier British rulers had strengthened the powers of the *Jenmi* far more than was exercised in the traditional society of Malabar. He came to this conclusion through a serious practical-academic study of the land relations in Malabar---a study to which he was driven by the series of "Mopla riots". Unlike the group of bureaucrats who hoped to suppress the riots through mere repressive measures, and like several others outside Malabar, he pointed out the need for vital changes in the relations between the *Jenmis* and tenants.

Logan, however, failed to see the disintegration of rural society taking place under British rule not only in Malabar, but in the entire country. The encroachments upon the rights of tenants with the corresponding increase in those of the *Jenmis* of Malabar were in fact the inevitable accompaniment of the

partially bourgeois restructuring of the rural society throughout India—a fact which Logan could not see.

Indian society on the eve of British rule, it will be recalled, was by and large, based on the natural economy with self-sufficient villages and with the stratified hierarchy of "upper" and "lower" castes and sub-castes, each with its assigned job in the social division of labour. No major change had taken place for centuries in this caste-dominated village centred Indian society. The British, however, dealt the heaviest blow to this social order when they entered India first as traders and then established themselves as rulers. The self-sufficent Indian village, each of which leading its own life completely separated not only from the world market but from other villages in the country, was destroyed to the roots when the British started making India an integral part of the world market and transforming the Indian village into the source of raw material for British industries, the market for British manufactured products and subsequently a field in which British surplus capital could be invested.

The economic consequences of such a basic change in India's socio-economic system were subjected to penetrating study by a host of Indian scholars who have rightly acquired fame as the "pioneers of Indian economics". Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dadabhai Naoroji, Ramesh Chandra Dutt and many others did, each in his own way, expose the loot of India's wealth by the British rulers. The doctrine enunciated by these pioneers were further developed, refined and perfected by subsequent generations of Indian economists. The freedom movement in all its subsequent developments drew heavily on these doctrines, placing before the Indian people the objective of putting an end to the economic exploitation as well as political domination by the alien rulers.

It is understandable that Logan and his counterparts in other parts of the country should have failed to see this cause of the poverty of the rural masses of India. Almost a generation before them, however, a scholar in Europe—not in England but in Germany—saw it in all its intensity. That German scholar carries the name Karl Marx. He analysed the policies and practices of the British rulers in India, explained how the British rulers carried out "the only social revolution in Indian history"

but so carried it out that the Indian people "lost their old world without gaining the new".

He pointed out how the traditional handicrafts of India were destroyed, throwing millions out of their jobs and how the Indian villager was tied to the world market which exploited him mercilessly. New forms of exploitation were developed without ending the old traditional forms, making the people suffer untold misery. With rare foresight, Marx predicted that the Indian people would be able to benefit from the social revolution carried out by the British rulers only if the British working class takes power into its own hands or in the alternative the Indian people emancipate themselves from alien rule.

Neither of the two contingencies visualised by Marx has come true. The United Kingdom is still dominated by the bourgeois-landlord ruling classes. As for India, the British rulers have no doubt handed over power to India but not to its people. What happened in the 1947 transfer of power was a compromise between the British rulers and India's "own" bourgeios-landlord ruling classes who became powerful enough to challenge them. The result was that the narrow upper stratum of India's new ruling classes, the emerging Indian bourgeoisie, together with the already existing feudal or newly-developing "modern" landlords, could use their newly-acquired state power to strengthen themselves and bargain with British as well as other foreign monopoly capitalists and through such collaboration develop capitalism in India. The mass of the people, rural as well as urban, however, continued to bear the burdens of feudal as well as capitalist exploitation.

Gigantic projects of irrigation, power, heavy and large scale industries, science and technology, etc., have of course been carried out under successive five-year plans. Industrial and agricultural productions, national income as a whole, developed at a rapid pace. So did the profits of a small upper stratum of capitalists, landlords, top professionals and a narrow circle of the hangers-on of these better-off sections of the people. At the other end of the scale, however, unemployment has been mounting, poverty growing, indebtedness rising, in short, the misery of the overwhelming majority of the people increasing at an alarming rate. The very official documents which speak of magnificent progress in all fields of development give facts and figures

to show that almost 50 per cent of the people today are technically "below the poverty line" which means that they are half-starved, half-clothed, etc. "Rich becoming richer, the poor poorer"—this neatly sums up the situation as it exists today.

The land reform measures contemplated and implemented so far, however laudable in themselves, become completely ineffective if and so long as this situation contiunes. The poor peasant or agricultural labourer gets a small piece of land through the process of fixing a ceiling on land holdings and the distribution of the surplus among the landless. So do tenants who get relief from exorbitant rent and the eviction proceedings. But neither of them can keep his land for long, since the burden of high prices for agricultural inputs and consumption goods, together with low prices for the agricultural produce, make the majority of the rural people lose their land and join the ever-increasing army of the unemployed. Those who are fourtunate enough to escape this fate have to bear the burdens of ever-rising taxation, interests, etc. For them too, it is a question of time before they lose what they continue to possess.

As opposed to this pauperisation of the majority in the rural areas is the emergence of a new rural gentry--a section of the old feudal *jenmis* who have transformed themselves into the new type employers of wage labour, those who engage themselves in usury and black marketing, etc., and exercise control over the administrative-political set-up. Their ranks are joined by the old tenants and professionals who too, like their former masters, have become an integral part of the rural gentry.

Class division in rural society is thus assuming new forms. In place of the old *Jenmi* and his tenants are two new formations. On the one side is a rural gentry which includes that section of the old *jenmis* who have kept as much as possible the old powers and privileges but who share with the "new rich" the powers and privileges of a new capitalist type and on the other, the rest of the rural people. The emergence of such a new form of class division is the consequence of land reforms and other socio-economic and political changes that took place in the last 100 years--not only in Kerala but also throughout the country.

