

**THE FIRST POPULAR GOVERNMENT IN KERALA
AND LIBERATION STRUGGLE - 1957-59:
A HISTORICAL STUDY**

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the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled **The First Popular Government in Kerala and Liberation Struggle – 1957-59: A Historical Study** is a record of bonafide research carried out by **Salim. P.M.** under my supervision at the University of Calicut. This work has not been published or submitted either in part or in whole, for any degree at any University.

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this thesis entitled **The First Popular Government in Kerala and Liberation Struggle – 1957-59: A Historical Study** is a record of bonafide research carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. V.V. Kunhikrishnan, Deputy Director of Collegiate Education (Retd.). This work has not been published or submitted either in part or in whole, for any degree at any University.

Calicut University
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ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	: Anti-Communist Front
ACC	: Anti-Communism Crusade
ACVC	: Anti-Communist Volunteer Corps
AICC	: All India Congress Committee
AISF	: All India Students Federation
AITUC	: All India Trade Union Congress
AKCC	: All Kerala Catholic Congress
ARC	: Administrative Reforms Committee
CACAC	: Combined Agitation Central Action Committee
CEAC	: Christian Education Action Committee
CEC	: Central Executive Committee
CIA	: Central Intelligence Agency
CMS	: Church Mission Society
CPB	: Congress Parliamentary Board
CPI	: Communist Party of India
CPSU	: Communist Party of Soviet Union
CSP	: Congress Socialist Party
HMS	: Hindusthan Masdoor Sangh
IB	: Intelligence Bureau
IAS	: Indian Administrative Service
IHC	: Indian History Congress
INC	: Indian National Congress
INTUC	: Indian National Trade Union Congress
ISO	: Independent Students Organisation
ISU	: Independent Students Union
IUML	: Indian Union Muslim League
JNU	: Jawaharlal Nehru University

KARB	: Kerala Agricultural Relations Bill
KCHR	: Kerala Council For Historical Research
KCBC	: Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference
KCBEAC	: Kerala Catholic Bishops Education Action Committee
KE	: Kollam Era
KEB	: Kerala Education Bill
KLA	: Kerala Legislative Assembly
KLOA	: Kerala Land Owners Association
KMPP	: Kisan Masdoor Praja Party
KPAC	: Kerala Peoples Arts Club
KPCC	: Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee
KPP	: Kerala Peoples Party
KSA	: Kerala State Archives
KSIDC	: Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation
KSMA	: Kerala School Managers Association
KSP	: Kerala Socialist Party
KSSP	: Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishath
KSU	: Kerala Students Union
KTP	: Karshaka Thozhilali Party
KWTC	: Kerala Water Transport Corporation
LPC	: Land Policy Committee
LSS	: Liberation Struggle Committee
MLA	: Member, Legislative Assembly
MP	: Member of Parliament
MSP	: Malabar Special Police
MRA	: Moral Re-Armament
NAI	: National Archives of India
NMML	: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
NSS	: Nair Service Society

ODB	: Ooranma Devaswam Board
OHT	: Oral History Transcripts
PAC	: Peoples Advisory Committee
PRC	: Police Reorganisation Commission
PSRDC	: Private School Rights Defence Committee
PSP	: Praja Socialist Party
PSS	: Private Secondary School Scheme.
PSTA	: Private School Teachers Association
RSP	: Revolutionary Socialist Party
RSS	: Rashtriya Swayam Sevaksungh
PSU	: Progressive Students Union
SC	: Social Scouts
SHL	: Sacred Heart League
SIHC	: South Indian History Congress
SNDP	: Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam
SPCS	: Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operatice Society
SRC	: States Reorganisation Commission
TC	: Travancore-Cochin (State)
TERC	: Travancore Education Re-organisation Commission
TCPCC	: Travancore-Cochin Pradesh Congress Committee
TTNC	: Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress
UGC	: University Grants Commission
UTUC	: United Trade Union Congress
UPASI	: United Planters Association of South India
VSS	: Vimochana Samara Samithi

PREFACE

This thesis is an earnest attempt to comprehend the historical background behind the formation of the first Communist led government in Kerala(1957-59) and to analyse the covert forces and the surreptitious undercurrents that led to its dismissal. The '*Vimochana Samaram*' (literally the Liberation Struggle) and the consequent intervention of the Central Government for the abrupt termination of India's first elected Communist led State Government form one of the most controversial episodes and a live subject of heated debate in the social and political realms not only in Kerala but nationwide, since then. Ironically, many of the participants of the *Vimochana Samaram* in Kerala regretted later. Thus the present study is the product of the intellectual inquisitiveness sprang up in me, particularly in the backdrop of the confessions of stalwarts of the struggle.

Notwithstanding the popularity of the term used for the agitation, '*Vimochanasamaram*' which denotes Liberation Struggle, is paradoxical and problematic. The English equivalent of the Malayalam term *Vimochanam* is Liberation which signifies getting rid of evil or wicked force. Liberation struggle implies struggle for freeing from iniquitous force. In the context of the study of the deliverance struggle against the first Communist led government in Kerala, certain questions need to be raised. What kind of liberation was needed? Liberation from what was sought? What was *Vimochanam* meant for? Is it appropriate to apply the term Liberation Struggle to portray the violent agitation against the first EMS Namboodiripad Government in Kerala? A careful survey of the policies and programmes of that government amply reveals that their administrative measures were really intended to provide a better living condition to the suffering and toiling masses. In fact such activities of that government merit to be branded real liberation programme. The term *Vimochanasamaram* to denote the anti government agitation was coined by Panampilli Govinda Menon in July 1958 in his daily speeches in support of the Seetharam mill agitation in Thrissur. Since then, to denote the agitation against the Communist government, the caste/communal leaders, vested interest groups, political leaders, all the vernacular

dailies, national newspapers and journals including the periodicals and dailies under the banner of Communist Party freely used the term. So the label Liberation Struggle (*Vimochanasamaram*) denoting the agitation against the first democratically established government in Kerala got embedded in public consciousness. This is the best example of deceptively designating, qualifying and popularising a historical event with an entirely different colouring. As this expression has got historicised, the present researcher uses the same in this study.

Starting from the Communist victory in the election of 1957 in Kerala, the thesis endeavours to consequentially examine such historical events as the formation of EMS Namboodiripad Ministry, its administrative reforms, anti-governmental and ant-Communist agitations, activities of the caste/communal groups and the Central intervention that culminated in the dismissal of the government. Due to the intricacy of the topic under research, primary sources were extensively collected and used. Data gathered from contemporary newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets and documents etc are highly useful. Abundant variety of original source materials and its scrutiny consumed much time. The pattern of documentation followed in the study is in the conventional. The Malayalam terminologies are given in italics. A separate glossary of such terms has been given.

In the compilation of this research work, I am indebted to a number of individuals and institutions who have rendered me valuable help. Though it is very difficult to name all of them here, I will be failing in my duty if I don't acknowledge my indebtedness to those who have been most generous in stretching me a helping hand. First and foremost, I fondly remember the affectionate encouragement and guidance of my supervising teacher, Dr.V.V.Kunhikrishnan, the former Deputy Director of collegiate education, Government of Kerala. Right from the selection of the topic to the final drafting of the thesis, he has been a great source of inspiration to me.

I express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Ashokan Mundon, Head of the Department of History, University of Calicut, for providing necessary facilities

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My indebtedness to Prof. T.P.Nalinakshan, Principal, University College Thiruvananthapuram is beyond words. The final compilation and scrutiny of the thesis would not have been finished without his sincere and timely help. I am also indebted to Dr. Sanal Mohan, School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University for his creative suggestions and encouragement for finishing the work.

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I wish to express my gratitude to the Archivists, librarians and staff of the National archives of India, Nehru memorial museum and Library, Central Secretariat Library, Parliament library, P.C Joshi Archives on Contemporary History, JNU, Ajoy Bhavan (CPI Office), New Delhi; Tamilnad Archives, Connimara Library, Egmore, The Hindu, Chennai, Kerala State Archives, Kerala University Library, Kerala Legislative Library, Centre for Development Studies, AKG Library, M.N.Smarakam, Thiruvananthapuram, NSS Head Quarters, Chenganasseri; Peoples Library, Ponkunnam; Pravithanam Public Library, Palai; Indian Institute of Christian Studies, Edamattam, Palai; The Malayala Manorama,Kottayam; The Deepika, Kottayam; Sahithya Academy, Appan Thampuran Museum, Thrissur; University of Calicut, Regional Archives, Kozhikode, Mathrubhumi, Kozhikode; Kannur University Library, Kannur; Sir Syed College Library, Thaliparamba; Public Library, Ezhilode; Parambath Library, Edat, Payyannur.

I am also thankful to my friends and colleagues Sri. K.V.Vinod Kumar, Sri. Harikumar, Sri. Sathish.K.V, Sri.Harikurup, Sri. K.Prakash Kumar of Government College Kasaragod for their timely help. I am thankful to my friends Prof.P.Gopinadh of Srikrishna College Guruvayoor, Dr.P.P.Abdul Rasak of PSMO College Tiruranagadi, Sri.K.P.Ravi of Government Arts College, Kozhikode, Sri. T.P.Abdul Rasheed, and Sri. Ismail Olaikara of Sir Syed College Taliparamba, Sri.G.O.Santhosh, Sri.Rajivan, Sri.Shivadashan Thirumangalath, Dr. P.T.Sebastian, Dr.P.Prabhakaran, Dr. Mohammed Musthafa and P.R.Shithor for their love, encouragement and support rendered to me.

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P.M.Salim

INTRODUCTION

The present study is an attempt to analyse the dimensions and magnitude of various issues pertaining to the first EMS Namboodiripad Government in Kerala. It was in Kerala for the first time in India that the Communist Party came to power through ballot in April, 1957. The Communist Party's assumption of power through the election was an event of inestimable historical importance for its echoes reverberated the world over. However, within a short span of twenty eight months it was dismissed by the Government of India through political moves that betray elements of a coup' d'etat. Such a policy was the culmination of the mobilization that ironically came to be referred to as "*Vimochana Samaram*"; meaning 'Liberation Struggle'. The Liberation Struggle launched by the caste and communal organisations in league with opposition parties and the subsequent Central intervention constitute one of the most controversial episodes in the history of post colonial Kerala.

The remarkable legislative reforms of the first popular government in Kerala and the clandestine actions of various right wing groups and organisations for ousting that government loomed large on the political horizon of Kerala. The ill motivated agitation coupled with the negative attitude of the central government which resulted in the dismissal of the sole non-Congress led state government in India during that time needs to be analysed threadbare. No comprehensive study has yet been undertaken on the ideology and activities of the anti-Communists which paved the way for the abrupt termination of democratically elected government in Kerala.

It may be appropriate to critically foreground certain issues of the post-colonial developments in Kerala society to that shine on the contentious politics of the late 1950's. There were definite developments in colonial

Kerala, especially in the first half of the twentieth century that created a new civil society although some of the developments could be traced to the last decades of the nineteenth century¹. The different strands of it included anti-colonial nationalism, communist mobilization against colonialism and landlordism, and social and community reforms of the first half of the twentieth century though it was far from egalitarian. These were fundamental in the genesis of a civil society in colonial Kerala. The exploited classes and castes through their mobilizations that cut across social spheres strove to make their presence in the civil society although it was not easy. However, the civil society was much contested and the dominant classes and castes always wanted to maintain their dominance. The Communist Party led mobilizations held out new imaginations to the popular classes and oppressed castes that were viewed with great fear by the dominant classes and castes. At the same time, the oppressed castes were yet to become very powerful in the political society of Kerala. In a way the interventions in the political society were thrust upon the Communist Party that could claim the support of the masses including the oppressed castes. This situation led to the dominant classes and castes to perceive a major threat to their power as exemplified in the policies that the new government had proposed. Already the dominant classes and castes had been consolidating their power in the Travancore – Cochin areas in the 1940's and 1950's through the political mobilizations. The civil society institutions were locus of the power of the dominant classes and they used them effectively to mobilize the socially conservative forces that feared the rise of the oppressed castes and the underclass. In addition to this, one may also mention the struggles in the public sphere that became spectacular. A close examination of the archives show that huge amount of literature was published on various aspect of the liberation struggle that

¹ For a discussion on civil society and political society, see: Partha Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy*, New Delhi , Permanent Black, 2011, pp 1-26

included pamphlets that dealt with theological issues published by the Catholic Church. Some of them provided the arguments against the 'spectre that haunted Europe' once as it has become a threat in their own courtyard. Some of the materials were published even as early 1930's celebrating the right wing politics in Europe in the interwar period. In addition to this, there was effective use of the public sphere to produce and circulate anti-communist ideas. There was a significant effort on the part of the leftist intellectuals to counter the propaganda of the right wing mobilization. In fact during this period we find different kind of mobilizations unleashed by the anti-communists as well as the communists.

Objectives of the Study

1. The major objective of the study is to analyse the diverse issues concerning the period of the first popular government in Kerala.
2. To examine the circumstances favouring the growth of the Communist Party in Kerala and the formation of the first Communist led Government in 1957.
3. To analyse the policies and programmes of the first EMS Namboodiripad Government and the countermoves of adversaries comprising the opposition political parties and caste/communal organisations like the All Kerala Catholic Congress, Anti-Communist Front, Christopher Movement, Nair Service Society, Indian Union Muslim League etc.
4. To inquire into the impact and repercussions of the constitutional attempts made by the first EMS Namboodiripad government at restructuring the traditional socio-economic fabric of Kerala and providing social justice to the oppressed and exploited sections.

5. To probe the transformation of caste reform movements as pressure groups with vested interests.
6. To analyse the mounting influence of the communal forces in the political history of post colonial Kerala.
7. To sift the circumstances entailing Central intervention in Kerala in 1959.

Significance of the study

An objective analysis of the important legislative reforms of the first popular government in Kerala is quite relevant because these reforms tended to redress some long standing grievances of the people of Kerala. The present study is an exploration of the activities of various anti-Communist groups and organisations for overthrowing the first popular government in Kerala, with special focus on the ‘Liberation Struggle’ in 1959. What plagues an inquisitive student here is the acute lack of academic studies on the activities of groups and organisations actuated by the negative ideology of ‘anti-Communism’ for dislodging the democratically established government. Hence an objective analysis of the activities of such groups and organisations and their impact on the socio-political life of Kerala is a desideratum.

Though the conditions of Kerala have undergone tremendous metamorphosis in due course the conflict of interests among divergent groups still persists. Similarly, hardly negligible is the lingering impact of the ‘Liberation Struggle’ in the present socio-cultural and political life in Kerala. So beyond doubt and dispute is the desirability of the academic study on the manifold aspects of the liberation struggle proving detrimental to the first popular government in Kerala.

Methodology and Sources

The study mainly hinges on primary sources collected from different archival repositories and libraries both inside and outside Kerala. Primary archival data drawn from various archives, libraries and personages across the country are indeed vital. Secondary sources include books, journals, souvenirs, biographies, autobiographies, working papers, articles and unpublished theses etc.

Extensive field work was done for gathering data from diverse sources. Data on experiences, opinions, perceptions and attitudes of the various political organisations and social groups were collected through interviews at different parts of Kerala with leaders and personalities who were directly or indirectly associated with either the Communist Party and its Government or the 'Liberation Struggle'.

Records and other source materials preserved in the National Archives of India, Parliament House library, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Central secretariat Library, P.C.Joshi Archives on Contemporary History, JNU, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi, Tamilnadu Archives, Chennai; The Hindu, Chennai; Kerala State Archives, Kerala University Library, Kerala legislative Library, Centre for Development Studies, M.N.Smarakam, AKG Centre, Thiruvananthapuram; District Public Library, Kollam, Indian Institute of Christian Studies Library, Hosanna Mount, Palai; Peoples Library, Mundakkayam, M.A John's personal collections, Kuravilangad, Kottayam; K.M.Chummar's personal collections, Vezhanganam, Palai; Priyadharsini Public Library, Pravithanam, Palai; School of Social Sciences, Mahathma Gandhi University, Kottayam; Sahitya Academy, Appan Thampuran Museum, Trissur, Father Vadakkan's personal collections, Thoyakavu, A.J.Bens' personal collections, Aranattukarsa, Trissur; University of Calicut, Regional Archives, Kozhikode, Jawahar Library, Kannur, Sir Syed Library,

Taliparamba, Ezhilod Public Library, Parambath Library, Edat, Payannur etc. have been consulted.

The writings about the first Communist government and the attendant “*Vimochana Samaram*” in Kerala appeared during the tenure of the government itself. Authors approached the subject from different angles at national and international levels. Harsha Dev Malaviya in his ‘Kerala a Report to the Nation’ published in January 1959, presented a brief report based on his direct experience and observations on various administrative measures of the first EMS government. He was a Congress leader from Uttar Pradesh and former editor of the AICC Economic Review. Having served the state for one year as the Member Secretary of the Administrative Reforms Committee, Malaviya had direct acquaintance with certain key economic measures of the first EMS Namboodiripad government. His work embodies a brief sketch of the activities of the government and its opponents during the first half of the regime. He provided a balanced view of the policies of the Government highlighting the key administrative achievements.

R. Velayudhan’s ‘*Kerala the Red Rain Land*’(1958), Jitendra Singh’s ‘*Communist Rule in Kerala*’(1959), S.C.Joseph’s ‘*Kerala: The Communist State*’, Kainikara Padmanabha Pillai’s ‘*The Red Interlude in Kerala*’, D.R.Mankekor’s ‘*The Red Riddle of Kerala*’ are some contemporary Indian works dealing with the subject in different perspectives. Gene D Overstreet and Marshal Windmiller’s ‘*Communism in India*’(1959), Taya Zinkin’s ‘*Reporting India*’ are the contemporary works by foreign authors treating of the same subject. Victor M Fic’s ‘*Peaceful Transition of Communism in India*’: *Strategy of the Communist Party*’ (1969), ‘*Kerala: Yenan of India, Rise of Communist Power 1937-1969*’(1970), T.J. Nossiter’s ‘*Communism in Kerala: A Study of political Adaptation*’(1982), *Marxist State Government in India*’ are the other important works of the alien authors, highlighting certain

aspects of the topic in question. An objective analysis of certain aspects of the subject under consideration is visible in the academic study entitled '*The First Communist Ministry in Kerala 1957-59*' by Georges Kristoffel Lieten'.

K.G.Gopalakrishnan's '*Vimochana Samaram Oru Padanam*', K.Rajeswari's '*Communist Bharanavum Vimochana Samaravum*', Andalatt's '*1957 April 5-into Porul*', P.Rajiv's(ed.) '*1957 EMS Manthrisabha Charithravum Rashtriyavum*', John Kachiramattam's '*Vimochana Samaram Oru Amukham*', T.M.Thomas Isaac's '*Vimochanasamarathinte Kanappurangal*', Kurias Kumbalakuzhi's '*Vimochanasamaram*', M.S.Sreekala's '*1957-59: Varthakalkkappuram*', Nirmala Books'(ed.) '*Palli Muthal Party Vare*', Alexander Paikada's(ed.) '*Vimochana Samarathinte Kazhchapurangal*' etc. are the significant Malayalam works discussing the subject from diverse view points. Among these works Issac's study, deserves special mention as it tries to analyse the problem in the context of the ideology and programmes of the cold war. Numerous works of EMS Namboodiripad do have a bearing on the topic of the present study. His works are especially meritorious in this respect for his being the most leading figure of the Communist Party in Kerala and head of the Ministry in 1957-59. His works are saturated with his personal observations and experiences.

The biographical narratives of the personages associated with the social-economic- cultural and political life of that period are capable of illuminating various aspects of the topic in question. In this regard, mention may be made of Joseph Mundasseri (*Kozhinja Ilakal*), Puthuppalli Raghavn(*Viplava Smaranakal*), Father Joseph Vadakkan(Enta Kuthippum Kithappum), K.A.Damodara Menon(*Thirinju Nokkumbol*), Leela Damodara Menon(*Chettanta Nizhalil*), K.P.Kesava Menon(*Kazhinja Kalam*), K.M.Chandy(*Jeevitha Vazhiyora Kazhchakal*), A.C.Mathew Edayadi(*Orma Chakrangal*), N.Bhaskaran Nair(*Udayam Muthal Asthamayam Vare*), Bhas

Kavnal(*Minnaminungu*), A.K.Gopalan(*Enta Jeevitha Katha*), K.Damodharan(*Orma Kurippukal*), Thopil Bhasi(*Olivile Ormakal*), N.C.Sekhar(*Agniveethikal*), E.Gopalakrishna Menon(*Mayatha Ormakal*), Joseph Chazhikkat (*Athmakatha*), K.C.George(*Ente Jeevitha Yathra*), Kumbalathu Sanku Pillai(*Ente KazhinjaKala Smaranakal*), P.Narayanan Nair(*Ara Noottandu*), K.Madhavan(*Payaswiniyuda Theerathu*), P.R.Kurupu(*Ente Nadinte Katha, Enteyum*), Aani Thayyil(*Edangazhiyile Kurisu*), Pala.K.M.Mathew(*Varika Varika Sahajare–Athmakatha*) Barlin Kunjanandan Nair (*Polichezhuthu*) etc. These works portray their individual experiences blended with organisational ventures in subjective manner. Biographies on Mannath Padmanabhan, Panampilli Govinda Menon, K. Kelappan, K.P. Kesava Menon, EMS Namboodiripad, K.Damodaran, A.K.Gopalan, Pattam Thanu Pillai, K.Balakrishnan, Mathai Manjuran, T.V. Thomas, K.C. George, C.Achutha Menon, E.P.Gopalan, N.E.Balaram, P.T.Chacko, R.Shanhar, Seethi Sahib, P.K.Kunju, Bafaki Thangal, C.H.Muhammed Koya etc. depict their role in the socio-political life in Kerala in the period under study.

Scheme of Study

The present thesis consists of six chapters treating of the central theme apart from an **introduction** and **conclusion**. The introduction itself being an outline of the research programme, makes clear the significance and objectives of the study. It also discusses the approach and methodology besides the logical connection of the chapters and their thematic relationship.

The opening chapter attempts to sketch the genesis and growth of the Communist movement in Kerala up to 1957. It focuses on the evolution of leftist groups in Kerala and allied aspects in the second quarter of the 20th century. The official formation of the Communist Party and its novel programmes in Kerala are dealt with in this chapter.

The second chapter analyses the electoral politics in Kerala in 1957. Due emphasise is laid on electoral alliances and campaigns, election manifesto and the results. It also accounts for the victory of the CPI and portrays the despicably negative attitude of the Governor towards the Communist Party.

The third chapter enumerates the cardinal administrative reforms of the Government in spheres like police, labour, industry, education, agriculture, Local Self Government etc.

The fourth Chapter treats the growth and consolidation of anti-Communist forces in the state. This chapter attempts to highlight the role of various caste/communal groups like the All Kerala Catholic Congress(AKCC), The Anti-Communist Front(ACF), The Christopher Movement, The Nair Service Society(NSS), The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana yogam(SNDP), The Indian Union Muslim League etc. The Chapter also shows how publications such as pamphlets, monologues, dramas and narratives were employed to intensify anti-Communist actives in Kerala.

The fifth chapter is devoted to describe the diverse agitations culminating in the violent deliverance struggle against the government. It analyses the aggressive moves of the communal forces against the Kerala Education Act, held to be the most controversial piece of legislation of the government. An attempt is made in this chapter to thrash out the truths ingrained in the Andhra rice deal, Kattampilli land encroachment agitation and the controversial reservation issue. This chapter also exposes the hollowness of the opposition charge that the defective police policy of the government resulted in a state of insecurity in the State(*Arakshitavastha*).

The agrarian reform measures favouring the peasants and ryots and antagonising the landed gentry are also analysed in this chapter. How the

caste and communal forces took advantage of this opportunity to invigorate anti government agitation is also analysed. The chapter also discusses the manifold strategies and tactics forged by diverse anti government groups leading the so called Liberation Struggle which caused the extinction of the Communist government.

The sixth chapter centres around Central intervention and the dismissal of the first EMS Namboodiripad government in Kerala. It examines the attitude of the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and that of Union Cabinet ministers towards the Communist led state government. The chapter describes in brief the negotiations between central and state governments and the activities culminating in the ouster of the first Communist led government in Kerala.

The conclusion sums up the study with some observations and findings.

CHAPTER I
**COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS IN KERALA
UP TO 1957**

In the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, Karl Marx and Frederic Engels introduced Scientific Socialism (Communism) as a socio- economic and political ideology for the formation of a classless society. During the first half of the twentieth Century this ideology profoundly influenced the minds of the toiling millions of many countries of the world. V. I. Lenin, the great revolutionary adopted and adapted it to suit the requirements of Russia and successfully brought about the great October revolution of 1917.

Deriving inspiration from Russian developments, minor Communist groups were set up in some of the Indian cities in 1920s. But the real credit for the formation of Indian Communist Party goes to M.N.Roy, the veteran leftist thinker.¹

Initiative was taken by the dedicated Marxists to co-ordinate the activities of the Communists in India. Alarmed at the growing activities of the Communists, the British authorities in India framed three conspiracy cases in Peshwar in 1922. Consequently, the Communist revolutionaries had to undergo long terms of imprisonment. In 1924 the British again fabricated the Kanpur conspiracy case implicating key Communist leaders like Muzafar Ahamed, S.A.Dange, Shoukat Usmani and others.²

In 1925 a conference was held at Kanpur for unifying the various Communist groups. A resolution was passed at the conference for the formation of CPI with its head Quarters in Bombay.³ The main contribution

¹ Jyoti Basu (Ed), *Documents of the Communist Movement in India.*, Vol. I P. XXXI

² Ibid., p. XXXIV.

³ Ibid. P. 318.

of the Kanpur conference was the consolidation of diverse regional Communist groups.⁴

The British colonial government of India grew intolerant of the free functioning of the Communist Party in the Country. So pressure was exerted on it to work in the Indian national Congress. This was unacceptable to the Communists for it entailed compromises with the bourgeoisie. So the Communist International persuaded the Communists in India to form a party composed of workers and peasants to precipitate anti-feudal and anti imperialist revolution.⁵ With this end in view a meeting of workers and peasants was held at Calcutta in December 1928.⁶ To prevent this Party from gathering strength, the British concocted the Meerut conspiracy case(1929) implicating the entire leadership. The Meerut trial which dragged on for four years, though crippled the activities of the Communists, popularised the ideas of Communism, agrarian revolution and complete independence.⁷

Towards the end of 1920s a powerful left wing emerged within the Indian National Congress. This fraction led by Subash Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru etc, stood for radical agitation against the British.⁸ The growing discontent against imperialism induced the Indian National Congress to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Communists, owing to the unfriendly attitude towards the bourgeoisie, did not actively participate in the movement.⁹ But quite visible was their indirect participation in various provinces.

⁴ Ibid. Pp. 320-323 (Excerpts from Muzaffar Ahamed's Memoirs "Myself and the Communist Party of India" pages 407-413)

⁵ Ibid. forward of H.S.Surjit, P. XXXIV.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ EMS Namboodiripad., *Indian Communist Prasthanam 1920-1998*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, p.23.

⁸ Reba Som, '*Differences within Consensus- The Left Right Divide in the Congress-1929-39*', Orient Longman, new Delhi, 1995, pp. 72-73.

⁹ R.Palme Dutt, '*India Today*', Calcutta, 1986(7th reprint), p. 364.

The Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934 as a block within the Indian National Congress. From inception it favoured the idea of left unity and highlighted the idea of total independence and agrarian revolution.¹⁰ Under the impact of the 7th congress of the Communist International (1935), the Indian Communists hardened its attitude towards the Indian National Congress and the national bourgeoisie. They joined in the Congress Socialist Party without sinking their membership in the Communist Party.¹¹

By the beginning of 1930, the Communist ideology had got permeated in the minds of some of the political workers of Kerala. But the crystallisation of the Communist Party in Kerala took place after a lapse of eight years.

The historic “Poorna Swaraj” (full independence) of the Lahore Congress session of 1929 and the trial and hanging of Bhagat Sing and other revolutionaries had their far reaching echoes in Kerala region too. This led to the formation in 1931 of the ‘Communist League’ in Thiruvananthapuram under the guidance of Ponnara G. Sreedar, N.P. Kurikkal, N.C. Sekhar and others.¹² Like its counterparts elsewhere in the country, this Communist group was also a mere local association of youngsters inspired by Communist ideology.

The youthful congress leaders of Kerala having Communist leanings were enamoured of the Civil Disobedience Movement launched by the Indian national Congress. K. Kelappan who plunged into the movement led a jatha from Calicut to Payyannur on 13 April, 1930.¹³ P. Krishna Pillai also participated in the breaking of the Salt Law at Kozhikode beach on 12th May

¹⁰ Jyoti Basu, op. cit. Vol. III, p. IX; Reba Som, op. cit. p.15.

¹¹ Reba Som, op. cit.

¹² N.C. Sekhar, ‘*Agniveethikal*’ (Autobiography-Mal), Kannur, 1988. p. 186.

¹³ M.P. Manmathan, ‘*K. Kelappan*’ (Biography-Mal), Current Books, Thrisur, 1984, pp. 142-149.

1930.¹⁴ Besides his active participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement, A.K.Gopalan served as the volunteer captain of the *jatha* staged in connection with Temple Entry movement of 1930s.¹⁵ Consequently these leaders gained experience and popular base which later helped them to organise vigorous left wing movement in Kerala.

In January 1932 K.P.C.C. and several other Congress committees were declared unlawful by the British. As a result all the top leaders were arrested. It was at this critical juncture that EMS Namboodiripad made his appearance in the Congress politics.

A meeting of the Congressmen sympathetic to socialist ideas was held on 12th May 1934 at Calicut under the presidentship of K.Kelappan.¹⁶ At this meeting a decision was made to hold the first state conference of the Congress Socialist Party in Kerala in May 1935.¹⁷ C.K.Govindan Nair and P.Krishnapillai were respectively the elected President and secretary of the party. A committee with the following members was also formed: 1) EMS Namboodiripad, 2) P.Krishnan Paniker, 3) K.P.Gopalan, 4) H.Manjunath Rao,5) P.Kumaran.¹⁸ The organisation of the peasants and workers on socialist principles was stated to be one of the aims of the party.¹⁹ In this development was discernible the faint beginning of left politics in Kerala.

¹⁴ The Mathrubhumi , 25th April 1930., A.K. Pillai, '*Congressum Keralavum*'(Mal). 1945, p.143.

¹⁵ A.K.Gopalan, '*Ente Jeevitha Katha*'(Autobiography-Mal), Chinta Publishers, TVM, 1985, pp.62-67.

¹⁶ Antalat, '*Sakhakkale Munnot*'-collected works of P.Krishnapillai, Vol. II, p.181.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ T.J.Nossiter, '*Communism in Kerala- A study of Political Adaptation*', Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1982, p.77

¹⁹ A.K.Poduval, '*Kerala Karshaka Prasthanathinte Oru Lakhu Charithram*, Thiruvanthapuram, 1969, p. 115.

In 1935 EMS Namboodiripad was elected one of the four joint secretaries of the All India Congress Socialist Party. But the Indian Communists considered the CSP as a bourgeois party.²⁰

Apprehensive of being isolated from the nationalist mainstream due to their opposition to the nationalist movement, the Indian Communists adopted the “United Front” strategy,²¹ which necessitated contacts with national elements by working within the CSP and the Congress simultaneously.

In mid 1935 the CSP leaders of Kerala kept in touch with the Communist Party central committee, through its member P. Sundarayya.²² In July 1937, the CSP leaders – EMS Namboodiripad, P. Krishna Pillai, N.C.Sekar and K.Damodaran – formed a secret fraction within the Congress Party state executive committee.²³ The meeting of this fraction was held in camera at Calicut in October, 1937, S.V. Ghatte attended this meeting as a representative of Communist Party central leadership. EMS affirms that the origin of the Communist Party in Kerala would be traced to this meeting.²⁴

The miseries emanating from the economic depression of 1930s facilitated the diffusion of Communist ideas among the workers. The problems that plagued the industrial workers (coir) and agricultural labourers in the Alappuzha area were taken advantage of by the Communist leaders in this respect. The Communist Party activities that gradually gathered momentum in the area culminated in the eruption of the Punnappra-Vayalar agitation in 1946.²⁵

²⁰ N.C.Sekar, Op.cit., p. 227.

²¹ Reba Som, op. cit. p. 153.

²² EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil*, Vol. I, Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1984, P.11.

²³ EMS Namboodiripad, *Reminiscence of an Indian Communist*, New Delhi, 1987, p. 60.

²⁴ EMS Namboodiripad, op. cit. p. 60.

²⁵ N.E.Balaram, *Keralathile Communist Prasthanam Adyanalukalilude*, Prabhat Book House, Thiruvananthapuram, 1973, p.93.

From October 1937 onwards a secret committee of the Communist Party was already working in the KPCC under the label of CSP. The ideological conflicts within the Congress Party at all India level seriously affected the KPCC. The resolutions and day to day affairs of the KPCC bore a leftist tinge. The leftists enlisted the support of the nationalist Muslims of Malabar in their bid to tighten their grip over the Congress Party in Kerala.²⁶ The leftists came to have a strength of four members in the KPCC having a total membership of ten. They secured majority in subordinate committees too.

During the period of 1938-40, the leftists who predominated KPCC devised programmes in tune with the directions of CSP leadership.²⁷ They attempted to form various class organisations in order to mobilise mass support.²⁸ Literary weapon was employed for ideological campaign.²⁹ This included publications of various weeklies, pamphlets, articles etc. Thus workers, peasants youth, students, teachers and women came to be incorporated into the mainstream of nationalist agitation.³⁰

Attempts were made to organise labour unions having political outlook. Such unions were to serve as the feeder organisations of the Communist Party.³¹ A meeting of the All Kerala Students Federation (AKSF) was held at Calicut under the presidentship of Soumyendra Nath Tagor.³² By the end of 1938, the All Malabar Peasants union had as many as 30,000

²⁶ T.J.Nossiter, op. cit. p.74.

²⁷ EMS Namboodiripad, *Autobiography*, 1970, pp. 336-37.

²⁸ Andalath, '*Keralathile Thozhilali Vargathinte Piravi*' (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1989, p. 108.

²⁹ EMS Namboodiripad, '*Jeeval Sahithyavum Saundarya Bodhavum*', Chinta, Thiruvananthapuram, 1973, p. 4.

³⁰ K.C.George, '*Ente Jeevitha Yathra*,(Autobiography-Mal), P. 342.

³¹ T. J. Nossiter, op. cit. p. 74.

³² M.Rasheed, '*K.Damodaran*'(Biography-Mal), Kottayam, P. 37.

members.³³ At the instance of the Communist Party, K.Damodaran organised Muhamma Coir Factory Workers Union in 1938.³⁴

When EMS Namboodiripad became the secretary, vigorous programmes were chalked out to expand the party at the village level.³⁵ The committees were formed in villages, which had offices attached with libraries, peasant unions, teachers unions etc.³⁶ The Communist leaders relied on literary creations, folk arts, dramas etc to win over the backing of the people at the grass root level, particularly the peasants.³⁷ K.Damodaran's celebrated play "Pattabakki" deserves special mention in this context.³⁸

Study classes based on political and economic matters, drill camps, physical culture clubs etc were organised.³⁹ A state volunteer camp of one month duration was set up in 1938. Persons thus trained at these centres acted as teachers to lead village level activities later.⁴⁰ A trained corps of 3000 volunteers came into existence under the guidance of Sardar Chandroth.⁴¹ In 1939, a summer school class lasting one month on political and economic problems was conducted.⁴² Its aim was to spread socialist and Communist ideas. The "Hunger March"(Pattini Jatha) under the leadership of A.K.Gopalan(in 1936) was also a part of the leftist political campaign.⁴³

After the enforcement of the Government of India Act of 1935, elections were held to the legislative assemblies. In most of the provinces

³³ T.J.Nossitter, op. cit.

³⁴ M.Rasheed, op. cit.

³⁵ EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil*, op. cit. p. 52

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Antalat, 'Rekha Illatha Charithram', Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, p. 80.

³⁸ A.K.Gopalan, 'Ente Jeevitha Katha, op. cit. p. 145.

³⁹ Antalat (Ed.), *Sakhakkale Munnottu – P. Krishnapillai*(Mal), Vol. II, PP,291-292.

⁴⁰ N.E.Balaram, 'Keralathile Communist Prasthanam, Vol. I, Prabhat Book House, Thiruvananthapuram, 1973. P.205.

⁴¹ Antalat, *Rekha Illatha...* op. cit. p.90.

⁴² EMS Namboodiripad, op. cit.

⁴³ A.K.Gopalan, op. cit. pp.110-125.

Congress formed ministries. During this period the leftists changed their negative attitude towards elections. They demanded that the ministers should exercise their power to meet the needs of the people.⁴⁴ With this purpose the leftists started campaigns and agitations for drawing mass attention and acquiring organisational growth.

As stated earlier, the success of Russian revolution and the growth of Soviet Union as a Communist power greatly inspired the Indian Communists. The Congress Socialists of Kerala had strong affinity with the Communists, and this led them to have an emotional attachment with Soviet Union.⁴⁵ This emotional attachment led the Indian Communists to commit some blunders in the subsequent periods.

The outbreak of Second World War in 1939 had its salutary effect on the Communist movement in India. The British government's unilateral association of India with Britain's war efforts and its refusal to promise minimum post war concession prompted Congress to make the drastic decision of tendering resignation of Congress provincial ministries in October 1939.⁴⁶ The protest launched by Gandhi in October 1940 was moderate in nature. He organised *satyagraha* in such a limited manner as not to hinder Britain's war efforts.⁴⁷

The Indian Communist's made up their mind to take advantage of the pre occupation of the British with the Second World War. They were bent upon launching a mass agitation for dislodging the British.⁴⁸ The Communist called the first phase of the Second World War (from October 1939 to July

⁴⁴ EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil*, op. cit. P.39.

⁴⁵ Ibid, P. 43.

⁴⁶ Reba Som, op. cit. p. 234.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See, EMS Namboodiripad, *Quit India Samaravum Communistkarum*, Chinta, Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1992. p.7

1942) ‘the imperialist war’. Like their counterparts elsewhere in India the Communists of Kerala conducted anti-imperialist campaigns.

The first organised meeting in connection with the functioning of the Communist Party in Kerala was held in October 1939 at Pinarayi a village in North Malabar.

The Communists of Kerala were still working within the Congress Party. At the same time they perpetuated their connection with the central leadership of the Communist Party. Now they were constrained to adopt a two-pronged strategy. In their capacity as KPCC office bearers they favoured peaceful protest and agitations. But being Communists they had to resort to violent activities. The government took rigorous repressive measures to quell the Communist activities. Consequent on the imposition of ban on the Communist Party, the leaders relied on underground campaigns. By mid 1941 almost all the key figures except EMS Namboodiripad had been detained. The left dominated KPCC gave a clarion call to observe 15th September, 1940 as ‘anti-repression day’. This observance and the attendant retaliatory measures of the government contributed to the outbreak of violent incidents at Thalasserry, Morazha, Mattannur etc.⁴⁹ Finding no alternative, the Congress High Command disbanded KPCC and nominated an ‘ad-hoc’ committee.⁵⁰ Thus the Communists were deprived of an open platform fit for political campaign. T.J.Nossiter promptly observes, “Fifteenth September 1940 marks a special stage in the history of the Party; from here onwards the period of Congress Communism is closed. Communist Party in Kerala became an independent political party directly opposing the Congress and other parties.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ EMS Namboodiripad, op. cit. p.54.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ T.J.Nossiter, op. cit. p. 85.

Bolshevik method of party campaign was followed in the underground activities of Communist leaders of Kerala. They found clandestine campaign centres in each of the Taluks of Malabar and key spots in Travancore, Cochin and Manglore. Weekly communication with regional centres was effected through a state centre. Party bulletins were released every week.⁵²

The Kayyur riot was a notable incident in that period. Kayyur is a remote village in Kasargod Taluk of former south Kanara. Peasant patriots of that village under the leadership of Communist cell organised an anti imperialist procession on 28 March 1941, in which a policeman was killed. Subsequently the police terrorism disrupted the peaceful life of that area. Later four 'ryot patriots', known as Kayyur comrades were hanged on 28 March 1943.⁵³

K.P.R.Gopalan was caught and punished for his alleged involvement in the Morazha case. After a farcical trial the authorities decided to award him death penalty. The 'Save KPR Forum' was formed and vigorous agitations were launched under its aegis. Bowing to popular pressure, the government commuted the death sentence of KPR to life imprisonment.⁵⁴ The save KPR movement enabled Communist Party to gain appreciable mass support and utilise legal opportunities for political propaganda. The Kayyur and Morazha trials together kept peoples attention drawn to the Communist Party continuously for a considerable period.

Adolf Hitler's invasion of Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, brought about a marked change in the attitude of the Indian Communists towards the colonial authorities. For the Indian Communists the 'imperialist war' now assumed the character of a 'peoples war'.

⁵² N.E.Balaram, '*Keralathile Communist Prasthanam*', p. 285. Also see- EMS Namboodiripad, op. cit. p.94.

⁵³ K.K.N.Kurup, *Kayyur Riots.*, Sundhya Publications, Kozhikode, 1978, pp 17-59.

⁵⁴ The Mathrubhumi, 25th February to 25th March 1942.

When the Indian National Congress passed the Quit India resolution on 9th August 1942, the Indian Communists were actively involved in the anti-Fascist campaigns. The Communists apprehended that the agitation would badly affect the anti-Fascist allies.⁵⁵ For a short period, the Communists had benefited from this policy. The government lifted ban on Communists. Hence, they no longer needed to continue the underground campaign. Its leaders were released from jail. Communist Party central committee office was opened in Bombay. Publications were started in various languages. Desabhimani press and weekly came into existence. Party schools, general body meetings, training camps etc were effectively conducted.⁵⁶ In every aspect party workers became energetic. In March 1943 the first state conference was held at Kozhikode.⁵⁷ And in 1943 the first Party Congress of Indian Communist Party was held at Bombay.

Account of the membership of Kerala party reported in the first Party Congress

Party members	-	2500
Volunteers	-	10,000
Full time party workers	-	300 ⁵⁸

Thus, “the party took advantage in its legality to build a more effective organisation and, under the device of co-operating with the authorities in anti fascist propaganda and Grow More Food Campaigns used every opportunity to proselytize”.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ EMS Namboodiripad, *Quit India Samaravum Communistkarum*, Chinta, TVM, 1997, p.7.

⁵⁶ EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil*, op. cit. pp. 158-168.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 175.

⁵⁸ Antalat, op. cit. p. 92.

⁵⁹ T.J.Nossiter, op. cit. p. 85.

A new generation of anti-imperialists believed that the CPI was the agent of British imperialism. The Communists were late to realise their follies in opposing the Quite India agitation. They got isolated from the main stream of the nationalist movement.⁶⁰ Ideological conflicts became deep rooted within the party all over India. Kerala was no exception to this.⁶¹ Following the first Party Congress P. Krishnapillai liquidated the party committee. The anti feudal agitation launched by the party on the excuse of scarcity of food grains against hoarders and black marketers⁶² helped partly to neutralise the propaganda carried out by its opponents. The abstinence of the Communists from the Quit India movement could in part be attributed to their impartiality in analysing the real political situation and to implicit commitment to the doctrine .

The period 1945-46 saw the adoption of a new militant line by the Communist Party at the national level. The 'August Resolution' of 1946 urged the party to resume its leadership of mass struggles and develop the fighting initiative of the masses and prepare for the decisive struggle for freedom and power.⁶³ The new militant line suited the general political climate of Travancore and the socio political context of Ambalapuzha and Sherthalai Taluks.⁶⁴ Naturally a direct confrontation with the state seemed inevitable. The government records testify to the extreme care taken by the administrative machinery to counter the Communist threat in the two Taluks.

⁶⁰ A.K.Pillai, *Congressum Keralavum*, Kottayam, 1986, pp.409-415.

⁶¹ EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil*, op. cit. pp.91-92.

⁶² M.N.Kurup, 'A.V.Kunhambu- (Biography Mal), pp. 204-211.

⁶³ 'The August resolution' had spoken about broad based peoples struggles for civil liberties, working class demands and democratic constitutions. For detailed reading, see, '*Documents of the Communist Movement in India*' Vol. IV.

⁶⁴ K.C.George, *Punnapra-Vayalar*, Prabhat, Thiruvananthapuram, 1972. 79.

These circumstances eventually resulted in the Punnapra-Vayalar uprisings. Hundreds of Party workers courted the martyrdom.⁶⁵

Under the impact of the August Resolution, minor peasant uprisings broke out in some of the villages of North Malabar. The heroic resistance of the peasants of Karivellur, Kavumpai, Korome, Munayankunnu etc helped the party to expand its mass base.⁶⁶ The broadening mass base of the party was amply proved by the number of votes secured by the Communist candidates who contested the elections in Malabar and Travancore.⁶⁷

The second party congress of Indian Communist Party was held at Calcutta in February 1948. The party congress brought about change not only in leadership but in policies and programmes as well. Most of the delegates from Kerala and Andhra were in favour of the 'Joshi line'.⁶⁸ But the party congress adopted the historic 'Calcutta Thesis' which was more militant in nature.⁶⁹ The party boycotted the Cochin election of 1948. As a sequel to this, the government banned the Communist Party. Many leaders were arrested and imprisoned. Others went underground. The party was confronted with unprecedented difficulties. The railway workers strike of 1949 ended in fiasco. The inner party conflicts and discords reached a high pitch. To tackle the situation the leadership adopted stern disciplinary measures against the deviant comrades. The imprisoned comrades were called upon to defy the jail

⁶⁵ K.C.George states the death of 290 workers. While P.J.Chериан in his Doctoral thesis on 'Punnapra-Vayalar' uprising pints out the casualty of 190 persons including 30 policemen and 2 army men.

⁶⁶ K. Damodharan, '*Oru Indian Communistinte Ormakurippu*'; Prabhat , Thiruvananthapuram, 1990, p.29

⁶⁷ K.G.Gopalakrishnan, '*Vimochana Samaram Oru Padanam*', Nakshatram Books, Attingal,1994, P.56.

⁶⁸ For details, see (1) EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil*, Vo. 1; (2) Strategies and Tactics for Peoples Democratic Revolution. '*Documents of the Communist...*' op. cit.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

authorities.⁷⁰ The adventurous policy brought huge losses. Consequently the party suffered a serious setback. Workers in general were plunged into passivity. There was a steady decline in the party membership.⁷¹

During 1948-50 great confusion enveloped the party as to which path it should tread on for Indian Revolution – Whether the Chinese or the Russian.⁷² A four member delegation consisting of Basava Punnayya, and Rajeswarra Rao representing the Chinese path and S.A.Dange and Ajay Ghosh representing the other trends visited Soviet Union to resolve the issue.⁷³ The CPSU leadership (CPSU-Communist Party of Soviet Union) advised the party to evolve an Indian strategy to carry out Indian revolution.⁷⁴ Accordingly new programme and tactical lines were adopted by the party at its All India Party Conference held at Calcutta in 1951. The adopted programme concludes:

“ Our party cells up on the toiling millions, the working class, the peasantry, the toiling intelligentsia, the middle classes as well as the national bourgeoisie interested in the freedom of the country and the development of prosperous life- to unite in a single democratic front in order to attain complete independence of our country, the emancipation of the peasants from the oppression of the feudal lords, improvement in the life of all working people, to bring about a major forward stride in our agriculture, a major forward stride in our national industry and secure the cultural advancement of our country”.⁷⁵

The adoption of novel programmes reinvigorated such mass organisations linked to the party as peasant unions, trade unions etc. In

⁷⁰ EMS Namboodiripad, op. cit. p.339.

⁷¹ Gene D Overstreet & Windmiller, *Communism in India*, 1960, p.357.

⁷² EMS Namboodiripad, *Indian Communist Prasthanam 1920-1998*, TVM, 1998, p. 94.

⁷³ EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil*, op. cit. p. 343.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Jyoti Basu (Ed.) *Documents of the Communist Movement in India.*, Calcutta, 1997, Vol. IV. P. 583

contrast to parliamentary parties which were active only during elections, the Communist Party remained active round the whole year.

During this period A.K.Gopalan emerged as a mass leader of the Party in Malabar. He gathered thousands of people under the banner of the Party. The tireless work of the party leaders in Travancore-cochin area gave added strength to the party in that area.

In 1953 the third party congress of CPI was held at Madurai. The domestic and foreign policies issued by Jawaharlal Nehru threw the Communist Party of India into a vortex of confusion.⁷⁶ He favoured cordiality and co-operation in India's relationship with the Soviet Union.⁷⁷ In internal policies he clung to a leftist approach or the so called Avadi Socialism.⁷⁸ Uncertainty griped the Communist Party as to the attitude to be adopted towards the changing policies of the Congress.⁷⁹ At the fourth party congress of the CPI held at Palakkad in 1956 this matter became a subject of heated discussion. Majority of the delegates disapproved of amicable policy towards the Indian National Congress.⁸⁰ Having hardened its stand towards the Indian National Congress the Communist Party in Kerala attained considerable electoral success both in Malabar and Travancore.

⁷⁶ EMS Namboodiripad, *Indian Communist Prasthanam*, op. cit. p. 112.

⁷⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India was the chief architect of the formulation of India's foreign policy. The basic principles of India's foreign Policy include; the policy of Non-Alignment, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, anti-racialism, punch sheel etc.

⁷⁸ The so called 'Avadi Socialism' is a resolution adopted in the historic conference of Indian National Congress held at Avadi in Tamilnadu in December 1957. The much discussed resolution proclaimed that the aim of Indian National Congress is the creation of a socialist society in India.

⁷⁹ EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil*, Vol. II. Pp.47-51.

⁸⁰ Op, cit. Pp. 58-62.

In the 1952 elections to the Assembly of the integrated Travancore-Cochin state the candidates of the CPI nominally standing as independents,⁸¹ won 18% of the poll, and its partners in the United Front of the Leftists a further 5%. The CPI fighting in 53 of the 123 constituencies, won 29 seats while its Revolutionary socialists(RSP) and Kerala Socialist(KSP) allies 7 seats of their 21 constituencies.⁸²

In Malabar the CPI made alliance with Kisan Masdur Praja Party. The KMPP-CPI united front won 13 out of the 32 seats.⁸³ Thus in 1952 elections the Communist Party had considerable success both in Malabar and in Travancore.

In 1954, elections were held to the State Assembly in Travancore-Cochin and the District Board in Malabar. The party made electoral agreement with PSP in Travancore. Though the alliance secured majority it could not form the government due to the betrayal of PSP.⁸⁴ In Malabar, the Communist Party emerged as the strongest party securing nearly 40% of the total votes polled and wresting 50% of the seats.⁸⁵

The CPI which gained confidence through electoral success could not turn a blind eye to the popular struggles that emerged in different parts of the country for the formation of linguistic states. The party which sympathised with the cause took the fight for linguistic states as a fight to establish a true Indian federation.⁸⁶ The Kerala unit of the CPI, the RSP and the KSP

⁸¹ The Communist Party was banned in 1948. It was after the elections in 1952 the Government lifted ban over the party.

⁸² T.J.Nossiter, op. cit. p. 111.

⁸³ In 1952 elections, the CPI adopted a united front strategy in Malabar which helped the party to expand its mass base.

⁸⁴ K.G Gopalakrishnan, op. cit. p. 64.

⁸⁵ Ibid; EMS Namboodiripad, op. cit. p.38.

⁸⁶ The CPI gave a Marxist theoretical tinge to the concept of linguistic states. See EMS Namboodiripad, *The Communist Party in Kerala*, National Book Centre, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 87-88.

exhorted the Keralites to join together for 'Aikya Kerala'(United Kerala), the birth right of the *Malayalees*.⁸⁷ *Aikya Kerala* conventions were held inside and outside Kerala. They were demonstrative of the popular aspirations favouring the formation of the linguistic *Aikya Kerala*. Class organisations including trade unions and *Kisan Sangams* traced the *Aikya Kerala* demand at the grass root level.⁸⁸ The *Aikya Kerala* Movement actively espoused by the Communists became a mass movement towards the end of 1953.⁸⁹ The dream of United Kerala was eventually translated into reality on November 1, 1956. General election to the Kerala Legislative Assembly was held in February-March 1957.

⁸⁷ Puthuppalli Raghavan, *Viplava Smaranakal, Vol. V*. D.C.Books, Kottayam, 1996. p. 93.

⁸⁸ See, A.Valsalan, 'Formation of Kerala-Problems and Perspectives'; unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Calicut, 2010, pp. 138-145.

⁸⁹ Puthuppalli Raghavan, op. cit.; EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil*, op. cit. pp.77-81.

CHAPTER - II

**ELECTORAL POLITICS AND
CABINET FORMATION - 1957**

The emergence of United Kerala State (*Aikya Keralam*) on November 1, 1956 was the fulfilment of the legitimate aspirations of the *Malayalees* ¹. The provincial conference of the Kerala unit of the Communist Party was held at Thrissur from June 22 to 24, 1956 in the wake of the President's rule in Kerala. At the conference was passed a resolution entitled 'Measures for achieving a democratic and prosperous Kerala'. ² The first part of the resolution was appreciative of the role played by itself and the people in the '*Aikya Kerala*' movement. It convinced the people that the goal of '*Aikya Kerala*' was only a part of the task, the other being transformation of Kerala into a democratic and prosperous state of all the *Malayalees*. Critical of the Congress Party, the second part of the resolution exposed the anti-linguistic policy of the prominent section of the Kerala unit of the Congress. ³ The resolution emphasized the fact that the poor management of the Congress Party prevented the people from enjoying its vast natural resources. The mobilization of the people in a united political struggle would culminate in the realization of the industrializing the state and laying the foundation for socialism. ⁴

¹ The formation of Kerala State (a state for the Malayalam speaking people) was a part of the linguistic state formation. The same day witnessed the emergence of four linguistic states - Andhra Pradesh, Mysore[Karnataka] and Tamil Nadu came in to existence. This development resulted from the dissipation of the demarcation between south Indian Princely States and British Indian provinces.

² New Age. Vol. III. No. 43 (July 22 1956) Pp.4 – 13.

³ Puthupally Raghavan '*Viplava Smaranakal*'(Mal) Vol. V .p.95. The Congress leaders did not held identical views in regard to United Kerala(*Aikya Kerala*) Movement. While some stood for *Aikya Kerala*, others favored Greater Kerala, still others clamored for Linguistic Kerala. V.M Fic, '*Kerala, Yenan of India*' p.66., K. Rajeswary – "*Communist Bharanavum Vimochanasamaravum*" p.54

⁴ New Age, op. cit.

For the materialization of the aforesaid dream was devised an efficacious programme. Demand was raised for the convention of Assembly with a view to ending instability in the state. The programme sought popular support to evolve an electoral alliance comprising the left parties, individuals with democratic and progressive attitude and those Congress men, who opposed the reactionary policies of the Congress. The programme also envisaged the formation of a government by all parties on the basis of a minimum programme. The resolution called upon the people to wage a struggle against injustice, corruption and undemocratic activities of the president's rule. (The Central Government was urged to the State Legislative Assembly prior to the rise of the state of Kerala on 1st October 1956)?.⁵ To achieve this goal people should tread on the path of organized agitation. Such efforts should be crowned with the formation of a government responsible to the legislature in lieu of the undemocratic president's rule.⁶ People were exhorted to make concerted efforts to arrest the rise in prices, to enhance the wages of workers, to ensure fair prices for agricultural produce, to prevent land evictions and to fulfil other similar demands of the people.⁷

The resolution highlighted the immense enthusiasm generated among the people when the Communist Party, the PSP and the other left parties presented a united front during the general elections in Travancore-Cochin. The anti-Communist stand subsequently adopted by the PSP dampened the spirit of the people and disheartened them to oppose the undemocratic policies of the Congress. The CPI kept on persuading the PSP to draw lessons

⁵ "Kerala: Communist Party's Slogan: Alternative Government of Democratic Opposition". *New Age* . Vol. III , No. 47. (August 19, 1956) p.12.,

⁶ Puthuppally Raghavan, '*Viplava Smaranakal*', op. cit., p.97.

⁷ N.4 and 5; Also see: EMS *Sampoorna Kritikal* (mal)Vol.16.

from its previous erroneous stance and to join United Left Front in order to establish a pro peoples government.⁸

The national conference of the PSP was held at Gaya in December 1955. The background of the conference needs to be laid stress on. Two groups within the PSP were at loggerheads on the question of it's relation with other parties. While Ashok Mehta advocated unstinted co-operation with the Congress, Dr.Ram Manohar Lohia vehemently opposed it.⁹ Thus on account of internal bickering the PSP at its conference at Gaya favored electoral alliance with neither Congress nor Communist Party nor Communal organizations.

Sensing the harmful implication of that decision on Kerala politics, EMS Namboodiripad wrote an article, which, identified the areas of difference and agreement between the CPI and PSP. He appealed to the PSP leadership to set aside the areas of difference for a larger cause and to form a united front on the basis of identical aspects.¹⁰

General election of 1952 and the byelection of 1954 and Malabar District Board elections of 1954 and the municipal election of Travancore Cochin revealed the diminishing support base of the Congress.¹¹ In the meantime, Provincial meeting of CPI was held at Ernakulam from October 6 to 9 -1956. Deriving inspiration from the article of EMS, the CPI asked the PSP to reconsider its stand in the larger interest of the people of the state.¹² In response to this demand the PSP at its third national conference in Bangalore

⁸ See. New Age. July 22 and Aug 19-1956.

⁹ EMS Namboodiripad –“*Indian Communist Prasthanam-1920-1998*” [Mal] p.118.

¹⁰ EMS, “Let us Strive for United Action. Policy Statement of the PSP and of the Socialist Party show that Despite differences with the Communists, There is a vast area of agreement”. New Age Vol. III No.16 (January 15, 1956)Pp.3-12. ; MVM Koteswara Rao, ‘*Communist Parties and United Front-Experience in Kerala and West Bengal*’. Hyderabad 2003, p 127., Also see EMS Namboodiripad, ‘*Sampoorna Kritikal*’ vol. 16 .

¹¹ Puthupally Raghavan, *Viplava Smaranakal* P-97

¹² New Age Vol. IV No. 4 October 21, 1956-

slightly modified its stand on the alliances. Realising the mutual competition among parties would debilitate the democratic opposition, the PSP permitted its state unit to enter into limited electoral adjustments. This paved the way for lengthy negotiations for the seat adjustments between the CPI and PSP. The emphasis was on getting the better of the deal instead of ensuring the defeat of the Congress. The PSP demanded as many as 20 seats out of total of 49. Later the demand was reduced to 15 seats. The CPI which had swept the Malabar District Board elections(1954) with 38.5 % of votes, was prepared to concede 13 seats to the PSP. In the Travancore -Cochin area where the PSP raised a demand for 41 out of 77 seats.¹³

Releasing the election manifesto of PSP on 5th January 1957 at Calcutta its prominent leader N. Sreekandan Nair hinted at united Front's possibility of securing majority in the ensuing elections in Kerala and West Bengal.¹⁴ He made mention of the understanding between CPI and RSP in Kerala. The negotiations of the CPI to reach an understanding with PSP did not bear fruits owing to latter's excessive demand for seats.¹⁵ The negotiations with RSP also met with some fate. The CPI was constrained to contest the election alone extending support to 19 independent candidates. Despite the failure of negotiations, the CPI nursed the desire to form the government with the co-operation of the PSP even if it would get an absolute majority.¹⁶ Demonstrative of their sincerity, the CPI propped up the PSP candidates wherever it did not put up its own candidates.¹⁷ In the words of

¹³ "What stands in the way of Electoral Agreement". "Kerala PSP's Unhelpful Attitude, Unreasonable Demands", New Age Vol. IV, No.17 (January 20, 1957), pp 9-12., A.K.Gopalan, `Kerala, Past and Present`, London 1957, p.93.

¹⁴ K.G.Gopalakrishnan, `Vimochanasamaram oru Padanam` (Mal) P-66.

¹⁵ V.M. Fic "Kerala , Yen an of India". P 65 .

¹⁶ E.M.S. `Communist Party Keralathil` (Mal) p. 84.

¹⁷ R.Ramachandran Nair, `How Communists Came to Power in Kerala` .p.18

EMS Namboodiripad this stand of CPI was instrumental in PSP victories in two constituencies.¹⁸

In the meantime attempts were made from different corners to form an alliance of Congress, PSP and Muslim League. It was the scheme devised by Father Vadakkan and Anti Communist Front (ACF) to defeat the Communists in 1957 election. This scheme which came to be known as “Mattanchery Thesis”¹⁹ became a topic of prolonged political discussion. The kernel of this scheme was to ensure the defeat of the Communists through electoral adjustments with PSP and the Muslim League. The Congress men did not approve of the thesis in the hope that they could win the election on their own.

²⁰ But quite bitter was the lesson they learned. Commenting up on this aspects Father Vadakkan observes:

“It was the false prestige of the Congress that dissuaded it from giving any credit to the so called ‘Mattanchery Thesis’. They would realize their mistake before long. In the elections held after the dismissal of the Communist ministry in 1959 the Congress made an electoral alliance with the PSP and the League. What we had seen in 1957 the Congress could see only in 1960”.²¹

The Congress men in Kerala, as elsewhere, sought votes on the basis of the glories of the Congress in the freedom struggle and scorned at the Communist for all their doings and failures during those days. But past glory proved of no avail. The record of the Congress, as also of the Praja Socialist Party, left no doubt in the minds of the people of Kerala as to what sort of Government they would get if they came to power again.²² In 1948, even

¹⁸ EMS- *Selected Writings* Vol-2, P-125

(Puthiyannur and Chalakkudy were the two constituencies)

¹⁹ Father Vadakkan `Ente Kuthippum Kithappum` (autobiography, Mal),Kottayam,1974, p.95.

²⁰ Father Vadakkan `A Priest's Encounter With Revolution`, Bangalore, 1975, p.59.

²¹ Father Vadakkan – “Ente Kuthippum Kithappum “-(Mal) P 95

²² Harsh Dev Malaviya “Kerala A Report to the Nation”, New Delhi, 1959, P.10

though the Congress commanded all the seats in the legislature of Travancore, its government collapsed within six months of its formation²³.

So the Congress started its election campaigns in 1957 when its prestige was at its lowest ebb. There was a fierce scramble for tickets in the Congress camp. The Congressmen entertained the notion that the Communists of Kerala like their counterpart in Andhra Pradesh, where its strength declined in 1955, would suffer reverses in the polls. They also seized up on international incidents like Hungarian affair, which was seized up on to paint, the Communists as blood thirsty murderers.²⁴ It was also anticipated that the exposure of Stalin by Khrushchov,²⁵ would also come in their favor. All this factors strengthened the hope of the Congressmen to regain the lost power. The reckless scramble for tickets aggravated factionalism inside the Congress.²⁶

To brighten the prospects of the Congress, S.K.Patil, the veteran election manager of the Congress, was deputed to Kerala to organize the campaign. He had worked wonder in Andhra Pradesh to the advantage of the Congress.²⁷ The Congressmen in Kerala thought him to be capable of repeating the performance here.²⁸ Realizing that winning the election was not an easy task, the shrewd Patil explored the feasibility of forming a United

²³ The first general elections for the Legislative Assembly of the state of Travancore was held in February 1948; So high was the prestige of the Congress in those days that it had just a walkover in the election , securing all but one seat and the solitary independent who was elected , joined the Congress party soon after. A Ministry formed under Pattam Thanu Pillai which fell in September 1948, that is, a bare 6 months after it came into existence.

²⁴ It is said that in 1956 in Hungary the Soviet Military was instrumental in assassinating the nationalist Prime Minister Imri Nagi and appointing Janos Kader.

²⁵ Father Vadakkan “*Moskovil Pokunna Mukya Manthriyodu*”(Pamphlet- Mal) ACF, Trissur,1958, P.4

²⁶ Kunhanandan Nair, ‘*Polichezhuthu*’, (Autobiography Mal), Kozhikode, 2005.p.113.

²⁷ Mid Term Election in Andhra in March 1955, where the Communist Party received a stunning blow in that its representation in the Legislature was reduced from 41out of 140 seats to 15 out of 196 .-EMS “*Conflicts and Crisis*”- *Political India 1974*-P.41

²⁸ H D Malaviya , “*Kerala A Report to the Nation*”, P. 11

Front comprising the Muslim League and the Kerala Peoples Party.²⁹ The support of the Muslim League to the minority Ministry of Rajaji in Madras in 1952 and the subsequent Congress - League understanding in the municipal elections in the Madras state had also created a favorable atmosphere for the Congress Muslim League alliance in Kerala³⁰.

S.K Pattil, Panampilli Govinda Menon and R. Shanker conferred with K.M Seethi Sahib, the general Secretary of Muslim League, for an electoral alliance.³¹ But some Congressmen foiled the efforts behind the scene. The Congress High Command apprehended that an alliance with the League would adversely affect their position in North India.³²

It may be recalled in this context that on an earlier occasion, Prime Minister Nehru had sarcastically commented on the efforts of Communists and other Left parties to forge a united Front as “the fusion of three lame men cannot make a strong men”³³.

S.K.Patil’s efforts to woo the PSP failed on two accounts. The PSP at its Bangalore conference put a ban on any alliance with other parties. The other factor was the ill will between the PSP leader Pattam Thanu Pillai and Congress dignitaries of Kerala.³⁴ So Patil endeavored to enlist the support of the Muslim League. But this roused the intense opposition in the ranks of the Congress especially Muslim Congressmen.³⁵ Patil’s attempt to win the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ M Abdul Aziz , ‘*Rise of Muslims in Kerala Politics*’ CBH Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1992, P. 51

³¹ K.M Seethi Sahib , “*Keralathil Muslim League*” – Souvenir , 1959 P27

³² K.K Muhammed Abdul Kareem , “*Sher-i-Kerala*” , *Seethi Sahib* (Mal) , 1960 P-108

³³ M.C Vadakara. “*C.H Muhammed Koya Oru Rashtriya Jeevacharithram*”, Kozhikode, 1996, P. 327

³⁴ Congress withdrew the support to Pattam’s Cabinet in Travancore – Cochin in December 12, 1954 resulted in the resignation of Pattam Ministry .

³⁵ A.K.Pillai, *Congressum Keralavum* , Kottayam, 1986, p.437.

backing of Kerala Peoples Party too was abortive. Thus the dream of the Congress to forge an effective electoral alliance was dashed to the ground.³⁶

Quite defective was the Congress management of Kerala elections. This is exemplified by the fact that till 27, January 1957, that is 48 hours before the last date for filing nominations, the organization had not succeeded in finalizing the names of candidates for more than a dozen constituencies. Frantic efforts continued to be made to `discover` suitable candidates for some constituencies where Congress victory was rather uncertain. In this background, Congress claims of being the only organization capable of providing a stable government to the newly constituted Kerala state aroused only scorn and laughter³⁷.

The first Kerala state conference of the PSP was held on 5th January 1957 at Puthukkad in Thrissur. The deliberations were mainly centered on two issues-one was the evolution of the state committee of the PSP, and other was the formation of the strategies for the imminent general elections. The state committee was formed with PattamThanu Pillai as chairman and M.P.Govindamenon as general secretary. At this conference a heated debate occurred regarding the election strategy. Majority of the representatives from Malabar argued for keeping an equal distance with Congress as well as Communist Parties on the basis of Gaya conference.³⁸ But delegates from Travancore - Cochin stood for the implementation of the Bangalore resolution.³⁹

³⁶ Father Vadakkan “*Keralam Chuvannathengane* “ (Mal),ACF Publications, Thrissur, 1959, P-17. H.D. Malaviya, Op. cit. P-11

³⁷ Ibid., ,H.D.Malaviya. op. cit

³⁸ Interview with T.C.Ashokan Master, former socialist leader at his residence at Vadakara on 14-3-2010

³⁹ The PSP National Council meeting at Bangalore forbade electoral alliances with other political parties, but recognized election adjustments at constituency level.

The election to the first legislature of the Kerala state was fixed to be held between February 28 and March 11, 1957⁴⁰. Certain Socialists pleaded for Communist alliance on the ground that the Communists had eschewed the revolutionary method and were ready to co-operate with democratic process⁴¹. However the discussion in this regard failed and the CPI decided to contest in the election independently⁴². In this circumstance PSP continued the effort to make electoral adjustments with the Muslim League. After a series of discussions an agreement was signed with Muslim League leaders, at the instance of K.B. Menon.⁴³ A democrat to the core, Menon believed that minority occupies a unique position in a democratic set up. Menon appreciated the political significance of the cultural and religious minority.⁴⁴ However, he did not consider this merely a political strategy but also as a policy of national integration and communal harmony. He decided to uplift the Muslim League which was looked down upon by the Congress.⁴⁵ His intention was to bring this minority to the main stream of National politics.⁴⁶ The alliance with the PSP enhanced the prestige of the Muslim League which had been described by Nehru as “dead horse”⁴⁷ and at the same time it proved beneficial to the PSP also. This alliance in the face of the growing strength of the Communist party was a boon to the Muslim League. In addition to boosting the morale of the League, the alliance effectively tried to stall the possibility of the Communist’s sweeping the polls as the Congress position in Kerala was still too weak to resist it⁴⁸.

⁴⁰ C.N.Somrajan, *Aspects of Kerala Society and Politics*, Quilon 183-p.24

⁴¹ P.K.Appa Nair, *PSP and Public Election*, `Samadarsi`, 13th September, 1956.

⁴² EMS, *Selected Writings*- Vol. 2. p.127

⁴³ M.C.Vadakara-`C.H. Muhammed Koya...` op. cit. Pp323-324

⁴⁴ K.B.Menon, *Muslim Minority in Kerala State*-K.B.Menon papers, NMML New Delhi

⁴⁵ Father Vadakkan, `Keralam Chuvannethengane` (mal), ACF Publication, Trichur, 1959, P. 18

⁴⁶ K.B Menon paper, op. cit.

⁴⁷ M.C.Vadakara, op cit .p.327.

⁴⁸ M. Abdul Aziz, *Rise of Muslims in Kerala Politics* “op. cit. P51.

