

**FROM PETITIONS TO PROTEST—
A STUDY OF THE POLITICAL MOVEMENTS
IN TRAVANCORE – 1938-1947**

Thesis

submitted to the University of Calicut

for the award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

HISTORY

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
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2004

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the present work on "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore - 1938-1947" is a bonafide research work carried out by me under the guidance of **Dr. K. Gopalankutty**, Reader in History, Department of History, University of Calicut. It has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the present work entitled :From Petitions to Protest – A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore – 1938-1947” is a bonafide research work carried out by **Smt. M. Sumathy** under my supervision and that it has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma earlier.

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PREFACE

The study on “From Petitions to Protest – A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947” is an attempt to examine in a critical and analytical way the various undercurrents, stresses and strains that existed in the society of Travancore which ultimately led to the union of three backward and aggrieved communities and the formation of the Joint Political Conference which used the strong weapon of abstention against the Government of Travancore for the redressal of their grievances and in later years transformed itself into the Travancore State Congress. This political organisation took up the cause of Responsible Government in Travancore at a time when the fight for freedom from the British was going on in British India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Started in 1938 it undertook strong political agitations in the State resulting in hectic political activities throughout Travancore and ultimately won the battle in 1947.

For the present study all the materials available at the National Archives Delhi, Madras and Trivandrum have been utilised. In addition to sources available at the Cellar Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum, Kerala State Archives, Trivandrum, AICC Papers and AISPC Papers have also been used. I have also utilised sources available at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. It has been supplemented by the Government of India Records of the Foreign and Political Departments, the Native Newspaper Reports for Madras State, the Crown Representative Records and the Private collections in the original and microfilms available at National Archives of India. The Cellar Records at Trivandrum, though not properly arranged helped me to understand various political developments and their undercurrents in the State and the attitude of the Government of Travancore towards it during the period under discussion.

The Theosophical Society Library, The Connimara Library, C.P. Rama Swami Aiyer Foundation, Chennai, Kerala State Legislative Assembly Library, Kerala

University Library, Trivandrum, the Calicut University Central Library, Calicut University History Department Library, Thenhipalam and the personal library of my husband etc. were of immense help to me for the study.

The present study has been a long time in the making and over the period I have accumulated a large number of debts. I have many individuals and organisations to thank for the help given to me to facilitate the present study. I remember with respect and gratitude Prof. M.P. Sreekumaran Nair, my erstwhile teacher, who originally mooted the idea of the topic and development of the argument. I am very much indebted to him.

My thanks are also due to Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan, former Chairman, Indian Council for Historical Research, who initiated me to the study of History and inspired me to indulge in research activity. I regard him with respect as the role model in my research work

I must thank my supervising teacher Dr. K. Gopalankutty, Reader in History, Calicut University, who throughout helped me and remained as a source of inspiration without which this work would not have completed. He not only perused the successive handwritten drafts with patience and tendered his valuable suggestions for further improvement but often went out of his way, to save me from the time consuming journey to the University.

Dr. K.J. John, Head of the Department of History was kind enough to permit me to make use of the facilities in the Department relating to my research programme. I express my strong sense of gratitude to him.

I express my deep sense of gratitude to the Principal of the Zamorin's Guruvayurappan College, Calicut, for granting permission to undertake this research work.

Of course this work would not have come out without the constant and overwhelming support from my family. My husband, Prof. P. T. Haridas, has given great encouragement in selecting this particular topic and this work has materialised from embryonic stage to its full blossom due to his unstinted support. He has gone through the whole draft and offered valuable suggestions. My Children Appu, Manju, Vishnu and Meera, also helped me a lot in writing the original script, ignoring their preoccupation with studies. I express my deep sense of gratitude to all these family members.

I am also grateful to the Director and Staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, The National Archives of India, New Delhi, authorities of Kerala Secretariat Cellar Records office, Kerala University Library, Kerala State Legislature Library, Trivandrum, Calicut University Central Library and History Department Library, Thenhipalam. My special thanks are also due to the Director, Sir C.P. Rama Swami Aiyer Foundation, Madras for granting permission to consult the relevant documents. I also thank and express my deep sense of gratitude to the authorities of news papers like Mathrubhumi, Malayala Manorama, The Hindu for their co-operation extended to me to refer the back volumes of these papers.