This discussion will be incomplete if it is not pointed out

that, as has been pointed out in this paper, the programme of land reforms does not start in isolation but is an integral part of the reform of the entire social system—industrialisation, modernisation of socio-cultural life, democratisation of the political system, etc. These latter reforms cannot be carried out if the system of land ownership remains unchanged. On the other hand, land reforms will be completely ineffective if they are not carried out along with reforms in all other fields of socio-economic, political and cultural life. What is happening in one field has its repercussions on all other fields. That is why all the land reforms that have so far been carried out in Malabar have led to the creation of a new type of rural gentry in place of the old feudal *Jenmis*, rather than putting an end to the exploitation of the rural masses as a whole.

NOTE ON THE REPORT OF THE ASOKA MEHTA COMMITTEE ON PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTION

1. I had hoped that, in spite of our differences on the basic approach to the problems dealt with by the Committee, I would be able to agree with my colleagues on the concrete proposals being made with regard to democratic decentralisation. On a study of the report, however, I find that the differences in the basic approach have expressed themselves in some concrete proposals. I am, therefore, obliged, while signing the report, to add this note.

2. Let me at the very outset make it clear that I agree with the main conclusions arrived at, and recommendations made, by my colleagues, namely,

(a) "Panchayati Raj should not be singled out for criticisms, failures and pitfalls which are not particular to it alone". (I.10.1)

(b) "Both from the political and socio-developmental angles, it is imperative to decentralise powers, planning process and developmental activities below the state level". (III. 1)

(c) "Our recommendations about the transfer of substantial quantum of powers from the State Governments to the local bodies has implications for the existing scheme of distribution of powers between the Union and the States which would require a detailed but separate consideration." (III. 5)

(d) "The first point of decentralisation below the State level should be the district". (IV. 2)

(e) "The present trend as also the past experience points to the size of Panchayats being larger". (IV. 4.4)

(f) "Next to the district, Panchayat will have to be the hub of developmental activities". (IV. 4.8)

(g) "A Committee system at the district and other levels as required should be introduced....The salient ones to be suggested now would be on Agriculture, on Education, on Small Industries, on Finance and Public Works. A committee of the chairmen of these committees will be the standing committee with Chief Executive Officer as secretary. The composition would be on proportional representation." (IV. 10)

(h) "Political parties should be allowed to participate effectively at all levels. We have reached a stage of political evolution when it would be unrealistic to expect that political parties would keep themselves away from these elections". (IV. 14. 1)

(i) "There was not much enthusiastic response (to Nyaya Panchayats), though many advocated their relevance and revival to settle petty disputes. The dilemma facing the rural people seems to be that, while they want justice at their doorsteps, their experience does not encourage them to place faith in Nyaya Panchayats as constituted today." (IV. 18. 2)

(j) Recommendation regarding the decentralistion at the district level as spelt out at paras V5.1, 2, 3.

(k) "All the staff engaged in development that is now available at the district and lower levels for these programmes will have to be placed under the elected representative bodies. This would mean that all the staff relating to decentralised items at the district level, and those subordinate to them in the respective departments should be working for the Zilla Parishads." (VIII. 2. 1 & 2. 2)

(l) Class III and Class IV staff should be fully handed over to Zilla Parishads. (VIII. 3. 3)

(m) "When it is postulated that all the developmental staff will be under the Zilla Parishads, it is also assumed that they will be under the administrative control of one Chief Executive Officer like the Chief Secretary at the district level who will be under an elected body." (VIII. 4)

(n) Recommendations regarding the system of line hierarchy at para VIII. 11.

(o) "Similar to the lack of will that is attributed to the political executive, an administrative will to work an alternate system should also be developed. Till now, control has never included a horizontal co-ordinating point. As far as State Head of the Department is concerned, an alternation has to be fostered." (VIII. 12)

(p) "The decentralisation of powers by the State and the entrustment of these powers to the Panchayati Raj Institutions should take into account the aspect of financial capabilities." (IX. 1. 1)

(q) "One of the important recommendations of the

Committee is the transfer of functions relating to implementation of projects at the district level to the Zilla Parishad. This automatically involves transfer of the finances along with projects." (IX. 9. 4)

(r) Paras IX. 10 1 to 9 regarding grants from the State and IX. 11. 1 to 6 regarding remunerative enterprises.

(s) "Any proposals for financial devolution or financial decentralisation should not emanate from a traditional approach but from our basic commitment to the logical imperatives of the dynamics of development which clearly postulate the entrustment of a great deal of developmental functions at the district level, with the Mandal Panchayats playing a key implementational role." (IX. 12. 1)

3. The above recommendations, if accepted and implemented by the Central and State Governments, would go a long way to transform democratic decentralisation from a dream to a reality. I therefore, hope that there will be no further delay in implementing these recommendations.

4. I, however, have basic differences in the approach to the problem of decentralisation as is explained in the report as a whole, particularly in Chapters I, II, VI, and VII. These differences on approach get reflected in several concrete proposals, spelt out in the other chapters. I would, therefore, explain what the basic differences in approach are.

5. I have already noted my agreement with the report where it states that Panchayati Raj should not be singled out for criticism. But, in noting other elements which too should be subjected to criticism, the report has omitted what, according to me, is the crucial factor– lack of political will on the part of the former and the present ruling parties at the Centre with regard to decentralisation of powers.

It is for instance, well-known that the 30 years of Congress rule resulted in increasing encroachment into the powers of the States as laid down in the Constitution. Many including the State Chief Ministers belonging to the then ruling party were, in fact, resentful but did not open their mouths at the Chief Ministers' gathering (I have myself had personal experience of several of them supporting me in private whenever, as the Chief Minister of Kerala, I was raising these questions at the meetings of the National Development Council and Chief Minis-

ters' conferences ; they told me that they are not free to express themselves. I was, they said, in fact, defending their interests as well).