The association with PSP Leaders won the appreciation of the Muslim League leadership. Even in remote countryside the workers of both parties acted in close co operation. Muslim League leaders like CH Muhammed Koya and Bafakki Thangal, sought the presence of socialist leaders like Arangil Sreedharan at election meetings.⁴⁹

Before finalizing its list of candidates, the Communist Party strove to reach some united front agreement with the RSP and PSP and offered them undue concessions in the process. At the same time it entered into agreement with non party democrats of proved integrity like A.R.Menon, P.K.Koru Master etc.⁵⁰ Bent up on setting up an alternative government the Kerala Committee of the Communist Party went to the extremity to effect some kind of left unity. The PSP and RSP being under a false notion that they were at a vantage position, were hesitant to come to terms with the Communists.⁵¹ Thanks to the excessive demands of the aforesaid parties, the negotiations initiated by the Communists fell flat.⁵²

The aborted negotiations proved more pernicious to the PSP and RSP than to the Communists. The RSP failed to secure a single seat out of the 28 it contested. The PSP strength shrank drastically from the previous 19 (Travancore-Cochin State Assembly) to 9 in Kerala. Analyzing the election results the special correspondent of the “Statesman” `reporting from Trivandrum thus:

“In 1954 the Communists had unnecessarily sacrificed some seats to placate the Praja Socialists and the Revolutionary Socialists in a bid to form a united anti Congress front. But it required an embittered battle of ballot box to prove that the

⁴⁹ M.C Vadakara , ‘C.H Muhammed Koya’ ...op. cit. (Mal) P 324

⁵⁰ K.C John, *Kerala Rashtriyam Orasambandha Natakam* (mal), P 95

⁵¹ Malaviya, op.cit. P 14

⁵² A.K.Gopalan – “*Ente Jeevitha Kadha* “(mal), Chinthra, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, P-226 .

Revolutionary Socialists were making unreasonable demands for seats if the Communists wanted a pre-election alliance’⁵³.

Following futile efforts at securing electoral alliance with the PSP and RSP, the Communist Party reached the final phase of its electoral campaign which was crowned with the publication of Election Manifesto in January 1957.

The manifesto was a unique document, which combined hard hitting punches against the Congress with a constructive programme of political, economic and social reforms⁵⁴. The first part of the manifesto was framed in nationalistic and patriotic terms. It lauded the role played by the Communist Party in the formation of the united Kerala and charged the Congress with anti national and unpatriotic policies, bordering on notional betrayal on that question. The manifesto made a sweeping statement that the future of the new state was not at all secure because several conspiracies against it were underway⁵⁵. Three conspiratorial groups managed the future of the state :

- a) advocates of the southern state (greater Kerala).
- b) exponents of the western Coastal States, (*Aikya Kerala* based on language) and agitators for the *Akhanta Kerala*.⁵⁶

All these groups had not given up their separatist ambitions. Their aim was, said the manifesto, to see that there would be no stable government as a result of the forthcoming elections. This in turn would create a constitutional crisis, causing the presidential rule to continue under the pretext that the new state was an artificial conglomeration unable to rule itself. All these groups

⁵³ Statesman, 20th March 1957. NMML

⁵⁴ V.M Fic, *Kerala- Yen an of India* ,P. 65

⁵⁵ Ibid P-66

⁵⁶ Puthupally Raghavan , *Viplavasmarnakal*(mal), Vol. V ,p 93.

pursued the separate ambitions. They believed that, mentions the manifesto, non stable government would emerge from the ensuing elections.⁵⁷

It was against this background that the manifesto called upon the people to rally behind the Communist Party not only to defeat the machinations but also to realize the dream of prosperous Kerala. The record of the Congress party amply proved that, states the manifesto, it could not rule and the Congress movement had failed to attend even to the barest necessities of the people despite enormous natural resources of the state.⁵⁸

It is explicit in the manifesto that Communist Party would admit that the government of India and the All India Congress Party had adopted a number of progressive measures⁵⁹. It was a matter of satisfaction to the Communist Party to note that the Congress party, which for years had been attacking the Communist by saying that socialism could not grow in the soil of India now declared that the socialism was the goal of the country⁶⁰. Similarly, the Communist Party drew satisfaction from the fact that the Congress party – which in the past had labeled the Communists as Russian agents for holding the Soviet Union, China, and other socialist states as real friends of India – now accepted this as a fact and worked for strengthening of ties with these socialist lands⁶¹.

After the criticism of the central government and All India Congress Party, the manifesto took the Congress party of Kerala to task. The document declared that the Congress stood indicted for “not accepting even those progressive measures which Pandit Nehru and All India Congress leadership

⁵⁷ New Age – Vol. III no 2 P Feb 10-1157 Pp. 8- 10

⁵⁸ Puthupally Raghavan, op. cit.p.117.

⁵⁹ V.M.Fic,op.cit.pp.65-68

⁶⁰ R.Ramakrishnan Nair, `How Communists Came to Power in Kerala`, Thiruvananthapuram, 1965. p.25.

⁶¹ New Age, Vol. III. No.2. Feb 10-1957 Pp. 8-10,; Father Vadakkan, *Keralam Chuvanathengine* (Mal) ACF Thrissur 1959 P- 61

had adopted ⁶². If after 10 years of the Congress rule, Kerala still remains a problem state, the responsibility must fall upon the heads of the local Congress leaders. They failed to implement the programme for the development of Kerala mapped out by the Central Government- large sums allocated by the Five Year Plan had not even been spent but indulged in factional quarrels, breaking the heads of the people agitating for their demands ⁶³. This had generated hatred and dissatisfaction even among the patriotic Congress men, adds the manifesto.

The manifesto made a bid at placing the leadership of the ‘people’ against the decadent rule of the Congress in the hands of the Communist Party. The document said that people of Kerala had enough of the Congress rule, and that they would tolerate no longer its anti people policies. Their verdict had already been recorded in the general elections of 1952 and 1954, the Malabar District Board elections in 1954, and the Municipal Elections in Travancore – Cochin late in 1955 and early 1956 ⁶⁴. In the next elections, so predicted the manifesto that, people would reject the Congress even more firmly as defeat was the fate of any majority party which ruled by bayonets and against wishes of the people.

The political instability in the state could be terminated, said the manifesto, only if the majority of people voted in favor of progressive policies. The Communist party was fighting this election to fulfill this desire of the people ⁶⁵

To convince the people that the Communist Party would be able to rule, if entrusted with the mandate by the electorate, Manifesto cited the

⁶² V.M.Fic, op. cit.

⁶³ New Age , Vol. III, No, 2, Feb 10, 1957, Pp. 8- 10

⁶⁴ New age, Vol. II No 29 - April 15, 1956 .p.5

⁶⁵ Ibid

record of the Communist ruled Panjayats and above all, the successful Communist stewardship of the Malabar District Board.⁶⁶

... ... The people also knew that the administration of many municipalities and of the Malabar District Board under the leadership of the 'Communist party' was better than before, and that both the panchayaths which won awards from the Prime Minister Nehru for good administration were under the leadership of the Communist Party. These experiences had made it clear that the Communist Party was capable not only of uniting the people for conduct of agitation, but also of running the administration successfully⁶⁷.

Making the final appeal to the voters, the manifesto declared that the Communist Party had no programme other than developing Kerala into a democratic and prosperous state, which would enable the party to face the people confidently.

The last part of the Manifesto enumerated economic, social and administrative reforms. The principal ones may be mentioned below.⁶⁸

- 1) In order to provide necessary fund for the national development programme, the central government would be requested to increase the capital allocation for Kerala's second five year plan from Rs 870 million to Rs 2000 million.
- 2) These funds could be productively utilized to boost industries thereby furnishing fresh employment opportunities.

⁶⁶ 'Communist Manifesto for Stable Government, Prosperous Kerala', New Age. Vol. I, No. 20 (Feb 10, 1957) P. 9

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ This section of manifesto is taken from New Age, Vol. III No.2, Feb 10-1957, Pp. 8- 10; Jitendra Sing- 'Communist Rule in Kerala', pp 22-24., V.M.Fic 'Kerala Yanan of India'- Pp 68-70 and Puthuppally Raghavan, *Viplava Smaranakal*, Pp.61.62

- 3) A portion of the same fund would be devoted to organizing co-operatives in industries like coir, handloom etc.
- 4) Also explicit was the mention to grant a wage hike to industrial workers and plantation labourers.
- 5) Enhancement of workers' bonus to 12.5 percent of the actual wage was also envisioned.
- 6) To moot an Agrarian Relations Bill with the objective of bringing about fundamental changes in the agrarian sector. Among its objectives may be mentioned protection of tenants' interests, putting a ceiling on land holdings, redistribution of surplus land among the landless and fixing fair rents.
- 7) An anti-eviction bill would be introduced to bring immediate relief to the tenants, maintain the present status quo in the tenure and to prevent the eviction of tenants before the passage of the proposed Agrarian Relations Bill .
- 8) Special attention would be paid to the enhancement of food production in order to transform Kerala from a food deficit region into a surplus one.
- 9) To launch an intensive housing programme with due care to ensure sufficient supply of basic commodities at fair prices.
- 10) To re structure the police policy, in such a way to avoid the interference of the police in the agitations of workers, labourers and students. Grant of 'unfettered freedom' to working class was the real aim. Rigorous enforcement of the labour laws in the interest of workers and at the cost of those of employers was evidently emphasized.

- 11) Tea, coffee and other foreign owned plantations would be nationalized
- 12) To revamp the entire educational system and the practice of government subsidies to schools.
- 13) The entire administrative structure of the state would be reorganized through decentralization of power. Measures would be adopted to increase efficiency, eliminate red tape-ism and bring down cost.
- 14) Truce less crusade would be carried out -against corruption, nepotism and favoritism in order to guarantee transparency in administration

Thus the election manifesto of the Communist Party contained short and long term programmes for a prosperous Kerala.⁶⁹

This manifesto was employed by the Communist party as the chief weapon for offending other parties including Congress and attaining upper hand in the whole election campaign. Well equipped with this manifesto ‘the Party could successfully field as many as three lakh workers’.⁷⁰ House to house squad work and a number of corner meetings and demonstrations were conducted .

During this period Kerala Peoples Arts Club (KPAC), a cultural forum, rendered yeomen service in the field of ideological campaign through out Kerala. The celebrated play ‘Ningal Enne Communist Aakki’ (You made me Communist) by Thoppil Bhasi and the music programs of the KPAC troops made tens of thousands of people champion the cause of Communist Party. This programme was noted for its novelty⁷¹. Such stars of KPAC as Sulochana, Sudharma, Vijayakumari, O.Madhavan, K.S George, P.K

⁶⁹ K.G. Gopalakrishnan, “*Vimochanasamaram Oru Padanam* (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1994. P 70.

⁷⁰ “Cross Roads” April 14, 1957 .(from the collections in Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi)

⁷¹ Puthuppalli Raghavan, *Viplavasmarnakal* (Mal) Pp 62,107

Maedhini etc came to lime light. They were indeed comrades to the core. Quite considerable was their contribution to Communist fermentation of the period.

K. Dhamodharans '*Pattabhakki*', Cherukad Govinda Pisharadi's '*Nammalonnu*' (We one) and E.K. Ayamu's '*Jje Nalloru Manusanakan Nokku*' (You try to be a good man) etc were some other meritorious dramas which left on the masses an indelible imprint of Communist ideology thereby lending additional strength to the election campaign.⁷²

The district committees of the Communist Party chalked out various programmes to activate the entire party machinery for election campaign. These programmes were⁷³

1. To summon meetings, to discuss in detail the election manifesto and the decisions of party conferences of Trichur, Aluwai and Ernakulam .
2. To convene the meetings of party members and well wishers explaining party decisions.
3. To organize the squads of party members for conduct vigorous election campaign.
4. To make arrangements for the house to house distribution of statement prepared on the basis of manifesto and for collection of contributions to raise fund. Puthuppally Raghavan pertinently points out that 'such types of activities evoked considerable popular response. At the initial phase staunch party members alone participated in the squad work. But before long more and more people embracing students, the youth and

⁷² K Rajeswari '. Pp 29-31

⁷³ Puthuppally Raghavan,.p.81.

the aged joined the squad apace. They sang revolutionary songs with great zest and zeal. That was indeed a different experience'.⁷⁴

The Congressmen in Kerala received a direction from the top to adopt moderate propaganda methods.⁷⁵ Congress president Debar came campaigning to Kerala. At Alapuzha, a Communist stronghold with a Communist ruling municipality, he thundered:

'No books are there in Moscow libraries on how to run the administration of an Indian State '. He sought to snub the Communists by saying that "state craft is no child's play, and if the Communists could run one or two municipalities, that is no reason why they could take over the state administration"⁷⁶ .

Next he visited another place where an independent candidate contested election with Communist support . Dhebar compared independents to painted women flirting with different parties and warned that these independents were the greatest danger to the nation. Nullifying his statement, a few days later Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Panampally Govinda Menon waxed eloquent at Kasaragod in support of an independent, Dr. Shenoy, who was contesting against A.K. Gopalan for the Loksabha⁷⁷ .

An important advantage enjoyed by the Congress in respect of election campaign in Kerala may be mentioned here. This was unstinted support lent by the Catholic clergy and Christian Planters.⁷⁸ Catholic Bishops went to the extent of releasing a pastoral letter⁷⁹ exhorting the faithful to vote against

⁷⁴ Ibid P.99

⁷⁵ H.D Malaviya, op.cit, p.12.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ A.K. Gopalan, *Ente Jeevithakatha*-(mal)P. 227

⁷⁸ 'Who support in Communist in Kerala- an Analysis of the 1957 election results'- Economic Weekly, April-1 1959 P 10 - 66

⁷⁹ N.Jose Chandar (ed) *Dynamics of State Politics-Kerala*,p.92.

‘ungodly Marxists’.⁸⁰ With a view to winning the popular sympathy in favor of the Congress the ‘Malayala Manorama’, the embodiment of anti-Communist sentiments exaggerated the danger in the event of the Communists emerging victorious in the election.⁸¹ The Communist management of Kerala elections offered a contrast to that of the Congress. The Communists, no doubt, failed to amass as much resources as the Congress. But they succeeded in galvanizing the literate electorate.⁸² The Congress propagandists relied more and more on the power of the lungs. They hardly touched on the burning economic issues of the land. The Communist propaganda on the other hand pertained to the grave economic problems that the Malayalees had to face in the daily life. In this context it is worth mentioning that a research in the state committee of the Communist Party strove for months to devise an economic plan for the nascent Kerala. The results of this study were meticulously incorporated in a pamphlet by C.Achuthamenon the then secretary of the state Committee of CPI. This pamphlet, apart from assessing the natural and human resources of Kerala, gave an insight into the acute economic ills of the people.⁸³ Besides, the pamphlet propounded concrete and feasible proposals. No wonder, these

⁸⁰ Babulal Fadia, ‘*State Politics in India*’, Vol. II. New Delhi, 1995, P 95 .

⁸¹ Anti Communist propaganda of Malayala Manorama is well Known. It is said that Mamman Mappila, the owner of Manorama in 1940s and 50s declared that he would commit suicide by drinking poison if the communists would come to power in Kerala. P Rajive (ed.) ‘*1957 EMS Manthri Sabha -Charithravum Rashtriyavum*’ .p.222-article of Dr.Sebastion Paul, a well known media analyst. Sri. K.C. George, in his article in ‘*Mamman Mapila Smaranika*’(1970) pointed out the same argument. He further says that when the Communists came to power in Kerala, this Mamman Mapila and his family gathered money by selling poison. He indirectly hinted that the circulation of Malayala Manorama and its propaganda against the Communist government was equal to the selling of poison against the Communists

⁸² Father Vadakkan .op.cit.p7

⁸³ C Achuthamenon, ‘*Keralathinoru Master plan*’ - Pamphlet (Mal) 1957 Prabhat Book House

valuable points got crept into the manifesto of the state Communist Party which was issued as a supplement to the CPI election manifesto.⁸⁴

The Communist propaganda left greater impact on the electorate than that of the Congress. The Communist stalwarts patiently explained to the electorate the merits and demerits of the policies pursued by different political parties.⁸⁵

The most astonishing feature of the Communist election management in Kerala was the sagacity and care with which the candidates were selected. This was a departure to from the defective selection method of the Congress. In Communist camp there was no scramble for tickets or group rivalries.⁸⁶ Prior to the election notification, the Communist party state leadership took cognizance of the peculiarities of each constituency with special attention to the role and influence of diverse political parties. The party had no hesitation to field some talented independent candidates with bright prospects.⁸⁷ The recommendations of the lower committees were also heeded by the party in the selection of candidates. Such strategy was formulated well in advance of the date of nomination and the entire party stirred into action with intense cohesion.⁸⁸

The Congress Party had to pay a price for its feeble election strategy. Exemplary unity, trained cadres, able leadership, intellectual primacy, fearlessness, dedication to the goal etc were made matters easier for the Communists in Kerala⁸⁹. Drawing lessons from the mistakes of the Andhra Comrades who had dissipated the energies in contesting almost all seats in

⁸⁴ EMS, *Communist Party Keralathil* Vol. II P 85

⁸⁵ K Damodaran, ' *Indiyum Socialisavum*' (Mal) 1958, P84

⁸⁶ H.D,Malavya.op.cit.p.13

⁸⁷ K. Rajeswari, *Cmmunist Bharanavum Vimochana samaravum*(Mal) p 57.,EMS, *Communist Party Keralathil*, Vol. 2. p.86

⁸⁸ H.D.Malaviya, p.14.

⁸⁹ Father Vadakkan, '*Keralam Chuvannathengane*' (Mal) 1959, p 9-10.

1952, ⁹⁰ the Kerala Communists prudently confined themselves to only 100 seats. The candidates fielded by the Congress generally lacked the sincerity and sense of sacrifice that the veteran freedom fighters had possessed. Among the charismatic Communist candidates mention may be made of EMS Namboodiripad, A.K. Gopalan, C. Achutha Menon, K.Damodaran, K.P.R Gopalan, E.P Gopalan, E.Gopalakrishna Menon, K.G. George, T.C Narayanan Nambiar, P.T. Ponnos, T.V Thomas, R. Sugathan etc.⁹¹

The first elections to the Kerala Assembly were held from February 28 to March 11, 1957. Out of the total 126 seats ⁹² 11 seats were reserved for scheduled casts and one for scheduled tribes. The number of constituencies was 114, of which 12 were two number ones ⁹³. The electors numbered 7,514,626 and the total number of valid votes polled was 5,837,577 ⁹⁴. Percentage of polling was 65.49. One candidate was returned unopposed ⁹⁵. For the 125 seats there was contest. Altogether 389 candidates contested.

The party wise distribution of candidates who contested the elections is as follows.

Congress	124
Communist	100
Praja Socialist Party	62
Revolutionary Socialist Party	28
Muslim League	19
Independents	<u>56</u> ⁹⁶
Total	<u>389</u> ⁹⁷

⁹⁰ EMS Conflicts and Crisis - political India 1974-p.41; Indian Communist Prasthanam 1920-1998 P.121

⁹¹ K. Rajeswari . op. cit P. 57.

⁹² Total strength of the legislative was 127 including one nominated Anglo- Indian

⁹³ In the two member constituencies each voter has two votes.

⁹⁴ Assembly Elections Since-1951- Department of Information and Publication, Government of Kerala -2006

⁹⁵ M.Umesh Rao from Manjeswaram was the independent uncontested member

⁹⁶ 19 of them were supported by the Communists.

⁹⁷ R. Ramakrishnan Nair : '*How Communist Came to Power in Kerala*'. P 13.

There were no electoral alliances except an electoral understanding between the PSP and Muslim League. Therefore, there was triangular contest and even four- cornered contest in several constituencies. There was straight contest only in 21 constituencies⁹⁸

The following table shows the result of the 1957 elections.⁹⁹

Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Deposit forfeited
Congress	124	43	5
Communist	100	60	4
PSP	62	9	28
RSP	28	0	22
Muslim League	19	8	0
Independent			
Supported by the Communist Party	19	5	0
Other Independents	37	0	31
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Total	389	125	90

The Communist party set up candidates in all the nine districts of the state. The party was second only to the Congress in the number of candidates set up for the elections. Besides the 100 candidates who were party members, the Communist Party supported 19 candidates unattached to any party. Obviously these were constituencies where non Communist candidates had better chances of success.

⁹⁸ *Assembly Elections Since 1951*. op. cit. Pp 41-50

⁹⁹ R. Ramakrishnan Nair . op. cit.

There were seven constituencies where the Communist party neither set up its own candidates nor supported any independent candidates. These constituencies were Kanjirappilly, Puliyanur, Chalakudy, Vadakkanchery, Tanur, Koduvally and Manjeswar where the Communist party thought that it had only negligible support ¹⁰⁰. Communist party supported the PSP candidates at Puliyanur and Chalakudy and the party support was instrumental in the success of PSP candidates ¹⁰¹.

The total number of valid votes polled was 5837577 out of which the Communist Party secured 2377962 votes. The Party (including the independents) emerged as the leading party as regards the percentage of votes polled (40.74) and also the number of seats secured 65 ¹⁰². This success was striking ¹⁰³. Thus in the 1957 elections in Kerala, the Communist party registered a phenomenal progress when compared with its own record in the previous elections and with the record of other parties ¹⁰⁴. The debacle of the Congress was unexpected and shocking. As the `Statesman` correspondent remarked:

‘Even the Congress fortress of Trichur district fell like a pack of cards and the defeat of the lost Congress Chief Minister Mr. Panampilly Govinda Menon in his home constituency was a very heavy blow to Congress Prestige’ ¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. P 18

¹⁰¹ EMS Namboodiripad, *Selected Writings*, Vol. II, P 127

¹⁰² Source-“*Assembly Elections since 1951*” Information and Public Relations, Government of Kerala, 2006.

¹⁰³ In terms of votes polled the congress stood with 37.84% ,and CPI stood first with around 40.7% votes, with a clear lead of 2.5 %

¹⁰⁴ In the 1954 elections to the Travancore-Cochin Assembly, the Communist Party set up only 35 candidates while the Congress set up 115 and PSP 38 candidates. The total seats were 117. The Communist Party secured 23 seats while the Congress secured 45 and the PSP 19 seats. Of the total valid votes polled-38,08312 , the Communist Party got only 629791 i.e. 16.1 % .While the Congress got 1758283 i.e. 42.2% and the PSP got 589140 i.e. 12.2%

¹⁰⁵ Statesman, New Delhi , March 20, 1957.

The allegations of corruption and nepotism against Congress in power decisively spelt the congress disaster.¹⁰⁶

A special election review published in Kerala's leading Pro-Congress daily *Mathrubhoomi* castigated the Congress leaders in the state as parasites on a grant tree whose roots were once deep. And pointing out one crucial aspect of the reasons for Communist victory. It said: "Deep rooted in the soil of Kerala and tended by constant care and attention of its activists is the Communist Party of Kerala. In every remote village, there are Communist activists who sympathize with the plight of the most downtrodden and have identified themselves with these sections. Apparently he is a vagabond. But in his village he keeps daily contact with all individuals and he takes the message of the party to his bosom. He has an objective which keeps him inspired and is bent up on achieving it at any cost. The better morrow might perhaps be a mirage, but to him it is the complete truth. And in the Communist party he finds the means to achieve his aims. The party is his body and soul"¹⁰⁷ .

The Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee publication, "The Red Interlude in Kerala" assigned the main reasons for Communist victory as follows:

"Conflict inside the camp had led to the fall of successive Congress ministries. The people wanted to see a strong and stable government installed in power. They had lost the hope of the Congress doing it. It was in this context that the Communist party approached them with the promise of an alternative government. They were the only party, other than the Congress that contested in a sufficiently large number of seats to form a government. They did not scruple to adopt any means that came to hand, parochial, communal or personal. The support given by

¹⁰⁶ D.R Mankekar , *The Red Riddle of Kerala*, Bombay, 1965. P80

¹⁰⁷ *Mathrubhumi*, March 21, 1957

certain influential newspapers like the '*Kerala Kaumudi*' and the *Desabandhu* helped them immensely. They were able to win over some sections of capitalists even, who had met with disappointments during the Congress regime”¹⁰⁸.

Dr. Jitendra Singh who has made an on the spot study of the political situations in Kerala gives a few reasons for the Communist success in the 1957 elections¹⁰⁹.

1. The Congress suffered loss of confidence due to factionalism within its ranks “People lost faith in Congress’ ability to provide a stable government. The Communist Party successfully channelised this discontent with Congress to its own advantage.”
2. In Kerala at that time there was no party other than the Communist Party which could replace the Congress and the PSP. The Congress stood discredited. There was a realization among the people of Kerala that the PSP by itself was too weak to form a govt. “Those who were disgruntled with the Congress felt that their votes would be wasted if they supported the PSP”. So the Communist party was the only party to which the people could now turn with the hope of providing a stable government.
3. The lure of the Communist Parties election manifesto was yet another reason. “In this declaration the Communists promised to provide everything to everybody. It attracted the public sympathy because of its boldness and created a positive attitude in favour of the Communists among many of the Keralites. It definitely raised the expectations of the discontented elements and succeeded in converting them to the Communist party’s Programme”.

¹⁰⁸ Kainikara Padmanabha Pillai, '*Te Red Interlude in Kerala*,' P19.

¹⁰⁹ Jitendra Singh, '*Communism in Kerala*' selection 24. *Red World in Tumult* edited by B.E Pentony, Chandler Publishing Co. ,San Francisco, 1962 Pp 244 -247.

4. Disunity that continued to exist among all the non Communist parties helped the Communists. “ The fight in 1957 was not between the Communist and the non –Communist but between the Communist, the Praja Socialist Party, The Revolutionary Socialist party, the Kerala Socialist Party , the Muslim League and the Independents“
5. “The Communists had nothing to live down as they had never before been in power.”
6. The Congress organization was weak and inefficient. “The inefficiency of the Congress organization, on one hand, and complacency on the part of the leaders of the Congress , on the other , were no match to the drive and effectiveness of the Communist organization”.
7. Some of the top Congress leaders had also cut a sorry figure in the public eye. Exposure of corruption within the Congress in Kerala by some of the Congress men themselves adversely affected the party
8. The top Congress leaders’ attack on the Muslim League alienated ‘Muslim sympathies in South Malabar and Palghat Districts of Kerala.

It is said that communal and caste factors too contributed to the success of the Communists in the 1957 elections.¹¹⁰ The special correspondent of the Economic Weekly point out that the majority of the Christians and Muslims supported Congress, PSP and Muslim League... Majority of the Urban people supported Congress and PSP while majority of the rural people bolstered up Communists¹¹¹. A social anthropologist wrote in Economic Weekly thus:

“The *Nairs* and *Namboothiris* are by and large land owners while the *Ezhavas* and *Harijans*, like *Pulayas* and *Cherumas*,

¹¹⁰ Ibid .

¹¹¹ Economic Weekly, August 1, 1959. Pp 1066-1067.

are landless laborers. The first group by and large supported the Congress and PSP while second the Communist”¹¹². Basheerudin Ahmed writes “...Estranged for the moment from the Congress and trying to pressurize it, the NSS (Nayar Service Society) gave full support to Communist candidates , paving the way for their success in central Travancore and ensuring their victory in several constituencies where the Party had never won before or have won since”¹¹³.

Actually Mannath Padmanabhan, the patriarch of NSS did not support the Communist Party in 1957. In the press meet on January 7, 1957 Mannam said,

“...My relationship with the Congress is embittered irreparably ... Even though, I will not actively participate in the Election Campaign my support to the Kerala Peoples Party will go unabated”.¹¹⁴

Victor M. Fic argued that major political parties like Congress and Communist were deeply rooted in communal equations . In other words “the politics in Kerala was merely a projection of the aspirations and strength of the communal organizations into the political arena”.¹¹⁵ R. Velayudhan attributed the Communist success in the elections to the undue reliance of the party on the support of the Hindus against the Christians.¹¹⁶ There is no substantial evidence testifying to the link of Communist party with any of the caste or communal organizations in the aforesaid elections.

¹¹² Economic Weekly, August 15, 1959. P 1131.

¹¹³ Basheerudin Ahmed , ‘Asian Survey’ Vol. 6, No. 7, July 1966. P 390

¹¹⁴ Janayugam, Jan 7 1957 .[Mannam’s theory was that *Chovan (Ezhava)* by birth, *Nair* by fate and *Mappila* by deed become the Communist... Communism is not suitable for either to Nair Community or human Society ... In 1956, Mannam asked the Nair women to divorce the husbands who were Communists] (K.Rajswari, ‘*Communist Bharanavum Vimochanasamaravum*’ P 62). Mannam’s apprehensions about Communist victory in the election of 1957 can be seen in his diary notes. See *Mannathinte Samboorna Krithikal*, (Mal) Kottayam, 1977].

¹¹⁵ Victor M. Fic, *Kerala, The Yenan of India* . Bombay 1970. PP 6-7`

¹¹⁶ R .Velayudhan, *Kerala the Red Rain Land*, New Delhi,1958. p.58.

The Communist party leader, A.K Gopalan observed that the results were a befitting tribute to the self sacrificing and devoted work carried out by party members and activists' braving repression, and years of hardships. He added that the victory of the Communists in Kerala 'symbolized the repercussions of the big strides made by the democratic and socialist forces throughout the country. In west Bengal the number of elected Communist candidates rose from 28 to 46, in Bombay while it rose from 1 to 21, and in Utter Pradesh from 1 to 9. It is noteworthy that for the first time 3 Communists were elected in Madhya Pradesh and 7 in Bihar'.¹¹⁷

M.N Govindan Nair, then the secretary of the Communist party Kerala state committee said

“There was the experience of the people with the Congress and PSP ministries and with President's rule. There was also popular experience with the Communists, both as leaders of struggle and as administrators in local bodies. There was the swing of a large section of the electorate which, while not necessary pro- Communist, felt that they should be given a try”.¹¹⁸

D.R. Mankekar opined: “The Congress's discreditable record in office paved the way for the thumbing Communist victory in the 1957 election”.¹¹⁹

Jawaharlal Nehru commented:

“It is pertinent to say that the Congress lost and the Communist won in Kerala. My party which had ruled there during the last 10 years lost mass support. Therefore, it was a negative vote against the Congress rather than a positive one for the Communist party”.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ A.K. Gopalan, '*Kerala: Past and Present*', P 95

¹¹⁸ M.N Govindan Nair, "*Challenge of Kerala*" :New Age , Vol. 2, No.29, April 15, 1957. p 9

¹¹⁹ D.R. Mankekar , *The Red Riddle of Kerala* , Bombay 1965. P 81

¹²⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru said this in a press meet at Helsinki held in June 1957 – quoted by K. Damodharan '*Indiyum Socialisavum*' (Mal) Prabhath, Ernakulam, 1958. P 83

Accounting for the success of the Communist Party , K.Damodaran

points out thus:

“For a quarter of the century, the Communist party played a crucial role in organizing peasant and working class movements. It left indelible imprint on the socio-economic realms of Kerala. Tiding over hurdles and hardships and resisting severe oppressions the party activists fought fearlessly to safeguard the interests of the people. All this enabled the Communist Party to consolidate and enhance their mass base...

¹²¹ Majority of the people advocated the Communist cause in the hope that the party alone could swiftly remedy the grave problems they were confronted with. They pinned their faith in the party leadership which was capable of fulfilling their national and democratic aspirations in the near future...”¹²²

Analyzing the results of 1957 election, Father Vadakkan, the most active anti-Communist leader of the time, made the following observations.¹²³

‘1) The organizational strength and compactness of the party mattered much in its success. The party was next to none in respect of unity , discipline and cadreship. The insurgent comrades displayed utmost readiness to obey orders from the top. Even though the base of Communist Party was made up of ordinary people, its leadership was endowed with intellectual caliber and political genius. The munificence, chivalry, sense of sacrifice and perseverance contributed much to their electoral victory. The motto of social struggle for the liberation of the have-nots enabled the Party to rally the indigent masses under its banner. ¹²⁴ 2) The political parties which adopted an anti-Communist attitude could not win the confidence of the common people. In this regard the Communist attained success. ¹²⁵ 3) People harbored indirect

¹²¹ K Damodaran, ‘*Indiayum Socialisavum*’ Prabhath, Ernakulam (Mal) 1958. Pp 84-85

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Father Vadakkan, “*Keralam Chuvannathengine*’ (Mal) ACF, Thrissur 1959. Pp 7 - 10

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

respect towards the Communist governments in Russia and China owing an account of India's harmonious relations with them. This aspect is hardly negligible with regard to the Communist success.'¹²⁶

The evaluative inferences of EMS Namboothiripad in regard to the election results of 1957 can be summarized below.

- 1) Unlike the elections in 1952 and 1954 the Communists fought single handedly against the Congress and its allies. The Congress entertained the false hope that this time they could effortlessly rout the Communists.
- 2) The Congress failed to take note of the enlarged mass base of the Communists in 1957. This led to their erroneous electoral calculation.
- 3) The Communists had been carefully assessing the political developments since 1952 and hence evolved a strategy quite beneficial to their electoral prospects.
- 4) People who were disgruntled with the Congress machinations resulting the fall of the Ministry in 1954 became desirous of a change of rule.
- 5) The people were optimistic that among the left parties the Communists alone had the mass base and competence to form a stable government. Naturally they rallied behind the Party.
- 6) Even if the opposition lacked the unity, the Congress did not enjoy the support of any non Communist party. For example, League in Malabar won the backing of PSP and fielded its own candidates all over Kerala to the detriment of the Congress.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

- 7) The Communist Party with its characteristic trade union support and backing of class organizations and chalked out a potent election strategy. Independent candidates with dynamic personality capable of gathering non Communist votes were fielded by Communist Party. Five of them emerged victorious.
- 8) The Christian domination in Congress Party in Travancore –Cochin area alienated the Nairs and Ezhavas. Their pent-up discontent proved advantageous to the Communists.
- 9) The vigorous activities of the Communist Party among the workers and peasants enabled it to win the sympathy of the depressed Hindus. A small section from Christian and Muslim communities also followed the suit.¹²⁷

The analysis of the socio-political reasons for the Communists in Kerala as stated in the British Daily ‘Manchester Guardian’ is never negligible in this context. Kerala, the most densely populated state in India had scanty growth of Industry, aggravating the problem of unemployment. The high rate of literacy in the state contributed to the emergence of highly educated unemployed youth. The peasants in Kerala remained aggrieved for being landless. The Congress ministry did not adopt the worthwhile measures to mitigate their misery. The successive fall of five Chief Ministers within a brief spell between 1948 and 1955 amply unmasked the inability of the Congress to set up a stable government. The Communists so inspired confidence among the people to achieve this goal.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ EMS Namboodiripad ‘*Communist Party Keralathil*’ (Mal) Pp 84-86; ‘Selected Writings’ Vol. II, NBA Calcutta, 1985. Pp125-128; ‘*Kerala – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*’, P 207.

¹²⁸ Quoted on P 69 by K. Rajeswari ‘*Communist Bharanavum Vimochanasamaravum*’ (Mal)

T.J Nociter writes,

“The world’s press carried according to their inclination, ‘Red Star or ‘Red peril over India’ headlines. Among the factors most often cited to explain the victory; the sorry state of the corrupt communal and demoralized provincial congress were the contrast with the well organized secular and enthusiastic CPI, at once movement and machine; the transfer of Madras of the Tamil Congress southern Taluks of Travancore and the gain from Madras to Communist Malabar; Indo soviet friendship and the adoption of Congress itself of a socialist goal in December 1954. In Kerala it was said, non Communists came to believe that if socialism was the pattern prescribed for India by Nehru, then the CPI would make it a better job than the local Congress party”.¹²⁹

The ‘New York Times’ Observed that the factor which led to the Communist victory in 1957 was the weak, inefficient and corrupt administration of the Congress regime in the State for a decade since independence.¹³⁰

The election Manifesto of the Communist party published, in 1959, attributed ‘the success of the Party in 1957 election partly to the erosion of popular faith in the Congress and partly to the mounting confidence of the people in the Communist party’.¹³¹

K.G. Krishna Moorthy and G. Lakshmana Rao remarked the politically conscious plantation workers and industrial laborers fell under the galvanizing spell of the Communist party. Thus, the CPI in 1957 managed to gain the backing of the lower strata of the society.”¹³²

¹²⁹ T. J. Nossiter-‘ *Marxist State Governments in India: Politics, Economics and society*’, London, 1988. P 65

¹³⁰ The New York Times , February 4, 1960, cited by R. Ramakrishnan Nair, P 32

¹³¹ *Election Manifesto of the Kerala State Council of the Communist Party of India*. 1959 P. 12

¹³² K.G. Krishna Moorthy and G. Lakshmana Rao. ‘*Political Preferences in Kerala*’, Delhi. ,Radhakrishna, 1968. P 78

The Communists in Kerala demonstrated their expertise in organizing trade union strikes, demonstrations and jathas. They were second to none in exposing ruthlessly the omissions and commissions of the ruling party. Thus, they befriended the poor and the downtrodden.¹³³

Among the laudable merits of the Communist Party may be mentioned, its inherent strength, unity, discipline and unmatched resources and leadership. Its chief rival, the Congress lagged far behind in this respect. The dedication of its leaders in establishing contact with the masses and rapport with the people at the grass root level were immensely impressive. The keen interest it evinced in the social, cultural, literary and artistic activities had evoked the admiration even of its adversaries. Such words as corruption, nepotism, bribery and red tape-ism were not found in the lexicon of the Communists. Factional fight and ministerial instability were quite alien to the Communist policy. Being champions of the have-nots and low income groups the Communists could acquire the loyalty and backing of the lowest strata of the society.¹³⁴

Different opinions emanating from diverse angles of vision as to the election victory in 1957 have been analyzed above. On careful scrutiny, one is inclined to infer that they unfold one or another aspect of the historical veracity.

Consequent on the publication of the election result the Communist Party plenum was held on March 30th at Ernakulam. The meeting attended by Communist Legislatures and supporting independents, decided the composition of the Cabinet which was to comprise 11 members. The mantle of chief minister ship fell on none other than EMS Naboodiripad.¹³⁵ In the meantime, B. Ramakrishna Rao,¹³⁶ the then Governor of Kerala attempted to

¹³³ Prof. S.A.H. Haqqi (ed.) '*Democracy , Pluralism and Nation Building*, Delhi, 1984. P 176.

¹³⁴ R. Ramakrishnan Nair. op . cit . P 76

¹³⁵ Puthuppalli Raghavan; '*Viplavasmaranakal*' Vol.5, P-129

¹³⁶ Ramakrishna Rao was not neutral in his dealing. He was a staunch congress man and former chief Minister of Hyderabad state

slighten the Communist leadership by resorting an undemocratic procedure. He chose to call individually each of the five independents to wrest an assurance of their support to the Communists.¹³⁷ This measure injured the sentiments of the Communists who passed a resolution characterizing the loathsome behavior of the Governor as an affront.¹³⁸

E.M.S Namboodiripad , the elected legislative leader of CPI met Governor on 3rd April and presented a list of 11 members of the prospective cabinet after holding a detailed discussion.¹³⁹ Left with no other choice, observes EMS, the Governor reluctantly arranged the swearing in ceremony.

¹⁴⁰

Another obnoxious act of the Governor on the eve of the Communist assumption of the office too attracted sharp criticism. He nominated a person of his choice to the assembly in a high handed manner without consulting the representative organization of the Anglo Indian community in Kerala and without taking the Communist Party into confidence.¹⁴¹

The resolution of the CPI's state committee secretariat looked up on this hurry as unwarranted for on previous occasions the nomination was used as a pretext to enhance the strength of the Congress Party.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ EMS –“ *Conflict and Crisis “ Political India 1974* (Orient long man 1974) Pp (51-52) EMS writes – “ the Governor wanted to meet five independent MLAs individually – a procedure which was unwarranted in view of their signed letter to him . The post of Governor was obviously made being use of to meet the independent MLAs separately from the Party . The transparent political game involved in it however completely misfired”. Puthuppalli Raghavan –p.133, Antalat “1957 April Sente Porul” P.11

¹³⁸ *Janayugam*, April 5, 1957.

¹³⁹ The newspapers reported that their discussion lasted of 110 minutes. The details of the discussion is not released . Puthupally Raghavan, P.124; K Rajeswari, P.74 ; Gopalakrishnan, P. 83

¹⁴⁰ EMS, *Communist Party Keralathil* , op. cit. P 88

¹⁴¹ H W Decruse was the nominated member. He was a Congressman . Puthupally Raghavan P 124 .; Ramachandran “*Kalaham kavarnna kaalam*” (Mal) *Madyamam* Weekly, June 28, 2010

¹⁴² H.D Malaviya, P 20

The eleven member cabinet with EMS Namboodiripad as Chief Minister was sworn in on 5th April 1957. The people of Kerala celebrated this august occasion with spectacular demonstrations and mammoth meetings. Common people of all walks of life were apparently in a mood to extend moral and material support to the nascent ministry.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Ibid. P 21

CHAPTER - III
**ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS ENSURING
POPULAR WEAL**

On assumption of office, the Chief Minister EMS Naboodiripad articulated the policy of his government. The features of the policy of the government were stated in the following words. He underlined the importance of popular co-operation, the essentiality of immediate action to stop evictions, the relevance of land reforms, the necessity of peace in industry, measures for making Malayalam the state language etc.¹ Most of these ideas had already been embodied in the manifesto of the Communist Party.²

In the 'Policy Statement' E.M.S. observed that Kerala is "a problem state" and to administer a problem state "is a job not easy for anybody".³ The Communists were inexperienced in administrative matters. "We have also to work within the framework of a system which includes several regulations and procedures which are not to our liking".⁴ These were the unfavorable circumstances. But the Chief Minister pointed out, that there were two factors in their favor. He declared that "the fact that the Party was in power as the representative of a great movement boosted his moral courage and self confidence". He adds on, "this is amply demonstrated by the large number of greetings which I and my colleagues have received during the last few days from all sections of the people". The Communist Party was "actually undertaking a great responsibility, not in the name of our party alone, but in

¹ For a detailed text of the Policy Statement, see, *EMS Sampoorana Krithikal* (Mal) Vol. 18, Pp 119-133

² Economic Weekly, April-13 1957 P. 480.

³ *New Age*, Vol. IV. No. 29, April 14, 1957

⁴ *Ibid*; The Hindu, April 6, 1957.

the name of all men of goodwill who are desirous of building a new democratic and prosperous Kerala”.⁵

“Our Party has placed before the people in the election manifesto a blue-print for the building of such a democratic and prosperous new Kerala... .. We adhere to the programme”. EMS declared that his “Cabinet in its corporate and individual capacity will make utmost efforts for the meticulous implementation of every item of the programme.”⁶

The Chief Minister listed the programme of action which his Government intended to take in the Policy Statement. This included decentralization, agrarian reforms, legislation in favor of the working people, peaceful employer-employee relations, land reforms to ensure the protection of the peasants and agricultural labourers etc.⁷ He touched up on eradication of corruption in the public service, administrative reforms, decentralization, etc., in the statement. He called up on the opposition to have constructive criticism, and to expose failures of the government. His first public comment was that his policy as Chief Minister would not be to establish a socialist society. The new government would only try to implement the promises which the Congress and the Central Government had made but which the Congress Governments in the state had failed to carry out.⁸

The Release of Prisoners

April 5, 1957, was a red-letter day for the people of Kerala for it was on that day that the State was brought under an elected government. To mark this occasion, the first cabinet meeting of the Communist Government which

⁵ New Age, op. cit.

⁶ EMS *Sampoorna Krithikal* (Mal) Vol. 18 ,PP 119-133.

⁷ The policy statement promised land reform “within a short and definitely fixed time limit” to provide fixity of tenure ceiling on holdings and distribution of surplus land. Emergency legislation staying evictions would be brought forward to give immediate relief to the tenants. *The Hindu*, April 6, 1959.

⁸ *Ibid.*

held on 6 April 1957, decided to commute the death sentence on all those who were then awaiting execution.⁹ This invited strong criticism from different corners.¹⁰ Soon came the centenary of the 1857 Freedom Struggle. The President of India himself came to Kerala to preside over the celebration in the capital of the state. On this occasion 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 prison¹¹.

Another decision taken by the Government of Kerala was to withdraw cases arising out of labour or agrarian disputes which were already settled, as well as cases arising out of political struggles.¹² In the former state of Travancore-Cochin, the then Chief Minister, Sri. Pattam Thanu Pillai, and his successor, Panampilli Govinda Menon in office had already set a precedence to withdraw cases and to release prisoners when strikes were withdrawn.

The decisions of the Communist Government of Kerala however, came in for a good deal of criticism at the hands of the opposition parties.¹³

⁹ *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly*; First Session 1957 Vol. 1 pp 452-487.

¹⁰ Sri. Shrimannarayan, the AICC secretary sharply criticized this. He said: "It is astounding that one of the very first acts of the new government is to commute the death sentences of confirmed murders and the release of the so-called political prisoners who were not under detention but were prosecuted and punished for serious acts of arson, violence and murder". "this" he said "is not the way in which the Communists should begin to function under constitutional democracy...". *The Hindu*, April 18, 1957. Also see, Kainikkara Padmanabha Pillai – *Communist Bharanam Keralathil* ,(Mal) KPCC, Thiruvananthapuram 1959. P 179. The opposition parties and many newspapers accused that the decision was to save Kedakulangara Vasupillai, a Communist worker who was waiting for execution. (K. Rajeswari, *Communist Bharanavum Vimochanasamaravum* (Mal) P. 93.; *Indian Republicinte Presidentine* (Mal) KPCC Memorandum to the President of India; New Delhi 1959, p. 3.; *Economic Weekly* June 22, 1959, P 767. ; Legislative debates on June 5th 1959.

¹¹ EMS, *selected writings* Vol. 2 National book Agency, Calcutta ,1985. P 128

¹² *KPCC Memorandum*op. cit. P 3;

¹³ *New Age*, Vol. IV. No. 44, July 28, 1957; " *Thozhilali* " *Kerala Liberation Struggle souvenir* – Thrissur (1957) PP 43-50

On April 7th itself the all India Congress Leader Sreemannarayan declared that the commutation of death sentences as life imprisonment and the release of prisoners were short sighted and mendacious. On April 17th the state Congress leaders A.P. Udayabhanu also held the same view.¹⁴ Opposition leader P.T. Chacko accused the Communist Government of unleashing violence and anarchy in Kerala through the release of political prisoners.¹⁵ But the Government was unmindful of this vehement reproaches.

The Law Minister V.R Krishna Iyyer vindicated the remission granted to political prisoners as a gesture of goodwill marking the joyous occasion of the emergence of the first peoples government in Kerala.¹⁶ He said that ‘the State Government took the definite stand that the ministry had the power to commute or remit sentences’.¹⁷ The Law Minister quoted the Article 161 of the Constitution of India to highlight the power of the Governor to do so. He further stated that Section 401 and 402 of the Criminal Procedure Code also empowered the State Government to exercise the powers of commutation and remission. Even in cases pending before courts, the Law Minister said, the Government could exercise powers of remission, reprieve or commutation.¹⁸ Commenting on the same issue A.K.Gopalan said that the release of prisoners(by the Congress government) who had been punished for violence in the agitation of 1942, was not objectionable, the procedure of the Communist government too was not objectionable.¹⁹ The trust of the

¹⁴ K Rajeswari, op. cit. P 93.

¹⁵ Legislative debates 6th May 1957.; *KPCC Memorandum* op. cit. ; *Reply to KPCC Memorandum*. op. cit.

¹⁶ Legislative debates on 13th April 1957., KLA Proceedings, Ist Session, Vol. I, Pp 452-487

¹⁷ The Hindu, April 10, 1957.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Kerala Janatha* (Daily-Mal) April 11 1957. The inauguration of the newly formed state of Andhra, in the year 1954 was marked by the government of Andhra by the total clearance of every jail in Andhra. In the former state of Travancore-Cochin, the then Chief Minister Sri Pattom Thani Pillai ordered the release of prisoners convicted in the group of cases known as Punnapra Vayalar cases . Travancore-Cochin CM Panampilly

indictment of the opposition was that the release of large number of criminals would give them direct encouragement to continue to perpetrate such crimes.

²⁰ Foiling the Contention EMS Namboodiripad states that ‘facts tend to show that the prisoners convicted for ordinary crime were not released; full remission was granted only to short term prisoners and that too on one occasion, the centenary of the 1857 freedom struggle. This were indeed a milder measure when compared with the total clearance of jails effected by the Congress government in Andhra’.²¹

Another criticism was that a considerable number of prisoners who secured release on the pretext of being convicted for labour, agrarian and political struggles had actually been charged with crimes like murder, arson etc ²². That the Congress-PSP government did same thing in the state of Travancore-Cochin erodes the credibility of the Contention.²³ Another accusation was that most of the beneficiaries of the releases were active workers of the Communist Party.²⁴ EMS Namboodiripad contradicts this argument, stating that there was only one Communist among the 10 persons whose death sentence were commuted.²⁵ Moreover the released prisoners belonged to all political parties.²⁶

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, could not fully go along with the critics. He, therefore, brought about a via media between the Kerala government and its opponents. G.B. Pant, the Central Home Minister having enlisted Nehru’s support, agreed to life imprisonment in place of capital

also withdrew the cases in connection with Tamil Nadu – Travancore agitation of 1955. (*KPCC Memorandathinu Kerala governmentinte Marupady* (Mal) Kollam, 1959. PP.8-17.; Legislative debates on 9th May 1957.

²⁰ ‘*Indian Republikinte Presidentinu*’ (Mal) in KPCC Memorandum , 1959 PP 2-6 .

²¹ EMS. Op. cit . P 129.

²² *KPCC Memorandum*, Op. cit.

²³ *KPCC Memorandathinu Kerala governmentinte Marupady*, (Mal) P. 10.

²⁴ Kainikkara Padmanabha Pillai. Op.cit P179.; *KPCC Memorandum* ... P 4

²⁵ EMS, Op-cit. P 129.

²⁶ For detailed figures see, *KPCC Memorandathinu Marupady* , P. 1.

punishment in three cases in which earlier, the President had rejected mercy petitions. Namboodiripad adopted the firm stand that these prisoners would not be released before serving their full terms in jail. This and other similar developments made Nehru repeatedly to testify that the Namboodiripad Ministry was acting with extreme propriety and had abided by its promises to function strictly within the constitution and to co-operate with the Central Government.²⁷

Police Administration

E.M.S.Namboodiripad, immediately on assuming office, declared a new police policy. The function of the police was, according to the new police policy, tracking down and bringing to book anti-social elements who indulged in theft, cheating, murder and other crimes, rather than suppressing the fighting peasants and workers, as used to be done in the past- both under the foreign rulers before independence and the Congress Government in free India.²⁸ It is not the job of the police to suppress the trade union, peasant and other mass activities of any mass organization, or a political struggle waged by any political party.²⁹ The settlement of labour or other disputes 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 led to an actual, or imminently threatened breach of the peace or violent action. The police comes into the picture only when these disputes between owners and workers, etc. led to violation of the person and property of any section of the people.³⁰ This policy could not be implemented fully and in its true spirit, since the police personnel had been so strained as to be virtually at the beck and call of the

²⁷ S.Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (1956-1964), Vol. III, (New Delhi ,1984), P. 55.

²⁸ *New Age*, Vol. IV , No. 44, July 28, 1957.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *New Age*, Vol. IV , No. 47, August 18, 1957.

vested interests.³¹ The very declaration however, had an electrifying effect, showing the fighting millions of working people that here was a Government which was trying to be of service to them, rather than oppressing them. Strikes and other forms of mass agitation and struggle received a big impetus. Employers and landlords found that they could not depend on the police machinery to suppress those working under them as they could do before.³² Many of them therefore thought it prudent to settle with the fighting people. Important gains were made by all sections of the working people. The tempo of the mass movement rose higher than at any time before.³³

One of the important achievements of the government was the unification of the police force of former Travancore-Cochin states and Malabar regions. Sri.Chandrasekharan Nair who had been the IG of Travancore Cochin Police came to be appointed as the IG of Kerala Police. Besides the IPS Cadre, the government created a new cadre known as Kerala Cadre. The Government set up an anti-corruption wing (precursor of present Vigilance Department)which proved 2985 complaints in 1957 itself. In the same year the strength of Kerala Police force (excluding the MSP and Fire Force) amounted to 11312³⁴.

Appreciable attention was bestowed on the renovation of the police force, the government created the post of a police superintendent to formulate a ' police manual'.³⁵ The Crime Branch, Special Branch, Fire Service and Short Hand Bureau were so arranged as to function all over the state. Due heed was paid to the preparation of the manual of office procedure and

³¹ EMS Namboodiripad,' *Communist Party Keralathil*'(mal), Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram,1986, Vol. II, p 108.

³² AK.Gopalan, '*Ente Jeevitha Katha*' (mal),Thiruvananthapuram, 1980, p.326.

³³ EMS Nmboodiripad, '*Selected Writings*' Vol. II, Calcutta, 1985, p. 134

³⁴ K Ramesan Nair , "*Police Vijnanakosam* (Mal) Prasanthy Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram,, 2004. P 176.

³⁵ *Desabhimani*, March 19, 1958.

codification of the works of the department.³⁶ The Motor Transport Department made as a part of the police and an independent motor vehicle department was established in June First 1958.³⁷ The most momentous leap in the police renovation was the formation of the first Police Re-organization Commission³⁸ (composed of 7 members) headed by N.C.Chatterjee.³⁹ The commission propounded revolutionary suggestions for the thorough revamp of the structure and functions of the state police force.⁴⁰ The report treated the police as a service sector. The proposal that armed police should perform social service to the people living around the camps sufficiently emphasizes the positive approach of the N.C.Chatterjee Commission.⁴¹

The police administrative report of 1957 stressed the need to strengthen the relationship between the police and the public. Importance was attached to the amelioration of the facilities and amenities of the police force. The government set up quarters,⁴² police training college, Police Control Room and Forensic Laboratory to facilitate the smooth functioning of the department. Codified police standing orders and store accounts rules came into vogue. Finger Print Bureau was established under a director. Solicitous for the weal of the police, the government instituted Police Welfare Fund⁴³. Steps were taken for the electrification and introduction of telephone facilities

³⁶ Alaxander Jacob “ *Onnam Manthri Sabhayude Kalathe Police*” (Mal) on 1957 “*EMS Manthri Sabha Charithravum Rashtriyavum*” ed- by P Rajeev P 126

³⁷ *Desabhimani*, June 3,1958.

³⁸ The Hindu, January 17, 1959.

³⁹ The Hindu, April 23, 1959; N. C Chatterjee was the father of Somanath Chatterjee, former speaker of the Loksabha. ‘Prabhatham’ daily wrote editorial against the Chatterjee Commission. It pointed out that N.C.Chatterjee was the former president of Hindu Mahasabha (Prabhatham, June29, 1959)

⁴⁰ The commission submitted its report at the time of R.Sankar Ministry.

⁴¹ K. Ramesan Nair, op. cit.

⁴² The Hindu ,May 20, 1959.

⁴³ *Desabhimani* , April 23, 1959.

in the police stations. Buses and jeeps were pressed into service to ensure the mobility of the force.⁴⁴

The first Communist government did not approve of the police policy of torture (*moonnam mura*).⁴⁵ Many police officers who had previously tormented the Communists felt uneasy while working under the Communist government.⁴⁶ However, some unsavory incidents partially changing the image of the police took place during the Communist rule. In 1958 police firing occurred in 4 places. One was at Chandhanathoppu in Kollam and the other three in the estates in the Mannar region. The labour strike at Chandhanathoppu was against the lockout of Cashew factory⁴⁷. This strike was under the direction of UTUC, the trade union of RSP which turned violent. In Police firing two labourers were killed and many others cane charged⁴⁸. The government appointed Justice Shankaran Commission to enquire into the untoward incident. The commission justified the police measures and pointed out that the firing was inevitable to terminate violence and to restore law and order⁴⁹. Police firing in the violent labour strike in Gudrale estate in Munnar was to save the life of sub inspector⁵⁰. Anyhow, the Communist leaders were honest enough to criticize the police firing there.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Alexander Jacob. op. cit.

⁴⁵ *Desabhimani*, June 22, 1957

⁴⁶ K Ramesan Nair – op. cit. P 177

⁴⁷ Interview with T.M.Prabha (He was the UTUC leader and lead the strike) at his residence at Ashramam ,Kollam on 4-5 2010

⁴⁸ Two labourers – Sulaiman and Raman were the workers of UTUC died on the spot in Police firing. Interview with Kundara Damodaran Pillai at his residence at Chandanathope on 3-5-2010 he was a participant of the strike and suffered police oppression .

⁴⁹ *Kerala Janatha* (daily) December 18, 1958; Editorial – `Justice Shokarate Report`. Also see, (1) *Desabhimani* daily, December 17, 1958, ‘Justice Shankaran Commission Report’;(2) G.K Leiten “*Progressive State Government. ...*” Economic and Political Weekly. Jan 6, 1979. P 35.

⁵⁰ K. Ramesan Nair. op. cit. P182.; Alexander Jacob op. cit. P I28.

⁵¹ *Kerala Kamudi Weekly*, October 27, 1958.; *Kerala Kaumudi*, October,24,25,26,1958; *Mathrubhumi* November 20, 1958. ;*Desabhimani*, October,24,25,26,1958.

The Government improved the status and working condition of the Kerala Police. The police who had previously been cruel oppressors now became protectors of the people and guardians of law.⁵² Even while tackling situation of the violent direct action(Liberation Struggle) the police exhibited exemplary vigilance and impartiality.⁵³ Father Vadakkan summarises his experience with Kerala police in his autobiography thus:

“...One thing is clear. While the goondas of Communists and the goondas of liberation struggle indulged in violence in many places, the police on the whole exhibited vigilance and impartiality. They showed extreme patience under many trying circumstances. Let me recall the picture of picketing at the Trichur Collectorate. There were at least five thousand men and women to take part in the picketing. I saw women rush forward and pushback policemen. I tried to dissuade them. What would happen if such provocation is given to the CRP now?”⁵⁴.

The government was highly concerned about the overall welfare of the police. The ideal held aloft by the government was decent behavior of the police and towards the police. The tenure of the government was characterized by the unification, revamp, renovation reorganization and judicious impartiality of the Kerala police.

Police Verification

A salutary change brought about by the Communist government was the abolition of the defective practice of police verification prior to recruitment to government services. The Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad came across a directive of the Central government that even if a person had requisite qualification, should not be recruited to government service on

⁵² *Desabhimani*, March 18, 1958.

⁵³ Father Vadakkan, “*Ente Kuthippum Kithappum* (Mal) Kottayam, 1974. P. 125.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

grounds of Communist leanings. Since association with Congress or other parties was no bar to appointments, this was a glaring discrimination against the Communist Party. The government therefore proceeded to do away with this discrimination against a political party.⁵⁵

Labour and Industrial Sector

The Communists were pioneers and organizers of the trade union movement in Kerala. Naturally, the first communist led government pursued a labour policy quite different from that of the previous governments. It made strenuous endeavor to strengthen all trade unions by fostering the unity of the working class and amplifying their collective bargaining power⁵⁶. This attitude towards working class struggles was remarkable for its originality and represented a fundamental deviation from the traditional ways. The Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad held his government to be instrumental in preparing the toiling millions “to effectively carry on their struggle for the amelioration of their working and living conditions”.⁵⁷

The first Communist led government was bent up on fostering the civil liberties and individual rights of the working class.⁵⁸ It viewed that labour and agrarian disputes to be matters dealt with by labour and other similar departments and not to be handled by the police.⁵⁹ ‘The police’, the government decided, ‘could enter the picture so long as labour employer

⁵⁵ EMS Namboodiripad, *Kerala : yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.*, Calcutta, 1968. p. 213.

⁵⁶ Policy Statement, *EMS Sanjika*, vol. 18 Pp119-133.

⁵⁷ *Kerala on the March*”, Kerala Government Publication 1958-P VII.

⁵⁸ *EMS.Sampoorna Krithikal* vol.32 PP.119-123; *Communist Party Keralathil* Vol.2 pp.803-106; H.D.Malaviya, op. cit. p.39

⁵⁹ E.M.S selected writings, op.cit.p.134; H.D.Malaviya “*Kerala A Report to the Nation...*” p 38

disputes resulted in violation of individual rights and destruction of property of any section of the people⁶⁰.

This new policy was demonstrative of a marked change in the role of the state irrespective of the relations between the owning classes and toiling masses. It proceeded from the basic premise that the relation between the workers and capitalists, the peasants and the landlords, etc, need to be settled between these classes devoid of third party intervention. The government stressed the desirability of effecting amicable settlement of disputes through negotiations between individuals and collective bargaining between respective sections of people.⁶¹

One of the important objectives of the government's industrial and labour policy was to fulfill the task laid down by the India's National Plan of boosting production⁶². In the words of EMS, 'the Kerala Government was straining every nerve for the creation of a congenial atmosphere in the state for a large scale industrial expansion. In such an atmosphere the legitimate interest and rights of the working class would be safeguarded and the industries would be empowered to make reasonable profits'.⁶³ EMS pointed out that the trade unions and Kisan Sabhas, could reap much benefits from the police policy of the new government.⁶⁴ The toiling classes could then bargain with the capitalists and land lords on terms of relations of equality and without fear.⁶⁵ Large scale hue and cry were raised about this policy.⁶⁶ Even

⁶⁰ Desabhimani, June 22,1957; *EMS Sampoorana Kritikal*, vol. 18, p 282.

⁶¹ See Policy Statement, EMS. ...op. cit. pp125-127.

⁶² EMS op.cit.2 p.119. EMS point at that his governments industrial policy was primarily based on the industrial policy of the India Government proclaimed on April 30 1956

⁶³ Indian Express, daily, 26 December 1957

⁶⁴ EMS, *Communist Party Keralathil* , op. cit. ;*Sampoorna Krithikal*, op.cit.

⁶⁵ E Balandan, "*Thozhilalikaluku puthuyugapiravi* (mal) on p.116. P.Rajiv (ed.) ;op. cit.

⁶⁶ See, Kainikara Pachamthe Pillai, *Communist Bharanam Keralathil*, P.P.84-119. Newspapers like *Mathrubhumi* July, 19, October 15, November and 14 1958, February 13, 1958, April 19 and July 19 1958, *Prabhatam* March 20 and October 9, 1958, *Malayala Manorama* October 19, December 34, 1958, *Chandrika*, October 25 July 19,

though this policy raised an hornet's nest of opposition, it defused industrial unrest instead of aggravating it.

The first Communist led government relied considerably on mutual consultations and negotiations for the settlement of industrial disputes.⁶⁷ This was a glaring departure from the previous parochial policy. The government framed a policy of solving problems of this kind on an industry wise and state wise basis through long term agreement reached between employers and employees aided by the officer of the labour department.⁶⁸ T.V.Thomas the minister in charge of labour initiated to form a 'Tripartite system' known as industrial regulations committee by the representatives of Trade Unions, Capitalists and Government⁶⁹. This was a system designed to discuss and solve the labour related problems. In this system the trade unions and capitalists could freely express their opinions and discuss it with government representatives for taking a decision acceptable to all⁷⁰. Industrial relations committees were set up in such important industries as coir, oil mills, engineering, textiles, tiles, chemicals, plantations etc⁷¹.

The Government formulated such a policy in order to ensure the economic development of the state through the constructive co-operation between the workers and the owners. The idea of blackmailing or subduing the capitalist class was alien to this policy.⁷² Emphasizing the need for long

Pothujanam October 22, 1958, *Express* October 17, 1958 *Deepika* July 19, November 1 and 14 , 1958 etc vehemently criticized the governments labour and industrial policy. Large number of pamphlets and notices were circulated in favor and against the policy. Heated debates were held in the Legislative Assembly. See, Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly-(1)22/02/1958 to 02/04/58, Vol. IV Nos. 1-30; (2) 30/06/58 to 09/07/58, Vol. V Nos. 1-8; (3) 24/11/58 to 13/12/58, Vol. VI Nos. 1-18, Secretary, Kerala Legislative Assembly, Thiruvananthapuram.

⁶⁷ EMS, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ E Balandan, op. cit. p.116.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ H.D.Malaviya op.cit.p.40

⁷² EMS,*Sampoorna Krithikal* vol.32 p.121

term settlement of labour capital relations industry wise and state wise, EMS said at the AITUC session held in the last week of December 1957 at Ernakulam as:

“This aspect of the problem of the working classes was as important as the proper solution of the question of wages, bonus etc. Unless this problem was tackled on a national basis, unless the resources of the state, private capitals as well as the financial resources even of the smaller man were tapped in order that all the existing industrial units were not only maintained but further expanded and strengthened and new industrial units were established, the working classes in Kerala had no salvation”⁷³.

Extending this tripartite policy at the state level, the Kerala Government set up an Industrial Relations Board. A sub committee of this board was entrusted with the task of driving home the employers and the workers the respective rights and obligations. The report submitted by the committee was noted for unanimity of opinions.⁷⁴ Its proposals covered such questions as wages, bonus, works committees, negotiating machinery, code of discipline in the industry and industrial peace etc. Its proposals meant to satisfy the legitimate demands of the workers were; 1. to fix a state minimum of earning for every worker,; 2. to provide for payment of gratuity when workers retire by way of superannuation or by voluntary relinquishment of service; and 3. to provide for the payment of guaranteed minimum bonus amounting to 6.25 percent of the annual earnings of the workers in every industrial establishment of the state, irrespective of profit or loss, and also for a surplus bonus annually out of the profits of the establishment.⁷⁵

The first Communist led ministry paid special attention to the workers in state concerns. The government granted wage hike to all categories of

⁷³ Indian Express December 26, 1957.

⁷⁴ H.D.Malaviya, op. cit.

⁷⁵ Ibid ,p.41.

employees in the state transport department, and guaranteed a minimum bonus of 3.33% of the annual earnings. All the labour laws were made applicable to the workers in the department.⁷⁶ The government decided to give financial aid to the workers discharged or dismissed on questionable grounds during the pendency of adjudication or arbitration of their disputes with the employees⁷⁷.

The government brought a large number of industries within the purview of the Minimum Wages Act.⁷⁸ With regard to the sprawling plantations in Kerala, a committee comprising representatives of workers and employers had been formed to fix a joint rate of wages. Increased rates of wages were fixed for agricultural operation by different categories of agricultural wage earners⁷⁹.

The government organized labour and construction co-operatives in the state on sound lines with the object of employing the large unutilized human resources. This enabled the people to improve their economic conditions⁸⁰. The co-operative societies benefited the people by providing them opportunities for work on reasonable terms and giving them necessary guidance and supervision⁸¹.

While following an active policy to ensure the legitimate rights and claims of the workers, the Communist government kept on reminding the

⁷⁶ G.K.Lieten, *"The First Communist Ministry in Kerala-1957-59*,p 60.

⁷⁷ H.D.Malaviya op.cit.p.42.

⁷⁸ *KPCC Memorandathina Kerala Governmentinte Marupadi* (mal),Kottayam, 1959. p.77.

⁷⁹ K.Damodaran, *"Bhoovudama Billinta Artham* (Mal), Erunakulam,1958,p.28;C Achuthamenon,*28Masathe Communist Bharanam*(mal), EKM, 1959, p.22; K. Ramachandran Nair, *Thozhilali Vargha Munnetthinte Charitham*" (Mal) p. 110 -1957 on *EMS Manthrisabha Charithravum Rashtriyavum*. Edited by P Rajeev, p.110.

⁸⁰ *Governors' Addresses to Kerala Legislative Assembly*. April 21 1959 p.18 Secretariat of the Kerala Legislature-1999.

⁸¹ Labour contract co-operative societies were formed on the recommendations of the state planning commission. Total 42 societies were registered. For details see, C Achuthamenon, *28 Masathe...* op.cit.pp30-38; *KPCC Memmorandathinu...* op.cit.39-40

working classes of their obligations and duties. Addressing a gathering of workers at Trivandrum on 26 April 1958 labour minister T.V.Thomas said:

“It is the duty of the society to ensure a decent and reasonable standard for the workers in all fields of activity. So far as the workers are concerned, while demanding their rights, they have to remember their obligations too for the entitlement to rights implies due discharge of duties. Without releasing their responsibility, the workers threatened to stop work and hamper progress in industries. But all means this cannot be viewed as a proper attitude. For all agitations public support is quite essential. To ensure public sympathy, one should bear in mind that the demands that made should be reasonable”.⁸²

The achievement of the rapid industrial progress was one of the most important targets ⁸³. This is clearly reflected in the governor’s addresses in the Kerala Legislative Assembly:

“Taking the state as a whole, development will have to be directed toward certain definite objectives such as:

- (a) The starting of a few heavy and large scale industrial units in the state. The government will try to see that the proposed second ship building yard, under the consideration of the Centre, is set up in this state. It will also try to see that certain industrial units whose establishment in this state has been under consideration for some time, are established (eg. A paper mill, a cycle factory, a rubber tyre factory etc).
- (b) Provision of all possible types of help to the medium and small industries. The question of providing easy credit to the medium and small industries in engaging the attention of the government, necessary modifications in the state industrial finance corporation are being considered.

⁸² The Hindu, April 28, 1958.

⁸³ G.K.Lieten, ‘*Progressive State Governments...*’Economic and Political Weekly, January 6, 1979.p.31.

- (c) Devising ways and means of forming and strengthening industrial co-operatives for cottage industries.
- (d) Development of irrigation and power”⁸⁴.

In his budget speech on 7th June 1957 the finance minister C.Achuthamenon emphasized the need for establishing modern industries by utilizing the available natural resources of the state⁸⁵. This would help increase the employment opportunities. Care to be taken to reorganize the traditional small scale industries⁸⁶.

“It is obvious that, though the establishment of modern, large scale industrial units is of tremendous national importance in the sense that it would expedite the process of industrialization of the country thereby finding the real and final solution to the problem of unemployment, the short term solution for the problem can be found in the direction of encouraging small scale and cottage industries on a big scale. This involves a large amount of effort and organization on the part of the people. For, it is easier to organize a small number of big units than a large number of small units. There is, however, no doubt that this has been proved by the experience of the working of the Handloom Board and the Handloom co-operatives. My Government, therefore, proposes to take steps for the organization of industrial co-operatives, particularly for such industries as coir, fishing, the processing of bamboo etc.