My thanks are also due to Sri.C.Ramakrishnan who has done the secretarial work of the thesis very neatly and efficiently.

M. SUMATHY

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|------------|---|---|
| ACC | - | Accession Number |
| AICC | - | All India Congress Committee |
| AISPC | - | All India States People's Conference |
| API | - | Associated Press of India |
| ASP | - | Additional Superintendent of Police |
| CRR | - | Crown Representative Records |
| C.R. | - | Cellar Records |
| CS | - | Confidential Section |
| DCC | - | District Congress Committee |
| F&PD | - | Foreign and Political Departments |
| Fn | - | Footnote |
| GOI | - | Government of India |
| IG | - | Inspector General |
| INC | - | Indian National Congress |
| INTUC | - | Indian National Trade Union Congress |
| IOL | - | India Office Library |
| ISPC | - | Indian States Peoples' Conference |
| JPC | - | Joint Political Conference |
| KGS | - | Kerala Government Secretariat |
| KLL | - | Kerala Legislature Library |
| NAI | - | National Archives of India |
| NMLL | - | Nehru Memorial Museum and Library |
| NSS | - | Nair Service Society |
| PCC | - | Pradesh Congress Committee |
| SNDP Yogam | - | Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam |
| SISPC | - | South Indian States Peoples Conference |
| TJPC | - | Travancore Joint Political Conference |
| TSC | - | Tamil Nadu Congress |
| TTNC | - | Travancore Tamil Nadu National Congress |
| TVM | - | Trivandrum |
| TPDB | - | Travancore Police Department Bulletin |
| WC | - | Working Committee |
| TSC | - | Travancore State Congress |

INTRODUCTION

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Indian National Congress in a broad sense, is the history of India's struggle for freedom. For more than two centuries the Indian Nation had been under British domination and it was the Indian National Congress that had striven hard for more than half a century to free the country from foreign subjection.

The phenomenon being so, it is but natural that statesmen, biographers, researchers, and political analysts in and out of India write abundantly on and about it with the result that a mass of literature in the form of historical writings, doctoral dissertations, biographies, autobiographies, monographs and text-books, journalistic writings, came out during the last few years after independence. The history of the Indian National Congress has been studied in detail by many historians both Indian and foreign.¹

While this is the case with the literature on the movement in British India, that on the struggle which freedom fighters had to wage in the former Indian Princely

1. Examples are B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, 2 Vols. (Bombay, 1935, 1969), (2) R.C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement* (Calcutta, 1963), (3) Tarachand, *History of Freedom Movement in India* (New Delhi, 1961, 1967), (4) S.R. Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress* (Delhi, 1971), (5) Khanji Dwarkadas, *India's Fight for Freedom 1913-1937 - An Eyewitness Story* (Bombay, 1966), (6) Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle* (Calcutta, 1948), (7) Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress party in India* (New Jersey, 1968) and (8) Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, (Bombay, 1970). But it is to be noted that these books give only a passing reference to the princely states and that too primarily with a view to completing the narration of events as they unfolded themselves in British Indian territory.

States, which forms an integral part of the history of freedom struggle in British India, is rather meagre. A comprehensive study of the agitation that took place in the Princely States first under the Indian National Congress and later under the banner of independent political organisations – the Indian National Congress was unwilling to interfere in the affairs of the states at a later stage – with active support and sympathy from the Indian National Congress, has not received detailed examination by scholars.² The reasons are many. The large number of princely states with varying sizes and standards of administration have really made it difficult for the historian to write an account which involved all those erstwhile states and give due place to these states collectively and individually. The lack of access to source material which remains scattered also makes a comprehensive work difficult. There are, of course, some regional studies, which have highlighted on the political and social struggle in some of these states.³