There was, therefore, the natural expectation after the present Government assumed office that the question of Centre-State relations would be given a second look. Many Chief Ministers, including some who belong to the present ruling party, were sympathetic to the idea. But like his predecessors, the present Prime Minister too, is preventing any change in the constitutional set-up. He is doggedly refusing even to have a national debate on this question.

6. That this is actually hampering the process of decentralisation from the State to the lower levels is in a way acknowledged by my colleagues who have clearly stated in Chapter III, para 5, that "the existing scheme of distribution of powers between the Union and the State would require a detailed but separate consideration."

This, however, does not, according to me, bring out to the full the crucial importance of recasting the constitutional frame-work regarding Centre-State relations. I am of the view that, unless the whole question is fully reconsidered leading to radical amendments in the Constitution, all that is proposed in this report would remain as much on paper as the Balvantray Mehta and other recommendations have so far remained.

7. It is true that the Constitution, while defining the Directive Principles of State Policy, mentioned the formation and and functioning of Panchayats. The importance of this for the effective implementation of the five-year plans has also been emphasised in innumerable documents of the Central Government and of the Planning Commission. It was in pursuance of this that the Balvantray Mehta Study Team was appointed. The report of the present Committee is based on these recommendations and the attempts to put those recommendations into practice. That is why the resolution appointing this Committee and the draft under discussion now are based on the idea of Panchayati Raj as the vehicle of rural development. The idea implies that, while there is maximum possible decentralisation of the developmental function of administration, the regulatory functions will not be decentralised.

8. I am opposed to this whole approach. The Consti-

tution itself according to me, failed to envisage an integrated administration in which, apart from the Centre and the States, there will be elected bodies which will control the permanent services at the district and lower levels. Democracy at the Central and State levels, but bureaucracy at all lower levels—this is the essence of Indian polity as spelt out in the Constitution. Added to this is the fact, in the actual work of the Constitution, the Centre made increasing encroachments into the rights and powers of the State. This trend reached its high watermark in the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution.

It was with such a centralised administration as its core that Panchayats were envisaged in the Constitution and the Balvantray Mehta Report. It is, therefore, not suprising that neither the bureaucrat nor the politician at the State level is prepared to decentralise whatever power has been conferred on the State under the Constitution. The point is to make a radical change in the very concept of democracy and adopt what is called four-pillar democracy. It is regrettable, that, while acknowledging the force of this reality, the report in the Chapter on "Review and Evaluation" does not nail down the chief hindrance to decentralisation at the district and Panchayat levels.

9. I am in disagreement also with the approach to the "Dynamics of Development" as projected in Chapter II. This, in its turn, has implications for Chapter VI on "Planning" and Chapter VII on "Weaker Sections". Before discussing the recommendations made in these two Chapters, let me briefly state my criticism of the "Dynamics of Development" as projected in Chapter II.

I am of the view that the achievements in the field of planning have been so listed in the Report that (it is) missing the woods for the trees. By the term "woods" I mean the fact that the entire process of planned development which began in 1952 (the inauguration of the first five-year plan) has been one of capitalist development without either breaking with foreign capital or ending land monoply, usury, caste oppression, etc. All the "technological revolutions" that have been mentioned in the report are, according to me, the trees each of which is sought to be described in detail.

I have no quarrel with the description of these technological changes that have been taking place during the entire post-

Independence period, particularly during the 26 years of planning. My criticism is that these technological "revolutions" have been so enthusiastically praised that their social implication, i.e., the increasing division of society into an exploiting minority and an exploited majority, is missed.

In all the countries where capitalism supplanted feudalism (beginning with the United Kingdom) development of capitalism meant as big revolutions in the technological sphere as or even bigger than (that) are now taking place in India. The "technological revolutions". however, inevitably led to the enrichment of a handful of the owners of the means and instruments of production at the expense of the vast majority who are deprived of their small property. Nowhere has a bourgeois "technological revolution" taken place without creating a wide gulf between an ever-prospering minority of the exploiters and a growingly impoverished minority of the exploited.

India, however, stands on a footing entirely different from the countries which witnessed this process of bourgeois revolutions (mainly in Western Europe, North America and Japan). Unlike in these latter and like many other Asian and African countries, India has had its capitalist development without making a complete break either with foreign economic domination or with those precapitalist institutions like feudal land monopoly, usury, caste oppression, socio-cultural backwardness, etc., which provide the biggest obstacle to the very technological revolutions that are necessary if the country is to be modernised. This makes the sufferings undergone by our exploited majority still more unbearable; the mass of the working people has to bear the double burden of feudal (including caste) oppression, backwardness, exploitation, etc., and of capitalist exploitation.

10. It is this double burden of pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of exploitation that gives the problems of what are called "the weaker section" its specific character. For, what are called the weaker sections include two distinct categories of the working people.

The first category consists of those who, even after several decades of capitalist development (under the British and in the post-Independence years) are still subjected to many forms of landlord, usurer, caste and other exploitations of a pre-capita-

list society. These are the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other backward castes.

The second category consists of people who, a few generations ago, i.e., under the then existing socio-economic and political system, were free from caste oppression and exploitation, the "upper castes", a section of whom has, under the inexorable logic of capitalist development, been thrown into the army of the landless, the unemployed and otherwise oppressed and exploited sections of capitalist society.

Included in the latter category are the women who were subjected to antequated forms of oppression, exploitation and backwardness in the conditions of precapitalist society and who, under the system of capitalist exploitation, are subjected to new forms of oppression and exploitation. The overwhelming majority of women is subjected to the oppression and exploitation of both kinds which make 50 per cent of the total population a really "weaker section".