As important as the organization of industrial co-operatives is the effort to pursue maximum number of people to invest their savings in small scale industries. It was with a view to encourage such potential investors that the planning commission and the Union Industries and Commerce Ministry sanctioned the formation of more industrial estates in this state than anywhere else...”⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *Governor's Address to the Kerala Assembly*, April 27, 1957 p.4, Secretariat of the Kerala Legislature,1999.

⁸⁵ See, ‘*Budget 1957-58, Finance Ministers Speech*’, Government of Kerala, 1957.; *Desabhimani*, June 10,1958; *Economic weekly*, June 22 1957.

⁸⁶ *EMS. Sampoorana Krithikal (Mal) Sanjika* 18.p.206.

⁸⁷ *Governors Address to Kerala Assembly from 1957 to 1998*. February 22-1958 p.12.

Besides coir, handicrafts and agriculture, the industry considered as a sector abounding in employment opportunities. The government adopted a policy of promoting the private entrepreneurs in the small and medium scale industries.⁸⁸ The government was ready to invest in the industries established on private capital.⁸⁹ For this necessary fund was allocated in the budget. Facilities were extended for the smooth running of the co-operative ventures of coir and handloom sector.⁹⁰ Industrial estates were set up in most of the districts.

EMS declared that 'we are trying our level best to attract the private capital in industrial sector'⁹¹. The government expected a number of industries to spring up in the private sector, and was prepared to offer maximum credit facilities and if, necessary, to participate in the share capital of the concerns⁹². The participation related also to foreign investments, for example, a Japanese cable factory which got a 20% government investment⁹³

In April 1958, the Kerala Water Transport Corporation was established⁹⁴. The nationalization of industry was limited to the establishment of water transport corporation, which took over the ownership of the passenger and cargo motor- boat services, with some 1500 workers⁹⁵. One entrepreneur who decided to invest in Kerala was G.D.Birla, one of the biggest Indian Industrialists. His decision to invest in a Communist ruled state

⁸⁸ After being summoned by the Governor of Kerala, EMS declared his policy as Chief Minister 'would not be to establish a socialist society. Businessman and traders would be encouraged, but at the same time the government would curb their tendency to excess profiteering'. G.K.Lieten, op. cit.; MP.Sukumaran Nair, '*EMS Sarkarinte Vyavasaya Vikasana Nayam*' (mal) on P.Raieev (ed) op. cit. p.121

⁸⁹ *EMS Sampoorana Krithikal* (Mal) vol.32 p.120.

⁹⁰ C Achuthamenon, '*28 masathe...*' op. cit. p 35;MP Sukumaran Nair, op. cit.

⁹¹ EMS, op. cit. p119.

⁹² Ibid. p 120.

⁹³ G.K.Lieten. *The First Communist Ministry in Kerala 1957-59*. p 59

⁹⁴ H.D.Malaviya, op.cit. p.100.

⁹⁵ G.K.Lieten, op. cit.

was expected to act as a forceful example for the Indian industries⁹⁶. Birla's pulp factory was established in June 1958 at Mavoor near Kozhikode. The government extended all facilities to ensure the supply of raw materials to this factory⁹⁷.

Generally, the government was quite successful in the industrial policy, and in the fulfillment of the plan. The new factories were opened not only in traditional sectors like rice and oil mills, textiles, coir, manufacturing, printing, splints and veneers, and rubber goods, but also in motor repairing, general engineering, artificial manures, forgings, and ship buildings⁹⁸. No doubt, the financial assistance provided by the Kerala Government gave an impetus to the economic development. Of all the Indian states, Kerala provided the largest amount of loans to the small scale industries⁹⁹.

In short, the government had a right sense of direction in raising the living standard of the people, reducing unemployment and regularly improving the industrial production¹⁰⁰. The Government had given much priority to state intervention for increasing industrial production, promoting private entrepreneurs, obtaining a reasonable share from central scheme for Kerala and extending the existing industries in private and public sector in the state. The government aimed at utilizing the raw materials available in the state on a long term basis and at imparting education and training to the new generation so as to equip them to run the industries efficiently.¹⁰¹

Labour Contract Societies

The formation and growth of Co-operative organizations is an all India policy, specially encouraged by the Planning Commission. The aim is to

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ M.P.Sukumaran Nair. op. cit.

⁹⁸ C.Achuthamenon op.cit.pp39-40.

⁹⁹ G.K.Lieten.op.cit.p.64

¹⁰⁰ MP Sukumaran Nair op. cit. p 123.

¹⁰¹ See *EMS.Sampoorna Krithikal* (Mal). Vol.32. pp.119-121.

encourage the workers themselves to do the job required in their local areas. The idea is that Workers' Co-operative societies should execute public works on a contract basis, and that there should be no one between them and the Government which gives the contract. Co-operative societies were meant to give benefit to the workers.¹⁰² The Congress Governments were not prepared to implement the ideas.

The first Communist ministry in Kerala initiated the implementation of this principle.¹⁰³ The most promising aspect in the field of labour participation, however, was the encouragement given to labour Contract societies. In three sectors - public works, coir industry and toddy-taping - the Communist government set up plans, aimed at protecting workers from exploitation by middlemen and contractors. To serve this purpose it started new Co-operative societies besides improving the existing ones.¹⁰⁴

The Government established 42 Labour Contract Societies and directed that Government works such as laying of roads, construction of bridges, building structures, digging canals, etc., be given to them at 50% more than the estimated cost as specified by Government engineers.¹⁰⁵ The societies were formed composed exclusively of labourers for executing public works and other contract items. It also eliminated middlemen.¹⁰⁶ Initially 25 pilot projects were started in different N.E.S. blocks. This proved to be a success and the Labour Co-operative societies were drawn up in all 84 blocks. The Government subsequently gave all the contract works costing up to 25,000/- to the workers directly. Applications were received only in 42 out of 84 blocks and registration formalities were completed in all these cases. However, the opposition hurled a narrow criticism that the Communist

¹⁰² Jitendra Singh, *Communist Rule in Kerala*, New Delhi, 1959. p. 125

¹⁰³ G.K. Lieten, *The First Communist Ministry in Kerala 1957-59*. p. 112.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ New Age, Vol. VII, No. 31, August 2, 1959.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

societies alone were given a chance to apply and that several non- Communist societies were denied registration.¹⁰⁷

The Coir industry, the most important traditional cottage industry in Kerala, employing nearly 10 lakhs of people, had been continuously in the grip of middlemen and money-lenders.¹⁰⁸ The Congress government, therefore, drew up the Coir Co-operative scheme in 1950. The Communist ministry, reviewing the Scheme came to the conclusion that its implementation had helped the very middlemen and money-lenders whom the Congress Government apparently wanted to exclude; at the same time it kept at bay the labour class for whose salvation the scheme was ostensibly formulated.¹⁰⁹ The Government appointed Rectification Committees in 25 out of the 187 societies, transferred the Coir special Officer to another job, and provided facilities to the poor workers to take shares in a society by offering them loans.¹¹⁰ Many of the new Coir co-operative societies have been opened by the government.¹¹¹

Financial Administration

The budget of the first Communist led government, on account of its contrast with that of the Congress ruled states, attracted national attention.¹¹² Prof. I.S Gulathi who wrote an article about the first Communist budget entitled “Behind the coir curtain-IV” (June 22, 1957) points out that

¹⁰⁷ G. K.Lieten, op. cit. pp. 112-113; The Hindu, July 12, 1959. ; Kainikkara Padmanabha Pillai, *Communist Bharanam...*, op. cit. p. 173.

¹⁰⁸ New Age, Vol. VII, No. 31, August 2, 1959.

¹⁰⁹ G. K. Lieten ,op. cit . p 113.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ New Age , Vol. VII, No. 31, August 2, 1959

¹¹² Economic Weekly. June 22, 1957. “Kerala has produced its first budget. That is also the communists’ first excise in constructive work in India... The budget by C.Achuthamenon to the Kerala legislature gives sufficient proof of the determination on the part of his party to apply itself devoutly to the building up of the economy of Kerala. This attitude is in striking contrast to that reflected in the budgets of some of the other state governments ...” p.767 .

“...Kerala too has a case for the Finance Commission and her Finance Minister could have made the excuse that Kerala’s revenue deficit of Rs.2.25 crores could be covered if only the Finance Commission rectified the ‘injustice’ done to the state earlier and allocated the state an additional transfer of the orders of Rs.2 to 3 crores. This would have meant additional taxes and would have won him applause from every quarter, because he would have pleaded for Kerala. But he did not choose the primrose path. On the contrary, he has introduced new taxes to the tune of Rs.2.32 and covered his deficit into a small surplus. The additional taxation should fetch nearly Rs.9 crores over the plan period. This exceeds the target set for the state. But the intention is to expand the state plan...”¹¹³

About new taxes, he opined, “In picking on new taxes Kerala’s Finance Minister has shown, a good deal of imagination. The additional super tax on companies operating in agriculture seems to be eminently justified¹¹⁴,”. Basic rate system was extended in the budget. “No one will quarrel with Sri. Achuthamenon on his proposal to unify the land revenue systems existing in the various parts of Kerala. The extension of the basic rate system of land revenue to Malabar is welcome also because it is a far simpler mode of taxation and should therefore reduce collection charges and be less onerous to the tax payers.”¹¹⁵ So comments I.S.Gulathi.

The measures adopted by Finance Minister Achuthamenon for reducing and if possible avoiding revenue deficit was really appreciable. He tried to accumulate resources for developmental activities¹¹⁶. The budget also aimed at avoiding revenue deficit for which the Finance Minister did not adopt the method of cutting expenditure in regard to social welfare. Instead he persuade the policy of collecting more taxes and approaching the Finance Commission with firm stand and logical contention in pursuit of more

¹¹³ I.S.Gulathi, *Behind the Coir contain-IV, The first communist Budget’* – Economic Weekly – June 22 1957. p.768

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ C Achuthamenon, op. cit. p 4.

fund.¹¹⁷ The taxation system of the Communist government was also novel in certain respects. While it exempted the poor, enhanced the taxes on the wealth and luxury of the rich. Indeed appreciable was the attempt of the Government to unify and simplify the tax structure.¹¹⁸

Administrative Reforms and Decentralization of Power

The first Communist led government, having realized the vital need for remolding the administrative machinery, constituted an Administrative Reforms Committee¹¹⁹. The Chief Minister EMS.Namboodiripad was the chairman and the Education Minister. Joseph Mundasseri was a member. Among other members in the committee, having much expertise in different aspects of administrative reform and state craft were V.K.Nandan Menon, P.S.Nataraja Pillai, Harshadev Malaviya, G.Parameswaran Pillai and K.S.Menon. The terms of the reference were to review the existing administrative machinery to assess its adequacy for a democratic Government in a welfare state; to recommend improvement in co-ordination; measures for the decentralization of power at various levels and to suggest methods for the democratization of the organs of government with a view to the effective participation of governing institutions.¹²⁰ After a detailed study and discussion for one year, the committee submitted a comprehensive report in August 1958.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Ibid ,p 29.

¹¹⁸ C Achuthamenon, '*Communist Governmentinte Karshikavikasana Pravarthanangal*'(mal),1959, p. 24;Economic Weekly, op. cit.

¹¹⁹ The Hindu, August 17, 1957. The Belwantrai Mehta Committee report already emphasized the need for administrative reforms both in the Centre and State Governments

¹²⁰ T.J.Nossiter, '*Communism in Kerala: A Study in Political Adaptation*'; Oxford University Press, (Delhi-1982), p. 166.

¹²¹ New Age, Vol. V, No. 46, Special Number, August 15, 1958 ;EMS. *Communist Party Keralathil vol.2* p.123, Thiruvananthapuram 1986).

The decentralization of power, effective and speedy functioning of administrative machinery, relationship between the officers and public etc were the key aspects of the Report¹²². H.D.Malaviya observes that, ...never before has the problem of administrative reform in India been dealt with such attention and care”¹²³. The existing administrative machinery was traditionally got entangled in the framework of foreign domination and monarchy. Therefore the committee propounded suggestions to remedy the defects and drawbacks of the administrative machinery. It examined all the matters with the aim of evolving an efficient system of administration suitable to the requirements of modern democratic state.¹²⁴

EMS writes, “The government prepared a draft bill and presented it in the legislature to enforce the recommendations of the committee regarding the decentralization of power. The draft bill was known as District Council Bill. The Bill, besides arming the panchayats with extensive powers, envisaged to establish the District Council as an intermediary step between the panchayaths and state government. The bill had the provision to devolve vast powers on the District Council composed of elected members. The powers and responsibilities of the secretariat in the state were so decentralized as to enhance those of the District Council. Extension was also manifest in the power of the elected village panchayaths. Thus the Bill came to materialize the twin objects of decentralization of power and democratization of administration.”¹²⁵

On the basis of the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Committee, the government in fact, presented two bills in the legislative

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ H.D.Malaviya op.cit.p.10

¹²⁴ EMS. op. cit.

¹²⁵ Ibid p 124.

assembly regarding the Panchayatee Raj and Municipality.¹²⁶ What was meant by the term unit of local self government was patiently defined in the preface of the bill.¹²⁷ According to the bills the panchayaths should have to adopt so many welfare measures including social economic and agricultural development, collection of land revenue, documentation and preservation of revenue records, carrying out of social welfare activities etc.¹²⁸ In short, the panchayath raj embraced all aspects of the rural development. Bent up on conferring extensive powers to the local self government institutions, the bill provided for a two tire system in local self government - panchayaths and municipalities in the lower level and District Council at the higher. The bill envisaged to transfer the powers of planning, co ordination of the activities of local self governing institutions and of revenue collection to the District Councils. The Bill of 1958 visualized the District Council as district government. The government considered the decentralization of power as a sequel to agricultural reforms. The decentralization was never conceived merely as an administrative reform, but as an extensive democratic system for improving the livelihood of the people¹²⁹

For want of ample resources, the units of local self government could hardly carry out the obligations bestowed upon them¹³⁰. Therefore, the local self government institutions requested the new state government to take over some of their responsibilities. But the Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad tried to empower the units of local self governments. He stood for providing necessary financial stability to the local bodies.¹³¹ The bills empowered the

¹²⁶ See *Kerala Panchayath Billum (1958) Kerala District Council Billum (1959)*; C. Achuthamenon, *28 Masathe....* op. cit. p.25.

¹²⁷ The Hindu. December 18, 1958.

¹²⁸ T.M.Thomas Isaac, *Adhikara Vikendrakaranam Oru Puthiva Kashchapadu*, on P Rajeev (ed.) op. cit. p.84.

¹²⁹ C Achuthamenon. op. cit. p 25;EMS, *Sampoorna Krithikal*, vol. 20 ,p.93

¹³⁰ Thomas Isaac, op. cit.

¹³¹ EMS *Sampoorna Krithikal*, Vol. 18, p. 207.

panchayaths to exact such new taxes as House Tax, Professional Tax, Vehicle Tax, Land Tax, surcharge on stamp duty, cess on irrigation etc.¹³²

The Panchayat Raj Bill and the District Council Bill were presented in the legislature respectively in 1958 and 59.¹³³ Both the bills failed to be enacted on account of the dismissal of the ministry.

The concept of democratic decentralization of power came into vogue in 1957-59 periods. This was the main idea behind the concept of Community Development Blocks introduced as a part of the Second Five Years Plan¹³⁴. In contrast to this the democratic decentralization of power means that officers of different hierarchical orders should function in tune with the directions of the elected representatives of bodies concerned. EMS observes,

“The success attained by the struggle towards democracy and freedom will not be lasting unless the state machinery is democratized and decentralized... The elected representatives must be accountable to the people. Government officer’s attitude towards the people must undergo thorough change. But, intoxicated with power, the government officers did not act in a judicious manner in their dealings with people. ...”¹³⁵

For the effective functioning of the panchayaths, the draft bill provided for a re-arrangement of officers so as to dispel the difference between the panchayat and village establishments. The bill, thus ‘envisaged a single cadre consisting of village officers, block extension officers, revenue officers and panchayat officers’.¹³⁶

EMS critically observed that excessive centralization and red-tapism were the two aspects of the existing administrative system. “Even for trivial

¹³² Thomas Isaac, op. cit.

¹³³ EMS, *Communist Party Keralathil* (Mal.) Vol. II, P.124.

¹³⁴ The Hindu. December 2, 1958

¹³⁵ *EMS Sampoorana Kritikal*. Vol. 19 p.194.

¹³⁶ See, *EMS Sampoorana Krithikal* vol.20 , op. cit.; The Hind. December, 2, 1958.

things, it was customary for the people and the officers from village to higher levels to look for directions from State and Union secretariats”.¹³⁷ Various departments functioned like watertight compartments. Conspicuous by the absence was the healthy reciprocal relationships. Consequently the participation of the people in the administration was quite meager. This resulted in red tape-ism. So the Administrative Reforms Committee prescribed the democratic decentralization as a panacea for departmentalism blended with red tape-ism.

The Administrative Reform Committee report suggested many progressive measures for an effective functioning of the administrative machinery in the state. Unfortunately, the key recommendations of the committee did not become a topic of healthy discussion in the following months.¹³⁸ On the contrary, one of its recommendations, pertaining to the criteria of caste reservation, became a subject of controversy with its ripples spread all over the state. No wonder, this lent strength to anti-Communist agitation in Kerala.¹³⁹

Food Sector

Food deficit has always been an eternal predicament in the state. Food situation in the entire country was getting grim in the first half of 1957¹⁴⁰. The condition of Kerala was no better. During the period of first communist led government, Kerala's deficit in this respect was to the extent of over 50

¹³⁷ *EMS Sampoorana Krithikal* vol.19. p. 195.

¹³⁸ EMS Namboodiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil...* op.cit .p 125.

¹³⁹ Puthuppalli Raghavan – *Viplava Samarangal*” (mal) vol.5p.197 DC. Books Kottayam 1986, K.Rajeswari “*Communist Bharanavum, Vimochana Samaravum* (mal). P.143, Aluva 2005.

¹⁴⁰ *The Hindu*, August 18,1957.On 17th August, 1957, the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made a declaration at New Delhi that his government intended to take some strong measures to control the price rise of food grains. On the same day the Central food Minister AP Jain explained the all India food situation and the reasons for price rise in the Lok Sabha.

percent of its requirements ¹⁴¹. At the initial stage the government failed miserably to accelerate food production

The Governor, in his address to the State Assembly on 27th April 1957 point out that “The Government is concerned over the food situation which at the present moment is causing a certain amount of anxiety. While the basic reason for the unsatisfactory food situation remains, certain recent developments have created, for the immediate present, certain additional difficulties. These are; firstly, the boiled rice to which the people of our state are accustomed, is not available, the stock that we are receiving are almost entirely raw rice. Secondly, even with regard to raw rice, the price situation is not at all good; the tendency in the areas from where we are getting our supplies for the prices is to rise. Nevertheless, the government hopes to be able to tide over the difficulties of the coming lean months with the help of the supplies promised by the Central Government” ¹⁴².

Due to the extreme shortage of rice, the food minister K.C.George initiated to change the food habits of the people. He advised the people to use wheat and ‘Macroni’ instead of rice. ¹⁴³ But it did not produce desired results. ¹⁴⁴

The Governor, in his address in the Legislative Assembly in February 22, 1958 again took note of the gravity of food situation. “I had made reference ,in April last, to the concern felt by my government at the

¹⁴¹ Economic Weekly, December 20,1958,p 1570.

¹⁴² *Governors’ Address*....op. cit. p 6.

¹⁴³ Macroni is a food material made out of tapioca. News papers reported that the Central government was ready to supply macroni to Kerala from its factory at Mysore. The Hindu, August 20, 1957; K.Rajeswari, *Communist Bharanavum Vimochana Samaravum* (mal),2005,p 142.

¹⁴⁴ It became a subject of scorn and ridicule the government. K.S.Rjan’s “*Bhagavan Macroni*” – a filthy story recitation that staged in the congress meetings throughout Kerala. (Source, Interview with K.M.Chummar, Congress leader and writer on 26-1-2010 at his residence at Pravithanam, Palai.; K.Rajeswari, op.cit)

deteriorating food situation. Subsequent developments have shown that this problem is, seriously effecting the entire country... The problem is however far more serious in our state than in any other state, firstly because no other state has such a deficit in food as ours; secondly because present food shortage is primarily a shortage of rice, the staple food of the people of our state, the position, therefore, is bound to continue to be serious during the next few years”¹⁴⁵. As any permanent solution would take time, the governor appealed for the cooperation of all parties for immediate ameliorative measures. It was repeated by the finance minister C. Achuthamenon in his budget speech¹⁴⁶. But the opposition parties and most of the newspapers did not welcome the appeal of the government. It was attributable to their anti-Communist and anti governmental attitude.¹⁴⁷ To tackle the food problem, the Governor suggested multiplication of rice production by four times. But in the given situation, he said that it would be modest to put the target at doubling the present level of production.¹⁴⁸ But the Communist government failed to attain the target.

Determined to mount the volume of food production, the government launched a large number of irrigation works and intensified the drive for a large scale use of green manures.¹⁴⁹ To ensure the supply of green manures, the government in June 1958 started a campaign to grow a green shrub named Glyricidia.¹⁵⁰ The first week of June 1958 was observed throughout Kerala as “Glyricidia Week”.¹⁵¹ Mass organizations like the *Karshaka*

¹⁴⁵ Governor’s Addresses, Op cit. P.10

¹⁴⁶ *Desabhimani*, June 8,1958.

¹⁴⁷ C. Unniraja, “*Bhakhya Prashnam, Desiya Prashnam* (pamphlet- mal) p-21, Kottayam, 1958.

¹⁴⁸ Governors Addresses, Op.cit.p11

¹⁴⁹ *Desabhimani*, May 12,1858; for details see. C. Unniraja, “*Keralathinoru Master Plan* (Malayalam), study report- 1958

¹⁵⁰ H.D. Malaviya, Kerala A report to the Nation, P. 96

¹⁵¹ C.Achuthamenon “*Communist Governmentinte Karshika Vikasana Pravathangal*” (Mal) P-12. Ernakulam,1959.

Sangham, workers of political parties, social welfare workers and others participated in the glyricidia week in a big way and the campaign assumed a popular character.¹⁵² The glyricidia campaign had so impressed the Planning Commission that it asked all the states to emulate Kerala in the matter.¹⁵³

During 1956-57, the food situation all over the country was considerably apprehensive¹⁵⁴. In this context, the Finance Minister C Achuthamemon in his maiden budget speech in June 1957 declared that, in order to protect the people from greedy profit seekers, the government intended to purchase polished rice and other food grains at a fixed price which would be supplied to the people at a reasonable price.¹⁵⁵

In 1956, the Central Government which appreciated its responsibility to the deficit state (Kerala) and fulfilled a part of its requirements. Such supplies made in 1956-57 by the Centre came approximately to 25000 tons a month.¹⁵⁶ EMS writes, “The 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 in July. The assumption behind the decision to create this zone was that 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 movements 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

¹⁵² *Desabhimani*, June, 8 1958.

¹⁵³ Indian Express. June 12, 1958.

¹⁵⁴ The Hindu, August 18, 1957; Sunil Guha, “*India’s Food Problem*” p.2. New Delhi, 1957.

¹⁵⁵ *Desabhimani*, June 10, 1957; K. Rajeswari, op. it p141.

¹⁵⁶ EMS Namboodiripad, *Selected Writings*, vol. II p.139.

requirements at prices at which the central government had been supplying to us. They however argued that the Centre should not absolve itself of its responsibility to undertake to supply this state in case this arrangement did not work”.¹⁵⁷

Anxiety of the Communist led state government became true in actual practice. It was only for the first few months of the existence of the Southern Food Zone¹⁵⁸ that supplies came from Andhra to Kerala through the normal Trade channel at rates declared by the Central Government as ceiling prices.¹⁵⁹ 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 price¹⁶⁰. The private trader procured rice from Andhra at rates higher than ceiling prices and sold it in Kerala at still prices.¹⁶¹ The state government, therefore, asked the central government either to enforce the controlled prices in Andhra, so that Kerala may buy at those rates; or supply to Kerala from any other stock which the centre may have.¹⁶² The central government did neither. It asked the Kerala government to buy from Andhra, but made it clear that Kerala government should make purchase at or below the ceiling rates¹⁶³.

The Communist government sent its officers to Andhra and purchased rice. The need being urgent, the normal formalities of calling of tenders and coming to agreement with the lowest bidder were not gone through;¹⁶⁴ a

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.p140.

¹⁵⁸ The Southern Food Zone was formed in July 1957 by South India States at Hyderabad

¹⁵⁹ C.Unniraja “*Keralathinte Bhakshya Prashnavum Kendra Governmentum*” (pamphlet ,mal)Thiruvananthapuram, 1959.p.20.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ EMS and C.Unniraja, “*Bhakshana Karyathil Vivechanamille?*” (pamphlet ,mal).p 20

¹⁶² Ibid. p30.

¹⁶³ C.Unniraja. op. cit .p 4

¹⁶⁴ Bulk purchase without tender was not justifiable. Allegations of occupation spread through out Kerala. See, “*Kumbakonangalude Kumbamela*” (mal). Democratic publications Ernakulam, 1959.

contract was signed with T. Sreeramalu, P.Suryanarayana and company who agreed to supply quickly at current market price and the supplies did come in time.¹⁶⁵ But a big furor was raised over the fact that tenders were not called.

¹⁶⁶ Allegations were made that the price paid by the government was more what the dealer got, the difference being pocketed by the Communist party.

¹⁶⁷ These have become one of the points of persistent campaign against the Communist led government and Communist party since then.¹⁶⁸

People's Advisory Committees

The first Communist Government constituted Advisory Committees to facilitate the popular content of administration. As a part of adopting various measures for solving the food problem, the government evolved the device of People's Food Committees. Committees composed of the representatives of all major political parties were to advise the Tahsildar in fixing the number of fair price shops in his taluk, in locating them where they were required, in selecting the person who was to run the shop, etc. Similar committees were also formed to help the local officers and Panchayaths in selecting the families of the lower income groups to whom identity cards were to be

¹⁶⁵ *Government statement on the enquiry Report of Andhra Rice deal Issue.* P.10, Thiruvananthapuram, 1959; Desabhimani, April, 5 1949; The Hindu, April, 8, 1959.

¹⁶⁶ Kerala Legislative Assembly debates on Sept. 2-1957, December 27, 1957 etc. Kainikera Padmanabha Pillai. *Communist Bharanam Keralathil*, 1979; p.45, .

¹⁶⁷ Anni.Joseph, "*Communist Sarkarinte 6 Masathe Bharanam*" (Mal) p.p.8-16, Kottayam, 1957; Puthuppalli Raghavan op. cit p.p. 134-139; Democratic Publications, op. cit; Kainikera Padmanabha Pillai. Op. cit. p.48; *Kaumudi* (daily mal) September 11/1158, *Mathrubhumi*, March 13 and 18, 1959, *Malayala Manorama* March 21-1159. It is significant that neither the Minister concerned nor anybody else was accused of pocketing the difference for himself.

¹⁶⁸ (The govt. appointed Justice P.T.Raman Nair as Andhra Rice deal Enquiry Commission to enquire about the allegations in connection with Andhra rice deal. After fully enquiring in to the matter, going through records and examining witnesses, the commission come to the conclusion that government had incurred an avoidable loss of Rs.1,12500. see, ARDEC Report. pp. 1 to 63.; *Mathrubhumi*, march 13, 1959; Desabhimani, March, 15, 1959; The Hindu, April, 8, 1959; *Appendices of the Congress memorandum to the President*, 1959.

distributed and otherwise ensuring, that the shops ran 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 was made available to people of the state by the Centre was to be organized.¹⁶⁹

The government thought that the setting up of People's Committees at various levels for discharging certain well-defined functions would help every department being run to the satisfaction of the people. They, therefore, formed People's Committees to assist regular government officials in the Forest, the Education, the Health, the P.W.D., 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 new school or hospital to be opened, road to be constructed, etc.¹⁷⁰

Education Sector

The first communist led ministry and its minister for education Prof: Joseph Mundassery tirelessly worked for progressive changes and improvement in the sphere of education in the state .The minister adopted several measures for the comprehensive development of education in which the Kerala Education Act of 1958 was the most controversial piece of legislation in the history of United Kerala ¹⁷¹. Being introduced by the Communist ministry and aimed at the control of private educational agencies and restructuring the school education, it raised an hornets' nest of opposition

¹⁶⁹ New Age Vol. Iv, No. 49, September 1, 1957.

¹⁷⁰ New Age , Vol. V, no. 45, August 10, 1958.

¹⁷¹ The Congress government in Andhra Pradesh state passed a progressive educational bill in 1956. (The Andhra Educational institution Act 1956). But there was no controversy in Andhra regarding the bill. The Congress state conference held at Manjeri in 1956 passed a resolution for the need of education reform in the state. See, Pavanan, '*Pathram, Charthram, Pavanan*', Trichur, 1992, pp84-85.'

from all communal and anti- Communist forces in the state. The private educational agencies exploited the communal and religious sentiments of the people and won over the political groups and feudal elements that were opposed to the Communists.¹⁷²

During the period in question, the condition of teaching community in the state was highly pathetic, especially in the private sector.¹⁷³ To the same category belonged, Joseph Mundassery, the Minister for Education. Besides being a talented professor, he was a renowned writer and a gifted educational thinker. Professor Mundassery in collaboration with the help of P.K Nambiar IAS, the Government Secretary for education prepared and drafted the Kerala Education Bill which was presented in the legislative assembly on 30th July 1957.¹⁷⁴ Consequent on its review by the select committee and second reading, the bill got passed on 2nd September, 1957.¹⁷⁵ But on the eve of seeking the assent of the President of India, the bill was referred to the Supreme Court. In June 1958 the Supreme Court approved the main provisions of the bill. In the light of the comments and observations of the supreme court, the bill was partially altered and passed as the Kerala Education Act., November 28, 1958.¹⁷⁶

At various phases in the process of the enactment of the bill, sharp and vehement criticism arose inside and outside of the legislative Assembly. The Kerala Education Bill devised by Joseph Mundassery was not totally different from the reform measures intended to be introduced by sir C.P

¹⁷² Economic weekly, July 1959; P 891

¹⁷³ interview with T.V Achutha warrier – Former chief editor, Express Daily Thrissur at his residence on 25-10-2010

¹⁷⁴ Joseph Mundassery “ *Kozhinja Elakal* (Mal) “ Pp. 259-295.

¹⁷⁵ Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly -22/08/57 to 02/09/57, Vol.2. Nos. 1-9.

¹⁷⁶ Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly-24/11/58 to 12/12 58, Vol. VI Nos. 1-18.

Ramaswami Ayyar in 1945¹⁷⁷ and the PSP and Congress ministries of Travancore-Cochin prior to 1957.¹⁷⁸

The KEB in its original form consisted of 36 sections,¹⁷⁹ over half of which pertained to the conditions of appointment and service of teachers. Under its provisions, the Government would maintain a state register of trained teachers eligible for appointment to private as well as government schools. Teachers would be paid directly by the government. Managers would be held responsible for the proper conduct of school administration in the interests of the pupils. Failure on the part of managers to discharge the statutorily laid down responsibilities could lead to forfeiture of maintenance and contingency grants, or a direct assumption of control of such schools by the government for a maximum period of 5 years¹⁸⁰. Under the proposed legislation, the management would continue to be responsible for the day to day administration of schools, whilst the state government's department of education would assume responsibility for the control and supervision of schools, mainly with a view to standardizing general education throughout the state.¹⁸¹

Furthermore, the KEB envisaged compulsory free primary education for all children up to the age of 14, with provision for free mid day meal,

¹⁷⁷ The Travancore Education re-organization committee of 1945 (TERC) recommended the free and compulsory primary education and establish the direct control of the govt. in primary education within the next 10 years . Government of Travancore – Report of the Travancore Education reorganization Committee, Trivandrum 1945. Accordingly the Maharaja issued on 18th October 1945, “The Travancore Primary Education Act 1121.M.E.” N.Jose Chander, *The Legislative Process in Kerala*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981. P 74

¹⁷⁸ The Congress Ministry introduced a new scheme in 1950 ‘The Private Secondary School Scheme’ (PSS) Along with other regulations the scheme enhanced the salary of teachers and partly regulated security of service . But it did not came into practice. A similar attempt was done in 1955 also .

¹⁷⁹ Kerala Gazette Extra ordinary (The Education Bill) 16th July 1957.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid .clause 14 of the KE Bill

¹⁸¹ T.V.Satya Moorthy . *India since independence..... Vol. 1* . P 394

Textbooks and writing materials.¹⁸² A State Education Advisory Board and appropriate local level educational authorities were to be set up to advise the Department of Education on various aspects of its work under the new law.¹⁸³

The churches had already mounted pressure against the bill by taking refuge under Article 30 of the Indian constitution, and claiming that KEB constituted a deliberate attempt on the part of the State Government to cripple private Managements. They carried their attack against the Government to the Centre whilst the bill, which was passed on November 29, was still awaiting the President's assent. Succumbing to pressure exerted by the Congressmen representing the interests of the church, the Central Government referred the bill to the Supreme Court.¹⁸⁴

The Government of Kerala, represented by D.N Pritt(Q.C.), vigorously and convincingly argued that the sole aim of KEA was to ensure equal opportunity to all qualified persons to seek employment as teachers, and that there was no intention whatsoever to discriminate against any section of the people, least of all the Catholic Church.¹⁸⁵ The Supreme Court's verdict (given in June 1958), was favorable to the State Government in all major respects . In clear support of KEA, the Court pointed out "that the right to administer schools would not mean the right to administer them inefficiently, and if state aid was given to them, the Government should have statutory rights to improve certain regulations".¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Kerala Gazette. op-sit Section 28 (ii)

¹⁸³ Section 4(ii)

¹⁸⁴ At this juncture the Home Minister of the Government of India was Gobind Ballabh Pant. No friend of the church, Pant was an implacable enemy of the Communists and was ready to oblige the Christian pressure groups in the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee which were on the war path against the Government over the Kerala Education Bill; see, H.D Malaviya , *Kerala : A report*op. cit. p 37.

¹⁸⁵ H.D. Malaviya , *Kerala : A report*op. cit. p 40.

¹⁸⁶ Georges Kristoffel Lieten , "Education, Ideology and Politics in Kerala 1957-59", *Social Scientist*, Vol.6, No.2 (September,1977) P. 9.

All important provisions of the Kerala Education Act were subjected to severe criticism. The critics attributed diverse imaginary abuses to the Act, for its being designed by the Communist Government.¹⁸⁷

The objects of the Act were 'to provide for the better organization of general education' and more specifically to provide for a check on the payment of salaries to and security of service of teachers and on the administration of the institution.¹⁸⁸ One important achievement of KEA of 1958 is that it saved the teaching community from the condition of servitude and enabled them to participate meaningfully in the socio political and organizational activities.

The Government constituted text book committees¹⁸⁹ and in November 1957 it had ordered various text book committees to prepare new text books for primary classes and these books were to be introduced in the schools from the next academic year onwards.¹⁹⁰ In the middle of 1958 it was also alleged that Communist's "sinister motive is seen in full nakedness in the preparation and prescription of text books" which was intended to "subdue the minds of the students to the ideology of the rulers by a rigorous control over syllabus... common to all totalitarian governments".¹⁹¹ The Government appointed a committee of educational experts to enquire in to these allegations. Dr. Kuruvila Jacob was the chairman of the Text Book Enquiry Committee. Mrs. O.C Srinivasan and M.V Narayann Pillai were the other members of the committee.¹⁹² The Committee of enquiry came across the occurrence of inadequate passages, but attributed it to the absence of an

¹⁸⁷ Michael Tharakan, '1957 le Vidyabhiasa Bille...' on P Rajeev(Ed.) op. cit. p 71.

¹⁸⁸ G.K Leiten, *Education, ideology and ...* op cit. P 8

¹⁸⁹ The Hindu, October 28, 1957.

¹⁹⁰ Joseph Mundasserry, "*Kozhinja Elakal*" (autobiography) P. 330

¹⁹¹ Malayala Rajyam, October 5, 1958; KPCC Memorandum presented to the president of India, New Delhi, 1959, P 22; Kainikkara Padmanabha Pillai. "*Communist Bharanam Keralathil* (Mal.) P 145.

¹⁹² Kainikara Padmanabhan Pillai, op. cit. P 152

adequate machinery of supervision.¹⁹³ The main conclusion of their report however, was that there has not been any concerted attempt on the part of the authorities ... to indoctrinate the pupils in anti religious ideas,” or “at indoctrination of communist ideology, or on intention ... to belittle the achievement of India”.¹⁹⁴ The report of the Kuruvila Jacob Committee was submitted in January 1959 .

The critics also raised voices against the works of great writers like Vaikom Muhammed Basheer , Vailoppilly Sredhara Menon, G. Kumara pillai, Sugatha Kumari , Ulloor S Parameswara Ayyar, Olappamanna, G. Sankarakurupu, T.N Gopinathan Nair , Vayalar Ramavarma , N. Gopala Pillai, N.V. Krishna Varrier, Edasseri Govindan Nair, Sardar K.M. Panikkar etc.¹⁹⁵

The most important achievement in the field of higher Education was the formation of Kerala University. The former Travancore University was reorganized by affiliating the Colleges of Cochin -Malabar region and the entire Collegiate education of the state came under the Kerala University. The University Bill was presented in the Legislative Assembly on June 11, 1957.¹⁹⁶ The University had democratically formed senate and syndicate . It enjoyed a good deal of autonomy. The staff appointments were decided through the Public Service Commission. The Act enabled the University to formulate the service norms for private college teachers. The University had a mandatory role in the disputes between private college teachers and

¹⁹³ G.K Leiten –“*Education*op. cit P 9

¹⁹⁴ Kerala Governments’ Reply o KPCC Memorandum 1959, PP 43-44

¹⁹⁵ Legislative Debates – July 8December 12 1958 etc ; Desabhimani, October 5,1958; Memorial submitted to the Honorable Chief Minister of Kerala by the Kerala Catholic Congress on the present school texts of Kerala, 1958, P 6. “*Paadapusthakangalude Thani niram* (mal) pamphlet . All Kerala Catholic Congress working committee , Joseph Mundasseri . op. cit P 333; K. Rajeswari, op. cit PP 168-170.,

¹⁹⁶ Janayugam,June 12, 1957; Desabhimani, June 13,1957; The Hindu, August 24,1957 ; K. Rajeswari, op. cit P 170 .

Managers.¹⁹⁷ Dr. John Mathai the famous economist and former cabinet minister in the Central Government was appointed as the first Vice Chancellor of the Kerala University.¹⁹⁸ He rendered meritorious services for the development of Kerala University and exalted the status of teaching faculties both in University and affiliated colleges by gaining UGC grant and other aid from different sources.¹⁹⁹

The attainment in the realm of technical education was never negligible. Engineering colleges were established both in government and private sectors. A few polytechnics and junior technical schools were also started in different districts.²⁰⁰ Kozhikode Medical college was established for the development of medical education and extension of medical facilities to the backward region of Malabar.²⁰¹ Minister for Health Department Dr. A. R Menon took special initiative in starting and developing the Kozhikode Medical College as one of the superior institutions of health education in the country.²⁰²

Thus the 28 months rule of the first Communist ministry in Kerala had great achievements in the field of education. But , ironically, the educational reforms, particularly the Kerala Education Bill of 1957 was a major factor that precipitated the anti-Communist agitation in Kerala.

Agrarian sector

The first Communist led government took various measures to effect qualitative changes in the agricultural sector. The most noteworthy among

¹⁹⁷ The Hindu, August 24,1957;Joseph Mundasseri op.cit P 312

¹⁹⁸ Joseph Mundasseri, op. cit.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Prof. T.O Mathew, educationalist(former Principal, St Thomas College Thrissur at his residence on 11th January, 2010.

²⁰⁰ Mundasseri , op. cit PP 335-336

²⁰¹ The Hindu, August 6,1957,

²⁰² B. Iqbal, 'Arogia Mekhala' on P Rajeev (ed.) op. cit. P 144.

them was the enactment of the Kerala Agricultural Relations Bill which transformed the traditional feudal means and relations of production.

Many of the land legislations of the government were designed to improve the condition of the people at the grass root level. Minimum wages were fixed for agricultural labourers.²⁰³ Through peoples committees was distributed among the landless labourers, excess holdings belonging to the government. Effective measures were adopted for debt relief. Steps were also taken to enhance agricultural production.²⁰⁴ Special attention was bestowed on the extension of cashew cultivation. Due regard was paid to diffuse agricultural knowledge.²⁰⁵ Thanks to suitable arrangements, agricultural products fetched fair prices.

Soon after assumption of office as Chief Minister, EMS Namboodiripad enumerated in his policy statement measures meant to restructure the agricultural sector.

“To ensure fair rent, permanent right to their land must be conferred on the tenants. Fix the land limit so as to suit the peculiar conditions of Kerala and distribute the excess land of the big land owners among the landless, to help the small scale land holders who are likely to suffer from the new land reforms. We hope to present in the immediate future, a couple of bills incorporating these anticipated changes. We also intend to enforce with immediate effect an urgent act providing provisional relief to the tenants. ...”²⁰⁶

On April 11, 1957, the government issued ordinance staying all proceedings for the eviction of tenants and ‘*Kudikidappukar*’ (Hutment

²⁰³ The Hindu, July 5, 1957; GK Leiten “*Progressive State Governments*” Economics and Political Weekly, January 6, 1979. P 34; MK Kamalasanan .op. cit. p 230.

²⁰⁴ H.D Malaviya, op. cit. PP 106-153

²⁰⁵ C. Achuthamenon, ‘*Communist Governmentinte Karshika Vikasana Pravarthanangal*’ (Mal) pamphlet, Ernakulam, 1959. PP 17-18

²⁰⁶ EMS “*Sampoorna Krithikal, Vol. 18, PP 127-128.*”

dwellers) and for the collection of the arrears of rent²⁰⁷. Later it was replaced by the Kerala Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act, 1957 (8th May 1957)²⁰⁸. This Act stayed the evictions of all categories of tenants including new types of lessees and all classes of *kudikidappukars*.²⁰⁹

A bill providing for the abolition of ‘*Jenmikaram*’ (tax to the landlord) was published on 27 November 1957, two days after the enactment of the Agricultural Debt Relief Bill, which gave a relief of Rs. 2 crores to 21733 agriculturists by the end of 1958²¹⁰. Another reform of the Communist government was the augmentation of the rate of compensation for tenant’s improvements by the Kerala Compensation for Tenant’s Improvement Act 1958, applicable to the entire state.²¹¹

In his address to the first session of the Assembly, the Governor indicated government’s top priority to land reform proper: “it had abandoned its original proposal to appoint a committee to study the land reforms, and started right away with the drafting of the Bill itself.”²¹² The Kerala Agricultural Relations Bill, following the scrutiny of the Planning Commission was published in the Kerala Gazette of 18th December 1957. The Bill introduced in the State Legislative Assembly by the then Revenue Minister KR Gouri on December 21st, 1957. Subsequently it was circulated for eliciting public opinion.

The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill 1957, composed of 86 Sections, was divided into four chapters - Preliminary (sections 1 and 2), Provisions regarding Tenancies (Sections 3 to 59), Restrictions upon holding Land in

²⁰⁷ The Hindu, April 11, 1957.; T.V Sathyamoorthy op. cit. P 194

²⁰⁸ Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, First Session-1957, Vol. I No. 5, p. 383.

²⁰⁹ Kerala Legislative Assembly, ‘*Niyama Nirmanathinta 50 Varsham*’, Thiruvananthapuram, 2007. P 895.

²¹⁰ G.K Lieten, *The First Communist Ministry in Kerala 1957-59*. P.81

²¹¹ *Governor’s Addresses to Kerala Assembly*op. cit. P 6.

²¹² G.K.Lieten, op. cit. p 82

Excess of Ceiling Area and Disposal of Excess Lands (Sections 60 to 74) and Miscellaneous Provisions (Section 75 to 86) and two schedules. The Bill was conceived to be “a measure to fix ceiling for the extent of holdings and to regulate and define the rights and obligations of all categories of tenants including cultivators on various types of precarious tenures and arrangements.”²¹³

The Bill was thoroughly debated upon the Legislative Assembly and at the Select Committee level. The discussion of the select committee spanned over a spell of 60 days in which 20 days were devoted to collection of evidences from district head quarters. Altogether 249 witnesses turned up for hearing.²¹⁴ Opposition parties like Indian National Congress, PSP, Muslim League and caste/communal organizations like NSS, Catholic Church etc vehemently objected the Bill. They endeavored to overthrow the Bill from within and without the Legislative Assembly.²¹⁵ Clause to clause discussion of the Bill dragged on for 124 hours. The suggested amendments amounted to 1296. But the Legislature approved only 175 of them.²¹⁶

The enacted Bill that reached the President of India in pursuit of assent was turned down on July 27, 1960. The Central Government advised the President to give a direction seeking the removal of the provision for nullifying the land transactions between December 18, 1957 and July 27, 1960. Accordingly the succeeding government did the amendment. However, the volume of transactions between December 18,1957 and July 27,1960 numbered more than two lakhs.²¹⁷ This exposed the ulterior motive to

²¹³ The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill 1957, L.A. Bill No 51 of 1957, p 46

²¹⁴ N Jose Chander, ‘*Legislative Process in Kerala*’, Thirvananthapuram, 1981;p.126.

²¹⁵ E Gopalakrishna Menon, ‘*Karshikabandha Billum Pradhipaksha Partikalum*’,(mal) Ernakulam,1959; pp 1-15.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ S Ramachandran Pillai, ‘*Communist Manthrisabhayum Karshika Mekhalayum*’; on P Rajeev (ed.) op. cit. p 52.

weaken the land ceiling. So in effect, it adversely affected lakhs of landless people.

The Communist government passed two more acts to mitigate the plight of the peasants who bore the burden of huge debts. These were the 'Act No-31', "The Debt Relief Act of 1958" - 'Act No-35', and the 'Act to Restrain the Moneylenders'. These Acts had state wide application.²¹⁸ The Act intended to monitor the activities of moneylenders stipulated that the usurers should take license and maintain clear and transparent account of their transactions.²¹⁹

The Private Forest Protection amendment Act (Act No 10, 1958) and the private Forest Management Act (Act No 13, 1958) were aimed to make some regulations and avoid the misuse of private forest land.²²⁰ These Acts empowered the government to take over the management of private forest land for a fixed period of five years.²²¹

Thus the Communist government adopted multifarious measures to intensify the agricultural production.²²² Some of them merit special mention: 1) Manufacture and distribution of manures including chemicals, pesticides etc, 2) Establishment of agricultural research centers, 3) Foundation of seed production centers and supply of good seeds, 4) Setting up of small scale irrigation facilities, 5) Restructuring the agricultural System, 6) Emulation of Japanese agricultural system etc.²²³ The government encouraged the cultivators for producing compost manure. The trained officers were appointed for imparting training to the cultivators about compost manure

²¹⁸ C Achuthamenon, '28 *Masathe...*' op. cit. p 21.

²¹⁹ S Ramachandran Pillai, op. cit.

²²⁰ C Achuthamenon, '*Communist Governmentinte Karshika....*' op. cit. p 6.

²²¹ The Desabhimani, October 17, 1958.

²²² HD Malaviya, op. cit. p 159

²²³ Ibid, p p 13-18.; *Governor's Addresses to Kerala Legislative Assembly...* op. cit. pp 17-18.

production.²²⁴ Measures were taken to grow more cashew and rubber plantations. Agricultural co operatives and collective farming societies were also established²²⁵.

The government created facilities for obtaining fair price for crops and decided to establish the State Trading Corporation for ensuring fair price for products exporting from Kerala²²⁶.

The government effectively distributed the state owned surplus revenue land (*puramboke* land) to the small scale cultivators and landless agricultural labourers²²⁷. To serve this purpose the peoples committees were constituted for identifying the needy persons.²²⁸ Such committees were instrumental in the distribution process. Around seven and half lakh acres of government land was distributed to the poor peasants among whom there was considerable number of 'Harijans'.²²⁹

The comprehensive strategy evolved by the first Communist government to tackle the agrarian tangles provided appreciable relief to the toiling ryots of Kerala. Positive changes became manifest in the means and relations of production. The pace of productivity and the volume of production turned up to the mark. Thus the peasants reaped rich benefits from the agrarian reforms forged by the first Communist government. The people at the grass root level felt a sense of exaltation. In brief, the reforms dealt a staggering blow to the edifice of feudal form of production that prevailed in Kerala.

²²⁴ Desabhimani, April 21, 1958.

²²⁵ C Achuthamenon, op.cit. pp 21-22.

²²⁶ The Kerala Kaumudi, September 11, 1958.

²²⁷ The Hindu, December 13, 1958.

²²⁸ HD Malaviya...op. cit. pp 115-116.

²²⁹ PK Chathan '*Harijanakshema Pravarthanangal*' (pamphlet, mal) 1957, p 7.

CHAPTER - IV
**CONSOLIDATION OF
ANTI-COMMUNIST FORCES**

The growth of Communist movement in Kerala synchronized with the propaganda against Communism. The anti-Communist Propaganda spear headed by the Catholics in Kerala cannot be taken in isolation. It was indeed inseparable from the anti-Communist activities of international Catholicism. In fact the origin and growth of Communism in the western world coincided with the origin and growth of anti-Communist propaganda under the aegis of Roman Catholic Church. This is amply evident from the scornful statement made by Pope Pius IX as early as 1846. In his words “That infamous doctrine of so-called Communism which is absolutely contrary to the natural law itself, and if once adopted would utterly destroy the rights, property and possessions of all men, and even society itself.”¹ In 1878 Pope Leo XIII went to the extent of defining Communism as “the fatal plague which insinuates itself into the very marrow of human society only to bring about its ruin”.² What is crystal clear from these statements is the inherent abhorrence of Catholicism towards Communist movement. Encyclical letters condemning Communism in fierce words were sent by Roman Popes to various centres of Communism to foil it in foetus form. Such letters served as guidelines for Bishops and clergy to evolve effective strategy to prepare a coffin for Communism.

The genesis of the anti-Communist movement in Kerala

The genesis of the anti-Communist movement in Kerala goes back to 1920s. It must be traced much before the official formation of the Kerala

¹ ‘*Encycl. Que pluribus*, Nov. 9, 1846 (Acta Pii IX, vol. I, p. 13). Cf. Syllabus, s IV, (A.A.S., vol. III, p. 170)’ Quoted by Pope Pious XI in his Encyclical Letter “*DIVINI REDEMPTORIES - COMMUNISM THE ENEMY OF GOD*” , Dublin, April 1937.

² ‘*Encycl. Quod Apostolici muneris*, Dec.28, 1878 (Acta Leonis XIII, vol. I, p. 46)’ Quoted by Pope Pious XI. Op. cit.

Fraction of the Communist party in 1939 and the formation of the 'Anti-Communist Front' by Father Vadakkan in 1951. The Church Hierarchy was the patron and Catholic seminary at Mangalapuzha near Alwaye was the centre of anti-Communist discourse in Kerala since 1920. It was the Sacred Heart League (S.H.League), the publication division of the Mangalapuzha seminary, that published a large number of books and pamphlets containing anti-Communist literature. During this period many other publishing institutions also contributed voluminous works to the anti-Communist literature.³ In this regard the St. Joseph press, Mannanam; Democratic Publications, Ernakulam; A.C.F. Book Stall, Thrissur; Voice of Kerala, Ernakulam; Malayala Manorama publications, Kottayam; Deepika Publications, Kottayam etc deserve special mention.

A few examples of the anti-Communist literature circulated in Kerala during this period can be cited here. K C.Varky, B.A,L.T, wrote and published the biography of Benito Mussolini('Sinjore Mussolini') in 1929 which contains much anti-Communist propaganda⁴. According to the author, the book was written with the direction and encouragement of Fr.Simon,CD the manager of "Nasrani Deepika" and Fr. Fransis CD, the press superintendent of St. Joseph press Mannanam.⁵ The book praises the fascist deeds of Mussolini with the support of the Church. It contemptuously presents warped version of the developments in Soviet Russia.

The most important book in this regard is "Communism the Enemy of God". It was an Encyclical Letter originally written by pope Pius XI in Latin under the title '*DIVINI REDEMPTORIS*'. The same was sent 'To the

³ A large number of such works are kept in the Theological Seminaries at Vadavathur, Mangalapuzha etc. A number of anti-Communist pamphlets are kept in the Indian Institute of Christian Studies, Hosanna Mount, Pala and in the personal collections of M.A.John, K. M.Chummar etc.

⁴ See, K.C.Varkey, '*Sinjore Musolini*' Mannanam,Kottayam,1929.

⁵ Ibid (preface of the book)

Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops and other Ordinaries in peace and communion with the Apostolic See'. Its English translation was published in April 1937 at Dublin by the 'Catholic Truth Society of Ireland'. The book contains the official attitude of the Church towards Communism.⁶ In this book the pope condemns Communists as "the most persistent enemies of the Church".⁷ After interpreting the theory and practice of Communism in apocalyptically, the pope suggests various means and methods for eradicating Communism.

The book "Socialism, Communism, Bolshevism" written by Fr. Ildephenos and published in the "Faith and Reason Series No. 18-19" by S H League Always in May 1938 is another one. The author interpreted these doctrines in such a way as to suit the requirements of anti-Communist propaganda. He emphatically pointed out that:

"... She (the Catholic church) can have nothing whatsoever to do with such a system as Communism, where God is denounced, morality outlawed, and humanity made the economic slave of a brutal and tyrannical state."⁸

"The Facts about Communism" the Church version of the interpretation of Communism written by E.L.Curran was also circulated in Kerala by S.H.League. The book contains the words such as:

"... in the interests of the working masses, as in the interests of God and religion and country, the Catholic Church is unalterably opposed to Communism."⁹

"The Worker in Soviet Russia", an anti- Communist book originally published in America and later translated and published in Malayalam by Bro. James for S H League in 1940 presented a spoilt and contaminated picture of

⁶ Pope Pius XI, "Encyclical Letter, on Atheistic Communism", Dublin, 1937, p.4.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Fr. Ildephanos O.C.D; "Socialism, Bolshevism, Communism"; Always, 1938; p.48.

⁹ E.L.Curran, "Facts about Communism"; Houston, 1935, p.38.

Soviet Russia¹⁰. Besides, hundreds of books and pamphlets published, in the form of studies, articles, short stories, dramas, poems, story recitation, lyrics, novels etc primarily for abusing Communism. Such works which got published throughout Kerala when a long way in keeping the doctrine and movements against and in favour of Communism a vital subject of discussion in society.

The anti-Communist attitude of the Hierarchy was also prominent in the spiritual discourses of the Catholic clergies in the churchyards. On many occasions, the spiritual exhortations of some of the Catholic clergies bore political contents and were meant to ward off the laity from Communist influence¹¹.

The political developments in Kerala in 1940s, particularly the Punnapra-Vayalar agitation and the other incidents after the 'Calcutta Thesis' of the Communist party, the penetration of Communist influence at the grass root level etc alarmed the traditional feudal and capitalist class in the Kerala society. The landlords, capitalists, the creamy layer in the caste hierarchy, the clergy etc dreaded that the Communist party's influence would curb their existing privileged position in society. So they sought a counter movement to debilitate the Communist party in Kerala.

Father Vadakkan and Anti-Communist Front

The Anti-Communist Front (hereafter ACF), the organisational form of anti- Communist activities in Kerala, came in to existence in October 1951 at Thrissur¹². Fr.(then Brother) Joseph Vadakkan (later popularly known as Father Vadakkan) was the founding leader of this movement. The real objective behind the formation of ACF was to prevent the spread of

¹⁰ S.H. League, "*Soviet Russiyale Thizhilali*" 2 vols. Alwaye,1940.

¹¹ Interview with T.G.Devasi master at his residence at Thrissur on 31st January, 1010.

¹² "*Thozhilali*" *Kerala Liberation Struggle Souvenir*. Trissur 1959,P 143.

Communism in Kerala. The immediate provocation leading to its formation, according to the founder, was to terminate the penetration of Communist influence among the poor workers in the Travancore- Cochin area.¹³

Father Vadakkan was born on 1st October, 1919 in a lower middle class family at Thoyakavu near Thrissur. After his middle school education he started his career as a teacher in a primary school. In 1946 he joined the Catholic seminary at Thope near Thrissur. It was during this period that he formed the ACF.

Father Vadakkan in his autobiography enumerates the circumstances favouring the formation of ACF as:

“It was during my training in social work(in the second half of 1951) that I took the lead for the formation of Anti-Communist Front. Let me first respond to the pertinent question why I who was a sympathiser of communism and had leftist leanings formed the Anti-Communist Front.

The authorities had decided that we would undergo training in social work staying at the Bishop’s Villa in Kallentumkara. When we came there the whole area was seething with serious labour trouble . This was the result of the closure of two cashew nut factories in Aloor and Pulloor. The owners of the factories were Catholics. The Majority of the workers in the factories were Catholic girls. The demands of the workers were just. But naturally the factory owners would not like any decrease in profit. When the workers put forward their demands the owners closed the factories. About eight hundred families from which this workers came were starving. We decided to offer hunger satyagraha if the factories were not opened. Since I was a student at the seminary it was difficult for me to undertake a fast. Therefore

¹³ Father Vadakkan. “*Ente Kuthippum Kithappum*”(autobiography, Mal),Kottayam, 1974;p 70.

Rev.Zacharias Vazhappally who was superior of the Missionary Union and A.C.Rappai master decided to undertake a fast.

The Union in the factory was under the leadership of the Communists. The Communists thought that we were the black legs of the factory owners. We were squeezed in between. It was then the idea grew in me that I should launch a movement which would at one and the same time oppose the selfish Capitalists and the atheistic Communists, a front that would be both an anti-Capitalist Front and an anti- Communist Front. This was made very clear in the announcement and documents we published when the movement was started...

During the 1951-52 election in Travancore-Cochin state I was in great demand. I went to several places for political campaigns. Because of electoral politics the anti-Capitalist part of my 'Front' was underplayed and the anti-Communist Front became prominent. The Front began to be known only for its anti-Communist nature... ...in Kerala the Capitalists found a new 'saviour' in me."¹⁴

Mr. Douglas Hyde in an article in the "Catholic Herald" (London) dated 4th August 1954 said:

"A tall lean Seminarian wearing a cassock of simple coarse hand-woven cloth today leads the fight against Communism in Malabar(Kerala), South India, the State which the Communists hope to make their own. He is Brother Joseph Vadakkan a former active Communist sympathiser who renounced his Communism and entered a Seminary to be trained for priesthood. He was equipped with a mass of facts and figures and Marxist quotations, an outstanding ability to refute Communist errors in easily understood language. A flaming

¹⁴ Father Vadakkan, op. cit. pp 69-72.

oratorical style and a deep conviction that the Red tide must be turned back before it is too late.”¹⁵

Fr. Vadakkan addressed thousands of public gatherings and study classes in all parts of the State, educating and convincing the people about the nature of Communism.¹⁶ It was for Fr.Vadakkan and ACF that they were convincing the people about the dangers of Communism¹⁷. But for the Communists, the Fr. Vadakkan and associates explaining the doctrines of Communism in a spoiled and faulty way in order to keep away the people from Communist influence.¹⁸ Thousands of study classes were conducted and millions of pamphlets and notices were circulated throughout Kerala containing arguments against and in favour of Communism from both sides.¹⁹ As a result of this discourse the Communist ideology and the developments in Soviet Union and other socialist countries became a vital subject of discussion in the Kerala society. ‘Malayala Manorama’ the leading language daily of Kerala wrote on 29th September,1954:

“The feelings of anti- Communism has existed in Kerala almost along with the origin of Communism. But it has to be agreed that it was the Anti- Communist Front which gave an organised form and shape to this feeling. For this Kerala is indebted to Brother Vadakkan”.²⁰

What were the programmes and propaganda methods of the ACF? Poverty, caste discrimination, starvation, unemployment, low wages, feeling of insecurity, feudal exploitation, oppression etc were the problems of the

¹⁵ Quoted in the pamphlet’ “*Father Vadakkan’ The Controversial priest of India*”
Published by Codi International Institute, Canada,1965.p 8

¹⁶ T.O.Mathew (ed) “*Father Vadakkan Oru Smrithi Gatha*”(mal) ,Thrissur,2004;p61.

¹⁷ “Thozhilali”-Kerala...souvenir, op. cit. p 143.

¹⁸ *EMS inte Sampoorna Kritikal,Sanjika* 15 pp65-67.

¹⁹ Father Vadakkan op. cit. p 85 ; “*Keralam Chuvannathengane*”(mal) Thrissur, 1959, p 9 ; K Damodaran,”*Indiyum Socialisavum*”(mal),Ernakulam,1958,p85; T.O.Mathew, “Brother Vadakkan- A Pen Portrait”,Trissor,1955,p16.

²⁰ ‘*Malayala Manorama*’(Malayalam daily)Kottayam,1954.It is to be noted that the anti-Communist propaganda of Malayala Manorama is well known. See, note No. 81 in Chapter 2

Kerala society during that period. These circumstances prepared a fertile soil for the spread of Communism in the region. Like the Communists, the Anti-Communist Front also benefited from this situation and resorted to similar methods of the Communists for counter propaganda. In 1944 EMS Namboodiripad wrote :

“Of late Many anti-Communist Conventions have been held in various parts of Travancore-Cochin. Thousands of men and women have taken part in them. They have through these conventions displayed the same hatred towards Communism as the Communists showed towards Imperialism, Feudalism and Capitalism”²¹.

B.Willingdon, who was the president of the ACF from 1956²² claimed:

“In order to counter the propaganda of the Communists...,the ACF printed thousands of booklets explaining the real nature of Communism, conducted regular study classes and innumerable public meetings... led ideological conflict with the Communists.”²³

The ACF worked hard to wean the young writers away from the Communist influence. Towards that goal it organised a seminar on the ‘real’ purposes of literature for the young writers. The ACF took the initiative in forming a literate front and through it worked for the removal of Communist influence in the field of literature.²⁴

Since its beginning the ACF had been constantly advocating the unity of non Communist political parties against the Communist party in the state. The first organised attempt of ACF’ s ideological and political attack against

²¹ EMSinte Sampoorna Kritikal, op. cit. p64.

²² Father Vadakkan, op. cit p 91.

²³ B.Willingdon, ‘The Role of the Anti-Communist Front in fostering the sense & spirit of Democracy in Kerala’(Thozhilali Souvenir),Thrissur,1959,p143.

²⁴ Ibid.

the Communists was the vigorous campaigns of election to the legislative assembly of Travancore-Cochin held in 1951-52²⁵.

The Communist leaders began counter move against the constant mendacious utterances and calumination of the A.C.F. In the party study classes and corner meetings, E.M.S.Namboodiripad, A.K.Gopalan, K.Damodaran and other leaders of the Communist party clarified the doubts and answered the questions of the audience. The anti-Communist propaganda machinery of the A.C.F. was constituted by the Church in collaboration with the Capitalists. The A.C.F. adopted the similar type of propaganda of the Communists for attacking them.²⁶ Its leaders conducted regular tirade of slander against the Communists through their speeches and writings.²⁷

In 1952 the Communist party organised a public meeting and procession at Alapuzha under the leadership of A.K.Gopalan to commemorate the martyrs day of Punnapra-Vayalar agitation. But on the same day at the same time, a rally of much strength and size was held under the auspices of the A.C.F. with Sri Sathyanarayana Sinha at the head²⁸. That rally with its slogans was so provocative, that B. Willingdon one of the leaders of the A.C.F. observed that : “it proved to be the forerunner of the anti-Communist tempest that enveloped Kerala years later in 1957.”²⁹

Though the A.C.F. was rooted in a negative philosophy, it adopted some positive measures to neutralise the programmes and activities of the Communists. An exaggerated report published in “Social Action”, the organ of Indian Institute of Social Order, Poona on 4th September,1953 reads thus:

²⁵ T.O.Mathew, “*Brother Vadakkan A Pen- Portrait*”; Thrissur, 1955,p11.

²⁶ *EMSinte Sampoorna Kritikal, Sanchika 15*(1954 Jan-Dec) (mal),2001;p.64.

²⁷ K.M.Joseph, “*Thettaaya Communist Viruddham*”, (mal),Kottayam.1958;p.3.

²⁸ “*Father Vadakkan ,The Controversial priest....*” Op. cit. p 10.

²⁹ B.Willingdon, op. cit. p.144.

“The All Kerala Anti-Communist Front is a socio-moral organisation without any direct political programme which combats Communist influence by improving economic and social conditions of the people. It has organised various associations and services, trade unions, peasant movements, co-operative societies, employment leagues, health centres, night schools, cottage industries, road making gangs, saving banks. The report of the first year mentions that one lakh of labourers have come under its trade unions; more than 700 cells have been created in the various villages... ..³⁰,”

During this period the A.C.F. was taking some temporary relief measures for the poverty-stricken and the physically afflicted. Houses were thatched, patients were taken to hospitals and medical help was rushed to the sick. In all such activities Bro. Vadakkan was in the forefront.³¹ He organised Labour Unions in many factories to counter the trade union activities of the Communists. A report in “The Examiner” states thus:

“Almost all factories of Kerala are fully or partially influenced by this movement,(Anti- Communist Front). More than 1500 public meetings and 300 Study-Circles have been conducted. Special training is given to the active workers of the Front... .. Book stalls are started in every town... .. The First Annual Convention of the movement was attended by more than one lack of people. In the people’s rally led by Dr.Sathyanaryana Sinha M P, nearly 30,000 sympathisers took part, shouting anti-Communist slogans.”³²

To propagate the message of ACF among the public ,Fr.Vadakkan and his associates published a weekly entitled “Thozhilali”(Labourer) 1952.³³ Advocate N.K. Kuttiraman, Professor T.O.Mathew and Father Chemmannur were the editors³⁴.Under the leadership of Manjala Kunjuvareed(the first

³⁰ Quated by T.O.Mathew in “*Brother Vadakan a Pen portrait*”; Thrissur.1955; p.8.

³¹ Ibid .p.9

³² “The Examiner”, Bombay, July 4,1953(quoted by T.O. Mathew, op. cit)

³³ Father Vadakkan, op.cit. p. 76.

³⁴ Interview with Professor T.O. Mathew at his residence on 11th January, 2010.

President of the ACF) and Father Vadakkan began a campaign for raising fund for the press and the publication. The rich donated handsome sums.³⁵

Father Vadakkan claimed that the ACF tried to instil the spirit of creative social service in their study classes and summer camps. The study classes were matched with such activities as visiting the the houses of poor and studying their burning problems.³⁶

By 1954 the ACF had about 1700 cells all over Kerala. After a public meeting and one or two study classes most of them turned themselves in to recruiting offices for Congress Committees.³⁷ Many of the workers of the Congress, Seva dal, INTUC and Youth Congress had their political education from the study classes and publications of the ACF. They had reprinted several editions of the book 'Is Jesus Christ in Moscow' which Father Vadakkan wrote then. Thousands of copies of the books 'Will the Comrades Reply', 'Communism and Belief in God', 'Communism and Democracy', 'Communism and National Security' 'Two Words to Mundassery' etc. were sold.³⁸

The name of Father Vadakkan and his movement soon spread outside the state and Anti-Communist in different parts of India came to evince in the activities of the movement. From distant places such as Mysore, Bombay, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh invitations came to Father Vadakkan to address meetings and form similar organisations like the ACF in such places.³⁹

³⁵ Father Vadakkan . op. cit.

³⁶ Ibid .p. 84.

³⁷ Joseph Vadakkan, '*A Priests Encounter with Revolution*'; The Christian Literature Society, CISRS, Banglore,1974;p 52.The author writes, "The majority of the present day Congress and Kerala Congress had their political formation in the cells of the ACF. ..."

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ T.O.Mathew, op. cit. p 15.

It was during those days that the 'Committee For Cultural Freedom' was formed in Bombay. Sri. Meenu Masani was the architect of this Forum. Intellectuals like Ashok Mehtha and Sampurnanda were associated with it.⁴⁰ An annual session of this Committee was held in Madras. Father Vadakkan attended the meeting.⁴¹ Many leading personalities like Rajaji, Bhaktavalsalam, Subrahmanyam, Masani and Despande took part in the meeting. An All-India Ad Hoc Committee of ACF was formed in Madras. A periodical entitled 'Anti-Communist' was launched from Hyderabad.⁴² In Bombay several large meetings and study classes were held under the auspices of ACF. Such meetings were arranged by Congress leaders like K.K.Shah and S.K.Pattil. A city unit of ACF was formed in Bombay.⁴³ The "New Leader" (weekly) published from Madras, dated 20th September, 1953 wrote:

"Availing the opportunity afforded by the annual Conference of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, Rev. Joseph Vadakkan, the organiser of the Anti-Communist Front in Kerala and a delegate for the conference contacted the various delegates and leaders in the social field and explained the possibilities of expanding the ACF activities on an all India basis. Thus an organising committee was formed."⁴⁴

"Blitz" the leading news magazine published during that period from Bombay in a report on 17th October, 1953 said:

"From America dollars continue to pour in Kerala through higher agencies of Catholic Bishops and so directly into the coffers of the Anti-Communist Front headed by Bro. Vadakkan... .. Bro. Vadakkan was a prominent participant in the recently held second All India Conference of Cultural Freedom at Madras, of the Washington patriots. His Anti-Communist Front is shortly to hold discussions with Congress

⁴⁰ Joseph Vadakkan; *A priests Encounter...* op. cit.

⁴¹ T.O.Mathew, op. cit.