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- 2 R.L. Handa, *History of Freedom Movement in Princely States*, (New Delhi, 1968). This may be perhaps the only work that deals with the problem. A study covering the whole spectrum, i.e., agitations in all Princely States has yet to come. The limitations are many. A comprehensive study involving the political movements in all Princely States, of course is a difficult task, but no attempt has been made so far in this direction. No doubt the States People have not been given their due place in the history of freedom movement. But it discusses only the general trend of the movement and does not give us a detailed picture of the agitation led by these independent organisations.
- 3 Examples are T.K. Ravindran, *Vaikom Satyagraha and Gandhi*, (Trivandrum, 1975), M.J. Koshy, *Genesis of Political Consciousness in Kerala*, (Trivandrum, 1972), *Constitutionalism in Travancore and Cochin*, (Trivandrum, 1972) and *Last Days of Monarchy in Kerala*, (Trivandrum, 1973), Compiled by the Regional Records. Survey Committee, Trivandrum, 1970 and 1972 respectively. P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Part II, (Trivandrum, 1972). G.S. Halappa, *History of Freedom Movement in Karnataka*, (1964). D. Daniel, *Struggle for Responsible Government in Travancore – 1938-1947*, (Madurai, 1986), A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala and Freedom Struggle*, (Kottayam, 1997), *American Model Arabikkadalil* (Mal.)

The native states comprised about 45% of the total area of pre-partition India and accounted for no less than one-fourth of its total population.⁴ The upsurge that took place in these princely states was bound up with happenings elsewhere in action-reaction relationship. Whenever the movement gained momentum in the British Indian Provinces, the neighbouring states were invariably affected and the agitation always found some echo, however faint it was, among the state subjects also. Moreover, the conditions obtaining in states throw a valuable light on the nature of the freedom struggle as a whole. The division of the people in India into those living in British India and Indian States was purely artificial. Both of them belonged to the same ethnic group, spoke the same language or languages, and had common aspirations and ambitions and were equally affected by colonialism. Thus a study of the history of India's struggle for freedom will remain incomplete, if it is not supplemented by the history of the states people's agitation for Responsible Government.

While the Princely State of Mysore with an area of 29,475 square miles was counted among the premier states of India, which was second in regard to population

(Kottayam, 2000), *Punnapra Vayalarum Kerala Charithravum* (Mal.), (Kottayam, 1999), *Sir C.P. yum Swathanthra Thiruvithamkoorum* (Mal.), (Kottayam, 1999), *Swanthantra ThiruvithamkoorVadavum Sir C.P. enna Villanum: Vittupoya Kannikal* (Mal.), (Kottayam, 2000). But these works do not analyse the social and economic background of the movement and political struggle in detail with the exception of course the attempt made by A. Sreedhara Menon in his *Triumph and Tragedy--Annals of Sir C.P's Sixteen Years*.

4 R.L. Handa, *op. cit.*, p.2.

and fifth as regards area,⁵ Travancore occupied the position of a medium state with an area of 7625 square miles⁶ and was allotted a gun salute of 19.⁷ Like the freedom movement in British India led by the Indian National Congress, the agitation for Responsible Government in the state of Travancore was led by the Travancore State Congress, formed in the year 1938, it could convert the agitation into a mass movement immediately after its inception. Large sections of people, irrespective of caste, colour or creed, were actively associated with the movement. The State Congress was well organised and led by a large number of eminent popular leaders of the state.

The conditions in which the Travancore State Congress was formed and had to continue its struggle make the movement more significant than those in other princely states. While most of the Indian States were suffering under anti-diluvian systems of administration, the worst being entirely feudal in character and the best of them being no better than enlightened despotism, Travancore enjoyed on the whole an enlightened administration at the hands of benevolent princes and able Diwans and thereby was entitled to the title of "model state"⁸ from the beginning of the 20th century. There

5 D.V. Gundappa, *All about Mysore*, (Mysore, 1931), p.2.

6 C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties. Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. X, (Calcutta, 1909), p.207.

7 *Ibid.*, Vols. IX and X.