What is called "the problem of the weaker sections" is thus the problem of two kinds of oppression and exploitation—feudal and capitalist—to which the overwhelming majority of our population is subjected. All the proposals, schemes, etc., intended to "help the weaker sections of society" will remain at best mere palliatives unless and until the people as a whole are emancipated from the feudal as well as the capitalist modes of oppression and exploitation. The "weaker sections" have to uplift themselves, through their own fighting organisations, political parties, etc., rather than depending on the benevolence of others. In the absence of this self-conscious organisation and struggle of the toiling masses, the "schemes" meant for helping the weaker sections will become so many new devices to fool them. It is from this viewpoint of the organised struggle to end the system of exploitation (pre-capitalist as well as capitalist) that I am looking at the entire problem of defending and extending democracy.

By democracy here, I mean the system of parliamentary democracy with adult suffrage; periodical elections; the executive responsiblity to the elected legislature; the rule of law; full protection of the citizens' rights and freedoms which are known in our Constitution as the fundamental rights of citizenship, etc. These constitute a set of valuable rights which

our working people won after decades of struggle against the exploiting minority.

Our experience of working this system proves that since the parliamentary democratic system as it prevails today provides the exploited majority a powerful weapon with which to fight the exploiting minority, the latter does its utmost to reduce democracy to a mere formality, to subvert it whenever and wherever the exploited majority uses it to get anywhere near the seats of power. The defence of parliamentary democracy at the Central and State levels (where it exists but is very often threatened by the authoritarian forces) and its extension to the district and lower levels as envisaged in the four-pillar democracy is, therefore, of extreme importance in the advance of Indian society.

My faith in democratic decentralisation, in other words, arises from the fact that it helps the working people in their day-to-day struggles against their oppressors and exploiters. I cannot, therefore, think of the Panchayati Raj institutions as anything other than as an integral part of the country's administration with no difference between what are called the "developmental" and "regulatory" functions. What is required is that, while certain definite fields of administration like defence, foreign affairs, currency, communications, etc., should rest with the Centre, all the rest should be transferred to the States and from there to the district and lower levels of elected administrative bodies.

11. Considering the proposals made in the report from this angle, I now propose to examine some of these proposals on which I have reservations, objections and alternative suggestions.

Firstly, I am opposed to the suggestion of including the nominee of district level co-operative federation and other categories of members of Zilla Parishad and other Panchayati Raj insitution bodies. I am for purely elected bodies at all levels of Panchayati Raj. To have co-opted members as suggested in the report, is a hangover of the idea that Panchayati Raj institutions are concerned with development alone and they are not the elected organs of administration at the appropriate level.

Secondly, with regard to the elections to all Panchayati

Raj institutions, I suggest that propotional representation with the list system should be adopted. Since the Mandal Panchayats are, according to the report, to consist of 15 members directly elected, the whole Panchayat area can be considered a single 15-member constituency. This will give enough opportunity for any organised group (political party, religious minority, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women, etc.) which has the support of not less than 1/15th of the electorate (about 7 per cent) to return one member. At the other levels of Panchayati Raj like the Panchayat Samiti (wherever it continues), Zilla Parishad, etc., elections should be organised on the basis of multi-member constituencies with no less than 10 seats in every constituency and not more than 15. This will provide every social or political group which has electoral support of 1/10th to 1/15th of the people the possibility of returning one member. The argument advanced in the report (VII. 9.2) that "the list system is alien to the territorial approach in the election system" does not convince me. I am, on the other hand, of the view that Indian politics and the state of political parties in our country have reached a stage at which the adoption of the list system even for State legislatures and for Parliament would help the solution of many problems which are now considered insoluble. One of the suggestions that I have to make on the amendment of the Constitution, in fact, is the adoption of this system.

Thirdly, I have already stated that I am in full support of the idea of a two-tier Panchayati Raj—the larger Panchayat which has been given in the report the name of Mandal Panchayat and the Zilla Parishad. I am in support of it because of the general consideration that the two-tier set-up is likely to be less expensive and more effective as well as my own experience in Kerala.

I am, however, conscious that some other States have other patterns of organisation which involve more than one tier below the district level. The recommendations that we make should not bar such arrangements in a particular State where this is considered necessary. It should nevertheless be stated that every endeavour should be made to replace the three-tier system by the two-tier system, since that will help the process of democratic decentralisation.

Fourthly, I oppose the recommendation made at Para IV. 18. 4 "in favour of a qualified judge to preside over an elected Nayaya Panchayat being assocated with him". The report itself admits that there is no enthusiasm for Nyaya Panchayat, the reasons being that people do not expect elected panches to be objective and do justice to the poor. Any proposal for bringing the judiciary closer to the people can, therefore, be considered only as a matter of reforming the Judicial system and not as a part of democratic decentralisation of administration. The Government may consider the various reports, referred to in our report, separately and not as part of strengthening Panchayati Raj institutions.

Fifthly, I have already referred to the integrated powers and responsibilities to be conferred on the Panchayati Raj institutions in which no demarcation is made between developmental and regulatory functions. I can understand the position if it were argued that, under the present circumstances, law and order should remain with the State and not shared with the District or Mandal Panchayats, even though on this question too there is room for difference. But, as the report itself admits in Para XI. 4, "the cooperative system has a number of regulatory functions beginning with registration". How then can it be argued that "all functions such as law and order or the actions under other regulatory acts, including social legislations, may remain with the Collector only" (V. 10. 1). I am afraid that the ghost of the earlier idea that Panchyati Raj institutions should be completely divorced from all regulatory functions and made to confine themselves only to developmental functions is haunting my colleagues.

Sixthly, the problem of what is called "the weaker sections of society" is, as I have already pointed out, a product of the existing social order in which two kinds of oppression and exploitation—pre-capitalist and capitalist—are mixed. The solution for the problem is ultimately the ending of this double oppression and exploitation. The essential pre-condition for this is the unity of the overwhelming majority of the oppressed and exploited, belonging both to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward castes, on the one hand, and the so-called "upper castes", on the other.