⁴² Joseph Vadakkan , op. cit.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ 'The New Leader' (Weekly), Madras, 20th September 1953.

and Praja socialists in Kerala to explore the possibilities of an electoral alliance against (Communist sponsored) United Front of Leftists in the State. The Front which hitherto was only a State organisation is busy drawing blue prints for an all India expansion and early in 1954 will hold two national conventions one in Calcutta and other in Bombay”.⁴⁵

About the source of fund of the ACF Fr. Vadakkan writes:

“... The donations from the rich were collected through the Bishop. I know of persons who received lakhs of dollars from America at that time. When I visited USA in 1965 I came to know that a priest collected huge amounts saying that he was Fr. Vadakkan. It was true that there were chances to raise huge amounts then. Because large newspapers like the ‘New York Times’ and the ‘Washington Post’ published news about the activities of the Anti-Communist Front with my pictures, the Delhi correspondents of those papers had interviewed me on several occasions”.⁴⁶

Every art of propaganda was used. In order to get the support of the poor peasants and tenants, the A.C.F. in 1955 sponsored an ‘Agrarian Reform Week’ through out the state demanding a fixation of ceilings on land and an equitable distribution of surplus land among the landless.⁴⁷ In the same year two groups existed within the A.C.F. One was the official fraction under Bro.Vadakan and the other was the All Kerala Anti-Communist Front under Joseph Vettikadan and others. Pamphlets and notices were circulated by one group against the other with mutual abuses. According to Fr.Vadakkan, this split occurred on the question of the A.C.F.’s attitude towards the Agrarian Relations Bill sponsored by the P.S.P. ministry headed by Pattam Thanu Pillai.⁴⁸ In fact, Father Vadakkan was truly sympathetic towards the poor and

⁴⁵ “Blitz” (Weekly), Bombay, 17th October, 1953.

⁴⁶ Josph Vadakkan ,op. cit. pp 73-74.

⁴⁷ Father Vadakkan; *Enta Kuthippum*....op. cit. p 88; B Willingdon, op. cit.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

afflicted.⁴⁹ But his sympathy and empathy towards the downtrodden was sunk in the intensity of his anti-Communism.

Following the birth of Kerala on November 1,1957, elections were held to the state Legislative Assembly. It was the scheme made by the ACF to defeat the Communists in that election that came to be known as the “Mattancherry Thesis”.⁵⁰ The ACF on the eve of the elections through its ‘Mattanchery Thesis’ placed before the people of Kerala a proposal to the effect that the Congress, P.S.P. and the Muslim League should form a democratic alliance against the Communist Party and put up only one candidate, representing the non Communist forces, in each constituency and give a straight fight to the Communists.⁵¹ But this idea was not accepted by the non Communist parties then.

Social Scout Movement

In the election, the Communist Party got majority in the State Legislative Assembly and thus formed its government. Enraged at this the ACF reinvigorated the anti-Communist activities. The ACF propagated its belief that “...the Communist would make a scapegoat of our democratic Constitution . Behind the façade of our Constitution, the Communists would use the State and its means for an eventual insurrection in the country. Lives and property of the non Communists would be insecure. The discriminatory policies would inevitably lead to widespread lawlessness and unrest in the State...⁵²” So the ACF prepared itself and formed a paramilitary organisation

⁴⁹ Father Vadakkan; ‘*Communist Viruddha Munnani Muthal Communist Sahakaranam Vare*’ (mal), Christian Revolutionary Front; Trichur, 1972; p 4-5

⁵⁰ Father Vadakkan, ‘*Keralam Chuvannathengane*’ (mal); ACF Book Stall, Thrissur,1959; p.55.

⁵¹ B. Willingdon , op. cit.; Father Vadakkan ,op. cit. p 95.(Father Vadakkan writes “...The Congressmen did not like the thesis they were not prepared to allot any seats for the P.S.P. and the League. They thought they could win the elections on their on. They learnt their bitter lesson soon.)

⁵² B.Willingdon, op. cit. p 145

on the pretext of a voluntary service organisation known as ‘Social Scout Movement’ to oppose the Communist government.

The ACF claimed that ‘the ‘Social Security’ and ‘Preservation of Democracy’ are the basic aim and slogan of the Social Scout Movement’.⁵³ The young people of all the communities were admitted to it. The Social Scout Movement sprang up under the guidance of Father Vadakkan at Trichur in 1957. Sardar Chandroth Kunjiraman Nair⁵⁴ a retired Military personnel was the physical trainer and drill master of the Social Scout Movement. The Churchyards were the centres of Physical training.⁵⁵ Hundreds of trained Social Scouts in uniform came out in to the open and marched in the streets of Kottayam, Chenganassery etc.

The ACF and its organs also worked for the unity of Communal forces against the Communist government. Inaugurating the Social Scout’s conference at Chenganassery in November 1957 Father Vadakkan emphatically declared: “If Kerala were to be saved from the clutches of the Communists, the Archbishop of Changanassery, His Grace Kavukkat, and the N.S.S. Chief Mr. Mannath Padmanabhan should sit around a table and devise ways of working together. It is towards this unity the Social Scouts are marching”.⁵⁶

The ACF undertook a social survey to know the socio-economic conditions of the people who supported the Communist party. The ACF also sent out regular social circulars edited and published by Father Vadakkan. They were meant to generate the anti Communist feelings among the

⁵³ T.O.Mathew; (ed.), *Father Vadakkan oru...* op. cit. p.133

⁵⁴ Sardar Chandroth was a former Communist and had acted as the volunteer captain of the famous Pattini Jatha led by AKG from Kannur to Madras. Later he left the Communist party and worked for the Anti-Communist Front.

⁵⁵ Cherian Philip; “*Kal Noottandu*” (mal), p .48.

⁵⁶ B.Willingdon, op. cit. p 146.

masses.⁵⁷ The Communist government's response to the reactionary activities of the ACF can be seen from the following press release issued by the government during that period:-

“Public warned against “Crusaders”⁵⁸.

“The Government have been carefully watching the trend of public opinion both in support of and in opposition to the Education Bill pending before the Legislative Assembly. The Government is reassured by the large volume of support for the measure and also taking note of the objections to certain clauses in the Bill genuinely felt by the individual sections or interests concerned. The Legislature which is the sovereign body empowered to give form and finality to the measure, will, doubtless, consider all aspects of the Bill”.

“At the same time, Government cannot help taking notice of certain unhealthy trends in the present organised opposition to the measure. Among the documents that have come to the possession of Government proving beyond doubt that such unhealthy trends are at work is a circular letter issued by an organisation in Trichur addressed to the religious heads and senior ecclesiastical dignitaries of a major community in Kerala. The circular letter says that the main object of the plan adopted by the organisation is “to save our country and its culture from the influence of communistic regime”.

The circular further points out that

“issues as the ‘Education Bill’ will be taken very seriously and timely information will be given to the people at large so that “Mass sensation” can be easily created...if at last, all our parish priests are co-operating with this move, we can form here, in Kerala, some 2000 small units of youths, well-informed and active against the Communists. I expect a good deal of support from non-Christian circles also”. The circular promptly

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ ‘Desabhimani’ December 18, 1957.

proceeds to add “We will approach you for a ‘Two Rupees monthly donation’ to meet the expense of this crusade”.⁵⁹

Government wish to point out that, while they have no objection to any form of legitimate expression of opinion or peaceful demonstration against any measure initiated by them, attempts such as the one cited above, to organise a crusade(as mentioned in the circular letter) particularly with the intention of whipping up “mass sensation” among the youths’ are fraught with danger to peaceful and orderly life in the State and might even cause repercussions which the promoters of the crusade may not themselves be in a position to control. Government wish to warn the people against being led astray by such attempts to exploit their emotions, religious or cultural, and fall a victim to the designs of those who seek sectarian or other benefits by whipping up agitation against the measure primarily intended to ensure protection for teachers and better organisation of Education in the State”.

The ACF attributed that the Communist government sought to bring education under its control.

“...Indoctrination of 25 lakhs of students and one lakh of teachers would pay great dividends. ...The Education Bill is aimed at squeezing all forces, other than the Communists, out of the field.”⁶⁰

In fact the Christian Managers with the support of the Church hierarchy in Kerala first voiced their protest against the Bill.⁶¹ It was a part of their larger propaganda of anti-Communism. From the beginning the agitation against the Education Bill had a communal character. The ACF made this a popular issue.

⁵⁹

Ibid.

⁶⁰

B.Willingdon, op. cit.

⁶¹

D. Jayadeva Das, ‘*Profile of the Indian Church*’; Thiruvananthapuram,1979. p. 46.

The ACF appointed Father Vadakkan as the convenor with full powers to organise the anti-Education Bill agitation. In the KPCC office at Ernakulam, he convened a conference which was presided over by Sri. Panampilly Govinda Menon. It was the first step towards the unity of the non Communist forces in their anti-Communist agitation in the state.⁶² K.A.Damodara Menon, former president of the KPCC; Pocker Sahib, leader of the Muslim League; C.M.Stephen, Sardar Chandroth, N.V.Joseph, N.X.Chериан and other prominent leaders took part in the conference.

As a part of their agitation against the Education Bill, the ACF staged a huge demonstration at Trivandrum on August 26, 1957. Most of the leaders of the ACF were in the Capital weeks ahead of the day of the demonstration, preoccupied with its preparation. After the procession in the city there were clashes between the workers of the ACF and Communist party in which many persons were wounded including Sri. B. Willingdon, the president of the ACF.⁶³

Shanthi Sena

During this period particularly after the launching of the Kerala Educational Bill in the State Legislative Assembly, tension mounted in the Catholic stronghold areas. The provocative measures of the ACF resulted in violent conflicts between the Communists and anti-Communists. In the wake of these events, lethal weapons like daggers were freely used in Trichur and other areas.⁶⁴ The labour strike in the Seetharam Mill at Trichur was also turned violent. Violence broke out at Varandarappilly in Trichur district on July 26th, 1958 in which five people killed and many sustained serious

⁶² Father Vadakkan; *Enta Kuthippum*....op.cit. p 89; B Willingdon, op.cit.

⁶³ B.Willingdon, op. cit. p. 146.

⁶⁴ Interview with Paul Vilappila at his residence at Trichur on 9th January, 1010.

injuries.⁶⁵ The reporter of 'Thozhilali', Varghese Mecherry, was dragged down from a bus and beaten⁶⁶.

In this violent situation Father Vadakkan undertook a fast to rouse the people for the formation of a 'Shanthi Sena'⁶⁷ (Peace Force) on the pretext to ensure the safety of citizens. Father Vadakkan aimed that at raising a volunteer corps having a strength of five lakh members drawn from all the communities and non Communist political parties in the entire state to compact the Communists.⁶⁸ The Christian and Nair communities joined hands in organising this private militia.⁶⁹ The ACF workers claimed that in Trichur city and its vicinity alone, 4000 young men formed the 'Shanthi Sena'.⁷⁰ Similar encouraging reports came from other centres. Sri. Kurur Namboodiripad, D.C.C. president and Sri Dharmaraja Iyer, the Municipal Chairman, of Trichur issued the Following statement:-⁷¹

“Father Vadakkan, the Chief Editor of “Thozhilali Daily”, and prominent spiritual leader has been on a fast for the last four days and this event has gained great prominence. He has been undergoing this tribulation with a view to forming a “Shanthi Sena” where the Communists have let loose a reign of terror. It is our bounden duty to render our sympathy and support to the timely thoughts and advice of the architects of history. In this short period many hundreds of young and dedicated men have joined the 'Shanthi Sena' and strengthened Father Vadakkans' stand”.⁷²

⁶⁵ “True Picture of the Situation in Kerala”, department of Public relations, Thuvananthapuram, 1958, p.22.

⁶⁶ Interview with Varghese Mecherry at his residence at Valappad, Thrissur on 10th January, 2010.

⁶⁷ Father Vadakkan, “*Enta Kuthippum...*” op. cit. p.124.

⁶⁸ Paul Valapila and Thomas Parannur, in “*Father Vadakkan Oru Smrithi Gatha*” op. cit. p 140.

⁶⁹ George Mathew, ‘*Communal Road to Secular Kerala*’; New Delhi, 1989; p .148.

⁷⁰ Interview with Paul Valappila and Vargheese Mecherry. op. cit.

⁷¹ Quoted by B.Willingdon in “*Thozhilali- Kerala Liberation Struggle Souvenir*”, P.148.

⁷² Ibid.

The *sathyagraha* was put off after an assurance by Sri. Kurur Namboodiripad that the D.C.C. would organise 5000 persons.⁷³

Father Vadakkan declared on August 22, 1958 that the militia should have at least half a million members in its ranks:

“ ... I have already enrolled 6000 young men and women in my *Shanthi Sena*. When our constitutional rights are threatened by the Communists, all citizens should take up arms. All of us should strengthen the hands of our national leaders to safeguard democracy. I believe that the Communists will endeavour to undermine the Constitution, and we should be ready to protect it by force of arms if necessary...”⁷⁴

The call of Father Vadakkan evoked a wide response all over Kerala, and soon almost every town and village came to have its militia called the ‘*Shanthi Sena*’. A memorandum prepared by the police in May 1959 shows that the total membership of the *Shanthi Sena* was approximately one lakh. The following figures show the membership of the *Shanthi Sena* of the Catholic and the Nair Service Society (NSS) in various districts:⁷⁵

⁷³ The ‘Deepika’ (mal), Kottayam, 9th August, 1958.

⁷⁴ ‘The Statesman’, Calcutta; 23rd August, 1958.

⁷⁵ “A Note on Christopher and other Organization”, Annexure No. VIII, in Kerala’s Answer to KPCC Charges..., CPI, New Delhi, September, 1959, pp 106-114.

District	Community Catholic/NSS	Number
Thiruvananthapuram	Catholic	9,000
	NSS	---
Kollam	Catholic	15,000
	NSS	10,000
Alappuzha	Catholic	11,000
	NSS	1,360
Ernakulam	Catholic	28,000
	NSS	540
Thrissur	Catholic	15,000
	NSS	---
Kannur	Catholic	4,136
	NSS	---
Kozhikode	Catholic	1,700
	NSS	---
Palaghat	Catholic	25
	NSS	---
Total	Catholic	83,861
	NSS	11,900
		95,761

The State government issued a statement on '*Shanthi Sena*' entitled "Call for organising Private Militia" as follows:-

"... Ever since the campaign against the Education Bill started in the State in May, 1957, the Opposition parties, especially the Congress had encouraged the formation of semi-military volunteer organisations under various names such as '*Shanthi Sena*', Christopher Organisation etc. They never made any secret of it. Fr. Vadakkan, well known leader of the anti-Communist Front, recently went on a fast in Trichur, with the avowed object of expediting the formation of a *Shanthi Sena* consisting of five lakhs of volunteers to fight the Communists. He was reported to have given up his fast on the assurance of

the District Congress Committee and others that it undertook to organise such a Sena”.⁷⁶

Though the Mattancherry thesis⁷⁷ was discarded by the non Communist political parties, the ACF continued to work for the unity of the opposition parties in Kerala. As a result, an alliance called the “Democratic Front” was formed in Trichur District with Sri. K. Karunakaran, the Congress leader and Sri.B.C.Vergheese, the P.S.P. leader as conveners.⁷⁸ *The Economic Weekly Annual* of January 1958 reported thus :

“The Congress as a party has not the strength to fight the challenge of Communism alone. Nor has the Praja Socialist Party for the matter. The two are, therefore, forging an anti-Communist front. This front attracts to its fold all anti-Communist elements in the state - the reactionary Catholic Church, landlords, planters and the other disgruntled elements. The front, as it is taking shape today, is likely to turn out to be the spearhead of the reactionaries....”⁷⁹

The ‘Democratic Front’ was the precursor of the formation of the Liberation Struggle Committee in June 1957 and the ‘democratic Alliance by the parties like Indian National Congress, Praja Socialist Party and Muslim League thereafter.’⁸⁰

The ACF organised a cultural festival at Tellichery in December 1959. A venue called ‘Pasternak Nagar’ was specially erected for this purpose. It was called the All Kerala Democratic Cultural Festival. Its organisers claimed that it was the first of its kind in Kerala.⁸¹ In that cultural festival for the first time, brought prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress, the Praja

⁷⁶ “*True Picture of the Situation in Kerala*”, Department of Public Relations, Thuvananthapuram, 1958, p.3.

⁷⁷ See, Father Vadakkan, *Ente Kuthippum, Kithappum*, op. cit. p 95.

⁷⁸ “*Weekly Kerala*” February 1,1959,(Periodical weekly published by Democratic Research Service, Ernakulam);

⁷⁹ *The Economic Weekly Annual*, January 1958; p 115.

⁸⁰ Father Vadakkan, “*Janadipathya Munnaniyuda Ullukallikal*”(mal) , ACF Publishing House, Trichur;1960; p.3.

⁸¹ B.Willingdon; op. cit .p 150.

Socialist Party and Muslim League on one platform. Among those who participated in the festival were Mrs Suchetheta Kripalani, Mr Philip Spratt, Sri R Shanker, Sri Sathyan, prominent film star and Sri P. Kesava Dev, a famous writer.⁸²

In order to prepare the ground for Liberation Struggle, the ACF popularised a booklet entitled “Charge Sheet and the preparation for the Struggle”. Father Vadakkan and ACF played a very important role in bringing a large number of women in the anti-Communist struggle.⁸³

Father Vadakkan and the Anti-Communist Front advocated all out drive to immobilise the Communists in Kerala. Ironically it may be added in this context that the most important leaders of ACF, Father Vadakkan, B.Willingdon and others supported the Communist Party in its agitation for the survival of the migrated poor peasants of the hilly areas of Idukki and Kannur districts in 1961. But later sources reveal that it was a clever move from the side of Father Vadakkan to keep away the migrant peasants from the Communist yoke.⁸⁴

‘The Christophers’

The ‘Christophers’, the anti-Communist private militia organised by

⁸² Ibid; Father Vadakkan, “*Enta Kuthippum...* op. cit. p.130

⁸³ Father Vadakkan, “ op .cit . p.125.

⁸⁴ “*Father Vadakkan ,The Controversial priest...*op.cit.pp.6-7. (Against Communist Infiltration: Mr. Patric Lagan, writing in “The Irish Press”, Dublin dated 3rd November 1961 referred the work being carried on by Fr. Vadakkan against Communist infiltration, in the problem involving three million farmers, said: “Fr.Vadakkan, who visited Dublin, some time ago, is an active missionary priest, working in India in the diocese of Trichur. ... he is the founder leader of the Indian Anti-Communist Front, Chief Editor of Thozhilali Daily, and a most strenuous social worker; and at the moment he has on his hands a gigantic problem involving the welfare of three million agricultural workers in the neighbourhood of Trichur. ... At a place called Kottiyoor five thousand peasant families are cultivating the lands belonging to a Hindu temple...”)

The Catholic Church in Kerala became very active during the period of the first Communist government. Its activities were mainly directed against the administrative measures of the first EMS government and also against the workers who supported the Communist party.⁸⁵

The term Christopher means the Christ bearer.⁸⁶ ‘The Christophers’ was the name given to the semi military organisation formed in Spain by the Catholic Church to overthrow the republican government elected by the people and help General Franco.

In 1957 the Catholic hierarchy in Kerala had decided up on a policy of relentless fight against the Communist government and ‘built up a militia called Christophers for the purpose. The planters and rich people extended necessary financial support. For organising Christophers and launching a crusade against the Communist government, the Church in Kerala enlisted support from various centres. On 11th August 1957, when the Catholic reaction in Kerala was getting in stride to launch the fight against the Kerala ministry a Father Farrol delivered himself as follows at Parish Priests’ sacred Church at St. Joseph Busty at Singamari, Darjeeling:

“In Kerala a Communist government has been set up and the Communist Ministry has been oppressing the Christians there and Pandit Nehru is also a Communist. Nehru has done much more than giving mere support to this hated Communist ministry. During his tour in Finland and Norway, Nehru said, ‘the Red ministry in Kerala has been functioning with utmost propriety, honesty, etc.’ What more is required to be a Communist than what Nehru has said about the Communist ministry in Kerala! We Christians all over India should be united to launch a crusade not only against the Communists but also against the Nehru government which is deliberately pro-

⁸⁵ It existed in Kerala around 1952 in some Catholic centers in central Kerala like Kottamuri church at Mala in Trichur District. Its aim at the time of formation was simply social service. (H.D.Malaviya , “*Keralam Rashtathinulla oru Riport*” [mal], KSSP, Thrissur, 2007; P 84.)

⁸⁶ It connected with the name of mythical figure St. Christopher, whose historicity is doubtful.

Communist.’⁸⁷ ‘...It is a sin against God to be a Communist or to support the Communists, no matter however good their work may be. ...’⁸⁸

“From now on, we, Christians in India should bear in mind the heritage of the ‘Holy Crusade’ as in the past and keep up the cudgel against the Communists and their supporters. If we do so the lord will be pleased with us and we can enter heaven. The recently introduced Education Bill in Kerala has been solely meant to curb the religious influence of the Church and as such all true Christians in the world must be united in this ‘Holy Crusade’ against the Kerala ministry. You should know that our co- religionists in America, Britain, France, Norway, Denmark and Sweden and Germany will stand with you in India to fight against the Communists and their supporters. ... In this respect, the only way to defeat the Communist ministry in Kerala is to launch a relentless fight against it’.⁸⁹

The organisation of a private militia against constitutional authority was sought to be justified by the argument that they were forced to organise in self defence in the face of insecurity under Communist rule.^{90 91}

But the new type of militantly violent ‘Christophers’ organisation did not exist any where in Kerala till the formation of the Communist ministry in April 1957. These Christophers constituted the main body of the procession in the anti Education bill demonstration in Thiruvananthapuram held on 26th August 1957. It was during and after their campaign against the Kerala Education Bill that the Catholic hierarchy appears to have resolved to turn this

⁸⁷ New Age’, Vol. IV. September 1, 1957.;H.D.Malaviya, op. cit.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.; P.A.Solaman, ‘*Bill Viruddha Prakshobhanam Iniengote?*’,Erunakulam, 1957;pp 22-23.

⁹⁰ ‘*True Picture of the Situation in Kerala*’, Government of Kerala, Department of Public Relations, 1958, p.3.

⁹¹ Legislative debates on 28 March, 1958; S.C.Joseph, ‘*Kerala the Communist Sate*’, Madras 1959; pp120-121.

organisation into an anti-Communist armed militia.⁹² By the time the Christophers were vested with a publicly declared constitution on 22nd December,1957.⁹³

The then Home Minister Sri V.R.Krishna Iyer replied to the question of Sri M.Sada Shivan M.L.A. related to the debates on Christophers in the Kerala Legislative Assembly on 21st December,1957 as:

“They are given training to march with flags. The flags are tied to sticks about 3 feet in length and one and half inches in diameter. The ostensible purpose is to hold flags during jathas and demonstrations but the sticks are capable of being used as weapons. They are also given training in drill and the use of sticks. A serious view is taken about these forces as they form a serious threat to law and order, and is an extraordinary method to resist a legislation”.

Sri C.G.Sada Shivan: “Is training conducted publicly or secretly?”

Sri V.R,Krishna Iyer: “It is taking place in church compounds where it is provided probably for all those who are interested in going there. It is being done with the financial aid from Bishops.”⁹⁴

Though given a legal look, the ‘Christophers’ remained for all practical purposes a secret organisation. In Kottayam district there were gangs of 50, 100, 200 or even 300 in Catholic centres like Mundakayam, Kanjirapally, Pampady, Changanassery, Karukachal, Meenachil, Eerattupetta and Ettumanoor.⁹⁵ This organisation was open to Catholic males only and they were trained and drilled in military style. They were given training in fencing, using of lathis and sticks, using of daggers etc. by ex-Military men and such

⁹² H.D.Malaviya, op.cit.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Debates on Christopher organization. Kerala Legislative Assembly debates on 21st December,1957

⁹⁵ ‘Janayugam’ (Malayalam Daily) April 21, 1958.

like trained coaches.⁹⁶ The exercises were done in the night within the premises of the Church.⁹⁷ V.R.Krishna Iyer pointed out that this process had been going on for a long time.⁹⁸ Christophers did take part in many agitations, including the Kattampally trespasses of 1957⁹⁹ and the student struggle of 1958. In many cases, where there were strikes or labour agitations, the employers began to hire these Christophers. So much so, they became a sort of private army without, of course, deadly equipments.¹⁰⁰

Young Catholics who completed sixteen years and above were admitted as the members of the Christopher Organisation. The activities of this organisation centred round a '*Desavyuham*' which functioned under a '*Desadhipan*'. Ten members of a parish constituted a *Desavyuham* and each parish maintained one or more such during the time. When there existed two such *Desavyuhams* in a parish, *Desadhipans* were to elect a chief from among them. In case *Desadhipans* from different parishes participated in the election, according to their seniority, one of them acted as the Chairman, who alone had a casting vote. If the Number of delegates in a *Desavyuham* was not sufficient to form another one, they were to remain as temporary members either under the Chief or under the *Desadhipan*. The decision of the *Desadhipan* was final in the matter of training, discipline and other activities of the Christophers.¹⁰¹

The working of the Christopher organisation was regulated by a well written constitution according to which its administrative control was vested with a *Samithi*, consisting of Regional Heads chosen by Regional Leaders or

⁹⁶ V.R.Krishna Iyer, '*Daniel come to Judgment*'; Ernakulam, 1959, p.35.

⁹⁷ Kerala Legislative Assembly debates on 21st December, 1957.

⁹⁸ V.R.Krishna Iyer. op. cit.

⁹⁹ Kerala Legislative Assembly Debates, op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ V R, Krishna Iyer; op. cit.

¹⁰¹ Kerala Legislative Assembly Debates on 27th December, 1958. Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, Third Session, 27 December, 1958, Vol VI, No.4, Tvm, 1960, pp354-355]

Desadhipans and non-official members suggested by the Diocesan. *Vyuhadhipan*, selected from among these members, acted as the President and Treasurer of the *Samithi*. No other person in the *Samithi* except *Vyuhadhipan* was in a position to hold two posts at the same time and therefore he was held in high esteem. Preparation of agenda and summoning of the *Samithi* were other duties solely assigned to him. He was responsible for keeping the minutes regarding the working of the *Samithi*. For the convenience of administration, the powers were distributed in such a way that the *Desadhipan* was obliged to the chief, the chief to the Regional Head and the Regional Head to the *Vyuhadhipan* for all their actions. Though the official members were selected for one year, an account of misconduct or indiscipline, *Vyuhadhipan* could expel them at any time. The Christopher organisation worked according to the rules framed by the *Samithi* which could be amended only with the majority vote of the official members.¹⁰²

The monthly expenses of this organisation were met out of the compulsory contribution of ten *paisa* made by its members. Besides the utilisation of church income, money was also collected from the people whenever the expenditure increased beyond the expectation. All records relating to income and expenditure were kept under the custody of the Chief which were presented before the *Samithi* whenever it was needed.¹⁰³

In almost every parish the church maintained Christophers during the tenure of the Communist ministry.¹⁰⁴ Churchyards became training centres, where they received training in the use of arms¹⁰⁵. Church dignitaries inspired the recruited young men, and at the time of their visit to these training camps ,

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ H.D.Malaviya, op.cit.p 85.

¹⁰⁵ Deepika' (mal-daily) January 4 , 1958 'Desabhimani' (mal -daily) April 13 , 1958.

the Christophers gave them guard of honour in military style.¹⁰⁶ The

Economic Weekly Annual of January 1958 reported thus:

“... An activist group has already been formed by the Catholics known as the Christophers, whose activities have become a source of anxiety. This organisation came in to being around 1952 but it became active only during the agitation carried out by the Congress and the Church in its Education Bill days. Christophers are working under the spiritual guidance of Catholic priests. Their aim is stated to be social service, but reports go to show that they are being trained on the lines of the RSS...”¹⁰⁷

Spiritually and politically led by the Catholic clergy, the Christophers were employed as a kind of private militia. Motor vehicles were kept ready to carry them whenever they might be ‘required’.¹⁰⁸ They have no regular monthly salary. But when ‘on active service,’ each of them received Rs 3 within his district and Rs 6 outside the district per day.¹⁰⁹

In many places in Thrissur and Kottayam districts, the ‘Christophers’ sometimes functioned under different names such as ‘Youth Federations’, ‘Samithi For Protection of Civil Liberties’, ‘Social Scouts’ ‘Democratic Front, etc. At most of these places they enjoyed the support of leading congressmen.¹¹⁰ There was an apprehension that it was a ‘national menace’ and that the state government was closely watching its activities¹¹¹.

The ‘Christophers’ constituted one of the backbones of the anti-Communist forces in Kerala during the period of the first Communist government. The passion of these volunteers was whipped up by the church

¹⁰⁶ K.C.John; ‘Kerala Rashtriyam oru Assambanda Nadakam’ Alwai, 1999. p.67.

¹⁰⁷ The Economic Weekly Annual; January 1958; p . 115.

¹⁰⁸ H.D.Malaviya, op. cit.

¹⁰⁹ D Jayadeva Das, ‘Profile of the Indian Church’-a politico- social analysis’; Thiruvananthapuram, 1979, p 44

¹¹⁰ H.D.Malaviya, op.cit.

¹¹¹ ‘Indian Express’, December 22, 1957.

leaders on the excuse of “religion in danger”.¹¹² The Bishops advised them to sacrifice everything in the struggle against the government to save their precious faith.¹¹³ The call of ‘Deepika’ daily was thus

“we have to face arrests, repression and criminal cases. Dozens of Bishops, thousands of clergymen and lakhs of disciples may be thrown into prison. Those who cannot face this with dignity and self-respect, hereafter cannot be called Christians... .. We should not create the misfortune of ourselves being condemned as degenerates in a forgotten corner of India on account of our cowardice to struggle and inability to move due to the weight of our body. Get ready to sacrifice everything. Let us fight as those who have nothing to lose.”¹¹⁴

In a pastoral letter jointly issued by 16 Catholic Bishops of Kerala on May 7, 1959, the church dignitaries declared: “The move effected by the Kerala government against the minorities and the believers in God is causing great concern. Let us try our best at this grave juncture to defend our precious faith, taking refuge in God the merciful. We will have to suffer difficulties discomforts and torture. Let us be inspired by the words of Divine: “Blessed are those who are tortured in the cause of justice, for their’s is the Kingdom of God”, and in the end, darkness is gathering around us. But we should not be frightened. This is darkness before dawn. Every member of our society is responsible to protect our rights and institutions. “O God! Almighty! Give everyone of us plenty of blessings to face this crisis with courage and self-sacrificing zeal!”¹¹⁵

Inspired by this call of the high priests of the church who had promised heaven for those who sacrificed their lives in a crusade against Communism, the action committee in the Changanasserry diocese in the course of a

¹¹² Georges Kristoffel Lieten, ‘*Education, Ideology and Politics in Kerala 1957-59*’; Social Scientist, Vol. 6 No.2 (September 1977), p 16.

¹¹³ Puthuppalli Raghavan, ‘*Viplava Smaranakal*’ Vol .5 (mal) Kottayam, 1996, p.180.

¹¹⁴ ‘Deepika’(mal daily), April 29, 1959.

¹¹⁵ Government of Kerala, ‘*Opposition Preparation for violent overthrow of the Government*’,1959,p 10.

statement said: “There should be committees in all parishes for taking up the leadership of the fight and the volunteer corps for action. It will not be too much if at least one young man from every house is encouraging to come forward and enlist himself as volunteer”.¹¹⁶

According to the press reports appeared in the ‘Navajeevan’, the Catholic priests of Trichur Diocese have visited every Catholic house taking a census of all adults and exhorting them to get ready for a crusade. During church sermon, the priests, according to the report, have called up on the audience to be prepared for spilling blood for ending the Communist rule. The reports adds that “Stave-armed regiments” are being organised to prevent teachers and students from attending schools and if necessary to “break their heads”¹¹⁷ The Arch Diocese of Changanasserry requested that ‘in each council under the Arch Diocese, Committees and volunteer corps have to be organised. The Bishop had instructed in a circular that every family should set apart one young man to be sacrificed in the struggle. ...’,¹¹⁸

The call of the ecclesiastical heads received wide response from all over the state and it created a stir among the Christians to sacrifice everything in the name of religion. In this venture they got the support of the Nair Service Society which had already declared an open struggle due to some difference of opinion with the government.¹¹⁹ Sri. Mannath Padmanabhan, the patriarch of N S S, earlier ridiculed the Christopher movement and once he sarcastically declared that they (NSS) will form a *Khrishnopher* force (Force in the name of Lord Krishna) or Nairphers (Nair militia) to counter the

¹¹⁶ ‘Deepika’ (mal-daily) April 2, 1959.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in the ‘*Opposition Preparation for violent overthrow of the Government*’, (Government of Kerala) 1959, p 11. ‘Navajeevan’ was a daily published from Thrissur under the direction of Prof. Joseph Mundassery;. Interview with Sri T.G. Devasi Master at his residence at Thrissur on 12th January, 2010

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Hareendranatha Kurup; ‘*Mannath Padmnabhan- Karmayogiyaya Kulapathi*’; Chenganassery, 1997; p.291. (It is dealt in detail in the next chapter)

Christophers.¹²⁰ But the later developments in Kerala politics generated the hostility of the NSS towards the Communist led government.¹²¹ The Church leaders shrewdly exploited this situation and benefited from the conflict of interests between the NSS and the state government. The opposition parties also sided with these communal forces and thus Kerala became a scene of political drama played by the reactionary elements and vested interests in which religion and politics mixed together to form a deadly weapon against the ministry.¹²²

In response to the call of the Church leaders, thousands of men joined the Christopher Movement and received training in the Thiruvananthapuram district. Volunteers enlisted by the Nair Service Society also joined these Christophers and all of them received instructions for the agitation to oust the government. Large number of volunteers were recruited to the Christopher movement from the coastal areas of Thiruvananthapuram district. These recruits were mainly from poor fishermen community of Latin Catholics¹²³. Thus Pulluvila, Vizhinjam, Kovalam, Neyyattinkara, Valiathop, Kochuthop, Kannanthura, Kochuveli, Vettukad, Valiathura, Poonthura, Cheriyaathura etc contributed large number of youngmen who were trained at the expense of the Church money to participate in the anti-Communist agitation. The Church authorities employed Kalari Asans and Drill Masters from southern Tamilnadu to train these Christopher Volunteers.¹²⁴ The Bishop of Thiruvananthapuram blessed these young recruits and inspired others to join

¹²⁰ 'Malayala Rajyam' (Malayalam daily, Kollam) 28th August 1957. Here Mannath Padmanabhan meant that Christopher for Christians and *Krishnopher* for the devotees of Krishna or *Nairpher*- the Nair militia.

¹²¹ The government's attitude towards the demand of NSS for an engineering college in Palghat and the proposed land reform legislations in the state were the main reasons behind the grudge of NSS towards the government.

¹²² Government of Kerala, Department of Public Relations; '*Kerala Government's reply to KPCC Memorandum*'; Thiruvananthapuram, 1959, p. xv.

¹²³ Interview with Joseph Thaivilakam, a fishermen of old ages, held at his residence at Vettukad on 27th December, 2009. He was a volunteer of the Christopher movement.

¹²⁴ Interview with Stephen Pereira at his residence at Chariyathura held on January 1, 2010.

the volunteer corps. Besides armed training and physical drills the organisers conducted discussion classes and cultural programmes for inculcating interest and enthusiasm among the recruits.¹²⁵

Bishop house at Vellayambalam was the centre of these volunteers in the Thiruvananthapuram district. Volunteers from northern parishes frequently assembled at Vellayambalam. Pretending to attend Bible class held at the Bishops palace at Vellayambalam they mingled with the volunteers of southern parishes who were visiting there regularly. According to the directions of Church leaders they took part in march pasts and paraded in streets shouting anti Communist slogans.¹²⁶

The Christopher movement was very active in Kollam district. The Catholic leaders recruited thousands of young men to these volunteer corps and gave them necessary training. Ranni, Aranmula, Kollam, Pathanamthitta etc were the main centres of these force in Kollam district. The Christopher force holding cards along with the Nair volunteers in Kollam district posed threat to the government functions. In Kollam, 1500 volunteers were organised by the Church which supplied them with sticks holding flags at the end, so as to serve the purpose of weapons, if required.¹²⁷

In Alapuzha district the Christopher force was very vigorous in their spirit and action. The Catholic priests tirelessly worked for recruiting the Christian Youth to these force. Niranam, Pulinkunnu, Cherthala etc were their main centres. On May 24, a public meeting was held in Pulinkunnu under the Presidency of Monsignor Rainolds. “ The meeting was addressed by Fr. Milanios and N.K. Thomas. Big processions of Christians came from various areas within the jurisdiction of the church. A strong volunteer force

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Government of Kerala, op. cit., pp. xvii- xviii.

capable of dealing with any emergency has been formed.”¹²⁸ The

‘Janayugam’ daily reported on May 27,1959:

“In Alapuzha, a procession was staged yesterday in which 300 armed men took part under the leadership of the parish priest of Vattayar church, Andrew P. Thekkeveedu. The procession started from the church compound. They shouted slogans like “We will fight spilling blood.”, “This is not Hungary, this is Kerala, Beware Namboodiri”.¹²⁹

Training in the use of weapons was reported to have been given at night inside the compound of many churches in Alapuzha. The Christopher volunteers in this district were employed in large numbers to launch the anti – Communist agitation and to cripple the labour force.¹³⁰ They were stationed at suitable places to meet any eventuality created by the supporters of the government who were keen on checking the agitation. The agitators, armed with *lathis*(canes), choppers and daggers obstructed the work in the government offices besides hindering the functions of the government schools.¹³¹ The insurgent activities of the Christophers necessitated police intervention.

During this period, about 5800 volunteers were recruited from various churches in Ernakulam district and they were imparted training in arms. The Mattancherry church, Chullickal church, St. Sebastians church, Syrian church, Nazarath church etc were a few among them, which recruited volunteers to wage struggle against the government.¹³²

The most active and militant wing of the ‘Christophers’ was that of the Kottayam district. The Catholic priests in this district were tirelessly working

¹²⁸ ‘Malayala Manorama’, 30th May 1959.

¹²⁹ ‘Janayugam’, 27th May 1959.

¹³⁰ N.K.Kamalasanan, ‘Communist Porali Kalyana Krishnan Nair; Kottayam,2008,p 38.

¹³¹ Government of Kerala, op. cit., pp. xv- xviii

¹³² Kerala Government’s Reply to KPCC Memorandum , p xx.

to enlist the Christian young men to the movement.¹³³ The press reports and other sources pointed out that regular arms training was going on every night in the sacred premises of all churches in Chenganacherry and in the palace of the Bishops in Chenganacherry. Their plan was to turn the church in to an armoury.¹³⁴ Cherian Kappan, Kurian Pottenkulam, M.C.Cherian etc were the most important leaders of this movement in the Kottayam district.¹³⁵ The Catholic leaders of Mundakkayam met at the Catholic church, Kottickal on 25th May, 1959, and elected Kurian Pottenkulam who organised a volunteer corps of 500 strongmen under name “*Vidyalaya Samrakshna Samiti*”(School protection Committee).¹³⁶ They were given arms training in the church.¹³⁷ Almost all churches in Mundakkayam contributed men and money to the anti Communist agitation. The volunteers recruited from these churches not only paralysed the working of educational institutions but also obstructed the functions of police stations and government offices, besides smashing of transport buses.¹³⁸

In the printed leaflet published by “Mar Thoma Education Action Committee” Kottayam contains seven instructions. It was stated that volunteers should be recruited only from among brave young men. “Identity cards should be given and a complete list of all volunteers had to be kept.” Relief committees were requested to “approach private medical practitioners and get ready with arrangements for first aid”.¹³⁹

¹³³ The Deepika 24th May 1959.

¹³⁴ Government of Kerala: ‘*Opposition preparation for violent overthrow of the government*’; 1959,p 11.

¹³⁵ Interview with Sri.K.M.Chummar at his residence at Vezhangann, Palai on 26-1-2010.

¹³⁶ Government of Kerala, op. cit., p xix.

¹³⁷ Janayugam’ (Malayalam daily),28th May,1959.

¹³⁸ Ibid.;‘25th May,1959.

¹³⁹ V.R.Krishna Iyar; ‘*Daniel Come To Judgement*’; Prabhat, Ernakulam1959; p 62;. ‘*Opposition preparation....*’ op. cit. p 12.

‘Janayugam’ a Malayalam daily reported on 23rd May 1959 as follows:-

“The Catholic churches in Meenachil taluk, the most important Catholic centre in Kerala, have been transformed in to arsenals. Clergymen are giving the lead in collecting guns and other deadly weapons in the churches at Kuruvilangad, Aruvithura, Ramapuram, Bharananganam, Palai and other places. They are feverishly giving training to Catholic youth raising slogan ‘Church in danger’ ”.¹⁴⁰

The Catholic priests were spreading a great scare of danger from Communism. Instructions were given to Christians to do house to house propaganda, to break law and not to send children to the schools.¹⁴¹ Elaborate arrangements were made in the church premises to organise an armed conflict against the government. In many places clergymen collected licensed guns and deadly weapons to use against the government.

“Christophers armed with daggers and staves are being organised on a large scale. Priests and clergymen are having house to house visits to encourage the enlistment of volunteers for subversive activities... .. They are exhorting their followers to take up arms against the government., and that heroic end in this battle is , equivalent to sacrifice of lives at the feet of the Holy Father. All parish priests have received instructions to organise “suicide squads” at the rate of one for every 10 persons in each parish.”¹⁴²

The Catholic priests organised huge processions of the faithful and addressed them with provocative words. They exposed the so called dangers involved in Communism and thus roused the feelings of common people who were made to rally round them. Church sermons were converted in to political sermons in which pastoral letters and circular letters issued by the Bishops and other church dignitaries were read for the information of the people

¹⁴⁰ Janayugam’ (Malayalam daily),23rd May,1959

¹⁴¹ Department of Public Relations, Government of Kerala; “*Opposition Preparation...*’P12.

¹⁴² Janayugam’ (Malayalam daily),19th May,1959 .

gathered.¹⁴³ Thus an impression was created among the people that the Communist government was acting against the wishes of the believers in God. So the people were encouraged to do propaganda work to overthrow it from power. As a final resort the clergymen raised the slogan the “church in danger” and called up on the Christians of Kerala to unitedly break laws and close down all educational institutions.¹⁴⁴ To serve the purpose small group of Christophers armed with weapons was posted in different parts of the State to deal with any situation as it arose. Every effort was made to suppress any counter move on the part of the government against the Christophers who were provided with medical aid and all transport facilities.¹⁴⁵

The ‘Deepika’ daily filled its pages with slander and incitement to the crusade against Communism. For instance on 29th April it warned:

“We have to face arrests, repression and criminal cases. Dozens of Bishops, thousands of clergymen and lakhs of disciples may be thrown in to prison. Those who cannot face this with dignity and self-respect, hereafter cannot be called Christians. Get ready to sacrifice everything. Let us fight, as we have nothing to lose”.¹⁴⁶

Father Vadakkan revealed that money flowed freely from planters and churches abroad, was used to feed, lodge and pay the volunteers who were drawn from the poorest sections of the Christian community exclusively.¹⁴⁷ Millions of dollars flowed from America in the name of maintaining these volunteer force.

¹⁴⁸ Documentary evidences were published in newspapers in

¹⁴³ Department of Public Relations . op. cit.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Malayala Manorama’ (Malayalam daily),30th May 1959.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Deepika’ (Malayalam daily), 29th April,1959.

¹⁴⁷ Georges Kristoffel Lieten , ‘*Ideology and Politics in Kerala 1957-59*’ ; ‘ Social Scientist’, vol. 6 No.2 (Sept.,1977) p 16.

¹⁴⁸ Father Vadakkan, ‘*Ente Kuthippum....* op. cit p 128.

the first week of August 1959 regarding the flow of money from America to Kerala for subversive activities against the Communist led government .¹⁴⁹

Mariya Sainyam (Legion of Mary)

‘Legion of Mary’ (*Mariya Sainyam*), the systematically formed voluntary organisation of the Catholic community was very active in Kerala during the period of the first Communist led government. It originated in Dublin , the capital city of Ireland on 7th September, 1921. The first unit of the ‘legion’ in Kerala was established at Palai on 15th August,1940.¹⁵⁰ The men and women in the Catholic Community had separate units of the ‘Legion’. In 1940s Dr.Kalacherry, the Bishop of Chenganacherry gave much encouragement to the ‘Legion’ for its growth in the Travancore region. In the aims and objectives, the ‘Legion of Mary’ had a missionary zeal.

In the organisational set up the ‘Legion of Mary’ (in Kerala it was known as *Mariya Sainyam*) followed the structure of the Roman military force. The term ‘Legion’ was originally the name of a wing in the Roman military. The Roman terms like ‘Presidium’, ‘Curia’, ‘Comitiam’, ‘Senatus’ and ‘Concilium’ were the names given to the various administrative bodies and functionaries of the “*Mariya Sainyam*”,¹⁵¹

The ‘ Presidium’ was the smallest unit of the ‘Legion of Mary’. It should be established with the permission of the Bishop. Parish priest or another one appointed by the Bishop acted as the spiritual advisor of the ‘Presidium’. Besides, the ‘Presidium’ had a president, vice president, secretary and a treasurer. In every week its meeting should be conducted in a fixed time. A secret collection of fund had to be made to meet the expenses of

¹⁴⁹ “Desabhimani’ (Malayalam daily) August 2,3,4and5, 1959.

¹⁵⁰ Father Augustine Chempilakunnel, ‘*Legion of Mari*’, S.H.League.,Alwai.1951,p 38.

¹⁵¹ Dominic Chariyan ,‘ *Legion of Mari*’, Kanjirapalli, 1951;p. 54.

the 'Presidium and the upper bodies.¹⁵² The 'Curia' was the controlling body of the two or more "Presidiums'. The 'Curia' existed in cities or districts. All office bearers and spiritual advisors of the 'Presidium' had to attend the 'Curia' which met once in a month. The spiritual head of the 'Curia' was appointed by the Bishop. The 'Comitium' was the controlling body of various Curias under a diocese. The 'Senatus' was the administrative body of all the 'Legion' units in a country. The 'Concilium' was the highest administrative body of the 'Legion of Mary' which was located in Dublin in Ireland.¹⁵³

The 'Legion of Mary' had two types of members. They were the 'working members' and 'helping members'. The 'Junior Presidiums (*Bala Sainya Shakakal*)' were also established to accommodate the members below the age of 18.¹⁵⁴ In its style and structure, the '*Mariya Sainyam*' had a military nature.¹⁵⁵ But it mainly concentrated on spiritual matters. During the period of the first Communist led government in Kerala, the '*Mariya Sainyam*' played a major role in spreading the anti Communist feeling among the faithful and drawing a large number of women in the anti-Communist agitation.¹⁵⁶

A.C.V.C.

Apart from the Social Scouts, *Saanti Sena*, Christopher Movement and the *Mariya Sainyam*, some other volunteer organisations also came in to existence in some particular regions and localities in Kerala. The Anti-Communist Volunteer Corps known as ACVC existed in some of the

¹⁵² Father Agustine, op. cit. pp 7-12.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Dominic Chariyan, op.cit.

¹⁵⁵ K.M.Joseph, '*Thettaya Communist Viruddham*'(Mal), Mannanam,1958, p 102.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Prof. Sara Joseph at her residence at Mulankunnathkavu, Thrissur on 18th October,2009.

parishes in the coastal villages near Thiruvananthapuram.¹⁵⁷ There the members of the middle class Christian community were mainly joined in it; because the members of the Christopher Movement were drawn from the poor and backward sections of the Christian Community. Not only that, the name ACVC had a non religious or secular nature and its organisers wanted to avoid the doubts of the followers of other communities.¹⁵⁸ The recruits of ACVC received Physical and armed training by the Kalari Assans from Tamilnadu engaged by the Churches at their own coast.¹⁵⁹

Kuruvadi sena

The '*Kuruvadi sena*'(Short stick force) was the name of a private militia that existed in some areas of Thrissur and Alapuzha districts during this period. Training in the use of '*kuruvadis*' was given to this force. Tamarind sticks were used for '*kuruvadis*.'¹⁶⁰ This private mercenary was fed and paid by the rich landlords. The Communist governments attempts to grow Glyricidia (*cheema konna*) was helpful to this force for the easy collection of sticks for violent demonstrations and subversive activities¹⁶¹ While conducting demonstrations they used to tie a small flag atop '*Kuruvadis*' and shouted filthy and provocative slogans.

Niranam Pada

The '*Niranam Pada*' was a group of goonda force under the commandership of Elenjikal John Jacob(Niranam Baby). He was an ex-military man who inherited large landed property. He enjoyed oppressing the

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Stephen Pereira at his residence at Chariyathura held on January 1,1010.

¹⁵⁸ K.M.Joseph, op.cit.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Stephan Pereira...op. cit.

¹⁶⁰ H.D.Malaviya op.cit.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Vargheese Kallarakal, at his residence at Nadathara, Thrissur on19th October,2009.

poor agricultural labourers.¹⁶² This goonda force was frequently attacking the poor agricultural kooli workers in the Kuttanad and Thiruvalla region. These goonda force was fed and paid by the rich landlords of that region.¹⁶³

Kuroor sena

The '*Kuroor sena*' was the name given to the volunteer force, which was formed under the direction of Sri Kuroor Neelakndan Namboodiripad, the president of the District Congress Committee in Thrissur.¹⁶⁴ The *Kuroor sena* came in to being immediately after the hunger strike of Father Vadakkan on August 8, 1958 in connection with the clashes between the police and the Anti-Communist Front.¹⁶⁵

The '*Thoppi pala sangams* were the group of cultivators (group of peasant cultivators who used to wear the cap made by the spathe of aracanut palm) who belonged mainly to the Christian community which occasionally gathered in some places in central Travancore and conducted demonstrations against some of the policies and administrative measures of the first Communist led government.¹⁶⁶

The Church and the All Kerala Catholic Congress

The Christians and the All Kerala Catholic Congress(A.K.C.C.), the religious organisation of the Catholic Christians in Kerala played the most crucial role in raising anti Communist feeling and Christian Communal animosity against the first Communist government in Kerala. The Church and its off shoot AKCC was against all the progressive administrative measures of

¹⁶² N.K.Kamalasanan, op. cit.

¹⁶³ 'Desabhimani'(Malayalam daily) 23rd March,1958.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Varghese Mechery at his residence at Valappad, Thrissur on 10th January, 2010.

¹⁶⁵ Father Vadakkan , op.cit. p124.

¹⁶⁶ Joseph Mundasseri, '*Kozhinja Elakal*' (mal) , Kottayam, 1978; pp 324-325.

the Communist government. It had a tradition of protesting against the previous educational reforms of Kerala.¹⁶⁷

The Kerala Education Bill(1957), presented by professor Joseph Mundassery and passed in the Kerala Legislative Assembly was the main target of attack of the Church and its off shoots the AKCC and the Kerala School Managers Association(KSMA). They managed a number of educational institutions in Kerala. The Arch-bishop of Varapuzha, Dr.Joseph Attipetty mentioning the Education Bill of 1957, said in Kerala Catholic Conference, that the Catholics in Kerala were facing the greatest “crisis”.¹⁶⁸ He is reported to have stated “The Kerala Education Bill is the first wicked child of the Communist Government”.¹⁶⁹ The combined conference of the Indian Catholic Union and the Kerala Catholic Conference held on 5th,6th and 7th January,1958 lauded the ‘Kerala Day’ observed against the Education Bill by Catholics throughout India.¹⁷⁰ The propaganda campaign was carried on at all levels in order to misinform the Christian flock about the content and aim of the education reforms. To quote Bishop Tharayil of Kottayam Archdiocese,

“Communism and Catholic Church are two organisations; the former standing against and the latter for God. Both will collide. We are un-willing to teach atheism- the poisonous capsule hidden in the Education Bill brought forth by the Communist Government. That is the chief reason for our opposition to the Bill”.¹⁷¹

It may be said in this context that Bishop Tharayil and his followers alone knew what atheism was embedded in the Education Bill, 1958.

¹⁶⁷ It launched a vigorous campaign against the educational reforms and the attempt for the nationalization of the private schools by divan C.P. Ramaswami Ayer in Travancore in 1945. They also extremely protested against the educational reforms of Sri Panampilli Govindamenon in Travancore-Cochin in 1955. See, Peter John Kallada, ‘*Vidyalaya Prakhobhana Charithram, Part 1*, Kottayam, 1957.

¹⁶⁸ The ‘Deepika’, January 7, 1958.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ The ‘Deepika’, January 8, 1958.

¹⁷¹ The ‘Deepika’, January 17, 1958.

The propagators misinterpreted the objectives of the Kerala Education Bill, 1957, in order to stimulate communalism among poor Christians and to exploit their support in favour of the vested interests. One Prof. Thomas Sreenivasan wrote : “The Bill was a device in disguise to annihilate the Christian Schools in Kerala”.¹⁷²

Regarding land reforms the Church and the AKCC took the most reactionary approach. They strongly opposed the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill, 1958.¹⁷³ About this Bill the ‘Deepika’ daily wrote: “The greatest problem being faced by Kerala in 1958 is Communist Party’s Land Reforms Bill.”¹⁷⁴ The editorial ended with a sceptical note as to whether democracy in Kerala was going to be sacrificed under the grab of planned economy.

The assault of the Church levelled against the Agrarian Relations bill was part of a political attack against the Communist party and its government. This fact is evident from the various pronouncements of Christian agencies. Criticising the Communist justice and morality they induced those who became ‘prey’ to the Communist party’s arrows to organise and fight against the party.¹⁷⁵

The Church in all possible ways, intentionally unleashed propaganda campaign against the Agrarian Relations Bill, the Government and the Communist Party. This propaganda culminated in the communal mobilisation and violent struggle against the Communist government.

The attack of the Christian vested interest inflicted not confined to the Education Bill and the Agrarian Relations Bill. They also vehemently opposed the Kerala Chit Bill, Agricultural Debt(Prevention) Act; Panchayat

¹⁷² The ‘Deepika’ , June 22, 1958.

¹⁷³ The ‘Malayala Manorama’, February 20, 1958.

¹⁷⁴ The ‘Deepika’, January 1,1958.

¹⁷⁵ The ‘Deepika’, February 2, 1958.

Bill; Library Rules etc.¹⁷⁶ In order to oppose the Library Rules they found out their own agents to launch a personal attack on Professor Joseph Mundassery.¹⁷⁷ The 'Deepika' published an article by Vettoor Raman Nair to hurling humiliation on Prof. Mundassery. The article entitled 'Mundassery's Democracy' said that the Rules put in peril the very existence of *Grandasala Sangam* (Library Association) and that in forming the Rules he was actuated by personal grudges and business motives.¹⁷⁸

The first Communist government in Kerala introduced the 'Dowry Prevention Bill', 1958 in the Legislative Assembly. All vested interest like the Congress party, the P.S.P. and the Catholics ganged up against the Bill. The 'Deepika' through its editorial, tried to mobilize Christian opinion in their favour. On behalf of the Christian parents the 'Deepika' said, "parental responsibility extends to feeding and up-bringing and educating children and even finding job for them. These are heavy burdens. Therefore, there is no point in saying that the Dowry Prohibition Bill is intended as a relief operation to help the parents".¹⁷⁹ In order to provoke Christian women it was written, "It means that the Communist law-makers have now directed their tactics against the women folk".¹⁸⁰ It indirectly pointed out that the Bill was aimed at annihilating the Christians. To quote it again, "If the aim is one of destroying Christians, rather than damaging the whole country, it is better to adopt some other means."¹⁸¹ The 'Deepika' found a chance to blackmail the Communist Party in the field of family planning and birth control also. It wrote, "The advocates of birth control oppose Catholics and Communists in

¹⁷⁶ The 'New Age'; Vol. II; No 23, June 7, 1959.

¹⁷⁷ Joseph Mundassery; "*Kozhinja Elakal* (autobiography, Malayalam); Kottayam, 1978; p. 370.

¹⁷⁸ Vettoor Raman Nair, "*Mundassery's Democracy*"; The 'Deepika', February 2, 1958.

¹⁷⁹ The 'Deepika', March 7, 1958.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

the same breath. But here the Communists are also in the camp of the contraceptionists.”¹⁸²

The Christian Church in Kerala actively participated in the anti-Communist political campaign for the overthrow of the Communist government of Kerala. As in the case of organised churches abroad the Indian Church also was intolerant of the growth of the Communist Party in India.¹⁸³

Their mental disturbances assumed the character of an open political campaign as the Communist party gained political control of the Kerala State.

¹⁸⁴ The ascent of the Party to power was to them the greatest agony. This is evident from the statement made by the Archbishop of Varapuzha, in the Kerala Catholic conference. The Archbishop described the Communist rule as a great hazard to Kerala Catholics. Chevaliar Swares who spoke on the occasion noted with regret the growth of Communism in India as manifested in the results of two previous elections. Yet he urged his followers to strain every nerve to get rid of it. To quote him,

“Communism is a Godless religion. It has a Bible, ‘Das Capital’. Its prophet is Karl Marx. Instead of the kingdom of god it advocates, ironically enough, the kingdom of man. Communism enticed to its fold some people with high ideals and intellect”.¹⁸⁵

The organised Church in Kerala collaborated with the Congress party and other vested interests in assailing the progressive measures of the Communist government. Sri. P.T. Chacko, leader of opposition of the 1957-59 Assembly, who participated in the Catholic Conference appealed to all those who believe in democracy, and the Catholics in particular to stand in alliance to wipe out ‘red rule’ from Kerala.¹⁸⁶ The Church had planned the

¹⁸² The ‘Deepika’, April 1,1958.

¹⁸³ D. Jayadeva Das, ‘*Profile of the Indian Church*’; Thiruvananthapuram,1979. p. 46.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ The ‘Depika’, July 7,1958.

¹⁸⁶ D. Jayadeva Das ; op. cit.

armed opposition to the Communist government as early as January 1958. This is testified to by the news about the conference of the Kerala Catholic Conference and the Indian Catholic Union, reported in the 'Deepika' daily. In addition to the Archbishop of Varapuzha, Swares, P.T.Chacko, a number of other Kerala and Indian leaders of the Christian Community participated in the Conference. The report states " In general one can say that all discussion centred on confronting the 'enemies of democracy and individual liberty through mobilizing the powers of the organisation".¹⁸⁷

The conference also resolved to form volunteer forces and to constitute committees on the diocese basis. To achieve this objective, money was mobilised from rich planters and affluent land lords. In addition to this they have had foreign assistance, both ideological and pecuniary. Father Vadakkan himself emphasises this fact.¹⁸⁸

The enquiry regarding the attitude of the Church towards radical administrative reforms of the first Communist government in Kerala should not at any rate be confined to be Catholics only. All the denominations of the Christian Church actively participated in this. The Churches were trying to inject superstition and misunderstanding among their folk of believers and to inspire them sentimentally against the Communists.¹⁸⁹ All the reactionary political forces and feudal lords collaborated. On 7th July 1958, all the Christian denominations concertedly conducted St. Thomas Remembrance Day at Thiruvananthapuram. Malankara Jacobite Metropolitan presided over the public meeting. The Thiruvananthapuram Archbishop was also present on the occasion. Sri. K.M.George, M.L.A., who attended the meeting spoke, "Never in the history of the Indian Church in the last two thousand years has Christianity faced so great a danger. Christ is still an alien in this

¹⁸⁷ The 'Deepika', May 5, 1958.

¹⁸⁸ Father Vadakkan, op. cit. p.128

¹⁸⁹ D Jayadeva Das, op. cit. p. 47.

vast land of ours. In Kerala, Christianity and other faiths are locked in a combat with Communism which is employing all its strategy to undermine our faith in God, moral values and the family life. The educational reforms, dowry prevention bill, amendment to Christian inheritance law, family planning all these are directed towards these ends. Our 'crusade' against Communism is not only for Kerala, but for India, Asia and the whole of mankind. This struggle can succeed only if all believers stand together. We must fight unmindful of cost. This is the clarion call of the historical day."¹⁹⁰

Thus, with the help of the well organised and well-equipped propaganda machinery and with the assistance of the unchallengeable economic power, the Church succeeded in mobilising the communal reactionary forces against the first Communist led government in Kerala.

The Nair Service Society (NSS)

Almost all the writings on the general election to the Kerala Legislative Assembly in February-March 1957 fully or partially endorse the support to the Communist Candidates extended by the Nair Service Society and its patriarch Sri. Mannath Padmanabhan. But a close scrutiny of the sources unfolds that the Nair Service Society did not have a definite stand in the state election of 1957.¹⁹¹ Mannath Padmanabhan was against the Communists.¹⁹² At the same time he was not in a good terms with the Congress.¹⁹³ In a dialogue with the media persons on January 7th 1957 Mannath Padmanabhan declared his intention to support the Kerala Peoples

Party.¹⁹⁴ In fact, Padmanabhan and the NSS was against the Christian

¹⁹⁰ The 'Deepika', August 8, 1958.

¹⁹¹ Kidangoor A N Gopala Krishna Pillai (ed) '*Mannathinte Dairi Kurupukal*' in *Mannathinte Sampoorana Kritikal* (Mal); Chenganacherry, 1977, pp 942-943.

¹⁹² K Rajeswary; '*Communist Bharanavum Vimochaana Samaravum*' (Mal); Aluva, 2005; p 62.

¹⁹³ 'Janayugam' daily (Mal) January 9, 1957,

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

domination in the Congress in Kerala.¹⁹⁵ Therefore he made up his mind to favour Nair candidates irrespective of party. This policy was fortunately beneficial to the Communist party in the election.¹⁹⁶

The first Communist led government in Kerala in its early months enjoyed the support of the Nair Service Society in many of the administrative measures.¹⁹⁷ Actually the NSS was a spirited supporter and ardent advocate of the Kerala Educational Bill 1957 as it was introduced in the Assembly.¹⁹⁸ The sequence of events that gave shape to the political alignments in Kerala from 1957 to 1959, however prompted the Nair Service Society to shift their policy from one of support to that of stiff opposition to the Communist party and its government.

After the publication of The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill 1957 on December 18, 1957 which seemed to hit the upper class Nairs' basic economic interests, the NSS changed its attitude and gradually assumed an anti government stance. This estrangement of the NSS was aggravated by the rejection of its request by the government for opening an engineering college at Palakkat.¹⁹⁹ Mannath Padmanabhan reacted sharply to the rejection of NSS' demand and vowed that he would not rest content until the Communist government was overthrown.²⁰⁰

While the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill was being drafted, a deputation consisting of Land Policy Committee (LPC) appointed by the NSS Board of Directors in its budget session held at Chengannassery on June 9,

¹⁹⁵ Thopil Bhasi; '*Olivile Ormakalku Sesham*'(Mal), '*Kerala Shabdham*' weekly, May 5, 1989.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Hareendra Natha Kurup ; '*NSS Charithram-Vol 2*(Mal) 1994, p 373.

¹⁹⁸ '*Malayala Rajyam*' (daily Mal.), August 28, 1957.

¹⁹⁹ '*Malaya Rajyam*'; December 5, 1958. Of the two applicants, the NSS and a Local Committee headed by the president of the Palakkat Municipal Council, the government permitted the latter to start the college .

²⁰⁰ '*Malayala Rajyam*', November 27, 1958.

1957, met the Chief Minister on October 25, 1957 and submitted a memorandum suggesting that the proposed legislation should not be harmful to the interest of the Nairs.²⁰¹ When the Bill was published on December 18, 1957, the NSS found that it had affected their interests considerably and, therefore, had taken an anti government stance. ‘The Malayala Rajyam’ representing the voice of the Nairs, in an editorial urged to “throw away the bill ” as it aimed at expropriating the land owners, the majority of whom belonged to the Nair community.²⁰² Actually the majority of the Nairs were not land lords. They belonged to the class of ordinary farmers or small holders. A small section among the Nair community (Nair Pramanis) was the land lords (Jenmis). They exerted much influence over the NSS leadership.²⁰³ The NSS thereafter organised a large number of meetings to demonstrate against the Bill. It also called up on all those who were against the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill to forge a united opposition.²⁰⁴

Sri Mannath Padmanabhan strategically made tactic efforts to arouse communal feelings by giving currency to the view that the government in power was “pro-Ezhava” and “anti-Nair”.²⁰⁵ Incidentally there was nothing in the controversial Kerala Education Act that could be definitely branded pro-Ezhava. It did not tend to confer in its special benefits on the Ezhavas as a community. However while dubbing the government as ‘pro-Ezhava’, Mannath Padmanabhan intended to divide the people of the state on lines of

²⁰¹ ‘Malayala Rajyam’, October 26, 1957.

²⁰² ‘Malayala Rajyam’, January 1st 1958.

²⁰³ Puthupalli Raghavan op. cit .p . 169.; K Damodaran, ‘*Vidyabhyasathinu Nere*’(Mal), Erunakulam,1959, p.8.

²⁰⁴ ‘*Mannath Padmanabhante Prasangangal*’(Mal)-A compilation of speeches by Mannath Padmanabhan. Chenganassery,1982, pp. 132-164.

²⁰⁵ Ibid p 162.

communities and casts and to focus the hostility of the prominent section on the Communist government.²⁰⁶

The system of communal reservation in appointment to government service and in admissions to professional colleges, introduced by the government was now highlighted as a deliberate attempt on the part of the government to placate the Ezhavas at the coast of the Nairs. The cry of “the Nairs’ interest in jeopardy” was intentionally raised to stimulate tension.²⁰⁷

The NSS endeavoured for the consolidation of Nair community under its banner and engaged itself in a vilification campaign against the Ezhavas, being one of the beneficiaries of reservation. The Board of Directors of the NSS, on November 3rd, 1958 passed a resolution asking the Communist government to exclude the Ezhavas from the list of backward communities eligible for the benefits of reservation.²⁰⁸ A Nair deputation led by Mannath Padmanabhan met the Chief Minister on November 18, 1958 and submitted a memorandum for so revising the list of backward communities as to eliminate Ezhavas from it, as conceived by the report of the Kerala Administrative Reforms Committee.²⁰⁹

The NSS hardened its attitude towards reservation and for the first time, in December 1958, it informed the Communist government that the Kerala Education Bill was not acceptable unless section 11 which provided for the system of communal reservation was dropped. Between December 1, 1958 and January 4, 1959 Mannath Padmanabhan was found engaged in a novel pressure propaganda under the guise of “Janma Naksatra Pirivu (birth

²⁰⁶ K.M.Chandy, ‘*Mannavum Vimochana Samaravum*’(Mal) in *Mannam Sathabishekopaharam*’; Pandalaam,1960,p. 153.

²⁰⁷ ‘Malayala Rajyam’, August 6, 1958.

²⁰⁸ The Deepika daily (Mal), November 4,1958.

²⁰⁹ ‘The Malayala Rajyam’, November 19, 1958.

day collection) to organise the Nairs behind him.²¹⁰ The NSS '*karayogams*' (local units) were alerted to pass resolutions in condemnation of the government measures and the existing system of reservation.²¹¹

The NSS soon joined hands with the Church in its agitation against the Communist led government. Mannath Padmanabhan's speeches addressed to the Nairs gathered at Perunna, the NSS Head Office and at Kottaarakkara, are very significant from the point of view of the new violent orientation given to the strategy of agitation. He said that "this (patronisation of the Ezhavas) had developed to such an extent that the interests of the Nair Community are definitely endangered. Therefore, do or die has to be our policy".²¹² An action committee was constituted under Mannath Padmanabhan to continue the agitation unabated. Now the NSS stood openly pledged to a policy of overthrowing the constitutionally established Communist government.²¹³ A decision to organise a 'Nair Volunteer Corp' to support the Kerala School Managers Association in its school closure movement was taken at another meeting held on March 27, 1959 at Kottayam.²¹⁴ On March 28, 1959 Mannath Padmanabhan gave an ultimatum to the Chief Minister formally informing their irrevocable resolve to start direct action against the government.²¹⁵ This was followed by another ultimatum to the same effect by Mannath Padmanabhan in his capacity as the President of the action committee formed by the Kerala School Managers Association.²¹⁶ Thus he openly declared his intention of ousting the Communist government from power.

²¹⁰ Ibid, December 31st 1958.

²¹¹ Ibid, January 12, 1959; '*Mannath Padmanabhante Prasangal*', op.cit. p 164.

²¹² Ibid, March 31, 1959; (2) pp 166-172.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ '*The Malayala Manorama*', daily, March 31, 1959.

²¹⁵ Ibid. April 1, 1959.

²¹⁶ '*Mannath Padmanabhante Prasangal*', op.cit .pp 182-184

In order to strengthen the anti Communist consolidation, Mannath Padmanabhan asked the Nairs to act hands in glove with the Christians and Muslims:

“We shall not alone carry on this struggle for the complete ouster of the government in power which is the embodiment of all evils. In this process, we should, indeed, ally ourselves with other communities like the Christians and Muslims whose interests are also at stake under this government beset with all malicious intentions. Therefore all the ‘Nair conferences’ we envisage for the future should be converted into meetings for the intensification of our struggle against the government under the joint auspices of the Nairs, Christians and Muslims.”²¹⁷

The Nair Service Society in unison with the Church launched a state-wide programme of organising protest meetings. The support of the Nair community, as revealed by the speeches of its leaders made at these joint meetings, contributed to a manifest sense of arrogance on the part of the Christians. The speech of Joseph Chazhikkat, a prominent Catholic leader and a PSP M.L.A., is significant in this context. “The Christians are ready”, he affirmed “ for any sacrifice in the company of the Nairs, for expelling the government instrumental in our material and spiritual degeneration. For this good cause, we are prepared to sacrifice any number of lives.”²¹⁸ The constitution of a ‘*Vimochana Samara Samithi*’(Liberation Struggle Committee) on 1st May, 1959 comprising the representatives of the Nairs, Christians and the Kerala School Managers Association and headed by Mannath Padmanabhan,²¹⁹ heralded the beginning of the so called ‘Liberation Struggle’.

²¹⁷ The Malayala Rajyam’ April 23, 1959.

²¹⁸ Ibid , April 30,1959.

²¹⁹ Ibid, May 3,1959.