8. Sir Harcourt Butler called the South Indian States of Mysore, Travancore and Cochin 'the most progressive' among the princely states. For details see Har Court Butler, *India-Insistent*, p.1. Also see Chief Secretary's Letter to the Resident, Madras States. File No. D.Dis./256/1938/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

were occasional protests against the prince. The dawn of the 20th century in Travancore marked the awareness of popular rights among the backward classes and by 1930's it led to the Abstention Movement. The appointment of C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer as the Constitutional Adviser to the Maharaja accelerated the tempo of this movement. Though this had very little claim to be called a political agitation, it had its natural influences on the politics of the state and with the coming of Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer on the political arena of Travancore as Diwan in 1936, political conditions underwent a thorough change. Though an able administrator, Sir C.P. failed to appreciate the strength of public opinion. The Abstentionists, realizing their draw-backs, began to think in terms of forming a political party with the support of caste Hindus. Nair stalwarts like Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, A. Narayana Pillai, K.R. Elankath and a host of others, who were sympathisers of their cause, promised full support. Thus under their leadership, came into existence the Travancore State Congress. Unlike the governments in the adjacent princely states of Cochin and Mysore, the government of Travancore was not on the whole responsive to the popular demands of the State Congress.

The Government of Cochin under the able guidance of R.K. Shanmughom Chetty had followed a policy of gradual placation towards the demand for the introduction of Responsible Government. With the exception of the famous "Electricity Agitation" that took place in 1936 in Trichur district and the Prajamandal Movement in 1942, there was no serious popular upsurge in Cochin against the

autocracy of the Diwan. The Mysore government even recognized the State Congress as a political party in the state.⁹ While this was the case with Cochin, the administration of C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer was determined to crush the movement at the earliest.

The demand for Responsible Government in Travancore was not sporadic but continuous from the beginning and till the end in 1947. However, the movement was fought not in isolation but as a result of a product of different forces acting on it. This gave it the character of continuous effort and made it a mass movement. The agitation for Responsible Government in Travancore was a more complex issue than the parallel agitations for independence in British India. It ran on two parallel and comparatively identical issues: 1) related to the introduction of Responsible Government in the State and 2) its concerns for the freedom movement in British India. There existed a clear demarcation between these two issues in the earlier days, but with the entry of the Indian National Congress into the State's agitations in 1921, this difference was deliberately submerged by the leadership not only within the States but also within the Indian National Congress, with a view to gain better base for their causes, in particular sympathy towards the movement throughout the country. But when the Indian National Congress entered and involved itself in the politics of Travancore and

9. "On May 17, 1938 the government of Mysore passed orders declaring their policy in regard to recognition of the Mysore State Congress and cognate matters. The order accorded recognition to the Congress party in the State". . . For details see Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. II, (New Delhi, 1969), p.386.

engaged in attacks on British administration which sought to turn the princess against nationalist forces, the leadership of the Indian National Congress directed its aims to Indian Union and integration.

The study is divided into ten chapters, with an introduction, bibliography and appendices.

A general survey of the emergence of nationalism in British India, and the grievances of the Princely States and case of Travancore, has been attempted in the first chapter.

The social condition of Travancore especially the social disabilities of the low caste Hindus who were alienated from the mainstream, domination of Caste Hindus, the Brahmins and Nairs in administrative positions, Malayali and Ezhava memorial and a split in the social fabric in Travancore etc. are discussed in the second chapter.

The third chapter deals with formation of the Civic Rights League in 1919, introduction of the Legislative Councils in the State of Travancore and restrictions imposed on adult franchise.

An attempt is made in the fourth chapter to analyse the various grievances of the Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims of Travancore, formations of communal organisations and representations made to the Government. Reconstitution of the bicameral legislature in Travancore imposing high property qualifications on franchise which resulted in lack of proper representation to these groups and in turn forced them

to unite and form the Joint Political Conference and abstain from elections. The decision on abstention forced the authorities to concede at least some of their demands.

The realization of the dangers of agitations on communal lines by the abstentionists and stand taken by the Indian National Congress in the agitations in Princely States after Haripura Resolution led to the formation of the Travancore State Congress in 1938. A survey of the aims and objectives of the organisation, its accepted programmes and the early activities of the Congress, repressive measures taken by the Government to suppress the popular aspirations with all powers in their hands, Congress memorial against the Diwan, Sir C.P.Ramaswami Aiyer and the subsequent retaliatory measures taken by the administration including assault on leaders of the organisation, gagging of the press, forming of loyalist organisations by the Government, etc have been attempted in the fifth chapter.