Looked at from this point of view, reservation for schedul-

ed castes, scheduled tribes and other backward communities has a positive as well as a negative aspect.

Positively, it helps, up to a point, in raising the educational level and securing some position in the official hierarchy for the millions of people who have had for centuries remained oppressed and exploited under the caste system. Emergence of a small group of intelligentsia, the professionals and members of the official hierarchy drawn from castes which were completely excluded from a share in administration under the caste system is certainly a gain not only for these castes but for the very cause of social advance.

Its *negative feature* is that, if this is looked upon as a method of securing jobs for the castes concerned, it sets the poor and the oppressed belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes against their brethren belonging to the socalled "upper castes". As was noted above, the inexorable law of developing capitalism is throwing larger and larger sections of those who have been born in the socalled "upper castes" families into the ranks of the landless, the unemployed and otherwise oppressed and exploited.

The basic problems of the poor belonging to both categories being the ending of caste as well as class oppression, what is required is that the poor, regardless of caste, should join together in the struggle against their common oppressors. The manner in which the masses belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and backward communities are made to believe that reservation is the panacea for all their problems sets them against their brethren belonging to the so-called "upper castes" and weakens the struggle against the common oppressors.

Striking a personal note, I may mention that I have for the last 45 years been an ardent advocate of reservation of jobs not only for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but also for other backward communities. This, in fact, has been the stand adopted by all the major political parties in Kerala. Gradually, however, a situation developed in which the poor belonging to the so-called "upper castes" began to feel that they are being denied those opportunities which are given to the rich belonging to the backward castes.

A demand, therefore, arose that the criterion of reservation should not be caste but economic status. After a good

deal of public debate, all the major political parties in Kerala have now come to the position that, while for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes reservation purely on caste basis should continue for some time more, a combination of caste and economic status should be used in providing reservation for the other backward communities.

I would not claim that what has been proposed in Kerala is the last word even for that State. There is, therefore, no question of applying what has been suggested in Kerala to the other States. I am, however convinced that the question of reservation for government jobs as well as jobs in private institutions is becoming an extremely explosive subject, setting one section of the poor against the other. This is doing great damage to the common cause of the poor belonging to all communities. Fresh thinking is, therefore, necessary on the question, so that ways and means can be found for ensuring the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and other backward communities, while the unity between them and the poor belonging to the "upper castes" is preserved.

Several recent incidents like Villupuram in Tamil Nadu, Marathawada, Kanjawala in Delhi, etc., show that the problem of unity among the poor belonging to all castes and communities is of overriding importance today. It is easy for a demagogue to whip up passions either by "taking up cudgels on behalf of the Harijans" or by appearing to "fight for the owning but working peasants". Dividing the two sections on this basis and making them fight against one another would help only the rich and well-to-do, who want at all costs to prevent the poor uniting themselves in their common struggle.

The fact, after all, is that none of the developmental plans, the plans of helping the Harijans to uplift themselves, the plans of modernising the rural areas, etc., has helped the agricultural labourers, working peasants, artisans, low-paid middle class employees, etc., at whose expense are growing a narrow stratum of the rural and urban rich. Reservation of posts would not help more than a handful out of an ocean of the landless and unemployed to get jobs. While this is good so far as it goes, it has harmful consequences for the poor masses as a whole in that it divides them into mutually conflicting groups. What is required, therefore, is to evolve some formula or other (de-

pending on the specific condition in a particular State) through which the two considerations of caste and economic condition would be combined, so that the poor belonging to both categories can come together on a common platform of struggle, rather than getting divided into two hostile camps.

This question of reservation with regard to posts in governmental or other services has, of course, no direct relevance to the subject matter which we are discussing in this report. It, however, has its relevance in considering the reservation of 20 per cent of the Chairman's posts to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Let me at the outset make it clear that I am as much concerned as my colleagues at the total inadequacy of the representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayati Raj institutions, particularly in the key posts of Chairman. I am, therefore, fully with my colleagues in desiring to do whatever is possible to overcome this lag. This question is of the method to achieve this desirable objective.

With regard to the manner of filling the posts of members of Panchayati Raj institutions, I have already indicated that proportional representation with the list system is a better method of ensuring this. This system, which is eminently practicable in our conditions, will perhaps ensure greater representation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes than reservation of particular constituencies since every political party which contests the elections is likely to include at least one candidate belonging to this category in its list. If, as I have suggested earlier, the constituencies will each have 10 to 15 members to be elected, it is very likely that the number of Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe Candidate selected will be more than under the system of reserving certain seats for them.

I am, however, more concerned at the recommendation made by my colleagues that certain definite Panchayati Raj institutions (Mandal Panchayats, Zilla Parishads, etc.) should be declared as those which should compulsorily have a Chairman drawn from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This goes against what my colleagues state at Para IV. 11. 4 in the report, where attention is drawn to "the occasional frictions between the panchayats and the Chairman which might arise if

the Mandal Panchayat Chairman represents a direct electorate are sought to be avoided." I would humbly suggest that the same friction would develop between a Chairman who occupies that post on the sole ground of belonging to a particular caste, if the majority of his colleagues who have to work with him is temperamentally against him. Such frictions in the working of the Panchayati Raj institutions are bound to have their repercussions on the public life of the Panchayat or district concerned.

It should, in this connection, be noted that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes being by the very definition of the term, part of the "weaker sections of society" and acknowledgedly a minority in any Panchayat or rural area, they cannot defend themselves in any situation of frictions and confrontation on a caste basis unless they have the support of the majority of the poor belonging to the other castes. It is, therefore, in the very interests of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes that whatever proposals are being made to assure them a reasonable share in the Panchayati Raj administration would unite them with the poor belonging to the other castes.