The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalanayogam (SNDP)

The majority of the Ezhava Community in Kerala supported the Communist party from its inception. A caste and community wise analysis of the voting pattern of Kerala from 1957 reveals the fact that the majority of the Ezhavas and other backward communities constitute the backbone of the Communist party. In its capacity as the caste organisation of the Ezhavas, the SNDP worked from its beginning for the socio-cultural and educational advancement of the community. During the period of the first Communist government in Kerala, the leadership of SNDP was controlled by politicians whose interests were identical to those of the Congress party.²²⁰

Aside from suggesting some amendments to the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill,²²¹ 1957, SNDP did not have any definite policy towards the Communist Government until the report of the Administrative Reforms Committee, which suggested the abolition of the system of communal reservation in recruitment to government service, was published in September 1958. In a huge meeting organised at Kulathur on 21st September, 1958, to celebrate the twin programmes of the anniversary of Kulathur Sreenarayana Library cum Reading hall and the '*Gurudeva Samadhi Day*' (Death anniversary of Sree Narayana Guru), the '*Pathradipar K. Sukumaran*' (The Chief Editor, '*The Kerala Kaumudi daily*') vehemently criticised the

²²⁰ R. Sankar, who was the Deputy Chief Minister and later the Chief Minister of the State after the overthrow of the Communist government in 1959, was the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president at that time. K.R. Narayanan, the then Congress M.L.A., was its general secretary.

²²¹ When the Bill was published, the Board of Directors of the SNDP welcomed and appointed on December 31, 1957 a Special Committee consisting of seven members headed by its President to study and report on the Bill (*The Malayala Manorama*, January 2, 1958). The committee submitted its report on February 25, 1958. It viewed the Bill as the first step towards socialism and suggested amendments to provisions relating to ceiling, compensation for excess lands taken over and fair rent (*The Malayala Manorama*, February 26, 1958).

Administrative Committee Report of the Communist government.²²² This provocative speech and criticism of K. Sukumaran was in the presence of the Chief Minister E.M.S.Namboodiripad, who presided over the meeting.²²³ On 27th September, 1958, the SNDP Executive Council passed a resolution protesting against the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Committee, and decided to resort to direct action, along with other backward communities to protect what little was accrued to them by reservation.²²⁴ Accordingly, the Board of Directors, which was authorised to chalk out detailed steps for direct action, on October 17, 1958 decided to start direct action against the administrative Reforms Committee report.²²⁵

The Nair Service Society objected to the decision of the SNDP as contrary to “Hindu unity and communal harmony”.²²⁶ The SNDP was perturbed at the opposition of the NSS to reservation, and, therefore, repeated its call upon other backward communities to stand united and face the threat to the little benefit they obtained by reservation as a result of their enduring struggle in the past. A deputation consisting of the representatives of the SNDP led by its General Secretary met the Chief Minister on November 4, 1958 to request him not to make any change in the existing system of reservation.²²⁷ They also submitted a memorandum to the Central Minister Jagajivan Ram, asking him to direct the Kerala government to perpetuate the job reservation. In fact, in the name of the Administrative Reforms Committee report, the communally conscious members of both the Nair and Ezhava communities turned against the government.

²²² Puthuppalli Raghavan, op.cit. pp .171-173.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ ‘The Kerala Kaumudi’, (Malayalam daily), September 28, 1958.

²²⁵ ‘The Malayala Manorama’, October 18, 1958.

²²⁶ Resolution, NSS Board of Directors, ‘The Malayala Manorama’, November 4, 1958.

²²⁷ ‘The Kerala Kaumudi’ November 5, 1958.

By May 1959 the SNDP had turned hostile to the Communist government. Its politically motivated leadership was in full sympathy with the opposition agitation against the government and wanted to dislodge it at the earliest.²²⁸ The SNDP leadership played its own role in the consolidation of anti Communist forces. The leadership, though indirectly, brought the organisation on the side of the anti Communist forces and actively participated in the so called liberation struggle.

The Indian Union Muslim League

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), the communal political organisation in Kerala, played a major role in the process of the consolidation of the anti Communist forces in the state. During this period, the important leaders of the IUML in Kerala were, Pookoya Thangal, K.M.Seethi Sahib, Keyi Sahib, B.Pocker Sahib, C.H.Muhammed Koya, Hassan Ghani etc.²²⁹ In the election of 1957 the IUML formed an alliance with the PSP.²³⁰ So it got 8 members to the first legislative assembly of Kerala. C.H. Muhammed Koya was the leader of the IUML in the Legislative Assembly. He was very active in the legislative discourse as well as in the public domain. From the initial stages the IUML was critical of the Communist government.

When the Kerala Education Bill,1957 was introduced in the legislature, the IUML, while welcoming it pointed out the necessity of amending those provisions which seemed to affect minority rights and managers' privileges. Its provision for the interference of political parties in the running of schools was also repugnant to the League. They also wanted to restrain the power of

²²⁸ 'The Malayala Manorama', May 9, 1959.

²²⁹ M.C.Vadakara, '*C.H.Muhammed Koya-A Political Biography*', Kozhikod, 1996; p.236.

²³⁰ T.M. Savankutty, '*Seethi Sahib*'(biography), Thiruvananthapuram. 1992; p.102

judiciary to issue injunctions in educational matters.²³¹ The IUML, thus, at the beginning took a reasonably co-operative attitude towards the Bill.

The approach of the IUML members in the Assembly, however, was different. Their opposition on the floor of the House was on two points²³²: the Bill was a 'Nazi-model' legislation actuated by malicious intentions of belittling and weakening the managers. Therefore, they demanded its circulation for eliciting public opinion, or else its withdrawal.

When the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill was introduced in the Legislature the IUML did not express any misgivings about its objectives. It however wanted alterations in certain provisions of the Bill which were detrimental to the rights of the Muslims. Many of the suggestions of the League were accepted by the minister in charge of the Bill. Therefore the IUML member K.Hassan Ghani who spoke during the third reading of the Bill welcomed it as a necessary measure for the welfare of the entire people of the state.²³³

During the time of the controversy over the school textbooks, the IUML acted shoulder to shoulder with the Catholic church and opposed the government. The League joined the Congress in the Legislature for the removal of some textbooks including those of famous writer Sri Vaikam Muhammed Basheer from the school curriculum.²³⁴ The League, in the Devikulam by-election of May, 1958, propped up the Congress candidate and campaigned against the Communist party.²³⁵

The IUML disapproved of the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Committee particularly regarding the reservation of minorities and

²³¹ 'The Chandrika' (Malayalam daily, Kozhikode), August 29, 1957.

²³² Kerala Legislative Assembly debates on July 13th and 20th 1957

²³³ Kerala Legislative Assembly debates on 10th June 1959.

²³⁴ K. Rajeswary, op cit. p. 169.

²³⁵ M.C,Vadakara, op. cit . p. 250.

backward communities in government jobs. Both in the Floor and outside, the IUML leaders demanded the reservation proportional to population and in appointment in Kerala Public Service Commission and High Court.²³⁶

The opportunity provided by the then existing political climate of the State was exploited by the League to obtain for itself a status equivalent to other leading political parties. The League Co-operated with the Joint Standing Committee of the Congress and PSP to call for a hartal on April 5, 1959 as a protest against the government's non-acceptance of the report of Andhra Rice Deal Inquiry Committee.²³⁷ This may be considered the first signal for the involvement of the League in the direct action against the Government. As a reward for its association, the All-India Congress Committee(AICC) President on May 6th 1959 extended tacit recognition to the League by permitting the KPCC to enter into a formal alliance with it in the struggle for the removal of the government in power.²³⁸ Thus the League's involvement in the anti Communist agitation and its association with other opposition parties resulted in its political acceptance in Kerala.²³⁹ It also helped the League in the establishment of its local level committees in the Muslim majority areas throughout Kerala.²⁴⁰

The IUML leaders organised their own public meetings throughout the state. Through their speeches its leaders evoked anti Communist feelings among the people.²⁴¹ The League Volunteers actively participated in the agitation along with the volunteers of other organisations. The leaders described the League as a living force and very much active and kicking.²⁴²

²³⁶ The Kerala Legislative Assembly Debates on 6th December, 1958.; 'The Chandrika', December, 7, 1958

²³⁷ 'The Chandrika', March 22, 1959; M.C.Vadakara , op. cit. p. 256.

²³⁸ 'The Malayala Rajyam', May 7 , 1959.

²³⁹ T.M.Savankutty, op. cit. p. 104.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ 'The Desabhimani' , July 7, 1959.

²⁴² 'The Chandrika', June 10, 1959

The tense situation in the socio-political climate of Kerala during that time was entirely favourable for the spread of rumours in lightning speed. A false propaganda soon got currency among the Muslims that the government decided to close the Arabic colleges. It generated wide spread protest in the Muslim settlement areas.²⁴³ Rampant were the rumours like, “atheists are in power; they determined to demolish the mosques, churches and other worshipping centres of the theists; they are trying to make Kerala as a Communist state; etc.”²⁴⁴ Ulterior motives behind the spread of such rumours was to stimulate fear and ill will among the people against Communist party. The dread ‘Communist revolution’ plagued the minds of people belonging to different castes and communal groups throughout Kerala.²⁴⁵ Thus, the agitated mood of a sizable section of society assumed the proportion of “Mass Hysteria”.²⁴⁶

In order to Bring the Muslim women in the mainstream of anti Communist agitation and make them enthusiastic, a calling of Ms. Haleema Beevi, the editor of ‘The Vanitha’, a publication for women was thus:

“... .. To day what is happening in Kerala is a religious struggle; a moral struggle; virtually a ‘Jihad’. The Muslim women along with their brothers must take part in this ‘Jihad’. This sacred struggle meant for the sustenance of Islam and its moral values. I believe that, the involvement of Muslim women in the fight for religious cause is approved by Islam. Ladies like Nafeesath Beevi, Fathima Beevi, Ms P.K. Kunju, Thankamma Malik etc have already entered the struggle, courted arrests and are now in jail. I pray to the Muslim women of Kerala to follow their suit. ...”²⁴⁷

²⁴³ The Malayala Rajyam’, July 14, 1959.

²⁴⁴ Interview with Hameedali Shammad at his residence at Kasaragod on 16th October, 2009. He is the senior most leader of the Muslim League. He had participated in the anti Communist agitation of 1959.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ The Chief Minister E.M.S.Namboodiripad characterized the immoral nature of the anti Communist struggle as “mass Hysteria”. (See, *Cherian Philip*, ‘Kaal Nootandu’)

²⁴⁷ ‘The Malayala Rajyam’, July 19, 1959.

Thus the speeches and activities of communally surcharged Muslim political leaders added momentum to the process of the anti Communist consolidation.

Political Parties

The Praja Socialist Party (PSP)

As many as 9 PSP candidates won the elections to the Kerala State Legislative Assembly held in 1957. It had an alliance with the Muslim League in Malabar. Sri. Pattam Thanu Pillai, the former Chief Minister of the Travancore-Cochin state, was the leader of the PSP in the Legislative Assembly. Sri. P.R.Kurup, Sri. M Narayana Kurup, Sri. P.K.Kunju etc were the other leading figures of the PSP who involved themselves seriously in the Legislative discourse. They hardly missed any chance to criticise the Communist government. The National leaders of the PSP like Asok Mehtha and Dr. K.B.Menon always found fault with the policies and programmes of the Communist government.

The Kattampilli land agitation was one of the early encounters between the government and the opposition. This issue induced the PSP and the Congress to form a 'Depressed Classes League'. Sri. P.R.Kurup, the leader of the PSP hailing from Malabar gave guidance to Kattampilli land agitation in July 1957. Though the issue was settled by December 1957, it strengthened the protest of PSP against the Communist government.

The PSP was opposed to the Kerala University Bill(1957).²⁴⁸ But in the case of the Kerala Education Bill (1957) there was not a united stand among the PSP members. Sri. Pattam Thanu Pillai and others had a favourable attitude towards the Kerala Education Bill. On the contrary, Sri. Joseph Chazhikkat vigorously opposed it. He actively associated himself with

²⁴⁸ Joseph Mundassery , op. cit. p. 312.

the Catholics in their tirade against the government, and went to the extent of calling for bloody sacrifices to prevent the implementation of the Bill, if it became an Act.²⁴⁹ He had the same attitude even in the case of the Dowry Prevention Bill(1958).²⁵⁰

When Kerala was affected by the shortage of rice and the rise in the price of food grains in 1957 the PSP copying the example of the Congress, organised a '*Pattini Jatha*' (hunger march) in the state demanding the measures to prevent the price hike and the resignation of the ministry. Their hunger march came to a close at Thiruvananthapuram on July 13, 1957.²⁵¹ As in the case of the Kerala Education Bill, the PSP failed to have a unanimous opinion on the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill (1958) because some of the influential party leaders were land owners or pro land owners. The party opposed the Bill manifestly induced by the landed interest which influenced important leaders like Joseph Chazhikkat who himself was a land owner.²⁵² It was through Joseph Chazhikkat that the Church secured the support of the PSP for the agitation against Communist government.

The Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP)

The Revolutionary Socialist Party offered a stubborn resistance to the Communist government in Kerala. During this period the important leaders of the RSP in Kerala were Sri. N. Sreekantan Nair, Sri. T.K.Divakaran, Sri. K. Balakrishnan etc. The RSP contested in the state election of 1957 without any alliance. Consequently none of its candidates won the election. But they were very active in Kollam district, particularly in the trade union sector. They were highly militant in opposing the Communist

²⁴⁹ The 'Malayala Rajyam', November 20, 1958.

²⁵⁰ Kerala Legislative Assembly debates on March 1-3,1958.

²⁵¹ K. Rajeswary. Op. cit p 141.

²⁵² Interview with Sri. Joseph Pulikkunnel at his residence at Hossanna Mount ,Palai on January 26 2010

government. The RSP's trade union the UTUC had competition with the AITUC counter part of the Communist party for ascending over the labourers. The trade union policy of the Communist government could not win the sympathy of the RSP workers.

The police firing to crush the labour strike in the Candanathopu cashew nut factory resulted in the death of two labourers Sulaiman and Raman in July 1958. This incident tremendously aggravated the enmity of the RSP towards the Communist government. The pent up anger of the RSP found vent in vigorous anti-Communist agitation.

The Indian National Congress

During this period (1957-59), the Indian National Congress was the main opposition party in Kerala. It could not act as a creative opposition because of the conflict of interests within the party in Kerala both in the legislative Assembly and outside.²⁵³ Instead they constantly and vigorously opposed the government in each and every aspect. Actually the Congress was the ruling party at the centre and in most of the states in India. It was the extreme intolerance of some of the leaders of the party both at the Centre and in the State largely helped the consolidation of the anti Communist forces in the state.²⁵⁴ U.N.Debar, the president of the AICC in 1957-58, and Sreemannarayan, the secretary of the AICC were against the Communist government in Kerala from its very beginning.²⁵⁵ Some of the leaders of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee, particularly from Malabar, including

²⁵³ H.D.Malaviya, op, cit. p. 45

²⁵⁴ K.Rajeswari, '*Communist bharanvum Vimochana Samaravum*', (Mal), Alwai, 2005, p.212.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.; Y.R.Krishna Iyer, '*Manthriyayirunna Nalukal- Chila Ormakal*' on P Rajiv (ed.) op. cit. p 174.

Sri. K.A. Damodara Menon, C.K. Govindan Nair, A.V. Kuttimaalu Amma etc were liberal in their attitude towards the Communist government.²⁵⁶

Sri. P.T.Chacko was the leader of opposition in the legislative Assembly. He was an able leader and a talented parliamentarian. His uncompromising opposition to the Communist government and strong support to the Church and the land lords contributed to the mobilisation of the vested interest groups and communal forces. The Christian lobby in Congress in Kerala considerably influenced the policies and programmes of the party in that period. They drew the party in the line of violent and undemocratic agitation against the democratically elected Communist government in Kerala.

From the initial stages, some of the measures of the Communist government infuriated the opposition in Kerala. Starting from the Eviction Pending Ordinance, the government's order for clemency to the prisoners, remission of varying periods for prisoners undergoing varying terms of imprisonment, the withdrawal of political cases etc in the initial stages invited bitter criticism from the opposition.²⁵⁷

The Governor of the state Sri. B. Ramakrishna Rao, who was formerly a popular leader of The Indian National Congress in Andhra Pradesh, was not in favour of the Communist government. The cry of "*Arakshitavasta*" (state of insecurity) spread rapidly in the socio-political atmosphere of Kerala. The vehement criticism and false propaganda against the so called 'cell courts' of the Communist party branch committees enabled the opposition parties to gather the support of the non Communists. The government's attempt for the nationalisation of plantations, formation of the workers co-operatives, reservation in public services, The Kerala Education Bill, The Dowry

²⁵⁶ K.Rajeswari, op. cit. p.215

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

Prevention Bill, the release of the Sabarimala arson enquiry report , the Devikulam by-election victory of the Communist party, the controversial ‘civil war’ speech of the Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad, allegations related to the Andhra rice deal, The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill etc were some of the grave issues which enraged the opposition parties and groups in Kerala. Besides the Varandarappilli violence, police firing in Moonnar, and Chandanathop, Seetharam mill strike, Boat fare agitation, student strikes etc added fuel to the rising flame of violent anti Communist agitation. All these developments combined with many other factors including some international, national and local issues culminated in the aggressive anti Communist gang up in Kerala.

On February 2, 1958 Mrs. Indira Gandhi was elected the president of the All India Congress Committee and on April 3rd, Mr. R. Shankar as the President of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee. Thereafter the Congress’ opposition to the Communist government in Kerala reached a stage of bitter intolerance.²⁵⁸ Sri. P.T.Chacko, the opposition leader and his associates had a stubborn attitude of protest to the government. Their irreconcilable stance to each and every measure of the government created a crisis in the functioning of the administrative machinery . In short, the social, cultural, economic and political climate of Kerala around April-May 1959 created a congenial atmosphere for the anti Communist coup.

Polarisation of the Writers and Cultural Activists

In 1912 ‘Swadashabhimani’ Ramakrishna Pillai wrote a small biography of Karl Marx in Malayalam. Subsequently a large number of literary works either directly or indirectly propagating the Communist ideology and party programmes were published in Kerala. During the same period a variety of anti Communist literary works in the form of dramas,

²⁵⁸ Ibid. p.

poems, essays, stories, parodies etc were also appeared . A group of cultural workers strove to terminate the first Communist government. They, in league with some vested interest groups, established “The Democratic Publications Limited” at Erunakulam. The proprietors of this company were ‘Deena Bandu (daily)’, ‘The Weekly Kerala’(news weekly), ‘The democratic Printers’, ‘The Voice of Kerala’, ‘The Democratic Book Stall’, ‘The Democratic Theatres’ etc. ²⁵⁹ The Democratic publications had its own writers. This company received sufficient funding from The Moral Re-Armament(MRA), The Anti-Communism Crusade, The Central Intelligence Agency(CIA) of America and the Catholic Church. ²⁶⁰ In order to propitiate the vested interest groups they published volumes of anti Communist literature.

Sri.M.Govindn, P.Kesava dev, C.J.Thomas , M.K.Sanu , M.V.Devan , Sukumar Azhikode , A.P.Udayabhanu etc were the leading figurers among the anti Communist cultural activists of that period. In addition to his dramas like ‘Visha Vriksham’, Sri. C.J.Thomas published large number of articles and pamphlets under different pseudonyms both in English and Malayalam against the Communists. ²⁶¹ Emotional in his criticism, Sri.P. Kesavadev through his works excited the zeal of anti-Communists. ²⁶² Sri. N.A.Thankappan, Vetoor Raman Nair, K.G.Gopala Krishnan, ‘Mahakavi Janakeeyan’ ²⁶³ etc also belonged to the group of the anti Communist writers. ²⁶⁴ Kalaykal Bhaskaran, George Tharakan, K.K.Madhavan, T.O.Bava, Vayalar Ravi, Anni Thayyil etc were some Congress leaders who contributed

²⁵⁹ Puthuppalli Raghavan; op. cit. pp. 177-178.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Large number of his essays and articles were wrote in the “Weekly Kerala” published from Erunakulam. Mr . C.J.Thomas was the main writer of that anti Communist weekly. He used the pen names like ‘Charithrakaran’, ‘Dionysius’, ‘Observer’ etc.

²⁶² B.Wellington ; op. cit. Interview with Sri. K.M.Chummar at his residence at Pravithanam, Palai on 26th January 2010.

²⁶³ It is Pen name. The real name was not revealed.

²⁶⁴ Puthuppalli Raghavan; op. cit.

to this organised cultural propaganda against the Communists.²⁶⁵ K. Balakrishnan, the editor of the 'Kaumudi' (daily) was a leader of the RSP and a leftist thinker, whose eloquent speeches and writings were very crucial in the cultural propaganda against the first Communist government.

During this period there were altogether twenty seven news papers published in Kerala.²⁶⁶ Of these 27, three alone were under the control of the Communist party.²⁶⁷ The rest missed no chance to oppose the Communist government and support the anti Communists. Transcending even ethnic boundaries, some of them carried on false propaganda and diffused extreme hatred among its readers against the Communists.

²⁶⁵ K.Rajeswary; op.cit p. 264.

²⁶⁶ H.D.Malaviya; op.cit. p.81.

²⁶⁷ 'Janayugam; from Thiruvananthapuram; 'Desabhimani' from Kohhikode and the 'Navajeevan' from Thrissur were the Communist controlled newspapers.

CHAPTER - V

‘LIBERATION STRUGGLE’ IN KERALA

The election result in Kerala and the formation of the first Communist led government in 1957 proved to be a heavy blow to the non Communist political parties, communal organisations and vested interest groups in the state. Since the Communist Party came to power, these groups and opposition parties had been intolerant and opposing each and every measure of the Communist led government. In this respect, the popular media run by vested interest groups and communal forces played a decisive role. There had been a general apprehension in the minds of the opposition that the Communists would impose an authoritarian rule on Kerala, that they would serve the party interests rather than the state interests. The immediate programmes of the government which included the eviction pending measures, release of political prisoners, commutation of death sentences, remissions etc. augmented the wrath of these groups.

The Communists in Kerala during that time believed that their party represented the interests of the toiling class, which constituted the only class worth preserving. They believed that Communism could not be established without the removal of all classes (except the proletariat) and that this could be done only by the Communist party which is by definition, the workers party. It, therefore, became the bounden duty of the Communist Party to fight for the party's elevation to power. The victory of the Party was considered synonymous with the victory of the workers' cause. Whether the Communist Party really fights for the workers' cause or not is another matter. What is important is that its members firmly believed that it does so. Thus if the Communist Party represents the workers and the aim is to bring about a

classless society, the interest and aims of the State are the interests and aims of the Communist Party.¹ The party thus becomes equal to the state. It follows then that any opposition to the Communist Party can only be 'reactionary', for there cannot be two parties simultaneously representing 'the toiling people'. An oppositional party or parties, therefore, must represent the interest of some other class, whose interests run counter to those of the 'workers'. Such opposition must be crushed or eliminated by persuasion if possible, by force if necessary.

But in a parliamentary democracy, with the centre in the hands of a different party the tactical line of the Communist Party had to be different from its theory. Certain fears had been created in the minds of the rank and file of the opposition parties regarding Communist intentions, just as fears had been aroused in the rank and file of the Communist party by certain speeches of the leaders of the opposition parties. These fears on both sides, whether genuine or imaginary, had collided and created a tense situation in Kerala. Violence, murder, strikes and police firing ensued.

The initial measures of the Communist government including the new policy towards industrial disputes and the role of the police deprived the vested interests of the traditional wealthy class. They had always handled labour demands from a position of strength.

The state budget of 1957-58 proposed for imposition of heavier taxes on the wealthy classes. All this was more than enough to derange the well entrenched, powerful propertied classes in Kerala and they would no more take things lying down. "*Arakshitavasta*"(state of insecurity) under Communist rule became the war cry. From the press, the pulpit and the platform, '*Arakshitavastha*' was the one common refrain. 'The Communists are out for the kill', 'the Communists are subverting the constitution',

¹ Jitendra Singh, '*Communist Rule in Kerala*'; New Delhi,1959, p.56.

Lawlessness and insecurity of life and property is the order in Kerala'- such were the cries that rent the air of Kerala. The reverberations of the cries disseminated throughout the length and breadth of the country. ²

According to the spokesmen of the government, the propertied classes had reasons to be worried. 'Here for the first time was a regime which was earnest in keeping its election pledges, which was uncompromising in its championship of progressive causes and the needs of the toiling millions, which was not amenable to sweet advances made through rich men's receptions and red-carpet dinners in the secluded places of the planters – in short an altogether impossible type of people to deal with.'³

The fresh breeze of the popular policies of the Communist ministry stirred the dormant energies of the long suffering toilers. The working class and other toiling masses of Kerala were highly elated by the victory of their party. There swept all over Kerala a wave of mass enthusiasm. Since the Communist ministry prevented the coercive arms of the state from siding with the owning classes, as was the traditional practice, their bargaining power was very much reduced and labourers and peasants could win substantial gains. ⁴ Unable to withstand the demands of the working people, the vested interests started shouting about their "Arakshitavastha"⁵

Actually the Communist ministers pledged to work within the limits prescribed by the constitution of India. ⁶ But the opposition parties in Kerala "doubted sincerity of the Communist attempt to work constitutionally". ⁷ They believed that "the Communist tactic" was "to infiltrate into various

² H.D.Malaviya, 'Kerala a Report to the Nation'; New Delhi, 1959, p.46.

³ New Age, Vol. IV, No. 43, July 21, 1957.

⁴ New Age, Vol. IV, No. 49, 1957

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The Hindu , April 7,1957.

⁷ Rajani Kothari, 'Kerala: A Post-mortem'; Economic Weekly, November 28,1959, p1595.

governmental bodies and disrupt them from within”⁸. Immediately after the election results were known, U.N.Dhebar, the former AICC President, vehemently opposed the formation of a Communist government in the state, for he apprehended that the CPI would utilise the opportunity to spread Communist ideology in Kerala.⁹ Panampilli Govinda Menon, the Congress leader and former Chief Minister of Travancore-Cochin declared that the Communist government would not last for more than a year.¹⁰

Majority of the newspapers in Kerala run by the vested interest groups were against the Communist government. They made large scale false propaganda of lawlessness under the Communist rule. All popular struggle which broke out within legitimate limits, were played up. Wide publicity was given to one incident here, another there, of such struggle taking place in plantations, factories and the countryside. These reports in several instances were strung together to prove the ‘lawlessness’ prevailed in the state.¹¹

There were a few clashes, sometimes serious and even violent between the toilers and their immediate employers or oppressors; but it was nothing very extraordinary or unusual. Large number of such clashes took place even before the Communists came to power. In fact, there was no particular deterioration of the law and order situation in Kerala.

Behind all the hue and cry about ‘*Arakshitavastha*’ was basically the panic among the vested interests at the very existence of a Communist ministry, which they would not tolerate, even if it worked within the constitution. Mr. Calderwood, President of the United Planters Association of South India (UPASI) gave expression to this feeling. Addressing the 64th annual conference of the UPASI, he said: “The existence of this (Communist)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Janayugam, March 28, 1957.

¹⁰ Malayal Rajyam, March 28, 1959.

¹¹ H.D.Malaviya, op.cit.p.47.

government, however restrained it may be by the framework of our democratically constituted union, is undoubtedly a source of grave concern to private enterprise of any kind of which its ideology is violently opposed". He expressed the great apprehension of the planters community about possible nationalisation of the plantations by the Kerala Government. "Our fear is that a foreign dominated cult, alien entirely to the ordinary aims, beliefs and purpose of an overwhelming majority of the people of this country may be inculcated by legislation and imposed by force and it is in the light of that fear that I see in taxation trends in Kerala today not the determination to build up or to foster our industry but to wreck it by subtle economic means".¹²

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then president of India, in a speech delivered at Thiruvananthapuram, observed that the government of Kerala was "grappling with problems with enthusiasm and in a spirit of service", and expressed happiness "that this great experiment which is being made in the state is going to serve as a great lesson not only to other states, but to the country as a whole, as an example of co-existence, for the good of all."¹³

Some of the immediate measures of the government including the release of political prisoners and commutation of death sentences etc. infuriated the opposition. The Communist government did this as part of the celebration of its assumption of power. Although this was a usual practice in many states in India,¹⁴ this action of the Communist government aroused considerable resentment from non-Communists, particularly the Congress and the Catholics who had taken it as a deliberate attempt to establish a reign of terror in the state. The Government also withdrew more than 350 criminal cases from the courts.¹⁵ The opposition's contention was that most of these

¹² Statesman, August 28, 1957.

¹³ The Hindu, August 25, 1957.

¹⁴ EMS.Namboodiripad, '*Selected Writings*', VOL-2, Calcutta, 1985, p. 125.

¹⁵ Rajani Kothari, op. cit.

prisoners were the Communists. They Characterised that the release of prisoners and the withdrawal of certain criminal cases from the courts, created in the minds of other communities a feeling that anybody could with impunity take the law into his own hands ¹⁶. Later on, Justice Sankaran ¹⁷ observed it as: “there is always the risk of motives being imputed to the exercise of these powers by a democratic government”.¹⁸

The congress fraction in Kerala and some of its central leaders raised sharp criticisms against the so called problem of failure of the law and order in the state. Sreemanarayan the secretary of the AICC attributed charges against the Communist ministry of letting loose ‘lawlessness’ and of attempting to subvert the constitution by taking recourse to what he called totalitarianism. ¹⁹ He said at the meeting of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee at Ernakulam on April 8: “It is astounding that one of the very first acts of the new government is to commute the death sentences of confirmed murderers and the release of the so called political prisoners who were not under detention, but who were prosecuted and punished for serious acts of arson, violence and murder”. ²⁰ A tearing and raging campaign was led by the state Congress leaders taking the cue from Shrimannarayan, against the government of the state on the ground that law and order had broken down. ²¹ In the first session of the Kerala Legislative Assembly which was held in April 1957, the opposition leaders raised this question of law and order and expressly invited central intervention on the ground of break down of law and order.²²

¹⁶ Jitendra Singh, ‘*Communist Rule in Kerala*’, New Delhi, 1959. p.60.

¹⁷ Justice Sankaran later served as the Chief Justice of Kerala High Court.

¹⁸ Rajani Kothari, op. cit.

¹⁹ H.D.Malaviya, op. cit. p.19.

²⁰ The Indian Express,; April 9, 1957.

²¹ H. Austin, ‘*Anatomy of the Kerala Coup*’, New Delhi, 1959. p. 3.

²² Ibid.

According to the labour policy of the government, the police need not intervene in the normal industrial and agrarian disputes.²³ The job of the police was to track down criminals and to prevent actual breaches of the peace and violence during times of industrial and agrarian unrest. The government was of the opinion that the “use of the police in favour of the owning classes is a violation of the fundamental rights of the toiling classes”.²⁴

The opposition was against this police policy and pointed out that this policy could neutralise the police force.²⁵ They felt as if they had no protection of the police. They feared that the Communists were free to do whatever they wished without fear of punishment.²⁶ The opposition propaganda created in the minds of the non supporters of the government a sense of insecurity and a feeling of fear. The opposition parties and groups exploited this situation to their favour. *The Deepika* daily, raised the alarm of insecurity in the state consequent to the release of political prisoners, the implementation of the new labour policy and the new police policy.²⁷ The Christians, particularly the Catholics, gave wide currency to the theory of insecurity (*Arakshitavastha*). In this situation the opposition parties and vested interest groups decided on two courses, (1) The organisation at once of voluntary bodies for self-defence, so as to counter-act the neutralisation of the police; and (2) to make the central government aware of their sense of insecurity, which they thought, may act as a check on the Communist government.²⁸ On the pretext of voluntary bodies for self defence, the vested

²³ EMS Namboodiripad, op. cit. p. 133.

²⁴ Rajni Kothari, op. cit.

²⁵ Jitendra Singh, op. cit.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *The Deepika*, May 5, 1957.

²⁸ Jitendra Singh, op. cit. p.64.

interest groups and communal powers organised Para-military troops for violent agitation and subversive activities.²⁹

But the Communist Party sources pointed out that,

“...the political cry of breakdown of law and order raised in the early days of 1957 was a farcical one. The basis was that a number of prisoners had been released and that the police had ceased to beat. The Andhra government, consequent on state formation, released a hundred fold more and yet the slogan of insecurity had not been raised in the Congress-run state, nor is third degree by the police the method of maintaining tranquillity in the state. The arguments put forward by the opposition, for want of supporting facts, become ineffective. That was the first round of attack by the intolerant top men of the Congress party and their Kerala fellow travellers.”³⁰

The most crucial protest and agitation against the first Communist government in Kerala was on the problem of educational reform. The government undertook to prepare a statutory basis for the improvement of general education and the working conditions of teachers. As early as 7th July 1957 the Kerala Education Bill was introduced and got through the select committee stage to its second reading on 20th September. The opposition in collaboration with the central government, managed to put off its implementation till June 1959 and to whip up the frenzy of the anti-Communist crowds against it.

The object of the Bill were “to provide for the better organisation of general education” and more specifically to provide for a check on the payment of salaries to and security of service of teachers and on the administration of the institutions.³¹ Joseph Mundassery the minister for education, replying to the discussion on the Bill stressed the intention to

²⁹ V.R.Krishna Iyyer, ‘*Daniel Come to Judgment*’, Ernakulam, 1959. p. 36.

³⁰ H.Austin, op.cit. p. 4.

³¹ Kerala Gazette Extraordinary, July 1957 (Education Bill)

protect the rights of the teachers: “Their dependence on the sweet will of the manager should cease”.³²

The Government’s attempt at educational reform had attracted the immediate attention of the various groups and interests who had a stake in the existing system. The opposition parties in Kerala alleged that in the field of education, government was trying to bring about a hidden ‘qualitative change through an open ‘quantitative change’.³³ In the words of the KPCC “what they did was to cover up their innovations in the field of education by universally accepted ideals and behind them to lay the foundation for Communist dictatorship. The surest way to regimentation is the brainwashing of the future generation.”³⁴ This logic was repeated again and again in vociferous writings and speeches and had an enraging effect upon large sections of the population.

The Catholic Christians were the most vehement opponents of the Bill. Before its introduction they launched a campaign designed to mould and control the opinion of the laity in its favour. Soon after the publication of the Bill all Christian Bishops in Kerala held a conference at Kottayam and passed a resolution intensify critical of the educational reforms.³⁵ The Government was warned of general disorder in the educational sphere of the state in the event of the implementation of the Bill.³⁶ The Catholics embarked on a misinformation campaign against the proposed bill by branding the provision for the appointment of the teachers in aided schools from a list of candidates prepared by the government or Public service Commission’ as a ‘trap’ for the private school manager and a device to eliminate private agencies altogether

³² The clauses of the Bill have been briefly discussed in a previous chapter.

³³ G.K. Lietaen, “*Education, Ideology and Politics in Kerala 1957-59*”; Social Scientist, Vol. 6, No.2, Sept- 1977, p. 10.

³⁴ Kainikkara Padmanabha Pillai, ‘*The Red Interlude In Kerala*’;p.205.

³⁵ ‘*Vidyasa Billum Vimarsanangalum*’ (Malayalam); Moovattupuzha,1957;p.48.

³⁶ “*A Brief Report*” of the activities of the Private School Defense Committee and the Kerala Education Action Committee . Kottayam, 29th October 1957.

from the field of education.³⁷ The Church authorities which passed numerous resolutions against the reform proposals stated that the government “wanted to effect a thorough change in the educational system, with the ulterior aim of injecting into Children atheism and other aspects of Communism”.³⁸ . To carry on agitation against the Bill they formed a Private School Rights Defence Committee(PSRDC) on June 10, 1957.³⁹ The AKCC working committee, meeting at Kottayam on June 16, 1957, by a resolution urged the government not to include any provision in the proposed Bill that might break the rights of minorities to preserve their religion, culture, language and script guaranteed by the constitution.⁴⁰The Church apprehended that the Bill might endanger its existence and that the right of parents to educate their children in a Christian atmosphere would be imperilled. Further, the Bill was projected as violating the fundamental rights of citizens. This added strength to the cry of ‘religion in danger’.⁴¹

The Catholics intensified the agitation after the publication of the Bill on July 7, 1957. Protest meetings increased in number and frequency. A Catholic meeting held at Thrissur on July 9, 1957 decided to observe hartal (Close down) on July 12, 1957 in the diocesan educational institutions and industrial establishments in protest against the Bill.⁴² Pala Diocese followed the suit on July 13, 1957.

According to the Catholic Church the Bill aimed at regimenting education on Communist lines and bringing the conversion of Kerala into a Communist state was held to be the hidden agenda. The Local Educational Authorities and local educational committees conceived by the Bill were

³⁷ Father Jacob Mannanal; ‘*Statement of Kerala School Managers Association*’, Kottayam, July 26, 1957.

³⁸ The Hindu, July 4, 1957.

³⁹ The Deepika, June 11, 1957

⁴⁰ ‘*Thozhilali*’, *Kerala Liberation Struggle Souvenir*, Thrissur, 1959. p. 52.

⁴¹ The Deepika, July 2, 1957.

⁴² ‘The Malayala Manorama’ July 11, 1957.

meant for Communist infiltration into private schools. It was against the provisions of the PSS scheme and violated the natural right of parents to educate their children in a Christian atmosphere and it sought to penalise guardians for violation of or non-compliance with its provisions. It was a blatant manifestation of totalitarianism as it restricted the power of the judiciary and gave scope for any interpretation and executive arbitrariness.⁴³

The Church hierarchy was determined to oppose the Bill with all its strength including religious appeal. The archbishops, bishops and other ecclesiastics meeting at Kottayam on July 13, 1957 formed an action committee (KCBEAC), authorised the laity to form another, the Christian Education Action Committee (CEAC), and called upon the faithful to observe July 21, 1957 as 'Prayer Day' in disapproval of the Bill.⁴⁴ The laity responded to the call of the clergy.⁴⁵ Harthals, demonstrations and other protest meetings were held. Resolutions denouncing the Bill passed in the protest meetings, were sent to the President of India, the Union Home Minister, the State governor and the State Education Minister. Father Vadakkan went to the extent of calling upon the faithful to defy the law, unless the Bill was withdrawn forthwith.⁴⁶ On July 20, 1957, the Bill was referred to a select committee. The Catholics in Particular, evolved a new strategy of agitation to enlist the support of the poorer and under educated sections against the Bill, as the select committee was to meet at Alwaye to collect evidence on it. A petition signed by one million Catholics, demanding withdrawal of the Bill, was submitted to the governor.⁴⁷ Another mass petition was presented to the secretary to the Legislature. The Hierarchy continued to send circulars and

⁴³ The Deepika, July 14, 1957.

⁴⁴ The Malayala Manorama, July 14, 1957.

⁴⁵ Op. cit. , July 23,1957.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ The Deepika , August 1, 1957.

pastoral letters to the laity reminding them of their ‘religious duty’ to oppose the Bill.

When it became certain that the Bill would turn an Act, the hierarchy converted the agitation, so far directed against the Bill, to topple the government. ‘The Deepika’ daily in an editorial on August 14, 1957, under the caption “Education Bill—A Political Dynamite”, urged the laity to direct the agitation to oust the government from power rather than making attempts to get the Bill amended.⁴⁸ Deputations on behalf of the CEAC and the PSRDC continued to meet the Chief Minister demanding the withdrawal of the Bill, with immediate effect.

The CEAC meeting at Kottayam on August 20, 1957 decided to organise a demonstration before the Assembly as the Bill would be taken up for reconsideration in the light of the report of the select committee.⁴⁹ The Clergy exhorted the laity to participate in the demonstration to expiate their sins as a means to get salvation.⁵⁰ On August 26, 1957 about 70,000 people staged demonstration before the Assembly. The demonstrators held a meeting which passed resolutions demanding withdrawals of the Bill, and Central interference to prevent the deterioration of law and order in the state and to restore the sense of security.⁵¹

As the Bill was put through the legislature, the Catholics finalised a programme of direct confrontation with the government. The Deepika in an editorial “What Next?” on September 1, 1957, spelt out in clear terms the steps to be taken in this direction, i.e., to form a volunteer force with a prescribed uniform to protect private educational institutions, to raise

⁴⁸ Op. cit. , August 14, 1957.

⁴⁹ The Malayala Rajyam, August, 21, 1957.

⁵⁰ Kerala Legislative Assembly Debates; Proceedings Vol. II , No.3, second session 1957, p 449.

⁵¹ The Malayala Rajyam, August 27, 1957.

necessary funds to finance the agitation, to organise a ‘prayer campaign’ by the Christians and Muslims, and to continue the agitation with more strength.

⁵² The day the Bill was finally passed by the Assembly, the KCBEA and the CEAC, meeting jointly, condemned it as “autocratic” and “unconstitutional” and resolved to intensify their agitation to prevent the Governor and the President from giving their assent to it. ⁵³ Telegrams in large number were sent to the president, the Union Home Minister and the Governor requesting them to withhold assent to the Bill.

For the intensification of the struggle the CEAC co-opted more members to it and decided to wait on the President and the Governor and submit memoranda urging them to withhold their assent to the Bill. ⁵⁴ It further formed several sub-committees to prevent the implementation of the Bill and renewed the call for the raising of a volunteer corp. The CEAC on September 7, 1957 by a resolution asked private schools in the state to observe harthal on September 13, 1957 as a protest against the Bill. ⁵⁵ The call of the CEAC was repeated by diocesan committees. Nevertheless, all denominations of the Christians cannot be said to have been deeply committed to the agitation. For instance, the Marthoma Council, presided over by the Metropolitan, decided to dissociate from the proposed harthal. ⁵⁶

A deputation of the PSRDC met the Governor on September 10, 1957, discussed with him the situation in the state arising out of the passage of the Bill and submitted a memorandum requesting him to withhold his assent to it.

⁵⁷ In accordance with the call of the CEAC, a harthal was observed on September 13, 1957. In a few Catholic centres demonstrations were also held.

⁵² The Deepika , September 1, 1957.

⁵³ Op. cit. September 3, 1957.

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ The Deepika , September 10, 1957.

⁵⁶ The Malayala Rajyam, September 10, 1957

⁵⁷ The Malayala Manorama , September 11, 1957.

According to a report of Malayala Manorama, of over 7000 private schools in the state, 1,000 ones, that too in Catholic pockets only joined the harthal.⁵⁸

The opposition political leaders failed to present a united stand in the agitation against the educational reforms. The leaders of the Congress party joined the church authorities, and while the former education minister L.M.Pylee evaluated the Bill as a “blatant manifestation of totalitarianism”, the KPCC and the Congress legislature party condemned it as “ill-conceived, ill-drafted and totalitarian in its approach” and warned that it was likely to open up avenues “for the regimentation of educational activities.”⁵⁹ On the one hand, K.R.Narayanan, a Congress MLA, and the general secretary of the SNDP, favoured the Bill and declared that he saw no efforts to infuse ideology into the education system. He supported the Bill.⁶⁰ But P.T.Chako the leader of the opposition who objected the Bill, supported the efforts of the Church Hierarchy and vested interest groups. Both P.T.Chako and P.P.Ummer Koya, the deputy leader of the opposition, called for eliciting public opinion and for a conference of all interested parties. This view was also defended by Mrs.Leela Damodara Menon.

⁶¹ The radical Christian leaders in the Congress Party in Kerala like C.A Mathew, K.C Abraham. Alexander P Parambithara, K.M George, E.P Paulose and others were vigorous in their opposition to the Bill.⁶² These radicals in the Party were later following the successes of the anti-Education Bill on the central and local levels, joined by the more cautious politicians in the states Congress party.⁶³ The congress together with Muslim League leaders, who at that stage also opposed the Bill, attacked from public platforms the measures that would benefit teachers and pupils and were able to build up considerable support.

⁵⁸ The Malayala Manorama, September 14, 1957.

⁵⁹ G.K.Lieten, op. cit. P.10.

⁶⁰ The Kerala Legislative Assembly Debates, 20th July 1957.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Kerala Legislative Assembly Debates from 20th July to 26 November, 1957.

⁶³ G.K.Lieten, op. cit. p.12.

Certain Malayalam dailies like 'Mathrubhumi' and 'Kerala Kaumudi' did not support the campaign against the Education Bill. The agitation against the education bill was not very strong in Malabar. It is centred on the Christian Missionary school.⁶⁴ The Christian leaders from Travancore-Cochin came out openly to mobilise the campaign against the Bill. On the contrary, in Kozhikode the Congress party members openly supported the Bill.⁶⁵

The Congress and the Muslim league stood firmly behind the anti-education bill campaign. But their initial efforts to come to an understanding in this regard with the PSP and to form an all party platform did not succeed.⁶⁶ The national council of the PSP was not in favour of the agitation.⁶⁷ When the PSP state leader Pattam Thanu Pillai remained neutral, its deputy leader M. Narayana Kurup supported the Bill. However, the Christian leaders in the PSP, K.A Thomas and Joseph Chazhikatt, opposed the bill consistently.⁶⁸ Thus the Church and the Christian political leaders of the opposition parties resorted to all conceivable methods, like organising processions, harthals, demonstrations and vigorous propaganda campaign against the reform. It is worth mentioning in this context that political atmosphere in the state changed considerably, subsequent to the publication of the Kerala Agricultural Relations Bill on 18th December, 1957. The Bill was meant to stabilise the land relations of the State. The new measure, as it affected the landed interests of the Nairs, turned the Nair Service Society, and its leader Mannath Padmanabhan against the government.

In fact Mannath Padmanabhan was the staunchest supporter of the Kerala Educational Bill (1957) when it was introduced in the legislature and

⁶⁴ The Malayala Rajyam, 29th July, 1959.

⁶⁵ The Hindu, July 17, 1957.

⁶⁶ G.K.Lieten, op. cit.

⁶⁷ Weekly Kerala, October 19, 1957.

⁶⁸ The Hindu, September 3, 1957.

that he had condemned the Christians and the Hierarchy as the traditional enemies of any form of educational reforms and criticised them vehemently for their narrow and sectarian outlook on educational problems.⁶⁹ He, in extending support to the reform, suggested that teachers in aided schools might be appointed from a list of candidates prepared by the PSC. He had even called up on all those interested in promoting education on sound lines to support the measure.⁷⁰ The NSS Executive Council had also passed a resolution on similar lines.

When the bill, as amended by the select Committee, was introduced in the Assembly, Mannath Padmanabhan even congratulated the Communists on making amendments in such a way as to be acceptable to all and expressed: “The agitation is organised by the Church. Bishops and priests constitute the heart and soul of the movement. The bill earns so much of popular support that the present government will definitely succeed in implementing it, after it is made an Act.”⁷¹ But the introduction of the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill transformed the attitude of Mannath Padmanabhan and the NSS from one of unlimited support to one of uncompromising opposition not only to the educational reform but to the government as well. The estrangement of the NSS was aggravated by the rejection of its request for opening an engineering college at Palakkad.⁷² Mannath Padmanabhan reacted sharply to the rejection of the NSS’s demand and vowed that he would not rest contented until the Communist Government was overthrown.⁷³

As part of his strategy, he made determined efforts to arouse communal feelings by giving currency to the view that the government in power was ‘pro-Ezhava’ and ‘anti-Nair’, which enabled Mannath

⁶⁹ The Malayala Rajyam, June 5, 1957.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ The Malayala Rajyam, August 28, 1957.

⁷² Joseph Mundasseri, *Kozhinja Ilakal* (autobiography), Kottayam, 1985, p. 295.

⁷³ The Malayal Manorama, November 27, 1957

Padmanabhan to divide the people of the state on communal lines and direct the hostility of the prominent among them against the Communist government.⁷⁴ As a means of raising communal feelings, Mannath Padmanabhan ingeniously raked up the system of communal reservation in appointment to government service and in admission to professional colleges. The system was now highlighted as a deliberate attempt on the part of the 'pro-Ezhava' government to ruin the interests of the Nairs. The cry of 'Nair's interests in peril' was also raised, intended obviously to work up tension.⁷⁵

In view of the vigorous campaign started by Mannath Padmanabhan and the NSS, the agitation organised by the Church against the Education Bill, which had by now become considerably weak, gained a new lease of life. The alignment of Nairs and Christians proved to be fatal to the government.

Another aspect of the education policy of the government to which strong objection has been taken by the church relates to the preparation of textbooks. In the middle of 1958 it was alleged that Communists' "sinister motive is seen in full nakedness in the preparation and prescription of text books" which were "intended to enslave the minds of students to the ideology of the rulers by a rigorous control over syllabus, methods of instruction and discipline is a programme common to all totalitarian governments."⁷⁶ In fact, Prof. Joseph Mundassery was visionary in educational matters. He initiated a major revision in the school curriculum, syllabus and the content of the text books.⁷⁷ The government in November 1957 had ordered various committees to prepare new text books for the primary classes and these books were introduced in the schools from the next school year onwards. The Church

⁷⁴ K.M.Chandy, 'Mannavum Vimochana Samaravum' in 'Mannam Sathabhishekpaharam'; Pandalam, 1960; p. 153.

⁷⁵ The Malayala Rajyam, May 30, 1958.

⁷⁶ K.P.C.C. Memorandum, presented to the president of India, New Delhi, 1959, p.22. Kainikara Padmanabha Pillai, "The Red Interlude in Kerala"; KPCC; 1959, p. 117.

⁷⁷ Joseph Mundassery, 'Kozhinja Elakal'(autobiography-Mal), Kottayam, 1978, pp.330-359.

authorities, the All Kerala Catholic Congress, other communal leaders, leaders of some opposition parties made serious allegations against the new text books. Some leading newspapers in Kerala particularly 'The Deepika' held the new text books to be thoroughly obnoxious.⁷⁸

The major criticisms levelled against the new textbooks are following:

(a) "They have deliberately made an assault on religion and priesthood with a view to bringing them into contempt in the impressionable minds of school going children; (b) they belittle religious and moral values of life and enthrone in their place the canons of a Materialistic Hedonism; (c) they under-estimate India's achievements and culture and this create in the minds of the young an idea that India has no history and culture worth mentioning. This disregard of our glorious national heritage lends to de-nationalise the rising generation of the country; (d) these books glorify the actual and imaginary achievements of Communist countries like Russia and China and at the same time, blackout the vile spots in the theory and practice of Communism. With all nationalist ideals and aspirations deliberately pumped out of the mind of the Kerala youth, this idealised and glorified picture of Communist countries is brought into stuff them. The dangers involved in such propaganda through the textbooks are enormous".⁷⁹

⁷⁹ However a close examination of new and old version of the textbooks reveals the fact that these allegations were baseless.⁸⁰

The charge made by the Catholic Church evoked from Joseph Mundasseri's remark that "this is ironic to the extreme, coming as it does from spokesmen of a world religion which has sought, through the centuries,

⁷⁸ "Padapusthakangalude Thaniniram'(Mal), AKCC working Committee,1958. Joseph Mundasseri, op. cit. p.333. K. Rajeswari, 'Kammunist Bharanavum Vimochana Samaravum',Aluva,2005, pp 167-170. Legislative Assembly debates on July 8, 1958; December 12, 1958. 'The Deepika' August 19, October 12, 1958.

⁷⁹ Pamphlet. 'Memorial submitted to the Chief Minister' by the AKCC. 1958. pp.3-4.

⁸⁰ Economic Weekly, special number, July 1959, p.892. The extracts of the textbooks which subjected severe criticism and a comparison has been cited in the special edition of Economic Weekly, July 1959.

to enforce the dogmas and punish... those who question or challenge them, besides forbidding the faithful from reading books arbitrarily put on the index.”⁸¹ Nevertheless the government appointed a committee headed by Sri. Kuruvila Jacob to enquire into these allegations. The committee of enquiry noticed the occurrence of inadequate machinery of supervision. The thrust of the concluding part of the report, was that, “there has not been any concerted attempt on the part of the authorities... to indoctrinate the peoples in anti religious ideas,” or at indoctrination of communist ideology or an intention... to belittle the achievements of India”⁸² a comparison of some passages in the old and new textbooks moreover would reveal that the old version contained unhistorical facts, value judgements and a slandering misrepresentation of Communism.⁸³ Although the report by Kurivila Jacob rejecting its case was submitted in January 1959, the opposition kept on harping this very sensitive issue.

Andhra Rice Deal and Controversy.

The allegations regarding the Andhra rice deal and the Judicial enquiry commission report on the same provided much opportunity to the opposition parties for the propaganda and agitation against the government. As a food deficit state, Kerala was at that time seriously affected by shortage of food grains. The opposition parties organised hunger marches to politically exploit the situation.⁸⁴ In order to solve the deficiency and provide food grains in the

⁸¹ Department of Public relations, Government of Kerala, “*The Kerala Education Act and its opponents*”,p.14.

⁸² The Hindu, October3, 1958. Kerala government reply to KPCC Memorandum, 1959, pp 43-44.

⁸³ Economic weekly , op. cit.; a number of examples from the old version of the social studies textbooks of the high school classes has cited in the Economic Weekly. One such example is as follows: “ Communism encouraged violence, and does not believe in an omnipotent God. The communists forget that man has a soul... ..”.

⁸⁴ INTUC, the Congress trade union launched a hunger march, which started from Annoor in Kannur District, reached at Thiruvananthapuram on June 21. PSP’s hunger march

lean months, the government sought various ways.⁸⁵ In July 1957, Mysore, Madras, Andhra and Kerala were grouped in the Southern Rice Zone, and it was expected that the surplus of Andhra would find its way to the markets in Kerala. The export of rice from this zone to other states had, indeed, been banned and the Centre consequently reduced its supply to Kerala from 25000 to 10000 tones of rice per month.⁸⁶ Therefore the Kerala government entered in to an agreement with T.Sriramalu and P.Suryanarayana and Company, Madras for wholesale purchase of rice for distribution through fair price shops to ease the food situation in the State.⁸⁷ The opposition parties alleged that the government resorted to the rice deal to raise funds for the CPI, and Rs.16.5 lakhs was misappropriated through it.⁸⁸

In response to the demands of the Opposition, the government on May 12, 1958, under section of the Commissions of Enquiry Act, 1952 (Central Act 60 of 1952), appointed Justice , P.T.Raman Nair as the one man commission to go into the allegation.⁸⁹ The commission submitted its report on March 10, 1959.

The Commission report exposed that the necessity of rice import had been expressed by all parties in the Assembly, that the centre had declined twice to requisition the rice and fixed prices, and that the merchants in Kerala had refused to bring in rice from Andhra at a fixed commission. The manager of the Madras firm, who had been a Communist 15 years earlier, accepted the terms, though during the negotiations the terms were changed slightly in favour of his firm . The Commission observed:

reached at Thiruvananthapuram on July 13. K.Rajeswari; “*Communist Bharanavum Vimochana Samaravum*”(Mal); Alwai, 2005 .p. 141.

⁸⁵ Puthuppalli Raghavan; *Viplava Smaranakal*, (MAL) ,Vol.5; Kottayam,1996; p. 137.

⁸⁶ The Hindu, February 16, 1958.

⁸⁷ *Statement, The Rise Deal Inquiry Commission Report*, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram-1959, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Ibid.; The Hindu, February 28, 1958.

⁸⁹ The Hindu, May 14, 1958.

“The purchase of 5000 tones of rice by Kerala government in August- September 1957 was justified, but the purchase on terms of the present deal was not indicative of having any regard to the food situation in State, and that the purchase resulted in avoidable loss to the State”.⁹⁰

The Commission concluded that there had been an avoidable loss, but that “with the utmost good faith there are risks involved in the conduct of the business of the Government” and that moreover in later deals, on worse terms for the firm and even after inviting tenders, the Madras firm was contracted to deliver some 4500 tons.⁹¹

In fact the allegation related to the Andhra rice deal was completely unfounded. Sri C.Thomas, IAS, The then government secretary to the Food Department and the supervising authority of the Andhra rice deal clearly attest that,

“there was no corruption involving even a single paisa in the rice purchase from Andhra.⁹² Tenders were done away with for the expeditious solution of the acute paucity of rice in Kerala. The Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad and the Minister for Food Sri. K.C.George were the chief accused... I was personally instrumental in this speedy deal. I had the obligation to convince the civil society as to the urgency of rice purchase dispersing with tenders. It was an irrevocable mistake from my part.⁹³ ... It was due to my inexperience. Even if nobody accused me, the EMS Government was severely criticised both in the Legislature and outside for my lapse. Quite scanty was my Knowledge in legal matters at that time. ... I thought that the competent Advocate General would effectively handle the allegation of rice deal. I failed to drive home to the Advocate General the full details of the rice deal. Justice Raman Nair’s Enquiry Commission in its final report pointed out that it was a ‘shady deal’. ... A statement presented in the Legislative

⁹⁰ *Rise Deal Inquiry Commission Report, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram-1959, p. 63.*

⁹¹ Statement, Government of Kerala, op.cit.

⁹² C.Thomas IAS, *Autobiography*,(Mal), ‘Kala Kaumudi’ weekly,(1880) September 18, 2011,p.26.

⁹³ Ibid.

Assembly.⁹⁴ A resolution was passed in the Legislature rejecting the Enquiry Commission Report. But none of these satisfied the public. The opposition and media unleashed a wide spread propaganda that the EMS Government and Communist party substantially benefited from the Andhra rice scam and corruption. ... Even though there was no impropriety in the rice deal my incompetence as Food Secretary contributed to the grievance of the public. It was the most serious set back in my official life...⁹⁵

By the time of the publication of the Andhra Rice Deal Enquiry Commission Report, the political situation in the state had become tense due to the agitation of the Communal groups of the Christians and Nairs. Some days after the publication of the report, the leaders of the Indian national Congress, The PSP and the Muslim League met for an immediate action against the attitude of the government with regard to the findings of the Rice Deal Enquiry Commission. Many news papers editorially accused the government on Andhra rice deal issue and enquiry commission report.⁹⁶ The Communal organisations and opposition parties with the support of many newspapers used the Commission's report as a political weapon and asked for the immediate resignation of the government.⁹⁷ The government had "no right to continue in office", and Pattam Thanu Pillai asked the people "at this hour of grave peril in the history of the state, to be prepared for a mass agitation to compel the government to resign".⁹⁸ They declared April 5, 1959 the day of second anniversary of the assumption of power by the CPI, a day of protest

⁹⁴ Statement on Andhra Rice Deal Enquiry Commission Report, op. cit.

⁹⁵ C. Thomas, op. cit. p. 34.

⁹⁶ The editorials of news papers like *Mathrubhoomi* on December 13, 1958, March 13 and 18, 1959; *Kerala Janatha* on December 18, 1958 and March 18, 1958; *Kaumudi* on March 21, 1959; *Prabhadam* on December 25, 1958; *Malayala Manorama* on March 21, 1959; *Podhujanam* on March 19, 1959, *Kerala Kaumudi* on March 11, 1959 etc deserve special Mention. All from the collections of Haji K.C.M.Methor, Ernakulam, 1960.

⁹⁷ Speeches of P.T.Chako and Pattam Thanu Pillai, K.L.A., March 19, 1959, First session 1959, Vol. II, No.15, pp.1236-42. Mannath Padmanabhan's statement, "Malayala Rajyam, March 12, 1959. Puthuppalli Raghavan, op. cit. pp 134-39.

⁹⁸ The Hindu, March 17, 1959.

against the rice deal of the government.⁹⁹ The deal had, thus enabled the Opposition and the Communal groups to forge a common front against the Communist government.

Kattampalli Land Encroachment Agitation

At Kattampalli in Kannur District, a piece of land measuring 7.5 acres belonging to the government, was made a scene of one of the early encounters between the government and the opposition.¹⁰⁰ The land adjacent to the Kattampalli jail had been with the government of Madras for nearly 50 years and lying vacant except for occasional cultivation on licence.¹⁰¹ In July 1957, the then revenue Minister K.R.Gauri, announced a plan of organising a Harijan Colony there.¹⁰² It was also announced that the government was willing to distribute the land to the landless and 25% of the area so distributed would be to the Harijans.¹⁰³ Immediately after the measure was announced the Congress and the PSP formed a Depressed Classes League and resorted to direct action demanding assignment of the entire area to Harijans.¹⁰⁴ The League organised a *satyagraha* in front of the land to highlight the demand. A large number of Congress and PSP volunteers forcibly entered the plot of land at night ignoring the police pickets and with all show of violence.¹⁰⁵ The removal of these trespassers led to daily incursions of Congress and PSP volunteers into this bit of government land thus giving a law breaking trespass campaign a political status.¹⁰⁶ The government in order to settle the issue amicably gave two months time for the trespassers to vacate. But the

⁹⁹ Malayala Rajyam, April 6, 1959.

¹⁰⁰ V.R.Krishna Iyer, "*Denial Come to the Judgment*", Ernakulam, 1959, P. 33.

¹⁰¹ The Hindu, November 15, 1957.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ P.K.Chathan, '*Kerala Sarkarinte Harijana Khema Pravarthanangal*' (Mal) , Ernakulam, 1959, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ P.Ramunni Kurup- '*Autobiography.....*(Mal)....

¹⁰⁵ H.Austin, '*Anatomy of the Kerala Coup*; New Delhi, 1959 . p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

opposition parties persuaded them to stay on there. Finally, when the revenue authorities went there to remove the encroachers, the Congress and the PSP leaders organised a resistance and when they were removed, started an agitation with volunteers recruited from outside.¹⁰⁷ Almost all the Harijan families in the locality condemned the trespassing campaign in a memorandum submitted to the then Law Minister, V.R.Krishna Iyer.¹⁰⁸

In this series of ceaseless, naked aggression by force on government land, labelling it *satyagraha*, we see the emergence of the “direct action” technique which paid the “liberation struggle” leaders rich dividends in June-July 1959.¹⁰⁹ In a note issued by the government as early as 1957 we see the observation: “it is patent that the purpose of the present venture of the two parties (Congress and PSP) is to break the law and thereby to break the credit of the State government. What is more significant is the further development that has now taken place of undiluted goondaism and unvarnished vulgarity.¹¹⁰ Even in that miniature struggle, Christophers had been employed and plenty of money had been poured¹¹¹ as stated on the floor of the Assembly in those days.

Administrative Reforms Committee Report and Reservation Issue

The integration of state services and the reorganisation of administrative machinery was a matter of primary importance to the Communist government. The entire administrative machinery had to be streamlined in order to make it useful for the speedy implementation of policies and programmes of the new government. On August 15, 1957 an

¹⁰⁷ The Hindu, November 15, 1957.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ V.R.Krishna Iyer, op. cit. p 33.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Kerala Legislative Assembly debates in 21st December, 1957. The Minister for Law Sri.V.R.Krishna Iyer answered and gave clarifications to the questions of M.Sadasivan, M.NarayanaKurup, M. Thanupillai and K. Bhargavan on the role of Christophers in the Kattampilli land encroachment agitation.

administrative Reforms Committee was appointed, consisting of seven members with the chief Minister as its chairman.¹¹² The main aim of this committee was “examining the working of the present administrative machinery, assessing its inadequacies, and suggesting measures for improving its efficiency”.¹¹³

The Committee after a study of nine months submitted its report to the government. The Crux of its recommendation was ‘Democratic Decentralisation’. Among many other things the ARC recommended that “As a first step towards the recognition of economic backwardness as an index for giving state protection in recruitment to services... ..the benefit of reservation for backward classes should be given only to those who fall below a certain economic level”.¹¹⁴ The government accepted the report of the ARC, including the recommendation on reservation.

The system of reservation given to the backward communities in matters of appointment to government service and for admission to professional educational institutions has a long history which is interwoven with the socio-political set up in Kerala.¹¹⁵ The State was notorious for a rigorous system of caste distinction, which had, for centuries, kept the non-caste Hindus socially oppressed and economically backward.¹¹⁶ A section of

¹¹² H.D.Malaviya. op. cit. p . 162.

¹¹³ The New Age, Vol. IV . No. 47, August 18, 1957, p . 6.
Report of the Administrative reforms Committee; Government of Kerala,
Thiruvananthapuram, 1958, pp. 90-91.

¹¹⁵ *The agitation in Kerala: Its real nature and reactions of the national press*. Department of Public Relations; Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapura, 1959. pp – 6-7.

¹¹⁶ The *Malayali* memorial of 1891 in Travancore was against the exclusive monopoly of Tamil Brahmins in State services and the Ezhava memorial of 1896 was for protecting the rights of Ezhavas and other backward communities. These were some early attempts for raising protest against the monopoly of Cast Hindus in public services.

the Christians also did not get their due in public services which remained, till recently the monopoly of Caste Hindus.¹¹⁷

The Government's acceptance of the report raised a storm of protest from the Backward Communities, who constitute the majority and of whom constituted the main stuff of the Communist party, reacted against the action of the Communist government.¹¹⁸

Sri. K. Sukumaran, the chief editor (popularly known as Pathradhipar Sukumaran) of the 'Kerala Kaumudi'¹¹⁹ daily severely criticised the recommendations of the Committee on account of communal reservation.¹²⁰ However, the Communist party, sensing the mood of the backward communities, denounced the ARC report and assured them that the government had no plans to dispense with the then existing system of recruitment.¹²¹

Meanwhile, Sri. Mannath Padmanabhan, the leader of the Nair Service Society, made determined efforts to arouse communal feelings by giving currency to the view that the Government in power was 'pro-Ezhava' and 'anti-Nair'. It enabled him to divide the people of the state on communal lines

¹¹⁷ The Abstention Movement (*Nivarthana Prasthanam*) of Travancore, started in early thirties of the twentieth century was a protest movement of the Ezhavas, the Muslims and a section of the Christian community organized under the banner of the Congress Committee in Travancore. The movement demanded that these communities should be given representation in the legislative and state services in proportion to their numerical strength. As the demand was not conceded, they formed an organization of their own called *Samyuktha Rakshtriya Samithi* (Joint Political Congress) and exhorted the voters to abstain from voting in the elections held under new scheme.

¹¹⁸ Malayala Manorama, September 23, 1958.

¹¹⁹ A pro-Ezhava daily.

¹²⁰ Puthuppalli Raghavan, op. cit. pp. 171-173.; K.Rajeswari, op. cit. pp. 194-195. Sri. K. Sukumaran's famous "Kulathur Speech" in the presence of Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad on the Dias was very crucial and created waves of controversy in the subsequent days in Kerala society and politics.

¹²¹ The Janayugam, October 3, 1958.

and direct the hostility of the prominent among them against the Communist government.¹²²

As a means of raising communal feelings, Mannath Padmanabhan ingeniously raked up the system of communal reservation in appointments to government service and in admission to professional colleges. The system was now highlighted as a deliberate attempt on the part of a 'Pro-Ezhava' government to ruin the interest of the Nairs. The cry of 'Nair's interest in peril' was also raised, intended obviously to foment tension.¹²³

In short, the Administrative Reforms Committee report created discontent and protest among Ezhavas against the Communist government. The government's attitude on the report infuriated the Nair Service Society. However, due to the ARC report both these communities turned against the government.

Agitation against Agrarian Reform Measures

The Agrarian reform measures of the first Communist government brought about serious changes in the traditional class structure of the Kerala society. But the government's attempt in this matter strengthened the protest of communal pressure groups and vested interest groups of the opposition parties. The land reform measures of the government paved the way for united stance and collective agitation by the anti Communist forces against the Communist government.

The Eviction Proscribing Act passed on 8th May 1957, infuriated the vested interest groups.¹²⁴ When the Kerala Agricultural relations Bill was

¹²² K.M.Chandi, '*Mannavum Vimochana samaravum*'(Mal) in *Mannam Sathabhishekopaharam*, Pandalam; 1960, p. 153.

¹²³ The Malayala Rajyam, May 30, 1958.

¹²⁴ The 'Deepika', the Catholic daily and the 'Deshabandhu' a pro Nair daily wrote editorials against the Act. K.Rajeswari, op. cit. p. 208.

published on December 18, 1957, there were strong sections of the people both in favour and against the Bill. Among its supporters the Kerala *Karshaka Sangam*(peasant union) was the most vociferous.¹²⁵ Among those who opposed the Bill were the majority of the Nair Community and the Christian Planters, who were adversely affected by the provisions relating to fair rent and ceiling respectively.¹²⁶ The NSS found that the Bill had affected their interest considerably and therefore, had taken an anti-bill stance. *The 'Malayala Rajyam'* representing normally the voice of the Nairs, in an editorial urged to “throw the bill away”, as it aimed at expropriating the land owners, the majority of whom belonged to the Nair Community.¹²⁷ The NSS thereafter organised a large number of meetings to protest against the Bill. It also called up on all those who were against the Bill to forge a united opposition. The representative of the Land Policy Committee (LPC)¹²⁸ of the NSS headed by Mannath Padmanabhan met the Chief minister on February 28,1958 and submitted a memorandum indicating the lines on which the Bill should be amended.¹²⁹ The delegation warned the Chief Minister that agitation would be resorted to if their proposals for amendment were not accepted by the government.¹³⁰

The NSS leaders tried to influence the Nair leaders of the Communist Party.¹³¹ The NSS leaders made persistent efforts to pressurise the Select Committee, the Government and the Communist Party to amend the Bill so as to safeguard the interests of the Nairs. They made full use of the public platform and the press and attempted to compel the Nair members of the

¹²⁵ Pandalam P.R.Madhavan Pillai, “*Karshika Bandha Billinu Bhedagathiyo* ?....., Pamphlet,(Mal),1959, p. 1.

¹²⁶ N.Jose Chander, ‘*Legislative Process in Kerala*’,Thiruvananthapuram,1981, p. 131.

¹²⁷ *The Malayala Rajyam*, January 1, 1958.

¹²⁸ The LPC appointed by the NSS Board of Directors in its budget session held at Chenganasseri on June 9, 1957-, *Malayala Rajam*, June 10, 1957.

¹²⁹ *Malayala Rajyam*, March4, 1958.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ N.Jose Chander, op. cit. p. 133.