The leaders of the Party realized that the attitude and policy of the administration could not be changed with petitions and prayers and hence decided to take to direct action – Civil Disobedience Movement. The sixth chapter deals with in details, the various schemes and programmes planned and executed by the State Congress and the methods of repression adopted by the administration including stringent measures on public media, Gandhiji's intervention and his insistence on the withdrawal of the memorandum and its rejection and the subsequent mob violence, arrests and detention of prominent State Congress leaders, and suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement by the State Congress.

The suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement affected the image and working of the State Congress and therefore, the Party planned for direct action. But the insistence of Gandhiji on the withdrawal of memorial resulted in a split in the Travancore State Congress. The Youth League which had began its activities in 1931 intensified its activities to form a Communist Party in Travancore and achieved its aims. With this there was a period of lull in State Congress activities. This is the topic of discussions in chapter seven.

A detailed examination of the various forces and factors leading to the emergence and growth of the Communist Movement in Travancore along with the failures on the part of the State Congress leadership to identify itself with the economic problems of the people have been analysed, resulting in the growth of Communist Movement in Travancore. The activities of the Communists among labourers in all fields to gain popular support are also discussed. The details of Punnappra-Vayalar incidents, its various causes, relevance and results have also been discussed. In result the immediate decline of Communist movement is also discussed in the eighth chapter.

The ninth chapter discusses the various aspects and undercurrents leading to the attainment of Indian independence and the declaration by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer of an Independent Travancore and efforts made to kill the Diwan, Sir C.P. Ramswami Aiyer by K.C.S. Money, and the final response to agitations, ie., the attainment of

Responsible Government in the State and finally leading to the formation of a popular ministry in Travancore under Pattom A. Thanu Pillai.

A detailed appendices is included to have a clear understanding about the real attitude of the British administration towards the Princely States in the grant of democratic rights, though they favoured it in open but opposed it as in the case of Oudh. The British administration was very clever and shrewd in this regard. They wanted to project themselves as supporters of any democratic movement in States but obstructed (from behind towards such movements), as they thought that it would be against their interest in British India.

An attempt has been made in the last and tenth chapter to analyse the movement in the background of the National agitation undertaken by the Indian National Congress and its intentions towards integration of whole of India [and the role of Travancore in it]. The present writer is of the opinion that the Indian National Congress had taken, though not outwardly, a stand against regional Congress Parties and this did much damage to the respective political parties and their agitations in the respective States, as in the case of Travancore State Congress. This is the subject of discussion in this chapter.

The appendices is important in that it throws abundant light to the relations of the Princely States to the Crown in various ways and speaks of the relation of treaties, engagements etc. with the British Crown. It also gives a clear picture of the relations

of the Princely States with the Central Government of free India after the termination of these treaties and rules of sovereignty.

A map showing the divisions of British India and Princely India is given in the Appendices.

BACKGROUND

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter I

BACKGROUND

The wave of nationalism and political consciousness which swept through British India had its natural repercussions in the Indian States as well. The activities of the Indian National Congress were restricted to the British Indian territory. Throughout it maintained a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the princely states.¹ In consequence the states people were thrown on their own resources to keep the struggle for responsible government. They had thus to build up local leadership to unite states subjects on a common cause.

While this was the case with British India the position of the Princely States was totally different. The states people, though anti-British in their attitude remained loyal to their princes and in some cases, even offered whole-hearted support and co-operation to their cause. But assured of full security by the Paramount Power and intoxicated by their power and wealth,² the princes always tried to suppress popular

1. Strewn capriciously over India, there were about 600 principalities which did not form part of the British India. Historically the main common feature distinguishing these territories from the provinces was that, unlike the latter, they had not been annexed by the British power. Thus politically speaking there were two Indias, "British India, governed by the Crown according to the Statutes of Parliament and enactment of the Indian legislature, and the Indian States under the suzerainty of the Crown and still for the most part under the personal rule of the Princes."

According to the Butler Committee and the Simon Commission, there were 562 states whereas to the Joint Committees of Parliament on Indian Constitutional Reforms there were 600 states.