I would, therefore, suggest that, instead of having a statutory provision that the Chairman of such and such Panchayat or Zilla Parishad shall always be drawn from the Scheduled Castes and/or Scheduled Tribes, a convention should be established among all the political parties contesting the elections that a minimum percentage of every party's candidates for the Chairman's posts shall be drawn from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. If this is adopted—and I see no reason why it should not be adopted—every political party which wins elections in Panchayati Raj institutions will set up that percentage of candidates for the Chairman's posts. This, in fact, may be more than what the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes get under the proposal made in the report.

Seventhly, the problems of administration and financial resources dealt with in Chapters VII and IX should, in my view, be dealt with from a different angle. I have indicated above that the four-pillar democracy envisaged by me, should mean an integration of the Central, State, District and Pan-

chayat as the essential parts of an organic whole—the administration of the country.

The manner in which the Central and all-India services, State services and the services of local bodies have been separated, with different terms and conditions of service, is creating heartburnings among the employees. The Central and all-India service employees look upon the State employees as poor relations, while the latter look upon the local body employees in the same manner. It is necessary that this is put an end to and uniformity of government officials established. This alone will make the administration an integral whole.

In the matter of financial resources, too, there is great urgency to take a fresh look from the point of view of the financial resources of the whole country. After all, the resources which are at the disposal of the State and Central Governments are those which can be attributed by the people at lower levels. It is, therefore, unreasonable to expect that after the Centre and States tap all the financial resources, which have been allotted to them and which are in fact collected from the very district and local areas where Panchayati Raj institutions are working, these latter should find their own resources independently of the Centre and the States.

There is nothing derogatory in the Panchayati Raj institutions demanding and securng grants and other forms of financial assistance from the State and the Centre. Here again what is required is that the Central and State Governments, together with the Panchayati Raj institutions, should have an overall review of the financial resources of the entire administration and agree on the proper collection and distribution of all the resources that can be tapped.

I am not raising this as a matter of theoretical generalisation. I am obliged to raise it because the report does talk of "the need for some taxes being binding upon the Panchayati Raj Institutions" (IX. 5. 4). Amongst such taxes to be compulsorily levied and collected by the Panchayati Raj institutions are land cess, surcharge on stamp duty, taxes on commercial crops, etc. It is obvious that all these are in effect additions to the burden of taxation that the rural people have to bear, since these suggested taxes are over and above what the State and/or Centre have already levied. Making these "compul-

sory" for the Panchayati Raj institutions is a proposition with which I cannot agree. That is why I suggest that fresh thought should be given to the incidence of taxation on particular sections of the people, on particular forms of property or on particular commodities which are levied by the Centre and the States and now proposed to be levied by the Panchayati Raj institutions. Such additions to the burdens at a time when the rural poor are rightly demanding relief from the burdens of existing taxation will rouse resentment and resistance.

Finally, it is unfortunate that the report does not take into consideration the fact that there are voluntary organisations which have a sizable membership and are active in the rural areas, such as the Kisan Sabha, agricultural labour organisations, student, youth and women's organisations etc. which are not and would refuse to be non-political. Many of them are very active and enjoy the confidence of the people. Wherever such organisations exist, they should be given an important role in the schemes of human resources development. I am afraid that this aspect is ignored by my colleagues because of their prejudice against political parties or organisations oriented towards them.

Let me, in the end, reiterate that, in spite of these reservations, criticisms and suggestions, I am of the view that the report, if accepted and implemented, would go far in decentralising and democratising the administration.

COLLAPSE OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLITICAL MORALITY

The Shah Commission which has submitted its third Report has drawn attention to a serious development that has of late taken place in the administration of the country—the collapse of the moral standards which are obligatory on the administrative personnel and the political leadership of the country. The overbearing attitude adopted by the political leadership, coupled with the failure of the administrative personnel to stand up to the political leaders who are acting in a blatantly illegal and unconstitutional manner, has led to a situation which is described as follows :

"The political system that our Constitution has given to our country is such that it contemplates parties with different political ideologies administering the affairs of the Centre and the State Governments. It is necessary in the interest of the territorial, political and economic integrity of the nation, to ensure that the factors which contribute to such integrity are for ever and continually strengthened and not impaired.

"One such factor, and a very important and decisive one, is the body of public servants at various levels and particularly those at the decision-making levels belonging to the different disciplines and functioning in the States and at the Centre. If the basic unity and territorial integrity of the country is to be emphasised at the political level, it is imperative to ensure that the officials at the decision-making levels are protected and immunised from threats or pressures so that they can function in a manner in which they are governed by one single consideration—the protection of public well-being and the upholding of the fundamentals of the Constitution and the rule of law. The Government ought to ensure this, if necessary, by providing adequate and effective safeguards to which the officials may turn if and when necessary against any actual or attempted threats by the political and/or administrative authorities to sway the officials from performance of their legitimate duties." (Third Report, pp 229-30)

The Commission goes on to lay down the lines on which the objective of ensuring proper administration can be attained. They may be all right on paper, but the question is whether, in the conditions in which administration is carried on today, what is laid down as desirable would become practicable. Is there any guarantee that what was done during Emergency—both by the political leadership of the Government as well as by the higher echelons of the administrative personnel—will not be repeated in the future ?

This takes us from a legal juridical examination of the findings, observations and recommendations of the Commission to a realistic assessment of the political situation in the country. After all, it was a particular political situation, described by the Commission itself in the first Report, that led to the declaration of Emergency. It was the same political situation that nurtured the Sanjays, the Shuklas, the Bansilals and so on, at the political level, and a large number of administrative personnel from Dhawn onwards. Has that situation changed ?