Communist Legislature Party subscribed to their line of thinking. Mannath Padmanabhan personally briefed the Nair MLAs of the CPI.¹³² In spite of all their multi-channelled efforts, the NSS could not win over the die-hard Communists particularly from Malabar.¹³³ On a number of other issues too the NSS had fallen out with the Communist government.¹³⁴ The underlying causes of all the grievances of the NSS was that it could not exercise any influence on Communist policies.¹³⁵ The Communists were determined to push forward their legislative programmes without compromise with religious or caste groups. In these circumstances the NSS decided to join forces with the Christians who were already at war with the Communist government on the question of Education Bill. At all the public meetings held in protest against the Education Bill, the Nair leaders used to criticise the Agrarian Relations Bill. They also combined the anti-Bill propaganda with their opposition to reservation for Backward Communities in government jobs and tried to rouse the wrath of the Nair masses against the government which according to them, had turned in to an anti-Nair government.¹³⁶

The Christians in Kerala controlled by the Hierarchy had extensive interests in land. About the Agricultural Relations Bill, the 'Deepika' daily wrote : "The greatest problem that Kerala faces in 1958 is Communist Party's Land Reforms Bill."¹³⁷ The editorial ended with the doubts whether democracy in Kerala is going to be sacrificed for planned economy.¹³⁸ As soon as the Bill was introduced in the state legislature, *The 'Malayala*

¹³² A.K.Pothuval, 'Keralathile Karshaka Prasthanam (Mal), Pabhatham Printing and Publishing, Thiruvananthapuram, 3rd Impression, 1976. p. 34.

¹³³ N.Jose Chander, op. cit.

¹³⁴ The Government rejected the request of the NSS for opening an engineering College at Palakkad. The NSS was against the reservation policy followed by the government.

¹³⁵ V.K.S.Nair, 'Communal Interest Groups in Kerala', South Asian Politics and Religion, Donald Eugene Smith (ed.) Princeton University Press, 1996. p. 176.

¹³⁶ EMS Namboodiripad, 'Selected Writings', Vol.2, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1985. p. 163.

¹³⁷ The Deepika, Kottayam, January 1, 1958.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Manorama’ on December 28, 1957 condemned it as politically motivated, and that it was intended to injure the interests of the land owners who had invested their entire fortune in the land to make out an existence.¹³⁹

Father Vadakan writes:

“As soon as the Agrarian Relations Bill was passed, Mannath Padmanabhan and others were opposed to the Communists. From central Travancore, the trumpet of a United Front of Nairs and Christians was heard. It was echoed all over Kerala. I realised it was an alliance of arch reactionaries. ... The Agrarian Relations Bill was the target of the attack of Mannam and others. The stand of the landlord appeared to be, ‘If the Church wants us to protect its schools; the Church should protect our lands. ...’¹⁴⁰

Like the Nairs the Christians also held large number of protest meetings in which the Bill was subjected to severe criticism. The *Deepika* and the *Malayala Manorama*, which were the main mouthpieces of the organised Church and Christian land lords gave much propaganda to the proposals for amendments of NSS on Agricultural Relations Bill. It was an attempt to mobilize all communal forces behind them to fight the Communist Party and its Government. The All Kerala Catholic Congress (AKCC) also submitted a memorandum to the government seeking a number of amendments to the Bill.

¹⁴¹ It was obviously to save the interests of the land lords and plantation owners. The *Deepika* held that : “To hold that every one must own land to till, in addition to a plot for a dwelling place has no practical relevance whatsoever to land distribution”.¹⁴²

The rich planters and cultivators of *Kayal* lands (backwater or lagoon adopted for rice cultivation) in the state, the majority of whom were

¹³⁹ The *Malayala Manorama*, Kottayam, December 28, 1957.

¹⁴⁰ Father Vadakkan, ‘*Enta Kuthupum Kithappum*’. Op. cit. p. 121.

¹⁴¹ The Kerala Legislative Assembly: *Opinions on the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill 1957*, Opinion No. 456.

¹⁴² The *Deepika*, February 6, 1958.

Christians, also turned against the Bill. The Hierarchy neglected the grievances of the hutment dwellers even from the Christian community.

Father Vadakkan writes :

“Thichur Diocese is the largest Catholic Diocese in the country. The Biggest parish in the Diocese is Ollur. It is also one of the biggest land owners in Kerala. There were more than fifty hutment dwellers in lands belonging to the church. The church authorities were not prepared to give the hutment dwellers rights. ...”¹⁴³

Even though the majority of the Christians were tenants and small holders who benefited from the provisions of the Bill, they were swept away by the flood tide of the anti-education bill propaganda. Spokesmen of the Catholic community opposed the Bill and insisted on its total revision in favour of landed interests.¹⁴⁴ They had foreseen very early that when the Communist government would bring the Agrarian Relations Bill, the Nair Community could not but join them in their fight against the government. So the former wanted to protect the interests of the hierarchy and land lords, joined an alliance with the NSS to overthrow the government.

The attack of the Church levelled against the Agricultural Relations Bill was obviously a part of their political attack against communist Party and government. Criticising the Communist justice and Morality they stimulated those who became ‘prey’ for the Communist Party’s arrows to organise and fight against the Party.¹⁴⁵

The Church in every way deliberately unleashed propaganda against the Agrarian Relations Bill, the government and the Communist Party.¹⁴⁶

This campaign culminated in the violent agitation against the government. For

¹⁴³ Father Vadakkan, op. cit. p. 263.

¹⁴⁴ For suggestions of the All Kerala Catholic Congress, see The Deepika, 8th March 1958.

¹⁴⁵ The Deepika, February 5, 1958.

¹⁴⁶ D Jayadeva Das, ‘Profile of the Indian Church’-a politico- social analysis’; Thiruvananthapuram, 1979. p. 43.

this they extensively used the subversive activities of the notorious Christopher volunteers.

The private Devaswam Boards (bodies in control of private temples) in the state were another strong and organised vested interest group which also raised strong protest against the Bill. They feared that they would be adversely affected by the progressive land policies of the Communist government. So they organised themselves on a state wide basis in 1957 as soon as the government issued the first ordinance putting a stop to all evictions.¹⁴⁷ This organisation was known as the Kerala “*Ooranma Devaswam Board*”.

The *Ooranma Devaswam Board* used all means to pressurise the Communist government in order to protect the interests of the private *Devaswams*. But they could not win over the government. Later the *Ooranma Devaswam Board* joined seven other organisations, including the NSS, the Travancore *Devaswam Board*, the Kerala Lad Owners association, the small holders organisation, the SNDP etc. and formed a common co-ordination committee to fight out their case.¹⁴⁸ The coordination Committee functioned in several sections so as to facilitate its activities. In spite of all their intensive lobbying and pressures they were unsuccessful with the communist government, and therefore they also joined in the anti- Communist agitation.

The attitude of the opposition political parties towards the Kerala Agricultural Relations Bill was a complex one. In line with the policy of land reforms adopted by the Indian National Congress, its working committee on December 14, 1958 asked its state units to take suitable steps to implement

¹⁴⁷ Kerala Stay of Eviction Proceedings Ordinance, 1957. (No 1 of 1957) Gazette Extra Ordinary No. 34, 11th April, 1957.

¹⁴⁸ The Malayalarajyam, November 17, 1958.; P.R.Madhavan Pillai, *Karshika Bandha Billinu...* .op. cit. p.19.

land reforms before December, 1959.¹⁴⁹ But due to the pressure of vested interest groups, the KPCC was generally against the Kerala Agricultural Relations Bill. A joint session of the KPCC and Congress Legislature Party held at Alwaye on Feb-19-20, 1958 proposed amendments to the Bill similar to those of the NSS, the land owners and the Christians.¹⁵⁰ The Party members of the select committee in their minutes of dissent also suggested identical changes in the Bill.¹⁵¹

The speeches and the amendments made by the Congress members of the Assembly during the second reading only favouring the landlord interests. They also demanded division on six occasions to delay the passing of the Bill. At this stage the resistance of the party was amply demonstrated by one of its members, Maleth Gopinatha Pillai, staging a walkout, saying that it could not be implemented in Kerala and that the opposition parties were going to agitate for the removal of the very government responsible for its introduction.¹⁵²

Outside the assembly Congressmen were busily engaged in supporting the agitation started by the NSS, the Church and others. When the Bill was finally passed by the House, the leaders of the Congress Legislative Party and the leaders of the PSP and IUML were absent demonstrating their protest against the Bill. One of the Congress members K. Kochukuttan, who spoke on the occasion resorted to filibustering till he was stopped by the Speaker.¹⁵³ Another member of the party K.M.George, alleged that the Bill, if it was passed, would affect the peace and tranquillity of the State. The Muslim League was not very much opposed to the Bill. But the PSP failed to have a

¹⁴⁹ The Janayugam, December 17, 1958.

¹⁵⁰ The Malayala Manorama, February 22, 1958.

¹⁵¹ Minutes of Dissent, The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill 1957, report of the select committee, pp. 13-16.

¹⁵² Kerala Legislative Assembly Proceedings, Vol. VII, No.59, June 6, 1959. p. 5601.

¹⁵³ Op. cit., Vol. II, No. 72, June 10, 1959. p. 5291

unanimous opinion on the Agricultural Relations Bill because some of the influential party leaders were land owners or pro-landowners. The top leaders of the party pleaded much in favour of land lords.¹⁵⁴

During the second reading of the Bill, Joseph Chazhikkat, a PSP legislature, who was also an important Catholic leader, not only expressed doubts as to its necessity, questioned the moral rights of the government to introduce such a measure, and also demanded its withdrawal.¹⁵⁵ At the final stage of the Bill this Catholic member of PSP resorted to filibustering.¹⁵⁶ It was through Joseph Chazhikkat, the Church secured the support of the PSP for the agitation against the Bill. Some Nair members of the Congress Party from Travancore were very vehement in criticising the Bill during its second and third reading.¹⁵⁷ The Congress gave warning about the downfall of the ministry. At this time the anti government propaganda was raging through out the state. Within two days of the passing of the Agricultural Relations Bill the so called 'Liberation Struggle' was formerly launched and all the opposition parties soon joined this anti-Communist violent agitation.

Devikulam By-election

The litmus test whether the Communist rule in Kerala enjoyed popular support or not was made at Devikulam by-election. The result was convincing.

Since the introduction of progressive legislative measures and administrative reforms for prosperous Kerala, the Communist party and its government were facing stiff resistance from the vested interests in the state,

¹⁵⁴ E. Gopalakrishna Menon, '*Karshikabandha Billum Pradipaksha Partikalum*, (Pamphlet, Mal) Ernakulam, 1959.p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ KLA Vol. II, No.33, First Session 1959, April 17, 1959, pp. 2853-65.

¹⁵⁶ Op. cit. No.62, May 30, 1959, pp 6138-42

¹⁵⁷ *Kerala Billukalku Prasident Nirdeshikkunna Bhedagadhikal*,(Pamphlet, Mal) Navakeralam Printing Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1959.

particularly the Christians and Nairs who mobilised their rank and file with a view to pull the government down. The opposition parties were doing everything possible to discredit the government led by the Communist party.¹⁵⁸ It was at this time the opposition to the government was gaining momentum that the state witnessed the first by-election during the Communist regime, in the Devikulam Assembly Constituency on May 1958 caused by the cancellation of election result of 1957 by the Election Tribunal.¹⁵⁹

Rather elated by the crowds at a conference of the Congress Party held at Kannur , a few weeks before the Devikulam bye-election, Defence Minister V.K.Krishna Menon said that Congress was ‘not just a political party in the western sense’; but a ‘national movement’ which had suffered an electoral reversal in Kerala alone. He exhorted Congressmen to work hard and win ‘the moral and emotional sympathy of the masses and show in the Devikulam Bye-election that the state ‘has returned to the national fold.’ He said that Congress success in the by-election should not be a mere scraping through, ‘but a convincing victory to make amends for the ‘temporary’ reverses it suffered in the last elections’.¹⁶⁰

In a straight contest between the Congress candidate, B.K.Nair, and the CPI nominee Rosamma Punnoose, the later won the election by a margin of 7089 votes.¹⁶¹

The Indian Express daily wrote in its editorial :

“... the defeat of the Communists in Kerala, if it is brought about, will hold within it the seeds of innumerable developments of a beneficial kind not only for India but for the whole world... It is not alone in India but all over the world

¹⁵⁸ The Hindu, May 21, 1958.

¹⁵⁹ The Deshabhimani, May 17, 1958.

¹⁶⁰ Times of India, February 28, 1958.

¹⁶¹ Rosamma Punnoose got 55819 votes,; B.K.Nair got 48,730 and the RSP candidate K.S.Subrahmanyam got 7890 votes. The Hindu, May 19, 1958.

that lovers of democracy were hoping that this sound beginning in a final exorcisation of the Communist spectre would be made in Devikulam”.¹⁶²

The defeat of the Congress in Devikulam, however, became a fitting climax to the one-year-old hate campaign sponsored by the anti-Communists and the opposition parties including the Congress party against the Communist rule in Kerala. Despite the fact that a combined opposition pooled its entire resources against the Communist candidate, Rosamma Punnose, the workers and peasants at Devikulam reaffirmed their faith in the state government, and the first Communist government in an Indian state thus won a vote of confidence.¹⁶³

In a way it may be said that the Devikulam by-election was a symbolic struggle between the Communists and the democratic elements supporting them on the one side and the communal/capitalist coalition and anti-Communists on the other.¹⁶⁴ The Communist Party claimed that the Devikulam electorate and symbolically the entire Kerala people, gave their unambiguous verdict. The large percentage of voting in the constituency in which difficult terrain was expected to keep voters in their homes and the wide margin by which the successful Communist candidate beat her congress rival were convincing proofs of the above.¹⁶⁵

The Devikulam defeat shocked the Congress high command at Delhi. The special correspondent of the Indian Express reported:

“The Congress defeat at the Devikulam by-election in Kerala has come as a shock to the Congress high command which, based on reports from its local representatives, had never bargained for such a huge majority for the Communists. It is regarded as a stunning blow to the Congress, especially to the

¹⁶² Indian Express, Editorial entitled ‘No Waterloo’, April 28, 1958.

¹⁶³ H.D.Malaviya, op. cit. p. 165.

¹⁶⁴ The New Age, Vol. V , no. 34, May 25, 1958. p. 2

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Kerala unit. Its affairs have not evidently improved in spite of efforts to rehabilitate the party since it went out of office”.¹⁶⁶

While the central leadership of the Congress party was shocked, the state Congress leaders were completely stunned. ‘The Times of India’ reported :

“The Devikulam defeat has shattered the morale of all opposition parties in Kerala. The Congress alone is not the sufferer. The Praja Socialist Party, The Muslim League and the Revolutionary Socialist Party have all felt the blow.”¹⁶⁷

Stunned by the defeat, the Congress could not immediately offer any explanations. All that the KPCC president, K.A.Damodara Menon, could tell pressmen when the result was made known was that: “The defeat of the Congress at the Devikulam bye-election was unexpected”, adding, “This defeat should serve only to make us more determined in our fight against Communism”.¹⁶⁸

The victory of the Communist candidate was interpreted by the Chief Minister, In a speech at Coimbatore on June 3, 1958 as a fresh mandate for the entire people of Kerala to the CPI to continue the course so far pursued, and remarked that if the opposition persisted in its activities, they would divide the people and might lead to a civil war as in China and with the Congress meeting the same fate as Chiang Kai-shek.¹⁶⁹

The opposition was extremely intolerant to the Communist government and particularly after the Communist victory in the Devikulam by-election, the opposition joined with the communalist groups strengthened

¹⁶⁶ The Indian express, May 21, 1958.

¹⁶⁷ The Times of India, May 26, 1958.

¹⁶⁸ The Indian Express, may 21, 1958.

¹⁶⁹ The Hindu, June 10, 1958;. S.Gopal, ‘*Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography(1956-1964)*’, Vol. III. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994. p. 59. P.59.

manoeuvring and different other ways to unseat the Communist government.

Economic Weekly pointed out:

“... It only strengthened the belief of the class of people who form the back born of the Communist party that Congressmen and reactionaries are bent upon overthrowing the present government. It is in this context that Namboodiripad’s Coimbatore speech should be understood. Any manoeuvre to unseat the Communists at this stage and pitchfork the discredited local Congress leaders in to power will only look like transplanting Chiang Kaishek and Synhgman Rhees on the Indian soil !”¹⁷⁰

However, the opposition decided to see in the Chief Minister Namboodiripad’s speech a declaration of war, and was even “happy that Mr. Namboodiripad had at least thought it fit to reveal the real intentions of his party (and to dispel) from the minds of the people the illusions passed at the Amritsar Conference”.¹⁷¹

The Coimbatore speech was largely misinterpreted and created much controversy in the political discourse of Kerala in the subsequent days. Many newspapers wrote editorials criticising the Chief Minister.¹⁷² The so called “civil war speech” became a subject of heated debate in the state legislature on July 4, 1958.¹⁷³ The Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad emphasised in the Assembly that ‘his recent speeches and statements did not imply that the Communist party would create conditions of civil war in the state. On the other hand the party would try its utmost to prevent any prospect of such a situation’.¹⁷⁴

The ‘Hindu’ daily reported thus:

¹⁷⁰ Economic Weekly, August 16, 1958. p. 1075.

¹⁷¹ The Weekly Kerala, June 7, 1958. p. 1.

¹⁷² The Mathrubhoomi, July 11, 20, 1958; The Malayala Rajyam, July 7, 1958; Weekly Kerala, June 7, 1958

¹⁷³ Kerala Legislative Assembly debates on 4th July 1958.

¹⁷⁴ The Hindu, July 5, 1958.

“The Chief Minister said what he had said in his speeches, at Coimbatore, later at Coonoor – and at Kottayam and Thiruvananthapuram before that – was that if the opposition in Kerala continued its present anti Communist attitude, it might lead to a situation similar to what happened in China. He denied having referred to the “China way” in any of his speeches or statements. He said he was a Communist and China happened to be a Communist country. What was needed in the present circumstances in India, he said was unity, irrespective of caste, creed or political differences. That did not mean that nobody should criticise others or forge united fronts against the government party. But while doing all that, it was essential that they realised that there were certain things common to all.”¹⁷⁵

The Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru sought a clarification from the Chief Minister on the controversial ‘civil war speech’. ‘Would Namboodiripad ask the Communists in other parts of India not to oppose? Would the Communists hold on to the power in Kerala even if they lost in elections? What was the justification for comparing India with China under Chiang Kai-shek?’¹⁷⁶ But the Chief Minister Namboodiripad’s answer to the reprimand was soft. He told the Prime Minister that his speeches in Kerala, with their emphasis on national unity, had reminded him of Nehru’s call in 1936 for a joint front against the British. Now the programme was for national construction on socialist lines, and the Communist party endorsed this heartily. But the biggest obstacle to any such joint effort seemed to him to be the attitude of the Congress, which behaved as if it were the nation. This had led him to speak of the dangers of a policy of division which would, unless checked, result in national disruption and even civil war; but he had not compared existing conditions in India with those of China under Chiang Kai-shek.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ S.Gopal, op. cit. He quoted it from Nehru’s letter to Namboodiripad on 15th June 1958.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, P. 60.; S.Gopal quoted it from Namboodiripad’s letter to Nehru on 23rd June, 1958.

The PSP warned the people on July 9, 1958 of the seriousness of the speech, and be prepared for the civil war that might be created by the Communists.¹⁷⁸ The Opposition leader P.T.Chacko on July 18, 1958 declared that his party was prepared to accept the challenge thrown up by the Chief Minister at Coimbatore. He said : “we are determined to isolate and then annihilate the unprincipled CPI through democratic means”.¹⁷⁹

However, the Chief Minister’s speech, judging from the reactions it generated, was not well thought out. Although it might have been intended to invigorate the Communists and their supporters, it actually resulted in facilitating joint action by all opposition groups against the government.

The period following the by-election marked the beginning of widespread disturbances from June till august 1958, mainly led by petty-bourgeois youth, involved in the one Anna boat fare, the Water Transport Corporation and the Seetharam Mill agitations.

The Seetharam Mill Agitation.

The Seetharam Mill agitation, a labour strike at Trichur led by the INTUC, the Congress led union under the control of Sri Panampilli Govinda Menon, ex-Chief Minister of Travancore Cochin, was an instance of violent means to overthrow the government.¹⁸⁰ This labour agitation flared up into violent clashes but the more significant feature was that the Union president and Congress leader Sri Panampilli himself proclaimed, in his daily speeches in support of the agitation, that it was a “liberation” movement against the Communist government.¹⁸¹ So the credit for coining the term “Liberation

¹⁷⁸ The Malayala Rajyam, July 11, 1958; The Hindu July 11, 1958.

¹⁷⁹ The Indian Express, July 19, 1958.

¹⁸⁰ V.R.Krishna Iyer, op. cit. p. 34.

¹⁸¹ Op. cit. p. 35.; The Hindu, July 6, 1958.

Struggle” for the vioelet agitation to overthrow the first Communist government in Kerala goes to Sri Panampilli Govinda Menon.¹⁸²

The Seetharam Mill was managed by the Government of Kerala as the result of a mortgage. In June, 1958, a new drive was made to speed up production, and it was said that a majority of the workers were in favour of it. Due to an accumulation of stocks of yarn which had to be reeled in time, the management decided to transfer 12 workers from the winding section to the reeling section.¹⁸³ Seven of the 12 workers readily agreed to the transfer, but five of them claiming to belong to the INTUC refused to work in the new section.¹⁸⁴ An assurance was given to them that the transfer was only temporary and that their emoluments would not be reduced by it.¹⁸⁵ Sri Panampilli Govinda Menon demanded that the transfer order on the workers should be cancelled.¹⁸⁶ The authorities believed that this was a denial of the management’s right to improve the methods of production. Out of a total of 2117 workers only 182 took part in the struggle that followed. The management wanted to negotiate a settlement, but the negotiations failed due to the recalcitrant attitude of the leaders of INTUC. Mass picketing was started under the leadership of K.I.Velayudan and K Kochukuttan. These leaders were arrested due to the picketing in front of the Collectorate. Government then referred the matter for adjudication. In spite of these two INTUC workers began a hunger strike.¹⁸⁷

On July 27th, 1958 a settlement was reached between the government and the Labour Congress Leaders. According to the terms of the settlement, the workers who were transferred from the winding section to the reeling

¹⁸² S.Ramachandran, ‘*P.Balan: Thalaratha Porali*’(Autobiography, Mal),Kottayam,2000, p. 50.

¹⁸³ The New Age, Vol. V, No. 45, August 10, 1958.

¹⁸⁴ The Hindu, June 3, 1958.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ The Hindu June 6,1958.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

section undertook to work in the reeling section till August 15th. The government promised that there would be no victimisation, that all discharged workers would be taken back, and that all criminal cases arising out of this dispute would be withdrawn and sentences remitted.¹⁸⁸ The INTUC was also accepted the right of the management to employ workers in the way that would suit production best.¹⁸⁹

Rather than a labour dispute the Seetharam Mill issue was a politically motivated struggle. The agitators resorted to such methods as *satyagraha*, demonstration, *hartal*, picketing and violent deeds to make it a major confrontation between the management under Communist government and Labour Congress Workers.¹⁹⁰ The Congress thought that the intention of the government was to wipe out the INTUC, while the Communists thought that this was just a ruse to harass the government.

The waves of the Seetharam Mill agitation spread in the entire Trichur District. As the leaders hinted the opposition parties and the anti-Communists in the District find out it as a good opportunity to consolidate the anti-Communist forces and thereby intensify the agitation against the government.¹⁹¹ In this context, Father Vadakkan and others formed volunteer corps against the government.¹⁹²

The Seetharam Mills dispute raised a few questions. Can the management not transfer workers from one department to another? If there was so much injustice in it, why could the INTUC not organise a strike?¹⁹³ It is clear that the INTUC had, hardly, any following there; otherwise, there

¹⁸⁸ The New Age, Vol. V, No. 45, August 10, 1958.

¹⁸⁹ The Desabhimani, July 28, 1958.

¹⁹⁰ The Janayugam, July 3, 1958; The Malayala Rajyam, July 8, 1958.

¹⁹¹ S. Ramachandran, op. cit.

¹⁹² The Hindu, August 29, 1958. The details of these volunteer corps have sited in the previous chapter.

¹⁹³ The Economic Weekly, August 16, 1958, p. 1075.

would have been no need to bring non-workers to pickets at the gates of the Mill and the Collectorate.¹⁹⁴ After two months of unnecessary confusion, the INTUC conceded the management's right to transfer workers from one department to another and government sportingly agreed to re-instate the few dismissed workers.¹⁹⁵ But this unnecessary 'struggle' caused bad feelings which ended in cold blooded murders at Varandarappilli.

Varandarappilli Incident.

On July 24, 1958, a Communist party worker named 'Karuppan' was attacked by the Congress party members at Varandarappilli.¹⁹⁶ As a protest against this attack and other political violence in the Trissur region, the Communist party workers in Varandarappilli, a hilly village east to Amballur in Thrissur District organised a procession under the local leaders T.Ubaid and K.P.Unneen Kutty from Palappilli to varandarappilli on July 26. This procession was stone pelted and attacked from the Congress office at Varandarappilli.¹⁹⁷ Shouting, violence and stone pelting increased from both sides. As a result of this uproar, the infuriated participants in the Communist procession attacked the anti-Communist aggressors.¹⁹⁸ In this tumultuous situation six persons were killed and many wounded.¹⁹⁹ Father Vadakkan, the foremost leader of the anti-Communist agitation in Thrissur region testified it as :

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Kainikkara Padmanabha Pillai, op. cit. p. 206.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Ramakrishnan Kaniyaramban and Illickal Lanappi, the eye witnesses of the incident at their residence at Varandarappilli and Amballoor respectively on 27-12-2009.

¹⁹⁸ Bhas Kavanal, '*Minnaminung*-(Memoirs)', (mal), Kaladi,2002, p. 123.

¹⁹⁹ Kurias Kumbalakuzhi, "*Vimochana Samaram*"(Mal), Kozhikode,2010, p. 117. Five persons were killed on the spot. They were C.T.Kochchappu, Kaniaramban Krishnan, Chackoli Anthoni, Pantiyam Kochappan and Illikkal Appachan. One of the seriously wounded- Lonappan Thomas also died on August 7th. K.Rajeswari, op. cit. p. 136.

“ In fact, the Communists were not responsible for the Varandarappilli incident. Some anti-social element in the liberation struggle, fully drunk, attacked a procession of the Communists. In self defence the Communists used their knives. Six or seven persons were killed.”²⁰⁰

The anti-Communist newspapers severely criticised the government on Varandarappilli incident.²⁰¹ On August 11, Dr.K.B.Menon M.P. sought an adjournment motion in the Loksabha about the deteriorating law and order situation in Kerala.²⁰² Later Ashok Mehta, another leader of PSP also raised the same issue in the Parliament.²⁰³ On 18th September, 1958, the Congress working Committee meeting also passed a resolution about the so called insecurity in the law and order in Kerala.²⁰⁴

One Anna Agitation.

The One anna Agitation or the Kuttanad Boat Fare agitation was started as a student protest. It was initiated and led by the petty-bourgeois youth in the Alappuzha with the support and assistance of the communal forces, vested interest groups and opposition political parties. This student strike was started in the first week of July 1958. In order to retain the concession of one anna which, local students alleged, was available to them to travel in certain parts of Kuttanad.²⁰⁵ Soon it developed as a prolonged violent agitation of non-Communist student organisations which contributed to a great extent the worsening of the political situation and direct action against the state government. In fact, the students of the two Catholic schools, St. Joseph and Little Flower, in Kuttanad area in Alappuzha district, were enjoying 50% concession in steam boat fares before the Kerala Transport Corporation was

²⁰⁰ Father Vadakkan , op. cit. p. 124.

²⁰¹ K. Rajeswari, op. cit.

²⁰² The Hindu , August 12, 1958.

²⁰³ The Hindu, September 5, 1958. K.Rajeswari, op. cit.

²⁰⁴ The Hindu, September 19, 1958; . K. Rajeswari, op. cit.

²⁰⁵ The Economic Weekly, November 28, 1959. p. 1597.

formed by the government.²⁰⁶ The concession was given to the students as an incentive to enrol in the schools run by the Church.²⁰⁷ This kind of concession could only apply as long as boats were under different private owners. When the boats were taken over by the Water Transport Corporation, a uniform rule had to be laid down. The corporation decided that, instead of giving a one-anna concession to few students, they would allow a concession of half the fare to all students throughout the area in which Corporation boats plied.²⁰⁸ But this arrangement was resisted by the student organisations like 'Independent Students Organisation (ISO)' and 'Kerala Students Union (KSU)'²⁰⁹, which demanded that not only should the concession be restored but it should also be extended to other routes of the Corporation.²¹⁰

The first round negotiations between the student representatives and the government authorities failed, and a section of students decided to continue the agitation. These students were motivated, not by economic considerations, but by political ones, and were moved to action 'by other forces' which then used the students' agitation to further their own purposes.²¹¹

The students of Kuttanad, Pulimkunnu, Alappuzha, etc in support of their demands began to boycott schools and colleges and resorted to such agitation techniques as picketing government offices, obstructing operation of steamboat services and attacking state transport busses. This direct action

²⁰⁶ The Janayugam, July 7, 1958.

²⁰⁷ This concession was provided only for increasing the strength of the enrolment of students in the church school. This facility was not provided in all the boat services in this area. Only a few boats run by the members of the church or school committee extended this facility to the students.

²⁰⁸ The Hindu, July 15, 1958.

²⁰⁹ KSU is the student outfit of the Congress Party in Kerala. ISO was the student organization of the Preja Socialist Party. Both this organizations were in the forefront of the *one-anna* agitation and later in the Liberation Struggle.

²¹⁰ A.C.Mathew, '*Ormachakrangal*' (autobiography-Malayalam), Kottayam, 1995. p. 223.

²¹¹ The Hindu, July 18, 1958.

started on July 14, 1958.²¹² When the struggle gathered momentum and became intense, the government made arrangements for maintaining law and order and for the normal running of educational institutions.²¹³ When the situation became serious, the government imposed the prohibitory order under Section 144 in Alappuzha and resorted to cane charge those who attempted to break the law. At this a demand for public enquiry was raised.²¹⁴ The opposition political parties and labour unions affiliated to them, in a joint statement issued on July 19, 1958 condemned the withdrawal of concessions and warned the government of serious consequences if the issue was not settled amicably.²¹⁵

The students' agitation gradually assumed more and more virulent forms. Picketing assumed the form of physical assaults on teachers and loyal students, breaking of windows, doors, tables etc., state transport busses were broken and boats were obstructed and detained. Vulgar and provocative slogans were shouted and obstructed traffic in the streets.²¹⁶ It was in this light that Section 144 was promulgated in Alappuzha district. But the student agitators violated this order and extended their violent agitation in other districts also.²¹⁷

The Catholic Church, which was already at confrontation with the government in its opposition to the Education Bill, realised it as a good opportunity to direct the student community against the Communist government. They were, more over, helped by other opposition parties. The

²¹² The Hindu, July 15, 1958.

²¹³ The Hindu, July 18, 1958.

²¹⁴ The Deepika, July 24, 1958.

²¹⁵ The Malayala Rajyam, July 25, 1958.

²¹⁶ The Janayugam, August 2, 1958. Some examples of the slogans—"Beware of your life, Namburi", "Touch Sreekandan, T.V's head will be off!", "Down with your rule of the stammerer, the blind and the lame, Namburi!", "Blood-thirsty Namburi, drink more blood hereafter" etc. quoted in the 'True Situation...' op. cit. and K.Rajeswari.

²¹⁷ The Hindu, July 21, 1958.

government sources pointed out that, “When battles fought in the name of workers at Trichur (Sitharam Mills), Alappuzha and Fort Cochin did not produce the desired results, the students’ agitation was seized as an opportunity by the leaders of the opposition”.²¹⁸ On 21st July, 1958, the Congress, PSP, and RSP leaders took over the leadership of the students’ agitation and launched a state-wide movement.²¹⁹ All the opposition party leaders’ banded together, held meetings and demonstrations in support of the students’ agitation in Alappuzha.²²⁰

On July 24, 1958, the KPCC met at Ernakulum and decided to intervene in the agitation. The KPCC asked the government to end the students’ agitation and start negotiations. It also warned that “if the government were not prepared to do that before the end of the month, the Congress would be compelled to intervene and take charge of the situation”.²²¹ They also warned the people that the Communist Party, backed by the State, had started a ‘civil war’. It observed July 29th as ‘Anti-Repression Day’.²²² The opposition party leaders formed an Action Council to deal with the situation.²²³ The PSP gave a call for a state-wide protest on 29th July and an all out agitation from the 30th onwards. The RSP and the Congress joined the campaign. “What really happened in most places was that students of certain institutions were actually encouraged by the Managements to leave their classes and they were further encouraged to roam about in the

²¹⁸ “*True Picture of the situation in Kerala*”, Department of Public Relations, Government of Kerala, 1958, p. 15.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ KPCC Publication, ‘*True Picture of the Situation in Kerala-A rejoinder*’, Thiruvananthapuram, 1958, p.18

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Kainikara Padmanabha Pillai, “*Communist Bharanam Keralathil* (Mal), KPCCC, 1959, p. 167.

²²³ The Hindu, July 25, 1958.

locality”.²²⁴ Certain institutions, mostly Catholic ones, encouraged the students to leave their classes.

On the whole of the agitation, the police were careful and moderate in their actions.²²⁵ The police had a hard time, especially when they had to deal with children who were thrown into the fray. These children were placed in the forefront of the disturbances. However, a large number of violent student agitators were arrested or caned.²²⁶ P.M.Muhammadali, P.K.Kuriakos, Habeeb Rahman etc were the student leaders of the agitation. Anti-Communist political leaders like B.Wellington, Mathai Manjooran, Aani Thayyil, P.Z.Joseph etc. led the agitation in different areas.²²⁷ N. Sreekandan Nair, the RSP leader, C.G.Janardanan, MLA (PSP), B.K.Nair, INTUC leader etc declared their open support to the students’ agitation and violated prohibitory order.²²⁸

Nearly a hundred buses were attacked and damaged. The total extent of the damage was about one lakh of rupees.²²⁹ The student agitators resorted to violence and hooliganism.²³⁰ The government sources pointed out that, “not only did the opposition parties not utter a single word in condemnation of these violent activities, but on the other hand encouraged such activities by their active approval”.²³¹ But some matured and respected leaders felt distressed by the violence of the agitators. They felt that it was wrong on the part of students to agitate and they offered their services as

²²⁴ The New age, Vol. V, No. 45, August 10, 1958.

²²⁵ C.Unniraja, The New Age, Vol. V, No.48, August 31, 1958. P.10.

²²⁶ *True Picture of the Situation in Kerala*, Department of Public Relations, Government of Kerala, 1958, p. 15.

²²⁷ A.C.Mathew, op. cit. p. 224.

²²⁸ *True Picture of the situation in Kerala*, op. cit.

²²⁹ The New Age, op. cit.

²³⁰ The Hindu, July 26, 1958.

²³¹ *True Picture of the situation...* op. cit. p. 20.

mediators in the dispute. Sri. K. Kelappan was the first powerful voice raised against these anti-social activities. He said:

“The student struggle is a purely political struggle. I remind the political parties behind this agitation that it is dangerous to use the students as pawns in their political game. The bitter political conflict today might have blinded their eyes, but they must remember one thing. There are a number of impartial people watching all these misdeeds... .. Normally it has been our experience that Catholic institutions keep away from such struggle. But, amazingly enough we find them today in the forefront of these struggles. It is the worst crime against students to incite them to shout political slogans and to picket in front of Government offices. There can be no amends for this crime.... I appeal to the political parties to stop this rot and bullying tactics”.²³²

Sri. Kelappan also expressed great regret at the wanton misbehaviour of student agitators.²³³ Another prominent person objected to the student agitation was His grace the Mar Thoma Bishop. In a statement issued on 26th July, he said: “It is necessary that leaders of political parties like the Congress make it clear that they are not behind the struggle. Whichever group incites the student community as pawns in their game are inviting their own collapse.”²³⁴ Sri. K .Madhava Menon M.P.(former Congress Minister) also appealed to the students to abandon the path of violence.²³⁵

All these appeals failed to have any effect on the Opposition parties. They joined hands to observe July 29 as “protest day” throughout the state.²³⁶ But a majority of students and workers kept away from the agitation. When the authority of the Government was challenged, section 144 was put into force by the government in two Taluks of Kollam and Thrissur districts. The

²³² The Desabhimani, July 27, 1958.

²³³ C.K.Moosath, ‘*Kealappan Enna Mahamanushyn*’(Biography-Malayalam), Kottayam, 1982. p. 16.

²³⁴ *True Picture of the situation....* op. cit. p. 23.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ The Hindu, July 30, 1958.

police tackled the situation quite in keeping with government's declared policy of allowing full civil liberties.²³⁷

At this stage, at the request of the Congress president and K.Kelappan, the Chief Minister agreed to call an all party conference. The government also invited to the conference leaders of the Students' Action Council .All parties were represented in the conference besides a few non-party men like Sri. K. Kelappan.

Although no settlement was arrived at, the Chief Minister said while winding up the conference, that the Cabinet would consider the views expressed in the conference and inform the participants later of their decision. This was done the very same night.²³⁸ Meanwhile the opposition party leaders issued a press statement to the effect that the conference had failed.²³⁹ The government promptly announced their decision in a Press Note according to which they were prepared: (i) to appoint a judicial officer to enquire into and report whether the students in the Kuttanad area enjoyed any general concession, whether the 50% concession allowed by the Water Transport Corporation was adequate and, if not, what other measures had to be taken to meet the students' demands; (ii) to allow the students in the Kuttanad area to travel free in the Water Transport Corporation boats till the enquiry was over; (iii) to declare a general amnesty to students who were involved in cases connected with the agitation; and (iv) to institute a comprehensive judicial enquiry into the students' agitation, including its origin, forms of action,

²³⁷ The government in its initial stages issued its 'New Police Policy'. Accordingly, the traditional nature and role of the police in Kerala was changed. E.M.S.Namboodiripad; '*Selected Writings*', Vol. II, Calcutta, 1985; p.133.

²³⁸ *True Picture of the Situation*.... op. cit. p. 24.

²³⁹ The Malayalarajyam, August 3, 1958.

development, activities of those responsible for it, measures taken by the government to meet the situation and other relevant matters.²⁴⁰

The next day, on 3rd August, 1958, the students representatives along with Kelappan, met the Chief Minister and agreed to withdraw the agitation on the basis of the Press Note. The Chief Minister further assured them that the general amnesty would include withdrawal of all legal proceedings against students involved in the agitation, release of all prisoners in connection with the same, and cancellation of all disciplinary action taken by the educational authorities and loss of attendance.²⁴¹

Though a student agitation, the one-anna boat fare agitation was an important part of the series of political agitations organised and conducted by the opposition parties and anti-Communist groups against the first Communist led government in Kerala.

Labour strikes and police firings- Chandanthop, Moonnar etc.

Labour dispute in the Hindustan Cashew factory at Chandanathop in Kollam District resulted in picketing and lock-out which culminated in police firing. Labour dispute regarding bonus, maternity allowances, attendance card etc were under consideration in the labour office. Compromise discussions were in vain. Labourers under the banner of UTUC, the trade union of RSP, began sathyagraha agitation in front of the factory gate.²⁴² Infuriated factory owner locked out the factory. The labourers obstructed the transportation of

²⁴⁰ The Hindu, August 4, 1958; The New Age , Vol. V, No.45, August 10, 1958; *True Picture of ...* . op. cit. p 25.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Interview with T.M.Prabha, at his residence at Asramam, Kollam on 4th May, 2010. In 1958, he was the leader of the UTUC under struggle and faced to police oppression and arrest.

the processed cashews from the factory under lockout.²⁴³ The owner sought police help. When the police attempted to disperse the picketers, violence and stone pelting began. Without any warning, the police opened firing over the defiant agitators.²⁴⁴ Two labourers named Raman and Sulaiman died on the spot.²⁴⁵ Besides, many wounded in the brutal cane charge of the police. Prohibitory order 144 under criminal procedure code was implemented in Kollam and Karunagappalli Taluks.²⁴⁶ The government issued a press note which stated that the police began firing in self defence.

To protest against the police firing, the RSP organised labour march to the official residence of the labour minister T.V.Thomas. All opposition parties and most of the news papers blamed police firing and severely criticised the government. The government ordered a judicial enquiry. Justice Sankaran, a sitting judge of the Kerala High Court was appointed under section 3 of the Commissions of Enquiry Act, to enquire in to the circumstances which led to the police firing at Chandanathop.²⁴⁷ The finding of the Judicial Commission justified the police firing. But the observations of the Judicial Commission regarding the deteriorating law and order situation in the state and governments acts of pardons and remissions etc. were unfavourable to the government. It had an accusing effect.

Labourers in plantations in the High Ranges region were subjected to severe exploitation. The plantation owners were not providing minimum

²⁴³ Interview with Kundara Damodaran Pillai at his residence at Chandanathop on 3rd May, 2010. He was one of the participant of the labor strike and subjected to police arrest and oppression.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ The 'Kaumudi' daily, July 29, 1958.(collections from K.C.M.Methor, op. cit.) It wrote a serious editorial entitled " *Chora Puranda Kaikal*(Blood Coated Hands)" on the Chandanathop firing, which severely criticized the government. The 'Kaumudi' was a pro RSP news paper.

²⁴⁶ The Malayala Rajyam, July 28, 1958.

²⁴⁷ The Hindu, August 23, 1958.

wages, necessary allowances and other privileges to the labourers.²⁴⁸ In order to protect the rights the labourers began strikes under the banner of AITUC. But the plantation owners utilised the service of the police and Christopher goondas to suppress the strike. On 15th October, police opened fire at the agitating labourers at Nettikudi estate.²⁴⁹ Police firing at Gudrale estate and Thalayar on October 20th caused for the death of a few labourers. There were wide protests against the police atrocities in the Moonnar plantation region.²⁵⁰ But the Judicial enquiry vindicated the police actions.

Though the Communist government followed a neutral police policy, on many occasions the police were influenced by some external forces including the capitalists, retired police officers, Opposition leaders, Central Intelligence Bureau etc. Soon after the formation of the Communist government, the Intelligence Department of the Central Government reorganised its apparatus in Kerala.²⁵¹ It made a fourfold increase in the strength and efficiency of the Kerala wing of the Central Intelligence Bureau.²⁵² They maintained a strong link with the high officials of the Kerala Police force. The evidences reveal that even the Central Intelligence Agency of America also could influence the Kerala Police.²⁵³ Sri. Panampilli Govinda Menon, the former Chief Minister of Travancore-Cochin and the leader of Congress party openly appealed to members of the civil service to

²⁴⁸ The Hindu, January 30, 1958.

²⁴⁹ The Desabhimani, October 16, 1958.

²⁵⁰ The Hindu, October 12, 1958.

²⁵¹ The Janayugam, April, 17, 1957.

²⁵² Ibid. Some extracts of the report – “Madras is the centre for the southern zone of the Central intelligence. Kerala state comes under its jurisdiction.... The new organization will consist of one inspector for each taluk, one circle inspector for a certain number of taluks, one district officer in each district, a Kerala Centre, and this network will be supervised by the zonal head-quarters in madras. The office of Madras is reported to be paying “close attention” to Kerala”.

²⁵³ T. M. Thomas Isaac, ‘*Vimochanasamarathinte Kanappurangal*’(Mal), Op. Cit. pp. 248-259.

disobey the orders of government.²⁵⁴ He wanted the officers “to act according to their own conscience, even if, what their conscience dictates is not in conformity with the instructions of government”.²⁵⁵ In a meeting held at Thrissur on May 2, 1958, he said: “...All sections of the people including the police and the army should come forward to help the struggle to liberate Kerala from the Communists”.²⁵⁶ On another occasion he uttered, “The IAS and IPS personnel should know one thing: if you do rotten things on the orders of the Communists you will have to answer for all that. I am giving you this warning in my own name and also in the name of the Joint Action Council.”²⁵⁷

However, the words of Sri. Panampilli created a feeling of insecurity among the officers and civil servants which affected their morale. A major part of officials including IAS and IPS officers were in favour of the activities of the anti-Communists and opposition parties. The rest felt uncertainty. Due to these developments along with many other things, the common people began to think that the EMS government will be dismissed and the Congress government will be reinstated.

The Kerala Education Bill reported by the Select Committee was passed by the state legislative Assembly, scrutinised by the government of India and subsequently referred to the Supreme Court. The Bill was amended on the basis of the observations of the Supreme Court and the President assented to it on February 19, 1959.

On 21st February, 1959, The Kerala Kaumudi wrote in editorial that:

“If a minority may feel disgusting the assent of the President of India on the KEB, no doubt that large majority of the people

²⁵⁴ *True Picture of the situation.....Op. Cit. P. 5.*

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ The Malayala Manorama, June 3, 1958.

²⁵⁷ The Deepika, June 15, 1959.

inhabiting in Kerala will welcome this assent. In the initial stages the Catholic Christians were opposing the Bill.... Their protest was natural. Now the gorilla centre of that protest is shifted from Catholic Churches to the NSS under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan. Mannath Padmanabhan and Makkappuzha Vasudevan Pillai, the NSS general secretary clearly declared that the prime reason of their protest is the section 11 of the Bill. The section 11 is the statute for reservation in teacher's appointments.²⁵⁸ The Catholic Christians opposed the Bill in its initial stages, on the contrary the Nair Service Society and Mannath Padmanabhan welcomed the Bill. In fact, there was no change in that particular section of the modified Bill. Earlier Mannam or Makkappuzha had not raised any complaint that either Section 11 was harmful to the Nair community or Minister Mundasseri deliberately inserted that particular section to destroy the Nairs.Then why this somersault backwards. Mannam himself must clarify...”,²⁵⁹

As a reply to this, Sri. P.S. Vasudevan Pillai released a pamphlet with the heading that ‘Why the NSS Opposing the Education Bill.’²⁶⁰ Accordingly some reasons of their protests were:

- 1) Extremely denying the interests of the Nair Community.
- 2) Section 14 and 15 of the modified Bill, as it is not affecting the Christian and Muslim schools, is maintained to threaten around 4000 Hindu schools only.

²⁵⁸ Section 11 of the Act to which objection was then taken reads:

“Appointment of teachers in Government and aided Schools.

“The Public Service Commission shall, as empowered by this Act, select candidates for appointment as teachers in aided schools. Before the 31st May of each year, the Public Service Commission shall select candidates with due regard to the probable number of vacancies of teachers that may arise in the course of the year. The candidates shall be selected for each district separately and the list of candidates so selected shall be published in the Gazette. Teachers of aided schools shall be appointed by the manager only from the candidates so selected for the district in which the school is located, provided that the manager may, for sufficient reason, with the permission of the Public Service Commission, appoint teachers selected for any other district. Appointment of teachers in government schools shall also be made from the list of candidates so published.

In selecting candidates under Sub -section (1) the Public Service Commission shall have regard to the provision made by the government under clause (4) of article 16 of the Constitution.”

²⁵⁹ The Kerala Kaumudi, February 21, 1959.

²⁶⁰ The Malayala Rajyam, February 27, 1959.

- 3) Not stopping the cruel discrimination of the so called “reservation”.
- 4) Attempting to extend the reservation in some other fields also, which is presently not included in the reservation category.
- 5) Above all, our objection is for protecting the real interests of the community; To save the future generation from despair and unemployment; To safeguard the existence of Service Society.²⁶¹

But, many members of the NSS conferences (Karayogams) in places like Kaladi, Moovattupuzha etc. did not agree with Mannath Padmanabhan’s deviant attitude and severe opposition to the Education Bill.²⁶²

The leaders of two of the Communal groups in the state, the NSS and the Catholic Church, had then joined hands in a crusade against the Education Act and the government that was responsible for framing the Act. The most regrettable consequence of this agitation was that it had sowed the seeds of communal ill-will in an area which is all too congenial for its flourishing growth. Exhortations were being made to exacerbate communal feelings. Sri. Mannath Padmanabhan, in the course of his meeting at Chenganassery, called up on the Nairs to get ready to sacrifice their lives if necessary, because the community is surrounded by fire.²⁶³ The effort to incite the Nairs had been condemned by Sri. Gangadharan Nair, former Speaker of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly.²⁶⁴

Sri. Mannath Padmanabhan in his open letter dated 25th March, 1959 addressed to the Kerala Chief Minister, stated “I make the demand (for replacing the Education Act with a new legislation) in accordance with the

²⁶¹ Sreekala. M. S; op. cit. p. 156.

²⁶² The Janayugam , February 11, 1959.

²⁶³ The Malayali daily, March 10,1959.- quoted in ‘*The Agitation in Kerala*’. Department of Public Relations, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1959, p. 7.

²⁶⁴ The Desabandhu, April 4, 1959. – cited in ‘*The Agitation in Kerala*’..... op. cit.

wishes of other managements also. I want to inform you, that, in case it is not possible for you to withdraw it, we will be resorting to direct action".²⁶⁵ By the middle of April, Mannam's idea of direct action had already taken a different form; no action for some changes in the Education Act or the Agrarian Relations Bill, but for the removal of the Communist government.²⁶⁶ Communal feelings were so worked up to political ends that, at the crest of this wave, Sri. Mannam felt obliged to declare at a public meeting at Thiruvalla on 12th April, 1959: "The Nair is going to take over the administration from the Communists. 'Nair' is the simple reply to those who ask as to who will rule, if the Communists go"²⁶⁷. Mannam conducted such blatant communal campaign throughout the period of deliverance struggle. Speaking at a meeting at Thiruvananthapuram, Sri. Mannam said: "Let me declare that my mind will be at rest only after sending these Communists, bag and baggage, not merely from Kerala, but from India and driving them to their father-land Russia".²⁶⁸

The Catholics had the most powerful communal organisation in Kerala and the Church, an inveterate enemy of the Communists, had been controlling the political life of Kerala in the past through its domination over the Congress party. The Church hierarchy in Kerala found in Mannam an uncompromising campaigner against the Communist government. The Bishops found a god-sent opportunity to use him as a stalking horse. The reception meeting in his honour came to be widely publicised also in the pro-Catholic newspapers. His audience swelled with Catholic listeners. The speakers at these meetings were mostly Catholics and large funds poured in to

²⁶⁵ The Malayala Rajyam, March 29, 1959.

²⁶⁶ Mannath Padmanabhan, *A Compilation of Speeches by Mannath Paddmanabhan*, Changanasseri, 1982, p. 175.

²⁶⁷ The Desabandhu, April, 14, 1959, quoted in "The Agitation in Kerala" ... op. cit.

²⁶⁸ The Malayali (daily), April 24,,1959.- quoted in '*The Agitation in Kerala*'..... op. cit.

make for pomp and pageantry.²⁶⁹ They formulated a common agitation strategy and set up a joint action council. Gradually, the whole movement took on a political complexion.

From the stage of Mannath Padmanabhan's open challenge against the Education Act on 25th March 1959,²⁷⁰ the movement drifted to an anti-Communist and anti-government fight. In a sense it was not a drift; it was a deliberate direction given to accomplish the political objective. Step by step the Bishops and the NSS leaders, together with the Congress leaders belonging to these two communities, imparted definite political shape and objective to this movement. In a resolution adopted at a conference of these communal groups held on May 4, they declared that the fight would not stop with the end of the Education Act agitation. In the words of Sri. Mannam, "It will not be possible for them (Communist ministers) to save themselves by effecting some change in the education Act or Land Bill because our aim is to remove the Communist government."²⁷¹ The plan, it was proclaimed, was not merely to close down schools run by the Church and the NSS but to prevent all the other schools in the state opening after the recess. The aim was not limited to redressing of specific issues, but somehow to overthrow the Communist ministry. Sri. Mannam became the 'Messiah'. And so his processions were arranged like a tin pot deity marching into battlefield in a chariot, installed on peacock throne, with ceremonial umbrella overhead, a victory horse and elephants and other paraphernalia.²⁷²

A typical description from a pro 'Nair' daily, '*Desabandhu*' on 15th May, 1959 shows how the feudal-reactionary ideology of the movement was perfectly symbolised by the medieval trappings adopted :

²⁶⁹ New Age, Vol. VII, No. 14, April 29, 1959.

²⁷⁰ The Janayugam, March, 27, 1959.

²⁷¹ Mannath Padmanabhante Prasangal, Chenganasseri, 1982, p. 176.

²⁷² The New Age, Vol. VII, No. 24, June 14, 1959.

A cavalry horse was led in front of the *jatha* that came from Karimannur. On two sides of the horse, there marched in military style volunteers with swords unsheathed in their hands. Further there was an escort of Christophers, dressed in khaki *knicker*, blue shirt and white cap, as though marching towards a battlefield. The battle song played by a band created the impression that preparations for a battle are going on.²⁷³

June 1, 1959, Mannath Padmanabhan declared at his huge daily gatherings, was the “Deliverance Day”. “The land of Kerala, nay Bharath, would be ‘liberated’ from the ‘Reds’ and Mannam would tie up his war horse (*Aswamedha*) in the Chief Minister’s chamber” !²⁷⁴

Referring to the analogy of *Aswamedha Yaga*, he said: “There need be no doubt about it. Mannam himself will take the horse to the Secretariat building and have it tied in Chief Minister Namboodiripad’s office room” .²⁷⁵

This medieval march into public rallies with Sri. Mannam in a throne like an ancient deity fits in well with the communal and reactionary vested interests whose cause he espoused.

Sri. Mannath Padmanabhan had passed three points throughout the early stages of his propaganda. The first related to the Education Act in which his warning in the open letter to the Chief Minister already cited.²⁷⁶ Secondly, he opposed land legislation furiously; for example, in the course of a speech at Panmana, he is reported to have stated:

“The Nairs have the ability today to throw into the waste-paper basket Mundassery’s law (Kerala Education Act), which has been passed and Gauri’s law (Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill),

²⁷³ The Desabandhu, May 25, 1959. quoted by H. Austine, op. cit. p. 24.

²⁷⁴ The Malayala Rajyam, June 2, 1959. K.G.Gopala Krishnan, Kurias Kumbalakuzhi, Puthuppalli Raghavan, K. Rajeswari etc also quoted these words in their books.

²⁷⁵ The Malayalarajyam, April 28, 1959.

²⁷⁶ The Malayala Rajyam, March 29, 1959. Note 257.

which is going to be passed. We have decided to organise a law-breaking programme, if need be'.²⁷⁷

Speaking at Thiruvalla, he is reported to have said:

“It is not possible to send back alive whoever comes saying that excess land will be taken away. That is why I am sorry. My wish is that all including these Communist Ministers should remain alive.”²⁷⁸

The third point on which Sri. Mannath Padmanabhan concentrated in order to inflame the Nair youth was the principle of communal reservation allowed under article 16(4) of the Constitution. He demanded that the Kerala government should drop communal reservation. The vulgar language he used in attacking the Ezhava community produced, at one stage, an explosive state of tension and communal discord between the Nairs and the Ezhavas.

By a strategic stroke, the Church combined with the NSS chief Sri. Mannath Padmanabhan invigorated the campaign against the government. A conference of the Catholic bishops of India was held in Bangalore on December 4, 1958. The most Rev. James Robert Knox, the Vatican Ambassador in India was present. The conference seriously considered about ‘material and spiritual ways’ to overthrow the Communist government in Kerala.²⁷⁹

The *Indian Express* reported on December 5: “during its fifty hour deliberations, the conference spent most of the time to discuss reports on the Communist danger in India, especially the Communist danger in the Kerala State. The conference criticised the Kerala Education Bill and expressed its serious concern.”²⁸⁰ A Catholic congress held at Kanyakumari in the same month, gave a call to defend religion against Communism, ‘dedicating their

²⁷⁷The Malayali, April 25, 1959; quoted in *The Agitation in Kerala*...op. cit. p. 12.

²⁷⁸The Desabandhu, April 14, 1959; quoted in *The Agitation in Kerala*...op. cit.

²⁷⁹D. Jayadeva Das, ‘*Profile of the Indian Church*’, op. cit. p. 46.

²⁸⁰The Indian Express, December 5, 1958.

life to the cause of religion’²⁸¹ In March, 1959, a Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Conference at Ernakulam charted out a programme to launch a struggle against the government and under the given circumstances called upon their people to take all necessary and to unite with other communities.²⁸² According to this decision, soon afterwards a convention was held at Perunna of Nair and Christian leaders who formed an action council with Mannath Padmanabhan, as president and Sri. V.O. Abraham as treasurer.²⁸³ This conference decided to organise volunteer corps to defend the schools.

On 25th April 1959, the leaders of opposition parties including the INC, PSP and Muslim League met at Ernakulam and decided to constitute a standing committee to formulate measures for a joint elections front and to continue the agitation for democratic rights under the Communist rule.²⁸⁴ On April 26, Catholic Bishops in Kerala in a circular exhorted Catholics to continue the agitation against the Education Act had been duly approved by the Supreme Court, the Indian President and the Kerala Legislative Assembly, the call by the Bishops could only be interpreted as a call for unconstitutional action. Actually at that very moment, the Deepika, the Catholic mouthpiece, gave an open call for breaking the law. Its editorial on 28th April stated:

“The Communist Government in Kerala, when it deals with their opponents should remember that the Constitution, the Central Government and the law of the country are binding on them. The Communists have the responsibility of conducting the Government according to constitutional methods. But the people who are opposing have no such obligation”.²⁸⁵

On 29th April the editorial said that to run the schools under the existing circumstances “would be a deed against religion, society and the country. We

²⁸¹ D.Jayadas, op. cit.

²⁸² The Deepika, March 20, 1959.

²⁸³ H. Austine, op. cit. p.27.

²⁸⁴ The Hindu, May 7, 1959.

²⁸⁵ Deepika daily , Kottayam, April 28, 1959.

need not have any respect for a law which is unjust”. Mannath Padmanabhan, who during March April had been touring around the state, rallying the support of the Nairs, convened a conference of Christians, Muslims and Nair leaders at Changanasserry from 1 to 3 May. The conference decided to launch a powerful mass agitation to save the state from the Communist danger and declared that the proposed action would be aimed not merely at defeating the education Act but at ending the Communist rule itself. This had become necessary since the Communist rule was “defying human values, destroying morality, denying the right of existence to non-Communists, plundering public money and engineering communal hatred”.²⁸⁶ The conference unanimously elected Mannath Padmanabhan as the president, includes K. Velayudan Nair, a former Congress Minister, K.M.Chandy and Cherian Kappan, Congress leaders as other office bearers of the Joint Action Committee (Vimochana Samara Samithi -VSS).²⁸⁷ Before the formation of the VSS, the Catholics, the NSS and the KSMA had separately informed the government of their resolve not to reopen their schools unless and until the Kerala Education Act, 1959 and the rules made there under were withdrawn. The VSS reaffirmed this resolve.²⁸⁸ *The Deepika* daily had warned the government:

“The representatives of different communities from all over the State who met at Perunna (NSS Head Quarters) have decided to organise a direct action against the government. If the people are unable to stop the government from doing what they oppose, they certainly can obstruct everything that the government does... If the government does not allow the people to live honourably, they will justifiably resort to civil disobedience and the government will be subdued.”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ The Weekly Kerala , Ernakulam, May 23,1959; p. 12.

²⁸⁷ *The Agitation in Kerala*; Department of Public Relations, Govt of Kerala, 1959, p.10.

²⁸⁸ The Malayala Rajyam , May 3,1959.

²⁸⁹ The Deepika, May 3, 1959.

Sri Mannath Padmanabhan, at a reception meeting organised by the Catholics at Kottayam on 4th May 1959 expressed his intention of getting rid of the Communist government and rooting out of Communism from the country itself.²⁹⁰ Volunteers would be recruited in their thousands to keep the schools closed and to fight the government to surrender.²⁹¹ Calling upon the people to march the battlefield he assumed the office of the ‘Commander-in-Chief of the struggle and owed to stable his ‘war-horse’ in the state secretariat.²⁹² The leaders of the opposition parties, particularly of the Congress, lent support to the Vimochana Samara Samithi in their own way. P.S.George the then KPCC treasurer, while welcoming Padmanabhan at Ranni on May 23, 1959 said:

“We are now getting ready for a fight which had no parallel to be drawn from... . Our object is to force the Communist government to resign. We will definitely achieve the aim. Kerala is going to create a precedent of overthrowing a government by means other than the ballot box.”²⁹³

On May 9, 1959, Mannam declared at Quilon that the proposed agitation would begin by passing a no-confidence motion against the government in every taluk, and if it refused to resign, people will put all the ministers in the jail.²⁹⁴

The political leaders of INC, PSP and Muslim League were also present at the Chenganacherry meeting organised by the communal organisations held on 3rd May, 1959. On May 5, during a night session of the members of the KPCC, the District Congress Committees and the Congress Parliamentary Party at Ernakulam, decided to get ready a comprehensive

²⁹⁰ The Malayala Rajyam, May 3, 1959.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ The Malayala Manorama, May 24, 1959.

²⁹⁴ The Malayala Rajyam, May 12, 1959.

charge sheet and to stiffen the agitation with a view to ousting the Government from power on the basis of these charges.

In May 1959 itself, the Joint Action Committee held total 34 taluk meetings in the state.²⁹⁵ The first taluk meeting was held at Kottayam on May 3, 1959 and the last at Chenganasseri on May30,1959. Mannath Padmanabhan toured the entire state and aroused considerable opposition against the government. The taluk action committees organised volunteer forces in their jurisdictions. The action Committee formed under the aegis of the Changanasseri diocese on May 23,1959 stated: “There should be committees in all parishes to prepare volunteer corps for action. At least one young man from every house should be encouraged to enlist himself as volunteer.”²⁹⁶

In the printed leaflet published by “Marthoma Education Act Committee” Kottayam, containing 7 instructions, it was stated that volunteers should be recruited only from brave young men. “Identity cards should be given and a complete list of all volunteers has to be kept”. Relief committees are requested to “approach private medical practitioners and get ready with arrangements for first aid”.²⁹⁷

Panampilli Govinda Menon(former Congress Chief Minister of Travancore-Cochin) declared at Thrissur :

“The time has come for a freedom fight so far as Kerala is concerned. I am telling you, Communists, that a liberation struggle has been started against you”.²⁹⁸

Pattam Thanu Pillai, The PSP leader said:

²⁹⁵ The Malayala Rajyam, June 3,1959.

²⁹⁶ The Deepika, May 24, 1959.

²⁹⁷ *‘Opposition preparation for violent overthrow of the government’ ,Facts placed before the Prime Minister; Department of Public Relations. Thiruvananthapuram,1959 , p.12.*

²⁹⁸ *Malayali*, April 16, 1959; quoted in *‘The Agitation in Kerala’*, Government of Kerala, 1959,p.10.

“If you have manliness they (Communists)should be driven out of the Secretariat. Life is not bigger than self respect. If only you exhibit your manliness they will not remain there even for three days,- let alone the question of three years. And they are not going to remain there. This is Pattom Thanu Pillai who says so”.²⁹⁹

Mannath Padmanabhan, in the course of his speech at Trivandrum is reported to have said:

“I appeal to you, (Communist Ministers) to quit voluntarily without giving room for unrest and bloodshed. I give you the warning that, if you try to stick on to the Ministerial chairs, the consequences will be terrible. If the People wrest power from these Ministers and subject them to trial, their ears and noses will be chopped off or they will be whipped in Public”.³⁰⁰ Speaking at Quilon, Mannam said: I doubt whether they have the ability to beat. Is it that government alone can beat? Beating can be from our side also... ..We will courteously ask them (the Ministers) to quit. If they are not prepared to go we will send them, all the eleven, to the jail”.³⁰¹

His grace Metropolitan Mar Dionysius at Tiruvalla had characterised the agitation as a ‘liberation struggle’, and said that the fight against the Education Act was really religious.³⁰²

During this period volunteer forces in different names were recruited. ‘The Christophers was a paramilitary troop organised, trained and fed by the Catholic Church.³⁰³ The NSS also enlisted its volunteers. Apart from putting volunteer corps at his disposal, Mannath Padmanabhan was provided enough financial support mainly by the Catholics to launch their programme of direct action.

²⁹⁹ The Malayala Manorama, April 7, 1959.

³⁰⁰ Malayala Rajyam, April 28,1959.

³⁰¹ Desabandhu, May 12, 1959; quoted in *The Agitation in Kerala...* op. cit p.12

³⁰² Deepika, may 7, 1959.

³⁰³ *Kerala Legislative Assembly Proceedings*, Vol. III, No. 9, Third Session 1957, December 21,1957, p.2.

Actually, the government was whole heartedly ready for discussions and negotiations with the vested interest groups in order to have an amicable settlement of their demands. In fact, their real intention was far beyond their open demands and expressions. Although the government had got passed the Kerala Education Act, it had endeavoured to evolve a consensus in consultation with the managers, particularly with the Catholic. In his letter to the Managers on May 2, 1959, the Chief Minister assured: “The government will be prepared to discuss with you any specific problem or grievance which you may like to raise with them. The only point that I want to make clear is that the government have no intention to accept the demand of certain managements that the Education Act should not be enforced. The Act as you know is the result of several months’ labour in which the government and the legislature of the State, the central government and the Supreme Court of the country have been associated. The government cannot go back on the clear provisions made in the Act, although they would certainly be willing to discuss with the managements concrete details of how those provisions should be implemented.”³⁰⁴ The Bishop of Thiruvananthapuram, Rev. Vincent V. Pereera and other Church authorities had a stubborn attitude and totally rejected the Chief Minister’s call for negotiation.³⁰⁵

However, the vested groups decided to go ahead with their programme of direct action. But the Chief Minister pursued his attempt to avoid a confrontation with them. Meanwhile Mannath Padmanabhan threatened the police with dire consequences if they continued to obey the orders of the government, the days of which were already numbered.³⁰⁶ Sri. Mannath

³⁰⁴ *Appendix to Kerala Legislative Assembly proceedings*, Vol. VII, No. 60, First Session, May 26, 1959, p.4878.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ *The Malayala Rajyam*, May 26, 1959.

Padmanabhan, in his speech at Changanacherry on May 30, 1959, urged the people to paralyse the entire government machinery.³⁰⁷

Both the State and the Central leaders of the Congress party were absolutely intolerant to the Communist government from the very beginning. Besides the INC, the PSP was also making ceaseless efforts to overthrow the government. The hostility of the Christians to a great extent strengthened them. Although the Congress, the PSP and the IUML sought for each other politically, a formal alliance was forged only on April 26, 1959 at Ernakulam.

³⁰⁸ From 1st to 3rd May, a combined meeting of the leaders of caste/communal organisations and opposition parties held at Changanacherry, in which, the Congress leaders K.M.Chandi, Kalathil Velayudhan Nair, Cherian Kappan and P.S.George moved two resolutions, pledging support to school closure agitation and called upon the people to liberate Kerala from Communism.³⁰⁹ On May 5, while a night session the members of the KPCC, the District Congress Committees and the Congress Parliamentary Party was in progress at Ernakulam, the Catholic Bishops met in the same town and resolved not to reopen its schools. It was also decided to get ready a comprehensive charge sheet and to stiffen the agitation with a view to ousting the government from power on the basis of these charges.³¹⁰ The decision of the KPCC executive on May 6th, 1959 in the course of a resolution adopted by majority vote stated : ‘The committee considered that it is absolutely necessary to carry forward vigorously the campaign for the ending of the misrule of the Communist government, protesting against the Education Act

³⁰⁷ The Malayala Rajyam, June 3, 1959.

³⁰⁸ The Malayala Rajyam, April 27, 1959.

³⁰⁹ The Hindu , May4, 1959.

³¹⁰ G.K. Lieten,” *‘The First Communist Ministry in Kerala’*; Calcutta, 1982, p. 134.

that has created unrest throughout the State and for getting the Rice Deal Enquiry Report accepted by the government in defence of democracy’.³¹¹

On May 23rd 1959, the KPCC President R.Sankar, in a press conference in Delhi said :

“ We have informed the matters to the Central Parliamentary Board. The board has not given any instruction that the Congress should not have any connection with the agitation. The Kerala Congress has not taken any decision on this issue. The Congress will have sympathy towards this agitation so far as it helps to create anti-government feelings among the people and thus facilitate the ouster of the Communists from power.”³¹²

Referring to the school closure movement, Jawaharlal Nehru in a press conference said: “... the party could not come in the way of individual Congressmen who might perhaps be managers of schools, acting in the manner they think best”.³¹³ Panampilli Govinda Menon, the former Chief Minister of Travancore-Cochin and a member of the AICC spoke about the imminent fight in a meeting at Trissur on 13th April 1959. He said: “ Time has come for a freedom fight so far as Kerala is concerned. I am telling you Communists that a liberation struggle has been started against you.”³¹⁴ The mobilisation of caste and communal forces against the government further encouraged Sri. Panampilli to speak more firmly about violence. In a speech at Thiruvananthapuram on May 5, 1959, Panampilli said:

“The Communist *Chotta* Comrades are like little princes today. The people here will certainly destroy this royal family of Communists. We are also eating rice. We have also knives in

³¹¹ The Malayala Manorama, May 7, 1959.

³¹² The Mathrubhoomi, May 24, 1959.

³¹³ The Hindu , May 15, 1959.

³¹⁴ The Malayali, April 16, 1959 ; quoted in the ‘*Opposition Preparations for Violent Overthrow of the Government*’; Department of Public Relations, Government of Kerala,1959. p. 19.

our hands. If you funk, if you surrender to them, they will build their tower of victory here”.³¹⁵

On may 7, 1959, Sri. Kalathil Velayudhan Nair, Congress leader and a member of the KPCC Executive in a speech said: “When a Government refuses to accept democratic methods and conventions, it will be necessary to resort to undemocratic methods to remove that government from power.”³¹⁶

Sri. K. M. Chandy, another leader of the Congress in a meeting at Kottayam said: “Chief Minister Namboodiripad is reported to have said that certain people were getting ready for a civil war. Whatever may be said, that will not affect us. Well if it is civil war, we will resort to that to drive away this government”.³¹⁷

Sri. C.M. Stephan, member of the AICC and the then President of Kollam District Congress Committee in his speech at Kundara had declared: “Today there is only one slogan. This government should go. The Education Agitation is not at all an issue today. It is only one of the means. ...”³¹⁸ Addressing a meeting on May 24, at the Palayam Church grounds in Thiruvananthapuram called to rally support for the school closure agitation Sri. P.T. Chacko, leader of the Congress opposition in the State Legislature said that,

“the Catholics must be prepared to sacrifice, if an occasion arises, even their children, and that the final struggle against Communism is going to be started in Kerala from June 1, and in that struggle, every loss which the Catholics suffer will be written in letters of gold by historians of the future.”³¹⁹

The ‘individual Congressmen’ were deeply involved in the communalist, anti-Communist movement.³²⁰ But the Congress Party in

³¹⁵ The Deepika, May 7, 1959.