2. The revenue figures of the states are interesting. As many as 19 states had a revenue of Rs. 1 crore or more a year, 7 had a revenue ranging between 50 lakhs to one crore and the figure

movements and organisations. By taking recourse to a policy of repression at the instance of the British, the rulers of the Indian states lost support of their people and became willing tools in the hands of the British to hold the balance against the upsurge of political agitation in the country at large. This naturally disillusioned and exasperated the states people.

The turn in the tide of the Congress agitation in British India and the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as its foremost leader, had its natural repercussions on the states people's movement. In spite of the rule of repression and ruthless terrorising by the Darbars, the states people had decided to stand on their own legs. It is a point of historical importance that but for the flagrant abuse of power and unrestricted display of authority made by the princes, the states people's agitation might well have fizzled out, particularly because in the beginning the Indian National Congress was keen on keeping aloof and not interfering with the affairs of the states.³

descended gradually till in the case of petty principalities it showed a revenue approximating to an artisan's average wages. For details see *White Paper on Indian States* (1948), p.4.

3. The attitude of Gandhiji, the unquestioned leader of the Congress can be understood from the following sentences:

“The states are independent entities under the British law. That part of India which is described as British has no more power to shape the policy of the states than it has (say) that of Afghanistan or Ceylon.”

“I wish it were otherwise but I recognise my impotence in the matter. India of the states is undoubtedly an integral part of geographical India. But that carried us no further than where we stand today. Portuguese and French India are also an integral part of geographical India, but we are powerless to shape the course of events there.”

The people of the Princely States were struggling to have an all-India organisation of their own to fight against their grievances, though individual states had their separate Praja Mandals concentrating on political work in their respective territories. As mutual consultations became more frequent, different Praja mandals now joined hands to form regional political conferences or Praja mandals. Due to the healthy and effective leadership, this move soon gathered momentum and the establishment of the Deccan Native subjects Conference, the Kathiawar States Political Conference, the Rajaputana Seva Sangh, Sangli States People's Conference, the Bhor Subjects Political Conference,⁴ the Bhavnagar Praja Parishad, the Cutch Praja Parishad, the Hyderabad States People's Conference, the Janjira State Subjects Conference, the Miraj State People's Conference and the Idar Praja Parishad, etc were an expression of this new spirit. These organisations working for the political rights of the people of one state or of groups of states carried out the agitation for reforms almost to the level achieved in British India by the Congress. However, the states

"We enrol members from the states in the Congress. We receive considerable assistance from them. It is not want of appreciation or will that compels our non-interference. It is our helplessness."

"It is my conviction that any attempt on the part of the Congress at interference can only damage the cause of the people in the states."

"But there is nothing to prevent us from urging the states to adopt a certain policy."

"I am of the opinion that whatever we are able to accomplish in British India is bound to affect the states." M.K. Gandhi, *The Indian States Problem*, pp. 64-65.

4. The first session was convened at Poona by N.C. Kalkar and A.V. Patwardhan. File No. AP/29/1928, p.121-125, AICC Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum Library (hereinafter NMML).

people realized that the setting up of an organisation representing all the states people was an absolute necessity. It had become all the more imperative because the princely order, after the birth of the Chamber of Princes⁵ had started stressing the need for revision of political practice leading to their direct relationship with the Crown. Their move to seek special protection and immunity from public criticism in British India meant the closing down of the only medium through which the states people could ventilate their grievances.

At the invitation of the secretaries of the Deccan States Association, a number of prominent workers interested in the Indian States met on 5th March, 1922, in the premises of the Servants of India Society at Poona. M.C. Kelkar opened the proceedings and pleaded that progress in the Indian States was essential for the progress of the country as a whole.⁶ The question of forming an all-India Council of States was taken up and it was decided to hold an All India States People's Conference after a few months. But the next step towards this direction was taken only in 1926. Again the question of convening an all India States People's Conference was mooted, and it had to wait one more year to hold a Conference. The first session of the All India States People's Conference was held simultaneously at two centres on the 17th December, 1927 in Bombay.⁷ Representative as it was of so many states the

5. The Chamber of Princes was inaugurated by the Duke of Connaught at the Red Fort, Delhi in February 1921.

6. R.L. Handa, *History of Freedom Struggle in Princely States*, (Delhi, 1968), p. 127.

7. Diwan Bahadur Ram Chandra Rao presided over the first session. More than 1550 delegates attended. The main aim of the Conference was declared even earlier: "The

AISPC claimed that the Conference occupied the same position to the people of the Indian states as the Indian National Congress and other political organisations in relation to British India.⁸ The northern meet became the nucleus of the AISPC and the southern meet became a branch of the above body and called itself the South Indian States Peoples Conference.