Let us at the very outset state that, although thrown out of power, the initiator and effective leader of the Emergency regime—former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi—and her collaborators in the political arena have no regrets for what they have done. They, on the other hand, openly defend all that was done since they were allegedly done "in the best interests of the country". As late as in the last week of August, Karnataka Chief Minister Devraj Urs made an unequivocal statement in Trivandrum (while inaugurating the State Political Conference of his party in the presence of Indira Gandhi herself) that if necessity arose, Emergency would be imposed again. Aggressive defence of Emergency regime is, in fact, the one-item programme of the Indira Congress.

At the administrative level, there are sections of officers at the Centre as well as in all the States, who do not make a secret of their admiration for the "firm" line adopted by the Emergency regime in contrast to the "spinelessness" and "inefficiency" of the present Janata Government. The inept handling of affairs (including legal proceedings to be launched against the perpetrators of the Emergency regime) by the Janata Government has strengthened this tendency not only among the officers but among the general public as well. This is the soil

on which new Dhawans, Navin Chawlas. etc. emerge, or the very same persons reappear again. There are already enough indications that Dhawan himself is making his presence felt in the caucus around the former Prime Minister.

This, however, is not all. Developments within the Janata Party, particularly during the last four months (since Charan Singh tendered his resignation from the parliamentary Board and National Executive of his party and since his lieutenant Raj Narain launched his attacks on party President Chandra Shekhar), show that a very deep crisis is developing within the ruling party. The depths to which this crisis can go was clearly seen in the accusations and counter-accusations made by the two sides when they started quarrelling which culminated in the tragicomic drama of the Suresh-Sushama affair. Nobody who has seen all this and has not lost his capacity to think, would continue to nurse the illusions about the Janata being able to replace the Congress as a stable ruling party.

Everybody who has eyes to see will come to the conclusion that, if it took thirty years for the one-party rule of the Congress to collapse, the Janata may either collapse before the five years for which it has been voted into power, or may just drag along without being an effective ruling party. The disastrous consequences of all this are already being felt. The confusions and uncertainties in the Central administration are creating havoc in the country. Anti-social elements are having a field day. Bureaucrats at every level are taking over from political leaders, and so on and so forth.

The one lesson that has to be drawn from the performance of the Congress Government for thirty years—particularly the six years of Indira Gandhi's prime ministership, that is, since she consolidated her power through the *garibi hatao* election of 1971—and the seventeen-month-long performance of the Janata Party, is that the two parties of the ruling classes in which the people had put their credence have failed them. Their rule extending over 31 years has not only ruined the country economically but undermined its moral-spiritual basis. Surveying the quarrels, attempted "mediations", the futility of the efforts at mediation, etc. among the various components of the two major political parties, one would wonder whether the famous man of letters who some centuries ago coined the phrase

"politics is the last refuge of scoundrels" had India of 1970s in mind.

It would nevertheless be useful to recall that the political leaders against whom such remarks can legitimately be made today include many who belong to the generation which, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and his comrades-in-arms had raised politics to the level of high moral standard. Among the present-day leaders of the two Congress and various constituents of the Janata are individuals who were renowned for their selfless devotion to the cause of the people. Never could anybody in those days imagine that party politics in free India would descend to such low levels as we have been witnessing of late.

One leader arrogating to herself the right to rule the country, come what may, and organising heinous attacks on the common people for protecting her throne (or rather her chair); the example of this very leader being followed by several others who would not mind giving the go-bye to every principle of morality and correct political conduct for the sake of their sons, daughters, in-laws, etc., leaders accusing and counter-accusing one another of corruption and spreading vicious scandals against one another—could all these have been imagined in the days of freedom struggle when political leaders might not be saints but there certainly were limits to their violation of moral principles?

How and why has all this happened? What precisely is the difference between the days of freedom struggle and the post-independence days?

The main thing is that politics in those days meant one's dedication to a noble cause - freedom of the country which meant freedom of the common people. Willingness to sacrifice everything that one possesses, including one's life, so that the cause may succeed in the days of the succeeding generation, if not during one's own lifetime; close contact and identification with the life and culture of the common people working in the fields and factories; respect and affection for one's colleagues who have dedicated themselves to the same cause—these were the motives that guided those who participated in the freedom struggle.

Not that they were completely free from personal prejudices, animosities, quarrels, desire for positions of power and gain etc., these were undoubtedly there and expressed themselves on occasions; in the case of certain individuals, disciplinary action had to be taken. The fact, however, remains that these were not of proportions but reduced to the minimum possible under those circumstances.

A complete change took place when the leaders of the freedom movement became the ruling party and assumed office at the Centre. Whatever personal animosities and jockeying for positions of power had manifested themselves in the pre-Independence years, got multiplied several times and affected State after State and ultimately the Centre. These quarrels were over the division of spoils of office, each wanting the maximum share and trying to foil the game of others. Claims were made by each that his or her contribution to the freedom struggle was more than that of others and that, therefore, he or she deserved a greater share of power. Furthermore, whatever share of power each had secured for himself or herself was fully utilised to strengthen his relatives and hangers-on.

That was how corruption on the part of the Congress leaders came under public notice as a new development in free India. Several old Congressmen who had found it impossible to abandon their old moral values drew the attention of Mahatma Gandhi to these developments. He in his turn was so disgusted with all these happenings that, just four days before he was murdered, that is, on January 28, 1948, he made a significant remark: "Freedom stinks in my nostrils".

An integral part of these developments in Congress politics was that individual businessman and business houses entered the political arena in a big way. Those who had shown sympathy to the freedom movement, even while refusing to risk the displeasure of the British rulers, flocked to the office of Congress Ministers for concession after concession "in return for the services rendered" during the freedom struggle. Even those who had shown no sympathy to the freedom movement started getting close to the Ministers and demanding concessions "in the interests of national reconstruction". The Ministers in their turn saw a general opportunity for themselves, their family

members, relatives and friends in the new friendship that they were able to forge with these businessmen and business houses. A close liaison between business groups and political leaders thus came to be established, scions of business houses becoming politicians and children of politicians' families turning to business.