³¹⁶ The Malayala Rajyam, May 7, 1959.

³¹⁷ The Malayali, May 4, 1959 ; quoted in the ‘*Opposition Preparations....* ... op. cit. p. 20.

³¹⁸ The Deepika, may 28, 1959.

³¹⁹ A report from ‘Navajeevan’ reproduced in ‘The New age’, Vol VII, No.23, June 7, 1959.

³²⁰ G.k.Lieten. op. cit. p. 135.

Kerala as an organisation was asked to keep out of it. The local Congress leaders understood the signal and plunged into the liberation war with gusto.³²¹ This was their opportunity to overthrow the Communist government with the blessings of the High Command. The new KPCC president R. Sanker's press statement from Delhi after talks with the High Command on 23rd May 1959 was instructive.³²²

In the end of May, at the AICC session at Ooty, the Congress leaders of Kerala got the approval from the Prime Minister Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Morargi Desai and U.N Dhebar to give a 'positive lead' to the direct action. The KPCC President R. Sankar explained that his organisation had been "permitted to carry on peaceful agitation on perfectly non-violent lines to enable the people to give vent to their feelings and organise themselves against the onslaught by the Communist government and the party".³²³ On 3rd June, the KPCC decided to start the struggle for the removal of the Communist government from power. On the same day after the KPCC meeting, Sankar had talks with the PSP leaders Pattam Thanu Pillai, P.K.Kunju and Arangil Sreedharan who in their turn had discussions the next day with the Muslim League leaders K.M. Seethi Sahib and B. Poker Sahib. On 5th June Sankar announced that a non-violent movement would start on June 12, the day to be observed as "Deliverance Day". His press release from Kollam on June 5 stated:

"The Congress under the normal circumstances would have followed the normal path of constitutional agitation, but,... it cannot be a passive spectator to the developments in Kerala

³²¹ V.R.Krishna Iyar, op. cit. p. 75.

³²² The 'Mathrubhoomi', May 24, 1959. Sanker stated: "We have informed matters to the Central Parliamentary Board. The Board has not given any instructions that the Congress should not have any connection with the agitation. The Kerala Congress had not taken any decision on the issue. The Congress will have sympathy towards this agitation so far as it helps to create anti government feelings among the people and thus facilitate to oust the Communists from power".

³²³ The Hindu, June 3, 1959.

where a people groaning under misrule by a government which has been subverting democracy and the constitution are moving forward...”³²⁴

The programme of action did not contemplate immediate steps to paralyse the government. Sankar explained on ‘Deliverance Day’, two days after the Kerala Agricultural Relations Bill had been passed in its third reading, that they would give the Communists ten days to quit and that only afterwards they would paralyse the government. This paralysing of the state machinery was developed in collaboration with the communal organisations.³²⁵ When KPCC chief and his paper ‘*Dinamani*’ firmly and authentically asserted and conducted picketing of government offices the Congress president was reported to have sent the following telegram to the KPCC President :

“NO PICKETING. SHOULD NOT RESORT TO DIRECT ACTION WITHOUT PREVIOUS SANCTION”.

In reply to this telegram, P.T.Chako, the leader of opposition was reported to have wired:

“AFTER MATURE CONSULTATIONS CONGRESS ALONG WITH OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES STARTED PICKETING OF PUBLIC OFFICES. A STATEMENT DICTATED BY DHEBAR AT OOTY PERMITTED EXTRA CONSTITUTIONAL METHODS IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES IN KERALA. I ASSURE STRICT ADHERENCE TO NON-VIOLENCE. PRAY BLESSINGS.”³²⁶

In a press meet at Thiruvananthapuram on 13th June 1959, a correspondent asked Sankar: “The chief Minister accused the Congress of obstructing developmental work. What have you to say?”

³²⁴ The Hindu, June 6, 1959.

³²⁵ G.K.Lieten, op. cit. p. 136.

³²⁶ *Opposition Preparations for...* op. cit . p. 25.

Sankar: “Not only the developmental work will be obstructed, but the entire work of the State Government will also be paralysed.”³²⁷ So, the Congress party in Kerala along with communal organisations and other opposition parties carried on the violent direct action against the government from June 12 onwards.

The Praja Socialist Party and its Kerala fraction under the leadership of Sri. Pattam Thanu Pillai were particularly against the Communist government. In the State election of 1957, the PSP had a formal alliance with the Muslim League. Sri. Pattam Thanu Pillai, a former Chief Minister of Travancore-Cochin and the then Chairman of Kerala PSP, in the course of a speech at Thiruvananthapuram told the people gathered there:

“If you have manliness they (Communists) should be driven out of the Secretariat. Life is not larger than self respect. If only you exhibit your manliness, they will not remain there even for three days, let alone the question of three years. And they are not going to remain there. This is Pattam Thanu Pillai saying so.”³²⁸

He again said,

“mere public meetings and resolutions will be of no avail. Under the conditions which exist today, different stands should be taken. It is necessary to take more firm and courageous steps.”³²⁹

His inordinate lust was to overthrow the government through a revolution.

He said,

“if this government is not dismissed the people of Kerala will be forced to overthrow it through a revolution. It is for the good of the country if the centre, the Prime Minister and the Governor

³²⁷ The Kerala Kaumudi, June 14, 1959.

³²⁸ The Malayala Manorama, April 4, 1959.

³²⁹ The Malayala Rajyam, April 7, 1959.

realise this quickly”.³³⁰ Speaking in another public meeting Sri. Pattam is reported to have said that ‘the government servants should disobey the orders of the Ministers and the Government. He also requested them to resign. He assured them that when they (opposition) come to power after the overthrow of the Communist government, every one of them will be reinstated in their respective ranks.’³³¹

The PSP Journal in an editorial under the caption ‘Man eater’ wrote on 16th June, 1959: “... .. Today people adopt a programme to paralyse and smash this State Government. We have no doubt that the organised people of this state will smash this Government. Its days are numbered. ...” The PSP thought that the Congress was not very active in this struggle and they (PSP) were the real organiser of the direct action. The PSP organ ‘Kerala Janatha’ asserted in its editorial on 20th June, 1959: “... .. There is only one path open for the people, that is the path of direct action. Today this is taking place in Kerala.”³³² The PSP Chairman Pattam Thanu Pillai had repeatedly and with anger requested the Centre to dismiss the Kerala government. In Thiruvananthapuram, he spoke on the 15th June when he said that, “If the Government of India is not going to dismiss the Kerala Ministry, then the people of this state would have to take the task upon them”. He said, “he was sorry that the Governor instead of asking the Government to order an enquiry has chosen to come out with an appeal. A Governor who could not do his duty, could as well be sent away, he said”.³³³ In short, the PSP’s anti-Communist stance and the antagonistic attitude towards the first EMS government intensified the process of the violent direct action.

The revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) under the leadership of Sri. Sreekandan Nair was one with the violent ‘*Vimochana Samaram*’ because the

³³⁰ The Kerala Janatha, organ of the PSP., June 16,1959.,Quated in the ‘*Opposition Preparation...*’ op. cit. p 35.

³³¹ The Opposition Preparation for... op. cit. p. 35.

³³² Op. cit. p. 37.

³³³ The Hindu, June 6, 1959.

party had detested the Communists from the beginning of the regime and for valid reasons. The Communists were essentially a working class party and so was the RSP. If the Communists were in office naturally their working class base may get additional prestige and strength and to that extent the RSP would find themselves worse off. For them, in order to protect their political and trade union interests, it was necessary to keep the CPI out of office and therefore, the RSP had bitterly and violently opposed the Communist ministry.³³⁴ On June 4, 1959 the RSP decided to launch “an agitation against the Kerala Communist government to expose its various omissions and commissions”.³³⁵ Thus, they entered into the fray and made a distinctive contribution of extra violence. Sri Rangaswami, the political correspondent of *The Hindu* observed as follows:

“... .. The Revolutionary socialist Party which wants to claim a distinct entity disproportionate to its following in the State, organises its own campaign, and the police have a tough and anxious time with them. The men of the RSP do not stand and picket. They keep moving and the moment the police obstruct their march, they promptly lie down on the ground interlocking in each other’s arms making as it were a solid chain of human beings. They would not get up and get into the police van even when told of their arrest. The police have to lift them from the ground and when one is lifted, simultaneously two or three more have to be dragged. ...”³³⁶

The RSP tried to justify their participation as a positive action that could divert the upsurge away from reactionary influences. Denying that they were allying with communalist forces, the party also maintained that it had joined the struggle, together with non-Communist trade unions on specific

³³⁴ H.Austin, op. cit. p. 30.

³³⁵ *The Hindu*, June 5, 1959.

³³⁶ *The Hindu* July 24, 1959.

working class demands.³³⁷ The militancy of the RSP was a welcome contribution to the fighting strength of the violent agitators.

The Muslim League was the last to join the 'direct action' deliverance struggle. They had a standing understanding with the PSP and naturally the PSP brought considerable pressure on the League to join the 'liberation agitation'. They were disinclined to direct action, being constitutionally averse to law-breaking activities. There was one sore point with them and that was exploited by the Congress Party to bring them into the agitation. On May 26, 1959, the President of the Muslim League, Sri. Bafaki Thangal mentioned at Thirunavai (where Sri. Kelappan, the Sarvodaya leader was on a fast) that while his party also agreed that the Communists should be removed from office they believed in constitutional methods and wanted to get rid of them through the polls by which they came. It was only the Muslim league which declined to adopt the line of Sri Mannam and associates of closing down all schools.³³⁸

Actually, the Muslim League has a considerable following in that backward community and the Muslims are a substantial minority in Kerala. The congress Party in Kerala had, therefore, been loath to digest the high-principled utterances of the Prime Minister vis-à-vis the Muslim League.³³⁹ The Muslim League in that period had always been demanding of its woovers,

³³⁷ G. K. Lieten , op. cit. p. 138; Interview with Sri. T.M.Prabha a senior leader of UTUC at his residence at Asraamam, Kollam on 4th May,2010. He was very active in RSP's agitation against the Communist government.

³³⁸ H. Austin., op. cit. p. 31.

³³⁹ The Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and some other Congress leaders had dubbed the Muslim League as a dangerous, communal organization which had brought calamity to India. The prime Minister, every time he visited Malabar, described the Muslim League as a dead horse, as an organization which he would oppose with all the strength he had, an organization which had all but died elsewhere and should, therefore, vanish even from Kerala. He called it an exhibit in a political museum and recalled the unpleasant days when Jinnah's League produced all the mass slaughter in Pre-partition India. (see, M Abdul Aziz – "*Rise of Muslims in Kerala Politics.*", M.C Vadakara. "*C.H Muhammed Koya " a Political Biography"*)

particularly the Congress, recognition as a political party and not as a communal entity. The PSP had agreed to this stand and had got into a morganatic and rejuvenating alliance with the League. The Congress party in Kerala, it was said, secretly assured the Muslim league recognition as a political party and as part of the bargain the Muslim league joined the 'deliverance movement'.³⁴⁰

The Muslim League had derived comfort from the utterances of Smt. Indira Gandhi who had classified it as a democratic party with which the Congress later formed a united front. The Prime Minister when he came to settle the Kerala mess on June 22, 1959, invited the league leaders also³⁴¹ and later the Muslim League Assembly party leader Sri. C. H. Muhammed Koya met the Prime Minister in Delhi too.³⁴² These acts and events were interpreted soothingly by the League as an admission, at last, by the Congress puritans that they were also a political party. Sri. K. Rangaswami, the political correspondent of The Hindu also has noted in his special article on Kerala agitation that 'the Muslim League had demanded recognition by the Congress as an all-India organisation as consideration for its participation in the agitation.'³⁴³

The agitation front of non-Communist trade unions, non-Communist students unions etc. were also formed. The representatives of the Kerala Students Union (KSU), the Independent Students Union (ISU), the Independent Students Organisation (ISO), the Progressive Students Union (PSU) and the Students Congress, met at Ernakulam on May 17, 1959 and formed a Combined Agitation Central Action Committee (CACAC)

³⁴⁰ H. Austin, op. cit. p. 32.

³⁴¹ Kurias Kumbalakuzhi; '*Vomochanasamaram*';(Mal), Delhi, 2010; p. 191.

³⁴² C.H.muhammed Koya visited the Prime Minister in Delhi on July 23rd and demanded the dismissal of the Communist government in Kerala. After that he Mentioned in the Press conference that the Central intervention will be very soon. (see- M.C.Vadakara, op.cit. , Kurias Kubalakuzhi op. cit.)

³⁴³ The Hindu June 28, 1959.

consisting of 21 members, with the object of starting an agitation against the Communist government in case it failed to meet their demands.³⁴⁴ Accordingly they submitted a memorandum to the government. As the government did not adopt a favourable attitude to their demands, the CACAC on June 10, 1959 called upon the students to observe June 12, 1959 as 'Vanchanadinam' (Deception Day).³⁴⁵ On June 11, 1959 representatives of the state units of the INTUC, UTUC, HMS and the Port Workers union, Cochin, met at Ernakulam and decided to participate in the agitation to remove the Communists from power.³⁴⁶

During these days, a peculiar political culture of grudge and hatred emerged in Kerala society. It was due to the highly provocative words and deeds of the anti-Communist forces, the caste/communal organisations, vested interest groups, political parties, print media etc. By June 11, 1959 a definite polarisation of political forces had occurred in the state. On the one side were the Communist Party and its supporters, mostly industrial workers, peasants and students and on the other, were the Christian Churches, the NSS, the INC, PSP, IUML, RSP and the landlords, workers, peasants, and students aligned with them.

Meanwhile the Congress had drawn up a 'charge sheet' containing thirty seven allegations against the Communist ministry. These charges against the Communist government, on the basis of which the Vimochana Samaram was launched, were, in fact, the same as the charges made against the Communists as soon as they took over office.³⁴⁷ On July 7, 1959, the

³⁴⁴ The Malayalarajyam, May 19, 1959.

³⁴⁵ The Malayalarajyam, June 11, 1959

³⁴⁶ The Deepika, June 12, 1959.

³⁴⁷ Just after three days of the assumption of office of the Communist government, Sri.Sreemannarayan, the AICC Secretary raised serious allegations and charges against the ministry (see – H.D.Malaviya; *'Kerala : a Report to the Nation'* op. cit. pp. 19, 85-94). The new charge sheet was somewhat an elaboration with some additions of the assertions of Congress leaders including Sreemannarayan. 'The Statesman' noticed on

Congress High Command scrutinised the charge sheet and presented it to the Indian President. This 37-point summary was only a catalogue of assertions without any attempt at substantiating them. Those who prepared these assertions seemed to believe that it was for them to assert and for the people to believe.³⁴⁸

The main charge was “that it was the consistent policy of the government to create a privileged class composed exclusively of the Communist Party members, from whom nepotism, favouritism, etc., are shown and corruption had become rampant, with the funds of the State exchequer stealthily flowing into party funds.”³⁴⁹ The other serious charges levelled against the Communist Party and its government were : the party was attempting to politicise the police and other services, tampering with the executive and the judiciary, corruption in government deals and in the cooperative schemes, rigging of by-elections, curtailing of educational freedom, increase of criminality and unchecked actions by the Communist trade union, victimisation of non party members in the administration, in the police and in the judiciary, financial bankruptcy and economic failure.³⁵⁰ *The Hindu* “ on June 3rd 1959 pointed out that : “In this connection it is recalled that a KPCC publication entitled ‘A True Picture of Kerala – A Rejoinder’, published in October 1958, had already listed these and many other things”.³⁵¹

16th June 1959, “The draft of the charge sheet against the Communists now released was in reality prepared a few days after the Congress defeat in the election in that state ; many of the accusations could be and have been leveled against the Congress Ministers in other states”.

³⁴⁸ *The Opposition Preparation* op. cot. p.2.

³⁴⁹ *The Hindu*, June 3, 1959.

³⁵⁰ V.R.Krishna Iyer, ‘*Daniel Come to Judgment*’, op. cit. pp. 86-88.; H Austine, ‘*The Anatomy of Kerala Coup*’, op. cit. pp. 85-88

³⁵¹ *The Hindu*, June 3, 1959. See- ‘*True Picture of the Situation in Kerala – a Rejoinder*’, KPCC Thiruvananthapuram, October, 1958. This book in 86 pages contain large number of serious allegations and charges against the Communist government. Most of this allegations were baseless and futile. The Communist Party and its government

The Communist Party's alleged application of double standards and its disbelief in the Constitution and democracy were said to create great bitterness, conflict and insecurity of life and property in the state. Consequently, the argument ran there had been a big shift among the vast masses of the people against the government, which had reduced the majority vote of 41 % secured by the CPI considerably. Therefore with two solid blocks of people divided by a wall of suspicion, 'disengagement' through Presidential intervention and fresh elections would prove beneficial.³⁵²

On June 5, 1959, the *Vimochana Samara Samithi* decided to observe June 12, 1959 as 'Deliverance Day'.³⁵³ It is significant to perceive that the day fixed for such an observance coincided with the deception day of the non-Communist student unions. On June 8, 1959, the *Vimochana Samara Samithi* issued its programme for the observance of the deliverance day,³⁵⁴ according to which they were to offer special prayers in churches, mosques and temples between 7.30 a.m. and 9 a.m. On June 12, 1959 to save the State from Communism; hoist black flags on all public buildings and public places throughout the state; keep all markets, shops and other business and commercial establishments closed between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., persuade farmers, workers, businessmen, advocates and government employees to strike work; and to take out silent processions and hold protest meetings in the evening and pass resolutions denouncing the government.

On June 6, 1959, the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in a press conference at Coimbatore appealed "most earnestly" to the people of Kerala

refuted these charges and attributed that it published and propagated only for political motives. *New Age*, Vol. V, No. 45, Sunday, November 3, 1958.

³⁵² G.K. Lieten, op. cit. p. 121.

³⁵³ *The Malayalarajyam*, June 6, 1959.

³⁵⁴ *The Malayalarajyam*, June 10, 1959.

to adhere strictly to peaceful methods and to avoid violence in speech or act at all cost.³⁵⁵ He said :

“....The democratic duty of those who oppose is to adhere strictly to democratic and peaceful ways. They are entitled to agitate peacefully and try to convince the people of the rightness of their views and policies. They may look forward to changing the government, provided always that this is brought about by democratic and peaceful processes. The abandonment of peaceful methods might well lead to the abandonment of democracy itself. Peaceful methods, of course, mean an avoidance of violence. But they mean something more. The language of violence is itself opposed to peaceful method. ... Therefore, I would appeal most earnestly to all people of Kerala, to whatever party they might belong, to adhere strictly to peaceful methods and to avoid violence in speech or act at all cost. We seek the solution of even international problems through peaceful methods. It would be a tragedy for us if we fail to solve our problems through these methods and have recourse to violence and coercion. ... It is a matter of regret that..., the people of Kerala should be confronted with a situation full of conflict and violence...”³⁵⁶

As was expected, Nehru’s appeal was heeded neither by the caste/communal groups nor by the opposition political parties. The Vimochana Samara Samithi and the agitation front of the opposition parties went ahead with their programme of observing ‘deliverance day’ on June 12, 1959 to ‘demonstrate their unity and determination’. On June 10, 1959, in a press conference at New Delhi, Nehru condemned the agitation against the Communist government as communal and said that,

³⁵⁵ The Hindu, June 7, 1959.

³⁵⁶ Ibid. Nehru appealed both sides, to the state government to consider why this deep and widespread distrust of its bona fides had arisen, and the opposition to renounce its methods. He earnestly asked the opposition, particularly the Congress, should function within the limits of democratic conventions.

“I am particularly disturbed at the communal element that has been brought into this in what might have been a political conflict. ... In Kerala, the group that is making a lot of noise is a combination of the Nair Service Society and the Catholic organisation.”³⁵⁷

In fact, the Communist Party was interested in settling amicably the controversial issues. The Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad said, “We are always ready to discuss matters with all opposition parties together or separately or in any permutation or combination they like³⁵⁸ ...” On June 11, 1959 the CPI state committee offered to the opposition that “it is prepared to find peaceful solution to all controversial issues, sitting round a table and discussing with all interested parties.”³⁵⁹ The Vimochana Samara Samithi including the Catholic Bishops, the NSS, CEAC, KSMA etc. rejected the government’s proposal for negotiations and round table discussions.³⁶⁰ Mannath Padmanabhan, the head of the struggle discarded the offer, as he considered that “no kind of negotiation with the representatives of the Communist Party is meaningful” unless and until they stepped down from the government.³⁶¹

As examined in the previous pages, the agitation against the government, which was started from the inception of the Communist ministry by the communal groups and opposition parties, now reached a new, but very virulent and violent stage with the observance of the ‘deliverance day’ on June 12, 1959. Shops, market places and other commercial and business establishments and government offices were closed. Black flags were hoisted throughout the state. Wearing black badges and holding black flags, the

³⁵⁷ The Hindu, June 11, 1959t

³⁵⁸ The New Age, Vol. VII, No. 28, July 12, 1959.

³⁵⁹ The Hindu, June 12, 1959.

³⁶⁰ The Deepika, June 13, 1959.

³⁶¹ The Hindu, June 13, 1959.

agitators took out processions and held protest meetings.³⁶² *The Hindu* reported thus: ‘Normal trading activity throughout Kerala came to a near-standstill, shops and business houses observed a *hartal* in response to the joint call of the opposition parties to mark the beginning of their movement “to end the Communist role in Kerala.”³⁶³

The fifty days- from June 12, 1959 to 31st July, 1959- Kerala witnessed a series of different forms of violence from the agitators. Due to space constraint, the day to day incidents and violence of the hot fifty days of the agitation is not discussed here. The style of the agitation varied from place to place, depending on the ability and inclination of the agitators. “The emotional frenzy and mass militancy of the people had reached a pitch beyond all calculations of their leaders”.³⁶⁴ In fact, the fanatic agitators acted as if they were affected by a mass hysteria. Contempt, hatred, grudge, terror, animosity, phobia etc. were the dominating feelings which guided and goaded the agitators. On so many occasions, the senseless mobs acted according to their instant feelings and destructive thoughts. These furious mobs were themselves led by negative emotions. In many places the schools, government offices, public institutions, transportation facilities, bridges, public vehicles etc were demolished.

The government was not ready to suppress the agitation. It was due to the impartial police policy of the Communist government, that the state police force remained neutral in its dealings with political agitations. But in a very

³⁶² The Malayalarajyam, June 13, 1959.

³⁶³ The Hindu, June 12, 1959. Most of the newspapers in Kerala presented exaggerated reports of the developments in favor of agitators throughout the period of agitation . They neglected the movements and waves in favor to the government. The Print media in Kerala played a very crucial role in the agitation against the communist government. But, better national news papers like The Hindu, The Times of India etc presented a balanced picture.

³⁶⁴ Kainikara Padmanabha Pillai, “*The Red Interlude in Kerala*”, KPCC Publication, Thiruvananthapuram, 1959, p. 183.

few violent and terror situations, the police opened fire in order to save their own life from the terrorised mob. Thus, firing took place at Angamali, Vettukad, Cheriathura and Pulluvila resulting in the death of some agitators. Their martyrdom added fuel to the flame of subversive activities of the agitators. But, the agitation got subsidised around the last quarter of July. The interference of the Central Government with the Article 356 of the Constitution of India decided the destiny of the first democratic Government in Kerala led by the Communist Party of India.

CHAPTER - VI

CENTRAL INTERVENTION AND DISMISSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT

The Communist Party's assumption of power in Kerala through the election was an event of historic importance, and its echoes reverberated all over the world. 'The New York Times' reported: "The Communist Party of India declined to lie down and die, as predicted by Congress politicians."¹ 'The Tribune' the left-wing weekly of Britain, pointed out: "Kerala represents the first time that the Communist Party has come to power through democratic methods'. The Tribune also remarked, "The Congress government at the centre cannot adopt an attitude of non-cooperation and try to thwart the Communists... On the other hand if the Communists are allowed to do good work for the people by following entirely constitutional means and through cooperation with the Congress, both they and the amateurish admirers of the revolution through violence may be cured of their infantile attachments".²

Even the 'Economist' from London also made a plea for cooperation between New Delhi and Thiruvananthapuram. Said the 'Economist': '...the Kerala Communists are bound to be on their best behaviour... They know all India will be watching them. ... They may well choose to make a reputation by such solid measures as land reform, and avoid clashes with Delhi...'³

The News Chronicle from U.K. commented: '... it (Communist Party) is approaching the novel situation – revolution by consent – with almost painful discretion... Communists claim that even within the constitutional limits they have a few surprises up their sleeves. But their initial objectives

¹ Quoted by M.K.Kumaran on '*R.Shankar*' *Jeevacharithram* (Biography, Mal), Department of Cultural Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1993. p.388.

² Quoted in the New Age, Vol. IV, No. 31, April 28, 1957

³ Quoted in the New Age, Vol. IV, No. 32, May 6, 1957

are no secret; they have intended to bring their discipline and organisation into action to produce the first and only stable administration the state ever had to demonstrate with a sort of spectacular purity that the state government can be both efficient and incorrupt in a country where the opposite becomes only too clearly the rule.’⁴

The ‘Manchester Guardian’ commented:

“The Communist government in Kerala, led by some very able men is advertising that it will bring about something approaching Communism by means which keep just on the right side of the Constitution. ...”⁵

While such were the comments from the foreign press, reactions in India’s national press gave ample proof of the sound health of Indian democracy. Leading Indian dailies, even when not very confident of Communists constitutional behaviour, were largely of the view that the verdict of the electorate must be respected and that the Communist government in Kerala and the Congress government at the centre must mutually behave and learn to coexist. The tone was set by the ‘Statesman’s special correspondent at Thiruvananthapuram. ‘Coexistence of the centre and a state with different political parties in power will be a novel experiment in India but one well worth trying in the cause of parliamentary democracy. But there will be need for restraint, tolerance and understanding on both sides.’⁶ ‘The Hindu’ wrote : ‘ The leaders of the Communist Party have recently been affirming their readiness to work within the framework of the Constitution. ... In so far as the electors have returned them as the single biggest party in the assembly where with the support of five of the independents, can

⁴ Quoted in the New Age, Vol. IV, No. 43. p. 3., July 21,

⁵ 1957. Quoted in the New Age, Vol. IV, No. 43. p. 3., July

⁶ 21, 1957. The Statesman, April 4, 1957.

commanding majority in the legislature, their professions must be taken at their face value and an opportunity given to them to constitute the ministry.’⁷

The ‘Times of India’ called for ‘a high degree of tact and diplomacy as well as firmness’ on the part of New Delhi and said : ‘If the Communists succeed in giving the state a truly efficient and uncorrupted administration, they will have indeed endeared themselves to the people. But they will also be tested by the people on the score of the respect they show in practice to the democratic principles.’⁸ The ‘Free Press Journal’ wrote : ‘The best reaction that the Communist victory in Kerala has produced in the Capital is that our democracy is no sham; that it is hundred per cent genuine and truly and faithfully reflect the will of the people.’ And it added: ‘For the Communists, Kerala provides not only an opportunity but also a grim ordeal.’⁹

Apart from the above mentioned positive comments and opinions on the Communist assumption of power in Kerala, the ‘Hindustan Times’ commented, that the central interests will not be safe in the hands of a Communist state government. It pointed out the need for a federal police to ‘safeguard union interests’ and to ‘keep the centre constantly informed’- in other words to pry on State affairs. Its words were in fact, a plea to the centre to ‘re-arrange relationship with State authorities and demanded that central government should ‘classify’ confidential papers.’¹⁰

The triumph of the Communist party and the formation of its government in Kerala infuriated the capitalist interests in India and abroad. The utter panic and fear which had seized the capitalist interests in the country came out through different channels against the Communist government. Shrimannarayan, the AICC secretary was the first prominent

⁷ The Hindu , April 4, 1957.

⁸ The Times of India, April 6, 1957.

⁹ Quoted by H.D.Malaviya, ‘Kerala a Report to the Nation, New Delhi, 1959; p. 19.

¹⁰ Ibid.

figure among the central Congress leadership came out openly against the State government. At the meeting of the KPCC at Ernakulam on April 8, Shrimannarayan accused the Communist ministry of letting loose lawlessness and of attempting to subvert the Constitution by taking recourse to totalitarianism.¹¹

Shrimannarayan's charges were overshadowed by the healthy chorus of democratic opinion in India. These unhealthy precedents, inspired, of course, by certain quarters in New Delhi, were overshadowed by the authoritative statement of a central government spokesman that 'the Communist government in Kerala will in no way be discriminated against.'¹² However, the allegations of the Congress general secretary such as 'the spectre of totalitarianism swooping down on Kerala and law and order being given the go by' etc were the clear indications of the attitude of the dominating section of the Congress leadership in Delhi including Sri U.N.Dhebar, Indira Gandhi and some leading figures in the central government like the Home Minister G.B.Panth, Intelligence Bureau chief B.N.Mallik etc towards the first Communist government in Kerala.

A close analysis of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's attitude towards the Communist government in Kerala reveals the fact that generally he had no strong reservations against them. While some of the economic theories of Communism were acceptable to Nehru, he did not approve of the methods of the Indian Communists, which he regarded as motivated by violence and hatred, disruptive and often anti-national and based on extra- territorial

¹¹ *Janayugam*, April 9, 1957. Shrimannarayan added : 'It is astounding that one of the very first acts of the new government is to commute the death sentences of confirmed murderers and the release of the so-called political prisoners who were not under detention, but who were prosecuted and punished for serious acts of arson, violence and murder.'

¹² *The Kerala Kaumudi*, April, 13, 1957.

considerations.¹³ So the Communist Party appeared to him ‘absolutely and completely out of place in India’.¹⁴ In Kerala during the election campaign , he denounced the Indian Communists as intellectually bankrupt and having apparently lost the capacity to think. ‘The clock of the world has moved on while the clock of the Communist mind in India stopped long ago’. Their ideas appeared to him bookish, immature and negative, and to bear no relevance to the situation in India, to parliamentary democracy or to peaceful progress. He added that he found it difficult to deal with them because of what seemed to him their utter irresponsibility; they were always on the brink of disturbances and violence and looking abroad for inspiration.¹⁵ But when, after the elections, the Communist Party was in a position to form a government in the state, he was willing to give it a chance.¹⁶ The communist Party had contested the election on a moderate programme, and a government they formed could hardly be called a ‘pure Communist’ one.¹⁷

Even before the Communist Party formed its government in Kerala, a controversy between New Delhi and Thiruvananthapuram had developed.¹⁸ The Communist Party had announced that if it came to power it would nationalise the foreign owned plantations in Kerala.¹⁹ This was immediately objected to by the Congress, more particularly by the Prime Minister, who

¹³ S. Gopal, ‘Jawaharlal Nehru’ *A Biography, (1956-1964) Vol. III.*, New Delhi, 1985. p. 53.

¹⁴ The Hindu, February, I, 1957.

¹⁵ S. Gopal, op.cit.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The Hindu, March 30, 1957. The election manifesto of the Communist Party was a unique document, which combined hard hitting punches against the Congress with a constructive programme of political economic and social reforms for a wealthy and prosperous Kerala. On assuming office, the Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad issued his policy statement in which he pointed that they would only try to implement the promises which the Congress and the Central Government had made but which the Congress Governments in the states had failed to carry out. See The New age, Vol. IV, No. 29. April 14, 1957.

¹⁸ G. K. Lieten, ‘*Progressive State Governments, An Assessment of First Communist Ministry in Kerala*, Economic and Political Weekly, January 6, 1979, p.31.

¹⁹ New Age – Vol. III, No 2 , February 10, 1957 P. 9

declared that for the sake of getting a few crores of rupees what was at stake was the honour of India : “I am not going to tamper with the honour and good name of India just to gain a few crores of rupees.”²⁰

After being summoned by the Governor of Kerala to form a ministry, EMS declared that his policy as the Chief Minister would not be to establish a socialist society.²¹ The Communist government in Kerala would only try to implement the promises which the Congress and the central government had made but which the Congress governments in the states had failed to carry out.²² But the first steps taken by the ministry did not suggest a conformist attitude. In fact, the policies, programmes and style of functioning of the Communist ministry were entirely different from the conventional type. Immediately after assuming office, death sentences were commuted, an amnesty was granted to all political prisoners, and eviction of tenants were banned. Also it was said that, certain declarations were made which did not seem to the central Home Ministry to be in accord with the letter, or at least the spirit, of the constitution.²³ Pant, the central Home Minister, along with his intolerance and suspicion to the Communists, believed that the state government were manoeuvring for position and would later blame the government of India for failure to fulfil many of the promises made during the elections.²⁴

The Governor of Kerala, B. Ramakrishna Rao, a conservative Congressman was unfavourable to the Communist government from its very beginning. The Governor inclined to take the lead from Pant, who himself had no liking for the Communists. So Nehru had to ensure that his colleagues did

²⁰ The Hindu, February 2, 1957.

²¹ The Hindu March 30 and April 6, 1957., *The Desabhimani* , March 30, 1957.

²² The New age, Vol. IV, No. 29, April 14, 1957.

²³ S. Gopal, '*Jawaharlal Nehru*', *A Biography, (1956-1964)* Vol. III., New Delhi, 1985. p. 54

²⁴ Ibid.

not adopt too rigid posture towards the Kerala Government. But it would only be possible if Nehru took a personal interest in this matter, for Pant and Rao had already shown that they were lacking in the broad vision that was required.²⁵ The Prime Minister expressed his dislike to the state government's decision to the release of prisoners and the commutation of death sentences.²⁶ Although Pant was opposed on the particular issue of the commutation of death sentences²⁷, a compromise was found. Pant, with Nehru's support agreed to life imprisonment in place of capital punishment in three cases in which earlier the President had rejected the mercy petitions; and Namboodiripad in his side promised that these prisoners would not be released before serving their full terms in jail. Nehru also quickly laid down another ghost. Hearing that all decisions in Kerala were being taken not by the ministry but by the Party and the Party planned to send a senior leader to Moscow for guidance,²⁸ Nehru had the Soviet Ambassador reminded that there should be no interference in India's internal affairs; and the assurance

²⁵ EMS Namboodiripad's letter to Nehru, 15 April 1957, quoted in S. Gopal, op. cit.

²⁶ Nehru to Namboodiripad, 17 April, 1957, quoted in S. Gopal, p.55. Apart from legal and constitutional aspects of this decision, there were also issues of propriety and procedure. The central Government had a right to be consulted because other states were also concerned; and a unilateral decision on this subject implied discourtesy to the President and the Supreme Court.

²⁷ In the case of Kedakulangara Vasu pillai, there was stiff opposition and protest came from the Kerala fraction of the Congress party and anti-Communist groups in the state. On his matter the Communist Party had special interest not only because of his party linkage but also his work for the development of KPAC.

²⁸ During those days, in a meeting at Alappuzha, the AICC president U. N. Dhebar, thundered: "No books are there in Moscow libraries on how to run the administration of an Indian State...". The Congress leaders habitually blamed the Communists for their alleged loyalty to Soviet Union. See, H.D.Malaviya, '*Keralam: Rashtrathinulla oru Report*' (translated and published in Malayalam by *Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad*), Thrissur, 2007. p.28.

came from Moscow that the Soviet Government would not encourage any Communist leader from India visiting them to discuss Kerala.²⁹

However, the differences between the central and state Governments soon developed on other issues. The state government introduced The Kerala Education Bill to regulate the school education in Kerala. Pant wanted them that certain clauses might be *ultra virus*, and the Bill as a whole might serve, if passed, to discourage the initiative of non-official agencies.³⁰ When the legislative process of the Kerala Education Bill was going on, the Christian Churches and the vested interest groups started protest marches, agitations and false propaganda against the government and raised the cry of uncertainty. The Prime Minister mentioned his concern at the reports of the deterioration of law and order.³¹ The lawlessness, of which Nehru had believed to be causing considerable apprehension among many people in Kerala³², was strengthened by the false propaganda with ulterior motives from the side of communal groups, opposition parties and many newspapers run by the vested interest groups about the deterioration of law and order situation in Kerala.³³ With one sided reports and misconceived notions, blended with prejudice about the Communist government, the Central Home Minister Pant warned the Chief Minister Namboodiripad against the report of the deterioration of law and order in Kerala.³⁴

The Kerala Education Bill after its passage in the assembly was sent to the President for his approval. Meanwhile the reactionaries intensified their

²⁹ B.R.Rao to Nehru, 25 April, Nehru's note to Secretary –General, Ministry of External Affairs, 28 April, and K.P.S.Menon to Secretary-General reporting conversation with Kusnetzov, 5 June 1957. Quoted in S.Gopal; op. cit. p. 55.

³⁰ S.Gopal, op. cit. p. 56.

³¹ 'Weekly Kerala', Ernakulam, July 31, 1957.

³² The Hindu, October 22, 1957.

³³ In fact the law and order situation in Kerala was far better than many states in India. (see Monthly Abstract of Statistics, Government of India).

³⁴ Pant believed that the Communist government making pressure on the police and magistracy. S. Gopal, op. cit.

agitation against the Bill and large number of memoranda and representations were continuously sent to the central authorities. 'Rabid anti Communists in the top Congress executive, turning their eyes away from the genuinely progressive and secular purposes of the Bill, helped the delay which ensured, utilising the whole affair as a good weapon to malign the Communist government on a national plane'.³⁵ Evasive answers were given when questions relating to president's assent to Kerala Education Bill were raised in the parliament.³⁶ The Bill was referred to the Supreme Court by the President under article 143 of the Constitution towards the end of December.

Thus, Kerala Education Bill made history, this being the first reference to its kind to the Supreme Court from the president. And this event had certain immediate reactions. Replying to the questions at a press conference at New Delhi on 2nd January, 1958, the Prime Minister said that the government of Kerala had 'accepted most' and 'rejected some' of the suggestions on the Bill made the central government.³⁷ In explanation of the reference to the supreme Court, the Prime Minister said 'there was no doubt that the Bill would have been challenged by private parties and 'since the question (Education Bill) has been raised so much it is obviously desirable that the supreme court should give advice in the matter'.³⁸ Anticipating that this might be construed that unwarranted interference by the centre, the Prime Minister hastened to add that the central government in no way wanted to curtail states' autonomy.

The Prime Minister's argument apparently did not satisfy the government of Kerala and Chief Minister Nambudiripad, who was in Delhi at the time, met Home Minister Pant and expressed the state government's

³⁵ H.D.Malaviya, *'Kerala a Report to the Nation'*, p. 32.

³⁶ New Age, Vol. V . No. 30, April 27, 1958.

³⁷ The Times of India, January 3, 1958.

³⁸ Ibid.

opposition to the move. Soon after in Thiruvananthapuram, on January 11, 1958, a resolution of the secretariat of the Kerala state committee of the Communist Party strongly opposed the central government's move.³⁹ The secretariat resolution characterised the move as 'misuse of power and provisions of the Constitution' for the interest of the ruling party and as 'political discrimination' against a Communist-led government.⁴⁰

Unexpectedly, in view of his general sympathy with left-wing movements, the Central Minister V.K.Krishna Menon, after a visit to Cochin reported that there was a considerable deterioration in the law and order situation in Kerala. For more sinister trends were developing than might be inferred from the seemingly quite on the surface and he expected conditions to become worse.⁴¹ His evaluation, rather than the perennial complaints of the local Congress and the Governor's reports, influenced Nehru, and the New Year (1958) saw the Prime Minister more critical than before the Namboodiripad Government. He rebuked the Chief Minister for the criticism of the president said to have been voiced by the Kerala Communist Party for his reference of the Educational Bill to the Supreme Court. The Prime Minister continued to deprecate the recourse to violent methods by the opposition in Kerala, but now suggested that the state of tension and conflict was largely due to the attitude and activities of the Communist Party. He believed that the Communists in Kerala were adopting the Leninist tactic of pretending to accept 'bourgeois' democracy as a legitimate move in the struggle to establish Communist supremacy. 'I don't want Communism here'.⁴²

³⁹ 'Desabhimani', January 12, 1958.

⁴⁰ H.D.Malaviya, op. cit. p. 32.

⁴¹ S. Gopal, op. cit. p. 57.

⁴² Ibid.

The Chief Minister Namboodiripad claimed that the Communist victory in the Devikulam by-election as to be a fresh mandate from the people. He also remarked that if the opposition and reactionaries persisted in its activities of violent struggle, these would divide the people and might lead to civil war as in China and with the Congress meeting the same fate as Chiang Kai-shek.⁴³ Nehru sought a clarification. The Opposition in Kerala at that time stick on the so called 'civil war speech' and made large efforts and wide propaganda to make it as a heated controversy within and outside the state. Nehru had given up his earlier attitude of neutrality towards the communist effort at parliamentary government and was preparing for a public expression of his disapproval.⁴⁴ He even hinted, in interviews to foreign journalists, that he felt that the days of the Communist Government were numbered.⁴⁵

The development in the Communist countries had a bearing on Nehru's approach to Kerala. He had been worried by the Soviet attitude towards Tito. About the execution of Imri Nagi in Hungary, Nehru's reaction was severe.⁴⁶ He accused the CPI that 'its first loyalty was to the Communist Party of Soviet Union; Policies apart, there was a widespread lack of faith

⁴³ Economic Weekly, August 16, 1958. p. 1075

⁴⁴ S. Gopal, op. cit .p. 59.

⁴⁵ Nehru said : 'So far as the near future is concerned, the Communists in My opinion, will be lucky if they manage to hang on to Kerala, let alone expand their hold anywhere else.' Interview in *Daily Telegraph* (London), 10th May 1958. 'None of us can see very far into the future, but in my opinion the Communists have to have a great deal of luck to be able to stay in power in Kerala much longer.' Nehru to Ralph Oppenheim, reported in *Politiken* (Copenhagen), 16th June 1958. Quoted by S.Gopal.

⁴⁶ Nehru said: 'I am afraid that it will be very difficult for the Soviet Government to outlive this black mark... Many people who believed in the bonafides of the Soviet Union for peace rather doubt them now. Because we restrain ourselves in our utterances, it should not be thought that we do not feel strongly on these subjects. All our moral sense has been deeply shocked.' (Quoted by S. Gopal, p. 60). This execution had almost put an end to the idea of real peace for a generation; and Nehru turned away mentally not only from the Soviet Union, which he held responsible for this cold-blooded act, but generally from Communist Parties, including that of India, which supported the Soviet Government and their policies in Hungary and towards Yugoslavia.

in the bonafides of the Communist Party.’ He said ; ‘Though India had a basic strength, to progress was going to be a hard task because of reactionary forces ; and in this context the Communist Party was, despite its assurances, playing a reactionary role.’ There was also the fear, strengthened by the party’s change of position of Yugoslavia, that it would often function at the dictates of an outside authority.⁴⁷

The increasing rigidity of Soviet and Chinese policies in the first half of 1958, and particularly the Soviet interference in Hungary and Yugoslavia influenced Nehru’s attitude towards the Communists. He had now no faith in the Communist tactics and their style of functioning. Although, he continued healthy communication with Chief minister Namboodiripad through regular and mutual correspondence , he had, in a sense, ceased to listen and now served what was virtually a charge-sheet on Namboodiripad. On the basis of complaints from a large number of persons and organisations belonging to opposition parties and communal and vested interest groups in the state and one sided reports of murders committed by Communists, Nehru believed that a very undesirable situation, full of violence, had developed; and the state government appeared to be making matters worse by extending preferential treatment to Communists. In fact, basically the first Communist government in Kerala did not follow a policy of preferential treatment to Communists.⁴⁸ There was no noticeable discrimination between the Communists and non-Communists.⁴⁹ One another charge was that, many of the Communists serving prison sentences had been released and cases against others had been withdrawn. Actually, the release of political prisoners and withdrawal of

⁴⁷ The Times of India, July 4, 1958.

⁴⁸ Interview with Justice V.R.Krishna Iyar on 23rd May 2010.

⁴⁹ Interview with K.R.Gauri on 8th January, 2011. But there was some kind of preferential treatment prevailed to the people in the grass root level. Some kind of discrimination against the oppressive landed aristocracy also existed.(Interview with Joseph Pulikkunnel on 25th January,2010 at Hosanna Mount Pala).

political cases were not rare in some states in that period.⁵⁰ These were mainly done in connection with the celebration of the days of national importance. Some other charges were, (i) a magistrate who had refused to oblige the Government by dropping a case against a Communist had soon after had his powers curtailed; (ii) and some police officers were said to have been suspended because they had incurred the dislike of Communists. These allegations were already in the air raised and propagated by the opposition and anti-Communist groups and their Medias in Kerala. Nehru opined that: 'Political parties sometimes come into conflict but the situation that has arisen in Kerala is something much deeper than that. It may be that the opposition parties have to shoulder a part of the blame, but the ultimate responsibility must necessarily be that of the Government'.⁵¹

The Prime Minister thought that the Communist government in Kerala had created an atmosphere in which those critical of the Communist party had little sense of security, and many had the feeling that the Government did not treat all parties and groups impartially.⁵² He was not concerned with the intolerant attitude, incessant agitation and wild talk of the Congress opposition in Kerala with the support of some leaders in the Congress high command. He was influenced by the cry of 'insecurity'⁵³ and believed that the communists were deliberately encouraging violence in thought, word and

⁵⁰ The inauguration of the newly formed state of Andhra, in the year 1954 was marked by the govt. of Andhra by the total clearance of every jail in Andhra. In the former state of Travancore-Cochin, the then Chief Minister Sri Pattom Thani Pillai ordered the release of prisoners convicted in the group of cases known as Punnappa Vayalar cases . Travancore Cochin Chief Minister Panampilly also withdrawn the cases in connection with Tamil Nadu – Travancore agitation of 1955. (*KPCC Memorandathinu Kerala governmentinte Marupady* (Mal) Kollam 1959, PP.8-17., see the Kerala Legislative Assembly debates on 9 May 1957.

⁵¹ Nehru to Namboodiripad, 29th July 1958. Quoted by S. Gopal, op. cit. p. 63.

⁵² "Thozhilali"- *Kerala Liberation struggle Souvenir*, Thrussur, 1959; p. 22.

⁵³ The communal organizations, vested interest groups, opposition party leaders and majority of media in Kerala habitually raised the cry of 'arakshithavastha'(state of insecurity). It automatically echoed in Delhi through the mouth of the central leaders of the Congress and PSP.

action.⁵⁴ But, during this time, Nehru was mild and cautious in his criticism against the Communist government and rejected the idea of intervention by the central Government.⁵⁵ He said: ‘... case of mere firing does not justify such an intervention’.⁵⁶

The situation, however, did not endure. In a press conference at Delhi on 7th, August, 1958, the Prime Minister Nehru for the first time, spoke publicly in terms critical of the Kerala Government, and declared that he had not been convinced by their answer to the charges.⁵⁷ He blamed the state government for terrorising people, but least bothered about the activities of anti-Communist Para-military organisations like Christopher Movement, Shanti sena, Kuruvadi sena etc in Kerala. U.N.Dhebar, the then Congress president visited the state, toured many areas and discussed the internal and political situation in Kerala with local Congress leaders and the spokesman of vested interest groups . He returned to Delhi with a negative impression of the Kerala Government working in the interest of the Communist Party and creating a wide spread sense of insecurity in the state.⁵⁸ The Congress Working Committee discussed the Dhebar’s reporting on Kerala and passed a brief resolution expressing concern ‘ at the continuance of a state of insecurity in the State, the prevalence of attacks and murderous assaults and the policy of the State Government which is often discriminatory and not in accordance with the rule of law’.⁵⁹ In his address to the Congress Parliamentary Party meeting, the Prime minister hinted of a thorough investigation or some other impartial and constitutional action.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ The Weekly Kerala , December 27, 1958.

⁵⁵ The Hindu , July 28, 1958.

⁵⁶ Statesman, July 28, 1958

⁵⁷ The Indian Express, August 8, 1958.

⁵⁸ ‘The Kerala Situation’; All India Congress Committee, New Delhi, 1959. p. 3.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ S.Gopal, op. cit . p. 64.

The Chief minister EMS Namboodiripad in a detailed statement on Prime Minister Nehru's references on Kerala refuted all the charges and made some clarifications:

“I am pained to read the references made by Prime Minister Nehru in his press conference in Delhi on August 7 on the present situation in Kerala. It is true, that the last few weeks, some incidents have taken place in our state which are unfortunate and distressing, but the Prime Minister has based himself for his references on the highly exaggerated, half true and even totally false reports presented to him by interested parties who want to create the impression that the situation in Kerala is alarming and requires Central intervention to set right.

If the Prime Minister had cared to make a detailed and objective study of the developments in Kerala for the last sixteen months , he would have seen that the prime responsibility for the distressing aspects of the present situation in Kerala is not on the Communist Party as he has been made to believe, but on the Congress and other opposition parties who, ever since the Communist Party got installed in office in the State through the ballot box, were out to oust it by fair means or foul. ...”⁶¹

The Central Executive Committee of the CPI protested against Kerala being singled out for such an enquiry from Central Government,⁶² and Namboodiripad met the Prime Minister to state the case of the Kerala government. The statement of the Central Committee of the CPI, along with many other things, highlighted that:

‘... Right from the beginning, the Congress party in Kerala aimed at central intervention and was systematically working for creating conditions to bring about such intervention. It thought that this could be easily accomplished by misleading the people under its influence. But instead, it found that the

⁶¹ ‘*Statements on Kerala*’; information document published by Communist group in Parliament; 11th August, 1958. p. 11.

⁶² The Hindu, August 13, 1958. For the detailed text of the CPI-CEC resolution see, New Age, Vol. V, No.24, August 24, 1958. p p.8-11.

policies and measures of the Kerala government are winning for the government and the Communist Party support among the people. In its desperation, it decided to discard all norms associated with the functioning of opposition parties in a democratic set up.

It has been systematically resorting to questionable methods and tactics relying on the fact that it holds power at the Centre. The all-India leadership of the Congress, instead of checking the state Congress leaders, as encouraged such activities. Jawaharlal Nehru, as the leader of the Congress Party never uttered a word against these activities of the State Congress. His recent statements will only be interpreted as support to these questionable methods.

The CEC has no hesitation in saying that in making these statements based on one-sided version, Pandit Nehru has taken a partisan attitude and acted more as the leader of the Congress Party than as the Prime Minister of India...”⁶³

A report by V.K Krishna Menon on a visit to Kerala, which the state government denounced as ‘conducted tour’ confirmed Nehru’s attitude. Subsequent developments in the state including the text book controversies, Varandarappilli murders, Chandanathop firings etc and the information from Debhar, which was collected from opposition party workers and news paper cuttings from anti-Communist press ⁶⁴ also lent support to Nehru’s view that a considerable section of the people in Kerala had a feeling of ‘political insecurity’, in the sense that some political parties were being harassed and others protected. ⁶⁵ The multi level agitation and protest against the government from opposition political parties and vested interest groups created unrest in the state. The consequence of the deliberate propaganda on

⁶³ New Age, Vol. V, No.24, August 24, 1958. p p.8-11.

⁶⁴ New Age, Vol. V, No. 27, September, 14, 1958. p. 9.

⁶⁵ S. Gopal, op. cit.

the so called 'arakshithavastha' (condition of insecurity) was favourable for increasing the demand for Central interference.

On September 12, 1958, the PSP leader Asoka Mehta M.P submitted a notice for an adjournment motion in Lok Sabha to discuss the situation in Kerala regarding the allegation about the breakdown of law and order.⁶⁶ But initially the Hon. Speaker of Lok Sabha declined permission for the motion and made suggestion that home Minister might ascertain facts of the matter and added that he would not hesitate to invoke the jurisdiction of the house to discuss the matter if the incidents of murder, assault and threats to life which Mr. Mehtha had quoted, continued to occur.⁶⁷ J.B. Kripalani, on September, 19 in Lok Sabha made a query about the notice of an adjournment motion given by Dr. K.B. Menon.⁶⁸ The Speaker said that it contained serious allegations and he wanted relevant documents to be submitted in support of the allegations. Dr. Menon had given him a volume of documents including judgements, notifications, news paper reports and affidavits. The speaker satisfied himself with the materials and said that, 'Dr. Menon's motion sought to discuss 'serious situation that had arisen in Kerala as a result of the persistent violation of the fundamental rights and the failure of the Kerala State Government to function in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution',⁶⁹

In the meantime the Kerala Government had forwarded to the Union Home Ministry, their reply to the points referred to it by the Centre, following the adjournment motion of the PSP leader Asok Mehta about law and order situation in Kerala.⁷⁰ The Kerala government sent their reply containing their views on the situation in the state along with voluminous documents,

⁶⁶ The Hindu, September 13, 1959.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Times of India, September 20, 1959.

⁶⁹ The Hindu, September, 20, 1959.

⁷⁰ *Deshabhimani*, September 20, 1959.

including Press cuttings, statements of next of kin of victims of assaults and other evidence.⁷¹ In addition to this, the Kerala Chief Minister had sent a telegram to the Union Home minister on the “impropriety” of discussing in Parliament the Law and order situation in Kerala, especially when cases pending investigation and trial were being made the subject matter of such discussion.⁷² In the telegram the State government pointed out that, ‘a state subject could not be discussed in parliament without the concerned State getting an opportunity to explain its position, especially when some members of parliament who raised the question “tried to slander the State government in the name of explanation”. The telegram said that “unfounded accusations” once allowed to be made would do great harm and could not be under-rated.⁷³

The Speaker of the Lok Sabha had accepted the request of the Kerala Government communicated to him through the Union Home Minister, that the Kerala Government should allowed placing their case before the speaker to regard the motion.⁷⁴ Dr. Menon’s motion read: “The serious situation that has arisen as a result of the persistent violation in Kerala State of fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution and the failure of the Government of Kerala state to function in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution be taken into consideration”.⁷⁵ On September 27, 1959, Minoo Masani moved a privileged motion in the Lok Sabha against the Chief Minister of Kerala.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Times of India, September 21, 1959.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Times of India, September 23, 1959

⁷⁵ The Hindu, September 23, 1959. K.B.Menon’s allegation stated: “the conditions that have developed in Kerala State since the Communists formed their government are fundamentally different from other states in the Union. These conditions have steadily worsened and it is now obvious that they formed part of a calculated design of administration wholly incapable with our democratic constitution”. K.B.Menon Papers, *Record of the Communist rule in Kerala*, No. 27, NMM&L, New Delhi, p. 7.

⁷⁶ The text of Masani’s motion was : ‘The attention of the House having been drawn by a member on September 23 to the telegram sent by Mr. E. M. S. Namboodiripad, Chief

In addition to the strong opposition and intolerance of a major section of the Congress High Command against the Communist government in Kerala, the PSP top leaders like Asok Mehta, J.B.Kripalini, Minoo Masani, K.B.Menon etc also launched powerful move against the Namboodiripad Ministry in Kerala. So the organised move against the CPI Government in Kerala was very active in Delhi during this period.

Though the state government took steps for increasing the wages of labourers in the plantations⁷⁷ and introduced many labour welfare measures, there was only partial success in eliminating the injustices and exploitation in labour sector in plantations in the High Range region. The labour strikes in the plantation sector in the Moonnar region in October 1958 developed as a law and order issue. The fact that the police had opened fire on three occasions in the plantations on agitating labourers whose sympathies were with the Communists suggested that the government, while not influenced solely by the party considerations, was losing control of the situation. So Prime Minister Nehru asked the Central Home Minister Pant to secure more information from the local authorities and to consider ordering the army to move in.⁷⁸ Utilising a representation made by the British high Commission on behalf of some British planters,⁷⁹ Pant offered central assistance to the state

Minister of Kerala, to Pandit G. B. Pant, Home Minister, extracts from which are contained in a report based allegedly on official sources issued by the *Press Trust of India* from Trivandrum on September 20 and published in the Times of India, Delhi and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta on September 21 in the course of which, Mr. Namboodiripad has attributed the motive of slander to some members of the House'. The Hindu, September 28, 1959.

⁷⁷ With regard to the extensive plantations. in Kerala, a committee of representatives of workers and employers had been formed to fix a just rate of wages. According to the terms of an agreement arrived at Kottayam on January 1958, the increased wage system in plantation sector came into existence. For details see. H.D.Malaviya, op. cit. p. 42.

⁷⁸ S. Gopal, op. cit. p. 65. In fact, from the very beginning of the Communist government, Pant regularly obtained information about the Kerala through various channels like Central Intelligence Bureau, State Governor, Top officials of the state police, State Congress Party leaders, Press etc.

⁷⁹ The United Planters Association of South India (UPASI) also submitted memorandum to the central government for central assistance to settle the labor disputes. They

government in restoring law and order, and added that the situation would not have deteriorated if the Kerala Government had referred the demands of the labourers in the plantations to adjudication instead of justifying the strikes⁸⁰. Chief Minister Namboodiripad, not surprisingly rejected the offer of central intervention, claimed that the situation was under control and suggested Pant to advise the planters to negotiate a settlement. The Prime Minister after his discussion with Governor in the first week of November, 1958, expressed his view to the presspersons that ‘the situation in Kerala was “broadly speaking as it was” a month ago when he last addressed a press conference.’⁸¹ The Governor reported that the state administration was trying to assist the Communist trade union organisation to improve its position as against that of the unions supported by the Congress and was censuring the police officers who had attempted to control violence in these labour disputes.⁸² But Pant did not think the time had yet come for central intervention against the Namboodiripad Government.⁸³ He might be waiting for the occurrence of highly complicated situation in Kerala for central intervention.

On November 25, The Congress President U. N. Dhebar released a sharply worded letter, accused the Communist Party and its government in

criticized the State Government’s attitude and argued for a adjudication. ‘*Desabhimani*, October 20, 1958.

⁸⁰ The Association of Planters in Kerala had reiterated that adjudication was the only “inescapable” means for settling the state wide labour dispute in the plantations in Kerala(*The Hindu*, November (, 1958). The planters argued for adjudication because that would help to postpone the demands of labors for a period of four years. Not only that, if adjudication proclaimed, the proposed strike would be unlawful and cancelled. Sreekala M.S., ‘*1957-59:Varthakalkkappuram*’, Thiruvananthapuram,2010; p. 133.

⁸¹ *The Hindu*, November 9, 1958.

⁸² The words and deeds of the State Governor B. Ramakrishna Rao were more like the spokesman and agent of opposition parties in Kerala than as a constitutional institution. The communist attempt to weaken the non-communist trade unions was a usual cacophony of opposition parties. There might be a snitch of truth behind it. Kainikkara Padmanabha Pillai in his book ‘*The Communist Interlude in Kerala*’(KPCC, 1959) presented an exaggerated and distorted picture of the so called Communist attempt to destroy the non-Communist trade unions in Kerala.

⁸³ S. Gopal , op. cit.

Kerala of adopting a “course which must end either in subjugation of all political and constitutional elements under the heels of a totalitarian government or must weaken the country as every interminable cold war does”.⁸⁴ The Chief Minister in his reply had levelled counter-charges against the Congress of violating the fundamentals of the Constitution “in the sense that you adopt every device to maintain the rule of one party, i.e., your party”.⁸⁵

The praising statement of the U.S. Secretary of State, Mr. Dulles about India’s fight against Communism was debated in the Parliament. The Communist leader Bhupesh Gupta⁸⁶ criticised the Central Finance Minister Morarji Desai’s statements against Communist Party.⁸⁷ He sought Nehru’s clarification about Dulles’ statement and its linkage with Morarji’s comments. But the Prime Minister’s reply was that ‘India was not fighting capitalism, Communism or any other-ism but “we are fighting and struggling to achieve our own objectives”.⁸⁸

The changes in the All India Congress leadership were fatal to the Communist government in Kerala. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, as the AICC working committee member in 1957-58, was arguing for a tough stand against the Namboodiripad government. In February 2, 1959, she was elected as the President of Indian National Congress.⁸⁹ One of the major agenda of Indira Gandhi as the president of AICC was the ousting of the Communist government in Kerala.⁹⁰ Until that time, the Congress High Command,

⁸⁴ The Hindu, November 27, 1958.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Bhupesh Gupta was the leader of the Communist group in the Rajyasabha.

⁸⁷ Morarji made attacking statements against the Communists when he visited Montreal in November, 1959.

⁸⁸ The Hindu, December 5, 1958.

⁸⁹ K.Rajeswari, ‘*Communist Bharanvum Vimochana Samaravum*’, (Mal), Aluva, 2005, p.212.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

particularly Nehru was not freely permitted the Kerala fraction of the Congress to form an open tie-up with caste and communal groups in their struggle against the State Government. Indira Gandhi's leadership and influence in decision making in the Congress Party and the election of R.Shankar as the president of KPCC⁹¹ were highly beneficial to the agitators in Kerala. Her influence in the Central Government strengthened the process of central intervention.

The events in Tibet, Chinese suppression of the supporters of Dalai Lama and the exodus of Lama⁹² to India influenced Nehru's attitude towards the Communists. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in her speech at the AICC Session in New Delhi on 10th May, pointed out that the Communist Government in Kerala was trying to promote its party interests in every possible way⁹³. She "accused the Communist Government in the state of exploiting communal feelings for political ends".⁹⁴ But, the Chief Minister EMS, in a lengthy rejoinder to the Congress President at Thiruvananthapuram on May 12, pointed out that:"... It is not the Communists, some leading members of the Congress Party, who are trying to exploit communalism to serve party ends".⁹⁵ Again in the next week Indira Gandhi said in Calcutta that, 'the current agitation in Kerala was not directed against any particular clause or act of the Education Bill formulated by the State Government, but "a popular

⁹¹ R.Shankar was elected as the president of KPCC in April, 1959. Unlike his predecessor K.A.Damodara Menon, R.Shankar was very harsh towards the Communist government in Kerala.

⁹² In 1950, China occupied Tibet. Dalai lama was the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists. In 1956, riots broke out in some places in Tibet. The Chinese forces suppressed the rioters. In march 1959 the Chinese authorities tried to trap Dalai Lama. The Lama got hints about it and escaped to India. It negatively affected the Sino-Indian relations.

⁹³ The Hindu, May 11, 1959.

⁹⁴ New Age., Vol. VII, No.22., May 31, 1959. P.9.

⁹⁵ New Age., Vol. VII, No. 20., May 17, 1959. p. 1.

expression of pent up emotions against the undemocratic methods adopted by the Communist government of Kerala to push forward Bills”.⁹⁶

A section of the central leadership of Congress party raised several allegations against the State government, which were already subjected to broad discussion in Kerala. The principal among them were, ‘interference of varied kinds with the judiciary and the administration, widespread insecurity in the State, political murders, diversion of State funds to party purposes and a serious beginning with indoctrination of school children with communist ideology etc’.⁹⁷ Besides, many varied interpretations about the Andhra rice deal inquiry, the utterances and fake stories of some newspapers, all aimed to present a distorted picture about the Communist government in Kerala in the Indian public sphere. A deliberate attempt was made to propagate that ‘in Kerala that there was one law for Communists and another for others’.⁹⁸

Although the 11th provision⁹⁹ in the Kerala Education Act that teachers in all educational institutions should be chosen from panels drawn up by the Public Service Commission had secured the support of all parties in the Assembly, the caste/communal organisations and vested interest groups intensified the agitation. The Chief Minister saw no scope for compromise and expressed his determination to deal firmly with such opposition. He said: “We cannot withdraw the Act even if we want to. The overwhelming majority regard it as a good piece of legislation. We shall pass all the necessary rules

⁹⁶ New Age., Vol. VII, No.22., May 31, 1959. P.9.

⁹⁷ ‘The Kerala Situation’, AICC, New Delhi, 1959, p. 4.

⁹⁸ Sri. Sdiq Ali, the Secretary of AICC published a circular in July 17, 1959, which contain the official attitude of the Indian National Congress towards the Namboodiripad government in Kerala and the ‘direct action’ against it.

⁹⁹ According to the section 11 of the Kerala Education Act (1958), the Government would maintain a state register of trained teachers eligible for appointment to private as well as government schools. The managers of all educational institutions can select and appoint the suitable candidate from the provided panel of teachers. (See Kerala Gazette Extra ordinary (The Education Bill) July 1957). The private school managers and vested interest groups inexorably opposed this provision. The next government cancelled this provision

and notifications so that the Act is technically, and in every other sense of the word, in force by June 1.”¹⁰⁰ But he sought an interview with the Prime Minister, presumably as part of his effort to secure a peaceful solution.

When the reports and criticism appeared in the national press¹⁰¹ about Congress Party’s line up with the communal groups in the anti Education Act agitation in Kerala, the Prime Minister denied the existence of a joint front of the opposition parties in Kerala and played down the participation of the Congress as being no more than the peaceful protest of certain individuals.¹⁰² He Said: “with this particular movement (of the Nair and Christian communal leaders) the Congress is not connected. ...it does not come in the way of an individual Congressman involved in it ...”¹⁰³ However, the Congress Party in Kerala intensified its participation in the agitation on the ground that the central authority of the party had not instructed them not to have any connection with the movement.¹⁰⁴ Not only that, they got an indirect

¹⁰⁰ New Age, Vol. VII, no. 21, May 24, 1959.

¹⁰¹ ‘The Statesman’ wrote on May 14 : “... what is most distressing in this political gamesmanship is that Communalism is being used to fight Communism. In the present context, many people will view with suspicion a Congress alliance with Catholic Clergy, not to speak of the Muslim League... . Opportunistic alliances will not help Congress...” .’The Free Press journal’(May 14), was more outspoken : “the opposition campaign as it has developed in Kerala during the last few months is sordidly communal. Platforms and newspaper columns spite out unabashed communal sentiments openly and without even the restraint of maturity. The Congress Party has toed this line and bowed before the leadership of Sri Padmanabhan the idol of the reactionary Nair Service Society...”

“Smt. Indira Gandhi’s recent tour of Kerala and the week-end meeting of the AICC have both been a waste from the standpoint of raising the Congress Party in the State from out of its communal quagmire”. The Hindustan Times, The Bharat Jyothi, the Times of India etc also wrote reports and published columns criticizing the Congress tie up with the communal organizations in Kerala.

¹⁰² The Times of India, May 15, 1959.

¹⁰³ New Age, Vol. VII, No. 21, May 24, 1959. p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ On May 23rd 1959, the KPCC President R.Sankar, in a press conference in Delhi said : “ We have informed the matters to the Central Parliamentary Board. The board has not given any instruction that the Congress should not have any connection with the agitation. The Kerala Congress has not taken any decision on this issue. The Congress will have sympathy towards this agitation so far as it helps to create anti-government feelings among the people and thus facilitate to oust the Communists from power.” ‘Mathrubhoomi, May 24, 1959.

permission from the AICC president Mrs. Indira Gandhi when she visited Kerala in the beginning of May. When in a press conference at Erunakulam, she said, “there was nothing wrong in organising an agitation against the Act which had been passed...”¹⁰⁵ So the Congress was speaking with three voices: the members in Kerala were active in violent agitation, the central leadership permitting such activity without approving it, and Nehru disapproving of it but taking no action to curb it.

A section of the Congress High Command believed that, if the Kerala government was allowed to continue for the full term of five years that would be helpful for a solid growth of Communist Party in Kerala and a grave threat to the Congress prospects in the rest of the country.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, they were intolerant towards the spread of popularity of progressive legislative measures of the Namboodiripad government in the rest of the country.¹⁰⁷ The administrative measures of the first Communist government in Kerala were highly helpful for the empowerment of the people in the grass root level and for the elimination of social injustices.¹⁰⁸ The aims and objectives of some of the legislative measures of the government negatively affected the vested interest groups and thereby the Congress Party, because the Party always had benefited and enjoyed the support of such groups. Therefore, the real intention behind the violent agitation in Kerala was not the cancellation of the Education Act or Agricultural Relations Bill, but the eradication of Communist rule from the state.¹⁰⁹

The AICC circular¹¹⁰ pointed out that,

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in ‘New Age’, Vol. VII, No. 23, May 31, 1959. p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Janayugam’, august 9, 1959.

¹⁰⁷ New Age, Vol. VII, No. 31, August 2, 1959. p.7.

¹⁰⁸ The Economic Weekly, special number, July, 1959. p. 892.

¹⁰⁹ The Economic Weekly, May 30, 1959. p. 711.

¹¹⁰ The Kerala Situation’, AICC, New Delhi, 1959, p. 5.

“...In the name of democracy in Kerala, democracy was being subverted and employed for gaining party ends of the Communists. Even if forms of democracy were being cleverly preserved ... its spirit and substance were being rapidly undermined. If such was the grave peril to which democracy in Kerala was exposed the agitators felt they had the right and the duty to ask for the removal or dismissal of the Ministry in accordance with certain provisions of the Constitution itself. This then became their demand...”¹¹¹

However, the agitation was accelerated after the discussion between the leaders of KPCC and certain members of the Congress High Command at Ooty in the last part of May and the beginning of June.¹¹²

In the first week of June, the Prime Minister Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Moorarji Desai, V. K. Krishna Menon and some other leading members of the Central Government and AICC came to Ooty to attend the Planning Seminar.¹¹³ When Nehru came there, he grasped that violent conflict in Kerala was increasing, with political rivalries drawing strength from religious, communal and caste feelings. The Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad entrusted V.R.Krishna Iyer, the State Law Minister to meet the Prime Minister at Ooty and convince him the violent deeds of the Pradesh Congress Party with the support of AICC president against the State Government.¹¹⁴ Krishna Iyer revealed the details to Nehru and with Nehru’s advice he discussed the matter with Indira Gandhi.¹¹⁵ But the Congress President’s attitude was indifferent. Krishna Iyer sought Nehru’s intervention and invited

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² E.M.S.Namboodiripad, ‘*Who is Out of Tune*’, -*Chief Minister Answers to Sri Dhebar*. Thiruvananthapuram, 1959, p. 12.

¹¹³ The Hindu, June 3, 1959.

¹¹⁴ V.R.Krishna Iyer, ‘*Manthriyayirunna Nalukal- Chila Ormakal*,’ in P.Rajiv (ed.), ‘1959-EMS Manthrisabha- Charithravum Rastriyavum’ (Mal), 2007, p. 179. The Hindu, June 4, 1959 reported: ‘ Krishna Iyer characterised the proposed agitation against the Government as an attack on the constitution of India and democracy, because the Congress Party leaders did not seem to care for the allot box or the majority party in the Assembly. The Kerala government felt confident, he said, that they would be able to meet violence with their own machinery and resources’.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Sri. V.R.Krishna Iyer on 23rd May 2010.

the Prime Minister to Kerala.¹¹⁶ Nehru, therefore, in a press statement issued at Coimbatore on June 6, appealed to both sides, to the state government to consider why this deep and widespread distrust of its bonafides had arisen, and to the opposition to give up its methods. He said, "... It seems clear that a dangerous situation, full of possibility of violent conflict, is rapidly developing in that state. ..."¹¹⁷ "... It appears that a very considerable upsurge among large masses of people is taking place in Kerala against the government there. ..."¹¹⁷ The government should treat its opponents with consideration and even seek a measure of cooperation and consensus while the opposition particularly the congress, should function within the limits of democratic conventions. "... The duty of those who oppose is to adhere strictly to democratic and peaceful ways. ..."¹¹⁸ Certainly the government of India would not support sectarian demands or the use of violence.¹¹⁹

However, the statement neither satisfied the Communist Party nor the Congress. The Communists criticised Nehru for not condemning the activities of the Congress in Kerala in a more downright manner.¹²⁰ They demanded that 'the struggle against the Kerala Government must be called off immediately and unconditionally'.¹²¹ While the Congressmen in Kerala, though smarting under the censure of Nehru, were yet encouraged by his acknowledgement of a mass upsurge and made no effort to mend their ways. In fact, they obtained the support and encouragement from Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Her special interest and active support in the activities for ousting the first E.M.S. Government in Kerala, which was then the only non Congress government in Indian states, was very crucial in Kerala crisis.

¹¹⁶ V.R.Krishna Iyer, op. cit. in P.Rajiv (ed.) op. cit.

¹¹⁷ The Hindu, June 7, 1959.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ The Hindu, June 9, 1959.

¹²¹ The statement of Ajoy Ghosh, general Secretary of C.P.I., New Age, Vol. VIII, No. 24, June 14, 1959

The then Central Intelligence Bureau chief B. N. Mallick testified that, “The first person to see the red signal , which was looming large in Kerala, was the then Congress President, Indira Gandhi, and at the Coimbatore AICC Session, she made strong plea for central action against Kerala”¹²². In a press conference at Delhi on 10th June, 1959, the Prime Minister said that ‘he would not at any time desire the overthrow of a legally constituted government through undemocratic process or unconstitutional means’.¹²³ He was “particularly disturbed at the communal element that has been brought into this (the Kerala situation) what might have been a political conflict.”¹²⁴ He talked of the growing feeling of unfair dealing developed in Kerala and emphasized that the true test of tolerance was to put up with what one disliked. These remarks were obviously made in criticism of the Namboodiripad government. He said, “... the Congress certainly is not lined up with the communal groups”.¹²⁵ A correspondent pointed out that, ‘in the past Mr. Nehru had called upon Congressmen to resign when they joined communal parties and asked why he was not doing so in respect of Kerala.’ Nehru replied, ‘he did not know which communal society was being referred to.’¹²⁶ So, he continued to be unsure and unaware about the activities of the state Congress and suggested that if some Congressmen were participating in the agitation, they were functioning more as Catholics than as party men.¹²⁷

Nehru warned the NSS leader Mannath Padmanabhan as well as the Governor of Kerala that the state government had the right to suppress the agitation and the Central government would, if necessary, come to their

¹²² B.N.Mallik, ‘My Years with Nehru’, 1973, p. 348.

¹²³ The Hindu, June 11, 1959.

¹²⁴ The Indian Express, June 11, 1959.

¹²⁵ The Hindu June 11, 1959.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid. Nehru said : ‘... That a number of congress who are Catholics also are pulled in two directions, i.e., as individuals and not as an organization’.

assistance.¹²⁸ He also advised the Congress fraction in Kerala not to associate itself with the activities of the agitators. 'This would mean the abandonment of the party's principles as well as of democratic practice and would cause adverse reactions in both Kerala and elsewhere in India. To talk of pushing out the elected government was to encourage civil conflict and to challenge the constitution; and the Government of India, responsible in the final analysis for law and order, would have to suppress such direct action'.¹²⁹

The violent and well organised form of 'direct action' started in Kerala with a state wide hartal on June 12. When this news spread, V.K.Krishna Menon, the Union Minister for Defence said from Bombay that, the state government should take necessary steps for maintaining law and order. "In democracy the government, was changed either by passing a vote of no-confidence or if the complete machinery of the government was broken down. No government was expected to quit by demands made in public meetings or by demonstrations organised against them".¹³⁰ He ascertained that, 'no state should be treated in a different way in the matter of law and order'.¹³¹ Meanwhile, Mrs. Indira Gandhi's intolerance to the state government and blind support to the agitation went to the extent of asserting that: "Unless the Communists in Kerala put a stop to violence that had been going on there for some time and also desist from harassing workers of opposition parties there could be no solution".¹³²

The situation in Kerala became grave. Angry agitators attacked police station at Ankamali which resulted in the death of 7 persons and many injured. Firing took place in some other places also. Subversive activities of the agitators became the order of these days. The Congress president Mrs.

¹²⁸ S. Gopal , op. cit. p.67.

¹²⁹ Nehru's letter to R.Sankar on June 15, 1959, quoted by S.Gopal, op. cit.

¹³⁰ The Hindu, June 13, 1959.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

Indira Gandhi entrusted Sadiq Ali, the secretary of AICC to go to Kerala to study and submit report on the agitation and other situations.¹³³ U.N. Dhebar also came to Kerala with the instructions of Mrs. Gandhi¹³⁴ to study the developments and extend support to the agitating opposition in Kerala. These leaders visited the places of clashes, discussed the matters with the leaders of local Congress and communal organisations and presented a one sided picture to the press and the Congress Parliamentary Board. However, these leaders in the course of their tour supported the Christian communal propaganda that, ‘only the Christians were chosen for the special treatment of firing’¹³⁵ and thereby they intensified the process of communal antagonism and agitation. In fact, if the state government demanded, the military assistance was ready to protect the government offices and to suppress the disruptive activities.¹³⁶ The Chief Minister, still hopeful that he could avoid calling in the army, retained his faith in Nehru’s democratic instincts and invited Nehru to visit Kerala. Though the Prime Minister had been positive and helpful in refusing to countenance any movement with a communal or caste complexion and in insisting that disputes should be settled peacefully, his reference to a popular upsurge¹³⁷ had overrated, according to Namboodiripad, what was in essence an agitation of Nairs and Catholics.¹³⁸

¹³³ *The Kerala Situation*, AICC, New Delhi, 1959.p. 8.

¹³⁴ The Hindu , June 19, 1959.

¹³⁵ ‘*The Kerala Situation*’, AICC circular, op. cit. They asked: “Why only Christians were chosen for this special treatment is for the state government is to explain”.

¹³⁶ The Hindu, June 16, 1959. It reported: “Certain precautionary steps to protect Government properties particularly the Central government installations in Kerala are being taken by the Army and Chief of the Southern Command is at present touring the State for the purpose of determining the necessary measures in this regard.

The initiative of summoning military aid for this purpose emanated from the state government of Kerala and it is explained that under the existing law the state government can do so whenever it feels there is a likelihood of breakdown of law and order, and that the army’s help is needed for the maintenance of law and the protection of Government properties.”

¹³⁷ Nehru in his press conference at Coimbatore on June 6th characterized the agitation in Kerala as a mass upsurge. The agitators in Kerala highlighted this comment of Nehru in

On June 19, 1959, it was officially announced at Thiruvananthapuram that the Prime Minister would visit Kerala for three days, from June 22 to 24.¹³⁹ Consequently, brisk preparations were made by the agitators to convince Nehru of the mass character of the struggle against the State government. Actually, the so called ‘fact finding tour’ of Sadiq Aali and Dhebar with the instructions of Indira Gandhi was also aimed to give necessary guidelines to the representatives of agitating groups for proper way of presenting their grievances and demands before the Prime Minister. After the tour, Dhebar briefed his impressions about the situation in Kerala to the Congress president and Prime Minister.¹⁴⁰ Some Malayalam news papers reported that preparations were made to bring at least three lakhs of people to Thiruvananthapuram on the day of Nehru’s visit.¹⁴¹ But the Chief Minister expressed the hope that, “Prime Minister Nehru would use his good offices to see that the present controversies are settled”¹⁴²

The Prime Minister arrived in Thiruvananthapuram on 22 June at 2 p.m. amidst demonstrations against state government.¹⁴³ EMS wished him to make clear that the government of India made no distinction between direct action against the state ministry in Kerala or elsewhere, while on their part the Communist government would do their best to resolve the differences by

subsequent days and intensified the agitation. They neglected his urge for peaceful methods.

¹³⁸ The Hindu, June 14, 1959. EMS commented it an agitation of “*Palliachan* and *Pillayachan*” (*Janayugam*, June 8, 1959.)

¹³⁹ *Kerala Kaumudi*, June 20, 1959.

¹⁴⁰ The Hindu, June 21 and 22, 1959.

¹⁴¹ *The Malayalarajyam*, June 21, 1959; ‘*The Deepika*’, June 21 and 22, 1959; ‘*Kaumudi*’ June 21, 1959.

¹⁴² The Hindu, June 20, 1959.

¹⁴³ The Hindu on 24th June reported that, “in response to the call off the leaders of the agitation thousands of men, women and children gathered all along the rout from the aerodrome to the Raj Bhavan, carrying placards such as “Save Kerala from Communist Rule”, “Dismiss the Kerala Ministry”, “Prosecute the Communist ministry”, etc. Inside the aerodrome also, there was a huge crowds carrying such placards.”

discussions with the opposition.¹⁴⁴ But after three days of long talk with Governor and the ministers and the meeting with leaders and representatives of almost all political parties, trade unions, caste groups, communal organisations and spokesmen of various interests such as school managers, Bishops, planters, land holders, lawyers, pressmen etc, Nehru expressed his impression that the situation was much worse than he had expected. The atmosphere was near hysteria with ‘thick walls of group hatred’ and little room for any effort at compromise.¹⁴⁵ The tension was such as he had not seen anywhere before and for which even the reports he had received had not prepared him. He was not ready to discard the agitation. But, Nehru told the Congress and other opposition parties that, while they had a right to agitate, they should maintain norms of public behaviour and not encourage violent and vulgar activity. He also publicly expressed his disapproval of picketing especially by children. He said: “I do not like this method of picketing, more specially that of schools. I do not like school boys and girls being involved in this method of picketing. ...”¹⁴⁶ Nehru denounced the language of news papers in Kerala.¹⁴⁷ He said: “... The newspapers in Kerala seemed to have developed a language of vituperation unequalled in strength and vigour. I would earnestly appeal to them to express their sentiments strongly if they like, but in a somewhat moderate language”.¹⁴⁸ On his return from Kerala, the Congress Parliamentary Board, at Nehru’s initiative, permitted token picketing;¹⁴⁹ but it was expected that this too would be gradually withdrawn.

¹⁴⁴ S.Gopal, op. cit.68.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ The Hindu, June 26, 1959.

¹⁴⁷ He had only seen some translations of Malayalam news papers. *Malayala Manorama* (“Kerala Agitation and Constitution”), *Kerala Bhooshanam*(“We appeal to Pandit Nehru”), etc. wrote editorials in English.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Statement of the Congress Parliamentary Board, June 29, 1959. The AICC circular stated: “The central leadership has also, in the statement issued by the Parliamentary Board, expressed disapproval of picketing. ... It would have gladly counseled the

The Prime Minister, at the end of his visit made three suggestions : (a)suspend the implementation of the Kerala Education Act, 1959, and discuss the controversial clauses of the Act with its critics, (b)convene a round table conference and reply suitably to the oppositions ‘charge sheet’, and (c)a judicial enquiry into the recent police firings.¹⁵⁰ Nehru repeated that the unrest in the State was a “mass upsurge” against the Communist Government and desired it should face fresh elections as “the obvious way”¹⁵¹ to ease the situation. But the Chief Minister’s opinion on Nehru’s comment of ‘mass upsurge’ was that, “if the threat of Central intervention was removed, it would burst like a bubble”.¹⁵² Initially the Chief Minister EMS did not agree to the judicial enquiry into the police firings as long as the direct action was going on. Concerning the two other suggestions, he was prepared to “do something to assuage the feelings of distrust and dissatisfaction which Nehru felt is prevailing here”.¹⁵³ The Chief Minister announced that the government was prepared to suspend the most controversial ‘Section 11 of the Education Act’, regarding appointment of teachers and to discuss with all involved groups, to examine the charge sheet in a round table conference with the representatives of the opposition and to refer any point arising from the discussion on these two questions to Nehru for his advice, and to hold a judicial inquiry into the police firing if the opposition called off its direct action.¹⁵⁴

However, the efforts of the Chief Minister to implement the suggestions of Nehru did not elicit any positive response either from the

withdrawal of even this token picketing but knowing as it did the intensity of opposition feeling in the state it was felt that popular energy would be diverted into more dangerous channels if picketing as a form of peaceful protest was stopped all at once”. ‘The Kerala Situation’. AICC circular, op. cit. p. 10.

¹⁵⁰ *Kerala Kaumudi*, June 26, 1959.

¹⁵¹ *The Hindu*, June 29, 1959.

¹⁵² *New Age*, Vol. VII, No. 28, July 12, 1959.

¹⁵³ *New Age*, Vol. VII, No.27, July 5, 1959.

¹⁵⁴ *The Hindu*, June 26, 1959; *New Age*, Vol. VII, No. 27, July 5, 1959.

opposition party leaders or the leaders of caste, communal and vested interest groups including Bishops. Mannath Padmanabhan, the Commander in Chief of the '*Vimochana Samara Samithi*' characterised the Chief Minister's attempt as "a desperate attempt at clinging into office for some more time."¹⁵⁵ They turned down the invitations from the Chief Minister. The only solution acceptable to them was the dismissal of the ministry and the holding of new elections.

There was no common ground between the Government and other parties in Kerala. This was due to the breakdown of political relations in the state. The opposition had a stubborn attitude. The possibility of a compromise in the state thus came to an end. The Congress Parliamentary Board in New Delhi in its three day session (June 27-29) immediately after Nehru's visit to Kerala reached the same conclusion.¹⁵⁶ Its resolution on 29th June called for elections and the suspension of the entire Education Act as the only way, since "such a course of action would direct popular energy into proper democratic channels". The '*Statesman*' wrote in its editorial on July 1

... "The Congress Parliamentary Board as avoided the main issue, whether direct action to overthrow the legally constituted government is justifiable; the Congress Party will carry on agitation, peaceful 'in action and word', to buttress agitation by others not so peaceful in either".

"The Parliamentary Board has also ignored the Prime Minister's suggestion that the Kerala government holds talk with other parties and interest groups on specific charges brought against the ministry and on amendments to the Education Act, the Namboodiripad Ministry has accepted the proposal. Even if other parties to the agitation will not, the

¹⁵⁵ *Malayalarajyam*, June 26, 1959. *The Hindu*, June 26, 1959.

¹⁵⁶ The AICC circular stated that "popular energy would be diverted into more dangerous channels if picketing as a form of peaceful protest was stopped at all once". '*The Kerala Situation*', op. cit. p. 10.

Congress should have agreed to do so; otherwise, why should the Prime Minister have suggested them?”¹⁵⁷ ...

In fact, the Central government and Congress High Command did nothing to cool down the agitation temperature in Kerala.¹⁵⁸ The opposition violence mounted in Kerala immediately after passing the resolution.¹⁵⁹ The KPCC President Sankar stated: “we are glad that the Congress Parliamentary Board fully appreciated the implications of the present situation In Kerala”.¹⁶⁰

The Communist Party prima facie rejected the Congress Parliamentary Board’s demand for fresh election in Kerala. The CPI Central Executive Committee resolution on 27th June pointed out that the call for fresh elections was “nothing but giving a democratic garb to a discriminatory demand which the opposition parties sought to enforce by illegal means”.¹⁶¹ The Combined session of the CPI National Council and The Kerala State Committee held at Thiruvananthapuram on 13th July clarified that the Party opposed the slogan of fresh election because:

(1) “though apparently democratic it is patently discriminatory and therefore undemocratic; (2) a ministry which has a majority in the legislature must be allowed time to implement its programme – two years are too short a period to do that and enable people to judge the ministry there; (3) if the party which told the people that it should ensure stable government, voluntarily quits, vast sections would feel that voting for the Communist Party was of no use because whenever the opposition created enough trouble and the Centre backed them, the Communists would quit”.¹⁶²

The CPI did foresee the imminence of central intervention. Therefore the Party explained the call for fresh elections as a form of central intervention. Ajoy Ghosh said:

¹⁵⁷ Statesman, July 1, 1959.

¹⁵⁸ H. Austine, ‘Anatomy of the Kerala Coup’, New Delhi, 1959; p. 101.

¹⁵⁹ New Age, Vol. VII, No. 28, July 12, 1959.

¹⁶⁰ Times of India, July 7, 1959.

¹⁶¹ New Age, Vol. VII, No. 27, July 5, 1959.

¹⁶² New Age, Vol. VII, No.29, July 19, 1959.

“It is the Congress High Command, the Central leadership, who must be recognised as the chief culprit. As a matter of fact, the Parliamentary Board’s resolution is itself a form of central invention, is itself a direct and biased intrusion into the struggle that goes on there. ...Their tactics seems to be clear – plan a division of labour. The Centre will constantly dangle the threat of dismissal of the Ministry. The Vimochana Samara Samithi will handle the job of picketing, the students will be hurled into the “duty” of stoning busses, and the Congress leaders openly agitate around the “charge-sheet” and invite disobedience of the police and administrative services...”¹⁶³

But every time the ‘*Vimochana*’ agitation was on the down grade, some artificial stimulus was imported by fixing a D-day and threatening intensification of the struggle in a severer form from that date.¹⁶⁴ The secret sustaining power was the hope held out to the fighting elements that Central intervention had been definitely assured.¹⁶⁵ The Prime Minister making ambiguous statements to the press about presidential take over only encouraged the people particularly the doubting elements into the feeling that President’s rule would sooner or later come.¹⁶⁶ The Chief Minister EMS commented that: “There is so much talk of Central Intervention; it goes on and on. Why does not the Congress High Command intervene, at least, in the affairs of the Kerala Congress”.¹⁶⁷

Meanwhile the ‘*Vimochana Samara Samithi*’ by a memorandum on July 8, urged the President of India to dismiss the Communist government.¹⁶⁸ Besides the ‘Liberation Agitation Committee’ consisted by caste/communal organisations and vested interest groups, the opposition parties, particularly the Congress, persistently demanded Central intervention to end the Communist rule in Kerala.

¹⁶³ New Age , Vol. VII, No. 28, July 12, 1959.

¹⁶⁴ V.R. Krishna Iyer, ‘*Daniel Come to Judgment*’, Ernakulam, 1959, p. 110

¹⁶⁵ H. Austine , op. cit. p. 101.

¹⁶⁶ ‘The Hindu’ reported on July 8 – “Prime Minister Nehru said here, to-day (New Delhi, July 7), that he would like to avoid the contingency of Central intervention in Kerala “but if there is no other way one has to take it.”...

¹⁶⁷ New Age, Vol. VII, No. 28, July 12, 1959.

¹⁶⁸ Malayala Rajyam, July 10, 1959.

The KPCC President R.Sankar on July 10 submitted a memorandum to the President of India, listing the opposition's charges against the state government, and demanded new elections to end the impasse in Kerala.¹⁶⁹

The memorandum, among other things, alleged that "the Kerala government have subverted democracy; they have consistently adopted policies denying the people the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution, they have deliberately upset the apparatus of law and order; they have rendered the Civil Service and the police impotent, and created conditions in which they have to carry out orders of the Communist Party; they are working on the assumption that the government and the party are one and the same, they have institutionalised corruption, security of life and property has disappeared for all except the Communists; government according to the constitution has disappeared; and so large majority of the people have turned against them on account of their policies and misdeeds."¹⁷⁰

The Communist Party continued its efforts to convince the Central Government of the undemocratic activities of the opposition. The Chief Minister EMS Namboodiripad called on the President of India at New Delhi on July 10, 1959 and had an hour's discussion with him. 'The Chief Minister gave an account of the situation in Kerala and emphasised that there is nothing there to warrant Central intervention'.¹⁷¹ Before meeting the President, Namboodiripad had separate talks with Pandit Pant, V.K.Krishna Menon, Morarji Desai, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Hafiz Mohammed Ibrahim. After meeting the Prime Minister at Shimla on July 11, 1959 he reported to the National Council of the CPI session at Thiruvananthapuram.

¹⁶⁹ The Hindu, July 12, 1959.

¹⁷⁰ Highlights of the KPCC Memorandum to The President of India. 'Thozhilai', Kerala Liberation Struggle Souvenir; Thrissur, 1959; p-p 43-50. See "*Rashtrapathikku Samarpicha Kuttapathram*"(Mal),KPCC President, Thiruvananthapuram, 1959.

¹⁷¹ The Hindu, July 10, 1959.

K.M. Munshi ¹⁷², the former member of the Constituent Assembly, visited Kerala from July 8 to 12. During his stay in Kerala, he discussed the Kerala situation with leaders of communal groups, non-communist political parties, non-Communist students-women- trade union leaders, lawyers and press persons opposing the Communist government, Sarvodaya leaders, priests etc. ¹⁷³ After spending four days and travelling many places of agitation in Kerala, Munshi went Bangalore accompanied by Henri Austin, the general secretary of the KPCC and released there a detailed report about his impressions on the Kerala situation. K.M.Munshi's report was actually a charge-sheet against the Communist government. After releasing the report, Munshi urged for Central intervention in Kerala on the basis of Article 356 of the Constitution. ¹⁷⁴ The Catholic Bishops paid for three-men Kerala lawyers' delegation to New Delhi and Munshi helped to draft their memo to the President which was a crude example of Anti-Communist demagoguery in none-too clever legal jargon. During those days Munshi's chief passion was anti-Communism. He gave new contacts and sinister advice to Kerala's opposition leaders in their anti-Communist crusade.

K.M.Munshi glorified the opposition in Kerala for organising a movement "more Gandhian than the one against the British Government in early thirties". ¹⁷⁵ He asserted that the Constitution was collapsing in Kerala and concluded that it was the duty of "every citizen to resist the spread of

¹⁷² He was the ex -Congress leader, former Union Minister for Food ,and former Governor of Uttar Pradesh . In early 1959 Sri. Munshi joined the Swathantra Party along with Masani, Rajaji and N.G.Ranga.

¹⁷³ K.Rajeswari, op. cit . p. 253.

¹⁷⁴ The Hindu, July 15, 1959. The Hindu wrote on July 17 thus : 'The isolation of Karla's Congress leaders from healthy Congress opinion is so great that when they learnt the Union Law ministry was not impressed by their case for Central intervention and their charge-sheet had failed to make a decisive hit they summoned Sri, K.M.Munshi as adviser'.

¹⁷⁵ The Hindu, July 18, 1959

Communism”.¹⁷⁶ While in Bangalore, Munshi activated his old friend V.P. Menon who was the first Home Secretary of the Government of Free India.¹⁷⁷ Speaking in Madras, Sri V.P. Menon “cautioned the Central Government that if the mass upsurge in the state was quelled and the Communists succeeded now it would forebode evil not only to Kerala but to the entire country.”¹⁷⁸ Acharya Kripalani had also charged the Union Home Minister with ‘dereliction of duty’.¹⁷⁹ Kripalani published a booklet in July 1959, entitled “Communists in Kerala – Charges against Government – Centre’s Right to Intervene”, in which he criticised the Congress MPs for their difference of opinion on the situation in Kerala and the style of functioning of the Communist Government in Kerala.¹⁸⁰ Kripalani, without clear conviction about the nature of the violent agitation and communal groups’ tie-up with the Congress in Kerala, urged for Central intervention.¹⁸¹

As the Central Government had not taken any action on Kerala even after July 15, 1959, an emergency meeting of the *Vimochana Samara Samithi* under the aegis of Mannath Padmanabhan was held on July 25, and prepared for the intensification of the struggle from August 9, 1959.¹⁸² Investing Padmanabhan with ‘absolute powers’ the meeting decided to ‘save India’ by ‘paralysing all form of governmental activity in the state.’ The opposition called for a general strike till the Communist ministry resigned, picketing the State Secretariat from August 9, 1959, and launching a no tax campaign.¹⁸³ On the same day the Joint struggle Committee called upon the people to

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ V.P. Menon was the confidential Secretary of Lord Mountbatten. It is said that He persuaded sardar Pattel to accept partition of India. After independence Menon served as the Secretary of the States Ministry.

¹⁷⁸ The Hindu, July 20, 1959.

¹⁷⁹ Times of India, July 12, 1959.

¹⁸⁰ J.B.Kripalani, ‘*Communists in Kerala- Charges against Government-Center’s Right to Intervene*’, New Delhi, 1959, pp. 1-7.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² The Hindu, July 26, 1959.

¹⁸³ The *Malayala Rajyam*, July 28, 1959.

assemble in their thousands in Thiruvananthapuram on August 9, to hold a mammoth demonstration.¹⁸⁴ Mannath Padmanabhan, as decided by the *Vimochana Samara Samithi*, had visited Bangalore, Madras, Bombay, Calcutta and New Delhi between July 17 and 20, 1959 to muster support and raise funds for the struggle against Communists. On 20th July, 1959, he called on the Congress President Indira Gandhi, Union Home Minister G.B.Pant, Union Finance Minister Morarji Desai, Union Minister for Food and Transport S.K.Patil and U.N. Dhebar. Mannath Padmanabhan asked them to speed up the process of central intervention.¹⁸⁵ On the same day he called on the Prime Minister at New Delhi and appraised him that, “unless the Central Government intervened in Kerala to oust the Communist administration, he could not say how long the people’s movement there would remain non-violent”.¹⁸⁶ Besides Mannth Padmanabhan, several other communal leaders and leaders of non Communist political parties, delegation of Catholic Congress etc met the President of India, The Prime Minister, influential Union ministers and Congress High Command, and pleaded for the dismissal of the Communist Government.¹⁸⁷ The delegation of Lawyers from Kerala who supported the agitation also met the Prime Minister and others and submitted memorandum.¹⁸⁸

The Chief Minister Namboodiripad on July 25th, had drawn the attention of the Prime Minister, other influential Union Ministers and the Congress High Command to “the dangerous turn which the liberation movement headed by the *Vimochana Samara Samithi* and participated in by political parties including the Congress has taken during the last few days”.¹⁸⁹ He also reminded them that the state government, though run by a non-

¹⁸⁴ The Hindu, July 26, 1959.

¹⁸⁵ The Hindu, July 21, 1959.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ The Hindu, July 25.

¹⁸⁸ The Hindu, July 22, 1959.

¹⁸⁹ The Hindu, July 26, 1959.

Congress party, was entitled to protection by the Centre when the Opposition indulged in violence.¹⁹⁰

The Congress High Command gave a final push to Central intervention on 25th July, when the party president Indira Gandhi met the president of India. She emphasised that action was long overdue, and argued that she had placed enough material before the government in New Delhi to enable it to take firm and immediate action.¹⁹¹ On 26th July, Mrs. Indira Gandhi again met the Indian President Rajendra Prasad on the basis of the report received from Mrs. Suchetha Kripalani after her tour to Kerala.¹⁹² She declared that: “if the Reds continue to be in power in Kerala they would sow a seed which would one day root out democracy in India. ... If the Constitution did not provide any remedy for the situation the state Government has created it had to be altered. ... Delayed Central action might lead to the situation getting out of control”¹⁹³ ... While, the Communist Party stated that: “If it is sure that the Central government will not interfere, the agitation in Kerala will disappear within 24 hours”.¹⁹⁴ Addressing a public meeting in New Delhi on 26th July, she said: “The Constitution is for the People and not the people for the Constitution. And if the Constitution stands in the way of meeting the people’s grievances in Kerala, it should be changed.”¹⁹⁵

In a Public meeting held on July 28, at Madras, presided over by the AICC General Secretary, Sucheta Kripalani, Mannath Padmanabhan

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. EMS asked: “Are we, of the state Government of Kerala not entitled to the same protection at your hands against these miscreants and instigators of violence and disaster as you have been giving to other State Governments when they had to face law and order problems? Are we to be denied this protection simply because our Government happens to be one formed by a party different from yours?”

¹⁹¹ The Hindu, July 26, 1959.

¹⁹² Paul Srinivasan, ‘Seven weeks that shook the world- a Report to the Nation’, in “Thozhilali”-Kerala Liberation Struggle Souvenir, Thrissur, 1959; p. 110.

¹⁹³ The Statesman, July 26, 1959.

¹⁹⁴ The Deshabhimani, July 27, 1959.

¹⁹⁵ The Deshabhimani, July, 28, 1959

explained the “Save India” programme. He said that the *Vimochana Samara Samithi* would enrol 25,000 volunteers from various parts of the State, that they would march to Thiruvananthapuram at 3 p.m. on August 9, 1959 and they would squat in the compound of the State Secretariat and the ministers’ houses and of the other buildings. The INC was directly involved in the ‘Save India’ proclamation. Sankar said in Bombay that, “the people of Kerala would observe a Save India day on August 9, when ‘every man in the State’ would march on to the secretariat at Trivandrum and ‘we will not return to our homes till the Communist government is thrown out’.”¹⁹⁶ The threat that the State capital would be assaulted and the government ousted from it was possibly going to result in a ‘bloodbath’ and thus gave the Home Ministry sufficient reason to press for central intervention.

The preparation for Central intervention had speeded, around 20 July. During these days, high level discussions were conducted in New Delhi. The Congress President deputed Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani, one of the secretaries of AICC to study the situation in Kerala. It is said that between July 25 and 28, 1959, she had exerted considerable pressure on the State Governor who had been hesitating to make a report to the President of India on the political situation in State, on the plea that the Prime Minister had not asked for it.¹⁹⁷ She told him that she would leave Kerala without his report, as in her view, the constitutional machinery in the state had failed warranting action by the Union Government.¹⁹⁸

On 25th July, Prime Minister Nehru made one hour discussion with the President of India and conferred with Home Minister G.B.Pant on situation in

¹⁹⁶ The Times of India, July 28, 1959. Sankar announced it in Bombay in a public meeting on the Chowpathi sands held under the auspices of the Bombay Regional Congress Committee.

¹⁹⁷ Taya Zinkin, *Reporting India*, London, 1962, p. 185.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Kerala.¹⁹⁹ Discussions on Kerala situations were made among the Central Finance Minister Morarji Desai, Home minister Pant, Congress president Indira Gandhi, Indian President Rajendra Prasad and the Prime Minister.²⁰⁰ The Central intelligence Bureau chief and Law Minister A.K.Sen were asked by the Home Minister; Pant to prepare a charge-sheet against the Kerala Government.²⁰¹ On 23rd July, Pant had the charge-sheet of thirty-six pages sent to the Governor of Kerala, “so that he could have the facts before him and then come to his own decision whether Central action was necessary. The Governor was dependent on the Kerala Police and Ministers to give him the facts and it was clear that most of the facts were being withheld from him”.²⁰² The Governor did not reply for three days. Therefore, on July 26, the Home Minister asked the Home secretary, B.N.Jha who was not in favour of intervention, to ring up the Governor in presence of the Intelligence Bureau Chief, B.N.Mallick, who was a staunch advocate of intervention.²⁰³ The later remarked that “as Jha was opposed to Central take over Pandit Pant wanted that the message should be sent in My presence, so that Jha should not sound indecisive... That evening Pandit asked me whether I was present during Jha’s talk with the Governor and whether the Governor understood the trend properly, and I replied in the affirmative.”²⁰⁴ That same evening the Prime minister , much to the satisfaction of B.N.Jha, was still opposed to the ‘action-wallas ‘. B.N.Mallick seems to have convinced Nehru the next day with his ‘secret information’ that Namboodiripad himself wanted the take-over.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ “*Thozhilali*”-Kerala Liberation Struggle Souvenir, op. cit.

²⁰⁰ The Deshabhimani, July, 26 , 1959

²⁰¹ G.K.Lieten , op. cit.p 150

²⁰² B.N.Mallick, ‘*My Years with Nehru*’, 1973, p. 355. Quoted in G.K.Lieten , op. cit.

²⁰³ G.K.Lieten , op. cit.

²⁰⁴ B.N.Mallick, p. 355-6. Quoted in G.K.Lieten , op. cit.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. Actually, later Namboodiripad himself disposed the so called ‘secret information’. He never desired Central intervention. See- New Age, Vol. VII, No. 32, August 9, 1959.

Thus the Intelligence Bureau Chief played a serious role in Nehru's consent to the Central intervention.

The Communist party and its state government believed that: 'If only there had been a clear announcement on behalf of the Union government that creation of civil commotion by agitators was certainly not a ground for them to invite central intervention, the situation would have been different'.²⁰⁶ On 28th July, Ajoy Gosh, the general secretary of the Communist Party and A.K.Gopalan M.P, one of its prominent leaders, discussed the situation with Nehru in New Delhi.²⁰⁷ They asked him what the Central Government intended to do and were told that no decision had as yet been taken. They requested him to use his influence to cancel the mammoth demonstration being organised to take place on 9th August, if not to call off the agitation altogether.²⁰⁸ Nehru said that he was unable to do this. In that case, it was said that Ghosh and Gopalan replied, 'the sooner you act the better'.²⁰⁹ (But, later the CPI sources disposed this comment.²¹⁰) It would have suited the Congress to allow the agitation continue, for it increased the chaos in Kerala and demonstrated the helplessness of the state Government.

The story of "Centre gave all help" to the Kerala Government appeared in some news papers on 28th and 29th July.²¹¹ The CPI secretary disposed this also. He stated that, "if instead of aiding and abetting the reactionary opposition combine, the Congress High Command and the Union Government just publicly denounced their illegal and violent activities, all

²⁰⁶ H. Austine, op. cit. p102.

²⁰⁷ The Hindu, July 29, 1959,

²⁰⁸ S. Gopal, op. cit. p. 71.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. The Hindu reported on 30th July, 1959 thus : 'Mr Ghosh said that after his meeting with the prime minister previous day and from reports he and the party were getting, it appeared that the decision to intervene had been taken. Perhaps the exact form of the intervention will be decided to-day or to-morrow'.

²¹⁰ The Hindu, July 28 ; the 'Hindustan Times', July 29, 1959.

²¹¹ Ibid.

their provocations plus “siege of the Secretariat” at Trivandrum will collapse like house of cards and peace will be restored”.²¹² The second story was that the Communist leaders also wanted central intervention. The CPI general secretary disposed this too in a Public meeting and in his Press conference.²¹³ Another story, a variant of the above, was that the State Government favoured intervention. Namboodiripad publicly protested against this “untruth”.²¹⁴

The Intelligence Bureau chief Mallick was asked on July 29th morning by the Central Home Minister to verify whether the Governor was sending the report. After checking, it was found that the report was to be despatched by the afternoon’s air service, via Madras, and was expected to arrive in New Delhi the next morning only. Pandit Pant however, wanted the report verbatim the same night. The IB in Madras was asked to get the report from the plane, communicate the contents by telephone to New Delhi and despatch it by plane early in the morning. The result was a report of about thirty pages recommending the supersession of the Kerala Government.²¹⁵ The Union Cabinet on July 30, 1959 held a marathon discussion of more than three and half hours on Kerala situation and decided to advise the President of India to dismiss the State government and take over the administration of Kerala under Article 356 of the Constitution of India.²¹⁶ The decision was taken in the same evening and when the report arrived in the next morning orders were issued immediately, with effect from the 31st of July.²¹⁷

There were some unhealthy features to this whole procedure. The first one concerned the report by the Governor itself.²¹⁸ The CPI maintained that the whole thing was a ‘command performance’, a sort of excuse or after

²¹² New Age, Vol. VII, No. 32, August 9, 1959.

²¹³ The Hindu, July 28, 1959.

²¹⁴ New Age, op. cit.

²¹⁵ B.N.Mallick, p. 356 ; quoted by G.K.Lieten, op. cit. p. 150-151.

²¹⁶ The Hindu, July 31, 1959.

²¹⁷ G.K.Lieten op. cit.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

thought, which came after the decision to intervene had been taken.²¹⁹ The report itself was never released, and only after three weeks a “summary” of some 4000 words “prepared by the Governor himself”²²⁰ and received by the Centre on August 15th was placed on the table of the ‘Lok Sabha’ by the Home Minister on 17th August.²²¹ The wording of the summary and the charges made show an exact similarity with the KPCC memorandum submitted to the president.²²² The summary of the governor’s report as placed in the table of the Lok Sabha begin with the words :

“I am submitting a comprehensive report which will probably repeat many things contained in my previous reports, but which will place before you the situation as it now stands. I recommend in this report that the only solution which is available at present for resolving the serious crisis in Kerala is holding of re-elections after taking action under Article 356²²³ of the Constitution.”...

After a whole range of allegations, which had been disproved or acted upon by the communist Government, in the final part of the summary it was written that:

²¹⁹ The CPI sources pointed out : “On Wednesday (29th July) morning, the Cabinet met for just over two hours and discussed Kerala issues. The press next morning splashed the report that the Kerala Governor’s report had come, and some even went to the extent of saying that it had actually been discussed in the Cabinet on Wednesday morning. But a careful study of the reports the day after – and just a little careful listening-in in New Delhi with one’s ears to the ground – made it clear that when the cabinet was to discuss the all important question of intervening in Kerala, it did not have even the Governor’s report before it.” See , New Age, Vol. VII, No. 32, August 9, 1959.

²²⁰ The Central Home Minister G.B.Pant said that the summary had been prepared by the Governor himself. The Hindu, August 18, 1959.

²²¹ The full text of the summary published in the news papers on 18th August. See, The Hindu, August 18, 1959.

²²² G. K. Lieten op. cit.; The KPCC President R.Sankar on July 10 submitted a memorandum to the President of India, listing the opposition’s charges against the state government, and demanded new elections to end the impasse in Kerala.; The Hindu, July 12, 1959.; See, “*Rashtrapathikku Samarpicha Kuttapathram*”(Mal),KPCC President , Thiruvananthapuram, 1959.

²²³ Article 356, provides for the president to take over the administration of a State if the Government cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

...“ The Opposition has become so widespread that there are absolutely no neutrals in the State. ... The government though not yet fully paralysed, is unable to function in normal way. The agitation has continued for more than seven weeks and has not petered away as expected by the government. It is wrong to argue that it continued so long, because of the hopes of intervention given by the leaders of the centre. On the other hand the fact is that, the leaders of the opposition felt despondent every time they went to Delhi and placed their case before the central government. But considering the present situation I have come to the conclusion that the administration of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the Constitution any longer. It is not considered that a ‘no confidence’ motion should be passed in the assembly or parliament in order to justify the Change of government.”

“ It is very often contended by the Communists as well as other critics that instances of maladministration, interference by party, giving of benefits to ones own party are also to be found in other States governed by the Congress and that such instances cannot justify Central intervention. It may be true that such isolated instances of irregularities and partialities are also being found in other states. But as pointed out by Acharya Kripalani, instances of commission and omission which we find in other states are only the result of individual caprice, prejudice or even misconduct. ... It cannot, therefore, be argued that Central intervention would be unconstitutional whatever may be the intensity of the opposition of the people to the Government, and whatever the magnitude of such opposition”.²²⁴

This was the only report made available. Although the Communist opposition in Parliament asked for it²²⁵, the earlier reports by the Governor were not made public.

²²⁴ Summary of the Governor’s Report to the President of India. See, The Hindu, August 18, 1959.

²²⁵ See, Lok Sabha debates on 17th August 1959; Proclamation in respect of Kerala. Some example: Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat CPI) : Can we get the original. Shri G.B.Pant: The original contain such matter as cannot be disclosed in public interest, not that it effects the substance of what is given in the summery at all. Renu Chakravartty: Does it mean that we shall get only excerpts of the Governor’s report or shall we get the whole report.(Interruptions)

About the dismissal of the first Communist Government of Kerala, 'The Hindu' on August 1, 1959 reported thus:

“COMMUNIST RULE ENDS IN KERALA. PRESIDENT TAKES OVER ADMINISTRATION. ACTION ON REPORT OF GOVERNOR.

New Delhi, July 31. The President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad issued a proclamation this evening assuming to himself 'all functions of the Government of Kerala, dissolving the State Legislative Assembly, and directing that general elections for constituting a new Legislative Assembly for the state be held as soon as possible'."

"The President in his proclamation, stated: "Having received a report from the Governor of the State of Kerala, and after considering the report and other information received by me, I am satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the Government of that State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Constitution". Hence, he has issuing the proclamation in exercise of the powers conferred on him by Article 356 of the Constitution."²²⁶

In the Congress Central leadership, particularly Sreemannarayan, U. N. Dhebar, Sadiq Ali, Mrs Sucheta Kripalini and above all Mrs. Indira Gandhi played very crucial role in the process of Central intervention. S.K. Patil the Union Minister for Food, served as one of the connecting links between the funding sources of the anti-Communist imperial powers and the *Vimochana* agitators.²²⁷ The Union Home minister G.B.Pant and the Central Intelligence Bureau under the commandship of B.N. Mallick also played a very decisive role in the anti-Communist coup in Kerala.

G.B.Pant: You will get a summary of the report which will cover, I think, all that is directly relevant.

Renu Chakravartty: There may be something good in the portions that have been left out.

²²⁶ The Hindu , August 1, 1959. The full text of President's proclamation cited in the Appendix.

²²⁷ T.M.Thomas Isac, '*Vimochanasamarathinte Kanappurangal*' (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 2008,p.250.

About the dismissal of the Communist Government, Prime Minister Nehru claimed that the decision had been ‘hurled upon us by circumstances’.²²⁸ He himself recognised that the ‘dismissal’ was a bad precedent which went against the democratic conventions in India.²²⁹ Even Rama Krishna Rao, the Governor, whose sympathies lay with the opposition, recognised that it had never reconciled itself to the verdict of the elections. Particularly the Communist Party won the Devikulam by-election in 1958, the state Congress seems to have concluded that the only recourse was to secure the ousting of the ministry. However, the methods adopted by the opposition were not such as commented themselves to Nehru. Men and groups representing communal and reactionary elements had resorted to violent agitation and succeeded in involving the Congress. In fact, during that period, the Congress and other opposition parties in Kerala were under the control of anti-Communist communal oriented leaders and groups. Nehru’s own party gradually ignored his pleas for moderation. He was unable or seemed to be unwilling, to insist that such agitation be limited to moderate and constitutional activity. ‘The Economic Weekly’ in its editorial on 22nd August, 1959, pointed out that: “Pandit Nehru himself admitted that he failed to curb the intransigence of the Congress Party which exploited communal feelings in the State in such a shameless and diabolical manner *and would stop at nothing to get the Government out.*”²³⁰

²²⁸ The Indian Express, August 8, 1959.

²²⁹ S. Gopal , op. cit. p. 72.

²³⁰ The Economic Weekly, Vol. XI – No. 34, August 22, 1959, p. 1160.

CONCLUSION

The cardinal contention of the study based on the given factual narrative, is that the crucial cause of the anti-Communist coup in Kerala in 1959 must be located in the clash of interests of the Government of Kerala controlled by the Communist Party of India and the interests of the powerful anti-Communist elements in the state. During the two decades prior to 1957, there existed in Kerala a conducive atmosphere favouring the growth of Communist party as a cadre political organisation. At the same time, anti-Communist elements too found a fertile field for disruptive activities in the state. During this period, the CPI enjoyed the unstinted support of International Communist Movement. As a simultaneous development, the anti-Communist forces in the State took maximum advantage of the multilevel sponsorship of the manifold anti-Communist agencies in Europe and America.

The left political activities in Kerala had their beginning within the Congress Party in 1930s. P.Krishna Pillai, EMS Namboodiripad, A.K.Gopalan etc. led the left wing in the Congress Party in Kerala. These leaders who interfered in people's problems played a leading role in the anti-imperialist agitations like Civil Disobedience Movement. A.K.Gopalan was at the helm of Temple Entry Movement and Hunger March. Involvement of this sort enabled them to expand their popular base which was of immense help to them in organising a powerful left wing in Kerala. The left oriented Congress leaders of Kerala launched a peasant movement called 'Kerala Karshaka Sangam' on 5th November 1933.

In Kerala, the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was formed in May 1935. Thereafter the CSP leaders of Kerala interacted with the Communist Party central committee through the CPI central committee member

P.Sundarayya. In July 1937, the CSP leaders EMS Namboodiripad, P. Krishnapillai, N.C.Shekar and K.Damodaran formed a secret fraction within the Congress party state executive Committee. During the period of 1938-40, the leftist ideology found favour with many Congress men and before long the Congress leadership of Kerala slipped into the grip of the leftists. Thanks to their efforts, workers, peasants and students in large number got incorporated into the mainstream of the nationalist agitation. Literary and cultural activities were organised with a view to implanting in them a strong Communist outlook. Cultural activities were organised for ideological campaign. Study classes imparting insight into political and economic issues were arranged as part of ideological propaganda. Drill camps and physical culture clubs were also organised to serve the same purpose.

The secret committee of the Communists within the Congress Party strove to form a broader platform for the Communists. The first step in this direction was taken in 1939 with the convention of the first organised meeting of the Communist Party of Kerala at Pinarayi, a hamlet in North Malabar. However, they continued to play a double role. In their capacity as the KPCC office bearers, they advocated means of peaceful protest and agitations. At the same time as Communists they gave underhand directions for violent activities. When the Communist Party was banned, the leaders resorted to underground campaign. Their observance of 15th September, 1940 as 'anti-repression day' and the subsequent government reprisals contributed to the eruption of violent incidents in certain parts of North Malabar. These incidents indirectly strengthened the Communist Party.

The year 1945-46 witnessed the adoption by the Communist Party of a new militant line at the national level. The enlargement of its mass base could be attributed to the Punnappa- Vayalar uprisings in Alappuzha and the peasant insurgencies in Malabar. But the Communist Party suffered some set

backs consequent on the acceptance of 'Calcutta Thesis' of 1948 and the path of militant agitation that it advocated. Hence in 1951 the Party was forced to adopt a relatively moderate and tactical line. To organise its mass base the Party vigorously interfered in the problems of the people at the grass root level. Thus the organisational structure, efficient leadership, tireless work of the party cadres etc led to the growth of the Communist Party in Kerala. With the newly acquired confidence, the party came to play a crucial role in the United Kerala Movement.

As a part of the linguistic state re-organisation in India, the Kerala state sprang into existence on 1st November, 1956. During the period prior to 1957, the people of Kerala had been fed up with wrangles within the Congress party. This resulted in unstable governments and decline of the pristine prestige of the Congress. For want of a secure government, the chronic economic problems got neglected. This in turn intensified popular dissatisfaction with the Congress and left a general feeling of frustration and disillusionment

During the elections of 1957, the Communist Party channelised this discontent to its own advantage. It attempted to convince the people that the Congress party was inherently incapable of setting up a stable government. The people felt as if their desire was crystallised in the Communist propaganda slogan- 'inherently incapable'. Unlike the Communist Party, the other left parties in the state, like the Praja Socialist Party(PSP) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party(RSP) were lacking a mass base. But, the CPI attempted for a coalition of the left parties to contest the election of 1957. However, this attempt failed as all the parties except PSP and Muslim League refused to respond positively. Those among the people of Kerala who were dissatisfied with the Congress and who were not yet committed to any party

or ideology as such, decided to vote for the Communist Party, as it was deemed to be the best-organised and well disciplined of the left parties.

The Communist Party's election Manifesto promised to provide everything to everybody, and raised the hopes of solving substantially the problems of the State. Such promises tended to attract the discontented elements to the programme of the Communist Party.

In the election the Communist Party got a simple majority and formed its government. The eleven member cabinet headed by EMS Namboodiripad left no stone unturned to carry out the promises embodied in the election Manifesto of the Party. Soon after assumption of office the Chief Minister EMS released a statement having a bearing on policy of his government. It unfolds the essence of the manifesto . However the well intentioned statement was confronted with multifarious hurdles.

The first EMS Namboodiripad government bore some features which distinguished it from the later leftist governments in the state. On account of the inexperience, certain inadvertent mistakes were unavoidable on the part of the government. Moreover thanks to high expectations cautious voices were unheeded.

One of the primary measures adopted by the government was the release of political prisoners, predominantly Communists. Discussion was also made to commute certain death sentences. These measures combined with the new police policy, despite being progressive in nature, intensified the apprehensions of the opponents of the government. The new government pursued a transparent police policy which was emulated not only by the subsequent governments in Kerala but also state governments elsewhere in India. The government restructured the police force on scientific lines and

effected its transformation from the instrument of oppression of the state into a highly people friendly force.

The government devised a programme of increased employment, speedy industrialisation and a fare deal for the exploited sections. There were considerable progress and development in the labour and industrial sector. The government stood for recognition and consolidation of trade unions, for fostering the unity of working class and for strengthening their collective bargaining power. And its approach towards working class agitations, apart from being original, represented a fundamental departure from the past.

The fiscal policy of the government focussed on buttressing the economy of the state. Settlement of industrial disputes through mutual consultations and negotiations was emphatically stated. Enhancement of wages of the labourers in agricultural and industrial sectors elevated the living standards of the working class. Determined to serve the people in all possible ways the Communist ministry attempted to place the government at a high pitch of efficiency. To save the purpose an Administrative Reforms Committee consisting of competent personalities was constituted with direction to submit its report within one year. The report submitted in August 1958 highlighted the need for democratic decentralisation of power. Accordingly two legislations were enacted to better the functioning of local self government.

The government was highly concerned about the food problem of the state. To tackle the problem the government went to the extent of procuring rice from Andhra without following the requisite formalities. The resultant allegations of corruption plagued the government. To refurbish its image, the government ordered an enquiry. The opposition and the media blew certain observations of the enquiry commission out of proportion to hit the government.

The Kerala Educational Act too crept into the vortex of the controversy. This progressive piece of legislation was intended to bring social justice in the sphere of school education. But the vested interests feared that the new legislation would deprive them of their chance to continue their exploitation in the aided school sector. Communal organisations in general and Catholic Church in particular offered stiff resistance to the educational reforms. This disaffection in the educational field furthered the process of anti-Communist agitation leading to direct action.

Next, the Communist Ministry bestowed attention on ending injustice and exploitation in the realm of agriculture. Among incipient measures mention may be made of Eviction Pending Ordinance and the Kerala Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act. The government opted for anti-feudal measures rather than a full-fledged socialist reconstruction of the agrarian system. The immediate purpose was to deal a lethal blow to the landlords, intermediaries and usurers and make the tiller master of the land. The Communists of Kerala tried their utmost to enlist the support of the peasants and the workers for the Bills they introduced. But their efforts failed to produce the anticipated results, in the face of the stiff opposition of the landed gentry and the might of the constitutional weapons applied by the Central Government.

The growth of Communist movement in Kerala synchronized with the propaganda against Communism. The anti-Communist Propaganda spear headed by the Catholics in Kerala cannot be taken in isolation. It was indeed inseparable from the anti-Communist activities of international Catholicism. In fact the origin and growth of Communism in the western world coincided with the origin and growth of anti-Communist propaganda under the aegis of Roman Catholic Church. This is amply evident from the scornful statement made by Pope Pius IX as early as 1846. In his words “That infamous doctrine of so-called Communism which is absolutely contrary to the natural law itself,

and if once adopted would utterly destroy the rights, property and possessions of all men, and even society itself.”¹ In 1878 Pope Leo XIII went to the extent of defining Communism as “the fatal plague which insinuates itself into the very marrow of human society only to bring about its ruin”.² What is crystal clear from these statements is the inherent abhorrence of Catholicism towards Communist movement. Encyclical letters condemning communism in fierce words were sent by Roman Popes to various centres of communism to foil it in foetus form. Such letters served as guidelines for Bishops and clergy to evolve effective strategy to prepare a coffin for Communism.³

The ideological crusade of the Catholic Church against Communism was launched in Kerala in 1930s and 40s . As a result of this several anti-Communist literary works were circulated under the auspices of the “Sacred Heart League”, an offshoot of the Catholic Church in Kerala. The anti-Communist propaganda in the state was integrated with the formation of the ‘Anti-Communist Front’(ACF) in 1951 by Father Joseph Vadakkan, a seminarian hailing from Thrissur . His fire-brand speeches, study classes and pamphlets vehemently opposed the Communists. Even though the ACF copied the same methods of the Communists for counter propaganda it could

¹ ‘*Encycl. Que pluribus*, Nov. 9, 1846 (Acta Pii IX, vol. I, p. 13). Cf. Syllabus, s IV, (A. A. S., vol. III, p. 170)’ Quoted by Pope Pious XI in his Encyclical Letter “*DIVINI REDEMPTORIES - COMMUNISM THE ENEMY OF GOD*”, Dublin, April 1937.

² ‘*Encycl. Quod Apostolici muneris*, Dec.28, 1878 (Acta Leonis XIII, vol. I, p. 46)’ Quoted by Pope Pious XI. Op. cit.

³ The most important item in this regard is the Encyclical Letter “COMMUNISM THE ENEMY OF GOD” originally written by pope Pius XI in Latin under the title ‘*ENCYCLICAL : DIVINI REDEMPTORIS*’ and sent ‘To the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops and other Ordinaries in peace and communion with the Apostolic See’. Its English translation was published in April 1937 at Dublin by the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland’. Such works from the Popes contain the official attitude of the Catholic Church towards Communism. In this book the pope condemned Communists as “the most persistent enemies of the Church”. After interpreting the theory and practice of Communism in apocalyptically, the pope suggests various means and methods for eradicating Communism.

not retard the growth of the Communist Party in Kerala. The Kerala Churches' protest against Communist Party is an inseparable part of Christianity's traditional enmity with Communism in Europe. The Christian community in Kerala consisted of two specific identities, but both of them had their anti-Communist ideology in common. The first group belonged mainly to the Syrian Christians, Marthomites and Jacobites, the rising groups in all economic and administrative spheres. This leading business as well as farming community, dominating the rubber, tea and coffee plantations, was alarmed by the actions and intentions of the Communist government in the economic field. Their class position and link with international anti-Communist church organisations united them with similar social and economic interests. This combination would constitute from the beginning 'the hard kernel of anti-Communist resistance'⁴. The other group consisted mainly of "economically backward Latin Catholics for whom religion was nothing "but the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces".⁵ This evil terrestrial force was the rising Communism. Among Latin Catholics only a small section of the clergy and the educated and rich laymen had interests similar to the Syrian Christians. They, however, could make their followers believe that 'evil' Communism was launching the attack on the 'good' supernatural forces: "The devil can offer a good deal that can attractive, nevertheless the wages of his service is ultimately death, the death of the soul"⁶. Participation in the struggle thus became a sacred duty.⁷

⁴ G. K. Lieten, *Education, Ideology and Politics in Karla 1957-59*. Social Scientist, Vol. 6 No.2 (September 1977), p. 17.

⁵ F Engels, *Anti-During*, Moscow 1969, p 374. quoted in G. K. Lieten, op. cit.

⁶ G.K. Lieten, op. cit.

⁷ K. Rangaswami, the political correspondent of the Hindu wrote on 31st July 1959 thus : ...'The campaign is no doubt well planned, efficiently organized and adequately

Kerala in the years 1957,58 and 59 witnessed the consolidation of communal forces against the Communist government. Another allied development was the transformation of the caste reform movements into pressure groups of vested interests. Consequently, pernicious influence was felt in every aspect of Kerala society and politics in the subsequent period.

Among the Christian Communities in Kerala sprang up such anti-Communist communal groups as the 'Anti-Communist Front'(ACF), the 'Social Scout Movement', the '*Santhi Sena*', the 'Christopher Movement', the '*Mariya Sainyam*' etc. The first three were organised and led by Father Joseph Vadakkan. The Social Scout Movement and the *Shanti Sena* were the branches of the ACF. Para-military in nature, volunteer organisations perpetually opposed the activities of the Communists. The '*Mariya Sainyam*' was the women wing of the anti-Communist front of the Catholic community. Among the anti-Communist regional communal organisations, reference may be made to the 'Anti-Communist Volunteer Corps' (ACVC), '*Kuruvadi Sena*', '*Niranam Pada*', '*Kuroor Sena*', '*Thoppi pala Sangams*' etc. There activities were primarily directed to subvert the First Communist government in Kerala.

The 'Christopher Movement' was an anti-Communist private militia organised, trained and fostered by the Catholic Church in Kerala. In 1957 the Christophers under the patronage of Catholic hierarchy in Kerala launched a truceless crusade against the Communist government, drawing financial support from planters and the moneyed. The pretext of 'faith in peril' was exaggerated by the Church to whip up the passion of the Christopher volunteers. Sacrifice in defence of religion was glorified by the Bishops. Pecuniary aid from alien lands like America was received by the Church

financed..... But it is undoubtedly the Christian community which has supplied the bulk of the manpower and material resources for the struggle..."...

authorities for the upkeep of this mercenary. The All Kerala Catholic Congress(A.K.C.C.), the religious organisation of the Catholic Christians in Kerala, tried its level best in engendering political hostility and communal animosity towards the government. Emulating the example of the Catholic Church, all other denominations of the Christian Church opposed all the progressive administrative measures of the first Communist government.

From the Hindu Community too, the Communist government faced serious threats. Despite its initial support to the government, the NSS gradually reversed its attitude. That their economic interests were adversely affected by the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill,1957 induced them to adopt an anti-government stance. The reservation policy pursued by the government also rubbed the NSS on the wrong side. The government was dubbed as 'pro-Ezhava' and 'anti-Nair'. Thus the NSS worked hand in glove with the Christian and Muslim communal forces to overthrow the Communist government. The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) the caste organisation of the Ezhava community also extended support to the deliverance agitation. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) also threw its weight behind the opposition political parties and communal organisations in the so called liberation struggle.

The opposition political parties - the Indian National Congress and the Praja Socialist Party - effectively utilised the protests of the communal forces to strengthen the anti-government agitation. The leaders like Panampilli Govinda Menon, P. T. Chacko, R.Shankar etc gave galvanizing guidance to this agitation. They enjoyed the full support of the Congress Central leaders like U.N.Dhebar, Sreemannarayan, Sadiq Ali and above all, Indira Gandhi.

An intellectual atmosphere congenial for anti-Communist consolidation was created by the creative contributions of some gifted writers and talented cultural activists of the period. Through articles, essays, dramas,

poems and pamphlets, they attempted to generate anti-Communist sentiments in the general public.

Even though, the joint direct action of the communal forces, vested interests groups and opposition political parties to overthrow the Communist government openly began in June 12, 1959, the agitation against the government had started much earlier. Its origin could be traced to the beginning of the EMS ministry. The very initial measures of the government alarmed the vested interest groups. They raised the cry of '*Arakshitavasta*' and found fault with all administrative measures. Quite unjustified was their intolerance towards the Communist ministry which worked along constitutional lines.

The agitation had different phases and various dimensions including the real reason, genesis, inspiration, necessary support and assistance etc. They evolved from some external forces which had international dimensions and power. The Catholic antagonism against Communism was the chief reason.

Reforms in the educational sector were absolutely essential and the Kerala Education Bill chiefly aimed to safeguard the interests of the exploited teachers. But it is worth mentioning that the opposition to these reforms had not emerged either from teachers or from the parents. The entire opposition to the reforms was engineered by private school managements, spear-headed by the Catholic Church. The Churches in Kerala had diverse motives behind the establishment and functioning of educational institutions. They aimed to mould the new generation on their own line of thinking and had business motives and profit making concerns. The violent agitation or the so called "upsurge" was mainly in the Catholic dominated areas. The Catholic church in Kerala used its massive capacity to oust the government.

With the Kattampilli land encroachment agitation of October-November 1957, the opposition launched its direct action. Even in that miniature struggle, the 'Christophers' had been employed and plenty of money had been poured. The opposition parties and media effectively used the allegation on 'Andhra rice deal' and the observations of the Enquiry Commission Report in their propaganda against the government. The protests of the opposition parties along with the agitation of communal groups were so potent that it posed a serious menace to the government.

The victory of the Communist candidate in the Devikulam by-election infuriated the opposition parties and communal groups. This was followed by the Chief Ministers famous 'Coimbatore speech', which was largely misinterpreted. It created much controversy in the political discourse of Kerala. The opposition parties diverted the 'Seetharam Mill dispute' as a political agitation against the government. In this situation, the propaganda and campaign against and in favour of the government in the Thrissur region finally culminated in the cold blooded murders at Varandarappilli and the same period witnessed the 'one anna agitation' of the student organisations.

The labour strikes and police firing in Chandanathop and Moonnar intensified the anti- government agitation. The government's police policy and the direction that the police should not interfere in the mass agitations were beneficial to the agitators. The government was reluctant to use the force and suppress the agitations. The Communist government clung to a neutral police policy, nevertheless, on many occasions the police were influenced by some external forces including the capitalists, retired police officers, Opposition leaders, Central Intelligence Bureau and the like.

The protest of Mannath Padmanabhan and the NSS was certainly for protecting the vested interests of the upper class Nairs. The land reform measures of the government collided with the interests of the land owning

Nairs and Christians. Naturally, the main offensive against the Kerala Agricultural Relations Bill came mainly from these communities.

The much controversial political shift in the vast masses of people and the creation of two solid blocks for and against the government together blended into the big argument based on a 'people's upsurge in Kerala' frequently referred to by Prime Minister Nehru.

The Communist government through their actions antagonised the more vociferous classes and hence invited all the sound and fury against them. The planters who were unhappy about the high rate of agricultural income tax and the labour policy of the government too was not beneficial to them. The formation of the labour contract societies led to the weakening of the monopoly of P.W.D. contractors and it further resulted in their anti-government activities. The toddy shop renters were robbed of their intoxicating profits in areas where 'toddy-tappers' co-operatives' began to function. They therefore bore a grudge against the government, which set up such societies.

The landlords, as a class were spread over the whole state and had a great hold upon middle class opinion. These landlords, who on the verge of destruction due to some clauses in the Kerala Agricultural Relations Bill were doubtful of the agrarian reforms of the Communist government. They tried their level best to oust the government. The big landlords of Kuttanad went to the extent of threatening to leave all their lands fallow till the Communist ministry was given the boot. Thanks to the Kerala Education Act, the school managers also turned against the government. The liberal and favourable policies of the government towards the agricultural debtors provoked the banking community of Kerala.

A great array of politicians, priests, planters, bankers, lawyers, landlords and their families entered into the direct action fray. The dynamic role of these special interest groups in strengthening the struggle against the Communist government cannot be overrated. The church, of course, was the most influential, powerful and the most affected and enraged. Another communal group interest was that of the Nair Service Society which was aggrieved by the communal reservation principle and was so highly enraged by the land legislation.

The political parties in Kerala had all been against the Communist ministry right from the beginning. The INC, the PSP, the IUML and the RSP had worked in a loosely-knit 'united front' against the government. They utilised the opportunity and this alliance of special groups exerted high social and political pressure over the government. The same resulted in the launching of the "liberation struggle". There was enormous money behind it.

The masses engrossed in the agitation fall under two categories. The Church and other communal groups including the Muslim League and Nair Service Society formed one category. The political parties and vested interest groups constituted the other. They waged a 'do or die' struggle against the government. What ensued was a kind of upheaval in the towns. The rural parts of the state remained largely unaffected.

The political leaders of the opposition parties persistently sought central intervention in Kerala. Occasionally the senior leaders of the Congress party from Delhi also took the press into their confidence to create the impression that the situation in Kerala warranted central intervention. The Central Intelligence Bureau, particularly its Director Sri. B.N.Mallik played a very decisive role in the dismissal of the ministry.

The class structure of the then Kerala society and the living conditions of the people were closely connected with the so called 'mass upsurge' and the large unemployed population of the state constituted the cardinal element of the direct action process.

It is true that the agitation front attracted huge flow of money and the major influx was from abroad. The Prime Minister admitted in the Parliament that a huge sums of foreign money had been credited to the account of the churches in India. It is generally accepted that the Americans wholeheartedly supported anti-Communist struggle in Kerala. All these factors cumulatively gave rise to a fierce tempest in the political atmosphere of Kerala and in turn hastened the exit of the Communist government.

The attitude of the media was another crucial factor during the time of agitation that the antagonism of press towards the existing government was expressed through their daily reports and editorials. This contributed to the creation of 'paid news' in the state. The editorials and other reports of the majority of leading dailies during the time carried venomous news against the Communist government that resulted in creation of an anti incumbency factor. But the national press during the time observed somewhat a sagacious neutrality in their reports and editorials.

When compared with preceding administration, the rule of the Communist government was commendable. The period witnessed a holistic developmental approach which blazed a new trail of a novel way of administrative as well as social progression. Even though, the government had adopted and implemented a series of developmental and progressive policies, all these turned futile in the midst of a huge and massive anti-government movements spearheaded by the opposition and the communal leaders. The actual cause behind the downfall of the Communist government was the abundant resources accumulated by the leaders of the Communal groups and

opposition and their unscrupulous use in the political and economic spheres of Kerala. Majority of the toiling masses including the poor peasants, the dalits and the backward classes supported the first popular government in Kerala. But their backing was not adequately demonstrative or conspicuous.

Around the middle of 20th century, Kerala witnessed an unprecedented awakening in the socio-economic and political realms. These developments created a new civil society that was fraught with a lot of problems. We have seen how such conflicts got rearticulated in the political society where it became much contested. These conflicts became entrenched with the several aspects of social change that included among other things the coming of the oppressed castes into the social sphere. One could take this as a continuation of the anti-feudal mobilization that wanted to redraw the contours of social power. The dominant castes and classes wanted to reaffirm the subordination of the oppressed castes that became very strident in many of the slogans of the anti-communists. One classic example is the slogan... 'Let Pulayan Chathan plough the field and Chacko rule the land' 'we will make you address us as the Lord' and make you take you gruel in spathe...' All these have been strong markers of caste subordination. A perceived threat to the caste/class domination created a situation of imminent social change and losses of power to the dominant classes and castes. This was in reality a logical corollary of the prolonged process of internal conflicts and contradictions in the extant social order. However, certain elements of traditional order lingered on with minor apparent alterations. The establishment of the first popular government in Kerala in 1957 was in a sense a culmination of the inevitable conflict between the old and the new socio economic orders. The attempts and activities of the government were directed to counter the effects of the inherent evils and flaws of the then existing socio-economic set up. The government under the leadership of EMS Namboodiripad conscientiously endeavoured to bring about radical changes in the socio-political order within

the broad framework of the democratic constitution of the country. The policies, programmes and methods devised by the Communist government militated against and were detrimental to the interest of the champions of the erstwhile order. This naturally fomented violent and protracted agitation. In fact the roots of the '*Vimochana Samaram*' in Kerala lay embedded in the conflicts of interests of the Communist led government and the anti-Communists. Thus, the ship of the first popular government in the state was destined to be caught in the storm of disruptive activities engineered by the opponents.

GLOSSARY

Aathmakatha	: Autobiography
Aikya	: United
Akhanta	: Indivisible
Anna	: Paisa
Arakshitavastha	: State of insecurity
Aswamedha yaga	: A vedic ritual used by horse
Avarnas	: Person belonging out caste among Hindus
Bala Sainya Shakakal	: Branches of Juvenile Force
Bhagavan	: Male god
Bharanam	: Administration
Chotta	: Small
Cheema Konna	: Glyricidia Maculata/plant/Green shrub for organic manure
Desadhipan	: Leader of a unit of ten
Desavyuham	: A unit of Christopher force comprising ten members
Devaswam	: Temple administration
Grandasala Sangam	: Library Association
Guru	: Savant mentor / Teacher
Harthal	: A method of agitation by closing down the institutions, shops etc.
Jatha	: Procession
Janma	: Birth
Janmi	: Proprietorship of land by birth (One who holds jenmam land)
Janmikaram	: Tax to the landlord
Jathi	: Caste
Jihad	: Sacred combat/Holy battle
Kalari	: Gymnasium or military academy to train traditional martial art

Kalari Asan	: Trainer/teacher of traditional martial art
Karayogam	: local unit of the NSS
Karshakan	: Peasant / cultivator
Karshaka Sangam	: Peasant Union
Kayal	: Back water
Kisan	: Peasant/ cultivator
Knicker	: Trouser
Krishnopher	: Force bearing the name of Lord Krishna
Kudikidapkars	: Hutment dwellers
Kuruvadi	: Short Stick
Lathi	: Cane
Mathrubhumi	: Homeland
Mazdoor	: Labourer
Moonnam mura	: Police Harassment of heinous order/ Physically torturing by the police / police persecution
Nakshathra	: Star
Nairphers	: Nair militia
Pada	: Armed force
Pathradhipar	: Chief editor of a news paper
Pattini Jatha	: Hunger March
Pramanis	: Key figures
Pirive	: Collection
Poorna Swaraj	: Full Freedom.
Praja	: People
Puramboke land	: Surplus revenue land
Rajyam	: State/ country
Sabha	: Committee/ organisation
Sainyam	: Military force
Samadhi	: Demise/decease
Samaram	: Struggle
Samithi	: Committee

Sangam	: Association/Gang / group
Santi sena	: Peace keeping force
Satyagraha	: Non violent struggle / passive resistance
Samyukta	: Concerted/Joint
Sena	: Military force
Smaranakal	: Reminiscences/recollections
Thozhilali	: Worker/Labourer
Thoppipala	: Hat made of the spathe of aracanut palm
Ooranma Devaswam	: Traditional body of temple administration
Vanchanadinam	: Deception Day
Vanitha	: Woman
Vidhyalaya Samrakshana	
Samithi	: School Protection Committee
Vimochanam	: Liberation
Vyuhadhipan	: Chief of the units of Christopher force
Yaga	: Sacrifice/Ritual

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