This was the source of innumerable business deals in connection with which several Ministers were accused of corruption. In some of these cases, commissions of Inquiry were appointed which led to the exposure of many of the corrupt deals. Many, however, remain to be uncovered. This incidentally is the root of what is called "money power in the electoral process" about which everybody speaks but nothing is done.

All this has been quite natural for those whose philosophy of life is private gain. It is nothing extraordinary for businessmen to use anything for making themselves rich at the expense of the public. Buying cheap and selling dear, fleecing the poor in order to secure profits for themselves is law of nature of all those capitalists who flocked to the Congress fold after the country attained Independence. As for the Congress politicians, they had been restrained in the matter of satisfying their personal greed in the days of freedom struggle when they were obliged to work as self-sacrificing workers of the freedom movement. With the attainment of freedom, however, they had no such restraint. On the contrary, they considered it as a matter of right that they should be allowed to reap the maximum benefit out of the freedom for winning which they had sacrificed!

Such being the position of Congress politicians and businessmen, top bureaucrats in their turn could stake their claims. After all, they belong to the same social circles out of which the Congress politicians and the businessmen come. Fathers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, etc. belonging to the same family went either to business or to administrative jobs or to the politics of the ruling party. Each of them is interested in the growing prosperity of the other. None of the three sections of the ruling calss can exist without the assistance and co-operation from the other two. Once they co-operate among themselves and part with a share of the profits that they toge-

ther make with those who give various kinds of help to them, they can grow more and more prosperous.

This is how the assets of some Business houses have grown 20, 30 or 40 times what it was at the time of Independence, and how politicians, who were at best of the lower middle class status 30 years ago, have become partners in prosperous business firms. A relatively narrow circle controlling industry, agriculture, trade, banking, the newspapers, political parties and administrative machinery became the order of the day. Making profit for oneself at the expense of the people is for them quite natural, though for form's sake, they continue to speak about the need for "a clean public life". Joining all others in denouncing corruption at the highest places, they themselves indulge in and encourage corruption by others.

The collapse of moral values in political and administrative life is thus the consequence of a complete change in the political situation. The upper classes who had stood at the head of the freedom struggle and who, therefore, had to observe certain ethical values in their public life, became the rulers of the country and started using the country's freedom to enrich themselves.

It, therefore, does not apply to those political parties and organisations which are opposed to these ruling classes. The large mass of the common people, the organisations and political parties representing them and fighting for them, are interested in continuing the freedom struggle to make those who labour by the hand or the brain, the owners of the property which they produce with their own labour. They, therefore, cannot afford to join those political leaders and parties who are trying to use the country's freedom to make personal profit for themselves. They, on the other hand, are interested in enabling the common people to enjoy the fruits of their labour and, to this end, in fighting the exploiting classes. They have to go through the same brutal repression and terror which had to be faced by the entire people during the days of the freedom struggle.

The activists and leaders of the trade unions, kisan sabhas and other fighting organisations of the working people, as well as the Left and democratic political parties which give these fighting organisations the leadership they require, are

continuously subjected to imprisonment, tortures in police lock-ups, lathicharges, firings, etc. These, let us recall, were the lot of all the freedom fighters in the pre-Independence India.

Here, therefore, is a contrast between two sets of political leaders: (i) those who like the two Congresses and the Janata, represent the ruling and exploiting classes, and (ii) the Left and democratic parties which represent the fighting common people. The collapse of political morality is something which affects the former. The latter have to hold high the banner of militant struggle against their exploiters for which it is necessary to strictly observe all the principles of political morality which are the noble heritage of the entire freedom movement but which have been denounced by the political parties of the ruling classes.

The propagandists and publicists of the ruling classes would like to hide from the people the fact that there are tens of thousands of honest, self-sacrificing activists of the Left and democratic parties against whom the charge of collapse of political morality cannot be laid. They are trying to tar the two sets of political parties and leaders with the same brush, as if what is characteristic of the political morality of the parties of the bourgeois-landlord classes is true of the parties of the working people as well.

Their objective is clear--to discredit the fighting organisations and political parties of the working people, ideologically disarm the working people who have only the weapon of organisation with which they can put up an effective fight against their exploiters. Once it is driven home among the people that it is not the parties of the bourgeois-landlord ruling classes in the concrete, but political parties in general, that have degenerated and are degenerating, it would be easy for the ruling classes to prevent the common people from using the method of political democracy in their struggle against the exploiting classes.

It is, however, necessary to point out that even the Left and democratic parties are in danger of being affected by the collapse of political morality if they abandon the solid base on which their programmes and policies should be built. The basic political approach of any Left and democratic party should be that it subordinates everything else to the overriding import-

ance of strengthening the organisation and struggles of the working people. The ruling classes, however, dangle before them various temptations to corrupt them, to join the ranks of the ruling classes even while formally remaining in the camp of militant opposition to the ruling classes.

The history of the international working class movement shows that the crafty and cunning bourgeoisie is capable of corrupting a large number of individuals and even big groups, making them the tools of the ruling classes, thus dividing and disrupting the militant movement of the working class. It was the vigilance and ruthlessness with which a small minority headed by Lenin fought the Right-wing social democracy, that the cunning game of the ruling classes could be defeated at least in a part of the world. That this is not outside the realm of possibility in present-day India, too, has been shown by the vacillations and confusions in the ranks of the militant movement under the influence of the theories and practices of class collaboration.

The time has, therefore, come to have a sincere re-examination of recent developments in Indian politics, particularly in the politics of the Left and democratic movement. Then alone will the Left and democratic forces be able to overcome the division in their ranks and forge unity.

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