While this was the general trend in most of the princely states, there were exceptions like Travancore. In this state political activity was still in a state of stagnation caused by many factors. This state all these time had been passing through a state of communal politics which had practically very little or nothing to do with the freedom struggle. The people of Travancore in general laboured under several limitations which inhibited their active participation in the political struggle going on around them.

principal aims of such a Conference of the people of all Indian States should be to demand and secure that Indian states should be regarded as integral parts of a common Indian nation, on a par with the principal provinces of what is known as British India in all national matters, and founded on the basic principles of responsibility in government and representativeness in their governing institutions, similar to that prevailing in British India, under the aegis of their respective rulers." Quoted in *Ibid.*, p.128 (source not mentioned).

8. For details see the Memorandum submitted by the deputation of the AISPC to the Indian States Committee, 19 November, 1928. File No.62/Spl/1921, Foreign and Political/NAI.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITION OF TRAVANCORE SINCE 1850

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter II

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITION OF TRAVANCORE SINCE 1850

The lack of active involvement in the political affairs of Travancore by the people was mainly due to their social grievances and to certain extent economic and political reasons. While in some north Indian states communal confrontations took place between Hindus and Muslims, in Travancore it was mainly between Brahmin-non-Brahmin or Caste-non-Caste Hindus. In Madras¹ this movement started much earlier under the leadership of E.V. Ramaswami Naicker, while in Travancore the thirties of the twentieth century witnessed the intensity of this agitation, and this was more complicated than the parallel movement in Madras or elsewhere. In Travancore the political and democratic movement was rather an extension and development of the social movement by the lower castes against the caste Hindus. This provided a concrete basis for the future political activities in the state.

In Travancore the Ezhavas and the backward classes constituted the bulk² of the population when compared to that of the Nairs. But the forward communities as a whole had an absolute majority over all other castes in 1921.³ Public life in

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1. For a detailed account of the Brahmin-non-Brahmin movement in Madras see Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India – The non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*, (London, 1969).
 2. The Ezhavas alone constituted 16.7% of the total population while the Nairs had 17.3%. The other Backward communities also had a considerable percentage. See for details Census Report of Travancore, 1921.
 3. The Nairs and other forward Hindus constituted 47%. *Ibid.*

Travancore had been dominated for a long time by caste Hindus like the Nayars and Tamil and Telugu Brahmins. The Ezhavas and other backward classes were not even admitted to the government schools. Even as early as 1870, Mateer had denounced this policy of the government and opined that they ought to be admitted to public institutions as “they contributed their fair quota to the public funds which were vested on Brahminical rites.”⁴ They were also not given positions in the government services. The Ezhava memorial of 1895 concerned itself with not only the demand for admission to public schools but also with their demands for inclusion in government service. The refusal on the part of the government of this demand was primarily responsible for the genesis of the Ezhava organisation called the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam which aimed at the spiritual and educational development of this community. With the organisational ability of T.K. Madhavan, an Ezhava stalwart, the Yogam could establish 225 branches in Travancore by the year 1925.⁵

Travancore enjoyed a high percentage of literacy when compared to other parts of India. This went up after the lifting of the ban on the low-caste Hindu’s admittance to schools by the Travancore government. This highest literacy rate had its effects on the promotion of democratic movement in the state. The people began to be aware of the situation and became politically conscious, which in its turn made them think of their rights and privileges as citizens. Education gave them access to news-papers.

4. Samuel Mateer, *The Land of Charity*, (1870), p. 38.

5. P.K.K. Menon, *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, II, (Trivandrum, 1972), p. 463.

The low-caste Hindus were also restricted admission to temples. With the growth of education they began to demand radical changes in the society and political set-up. The evil practices of untouchability and unapproachability were severely opposed and criticised by social reformers as well as by low-caste leaders. They realized that the freedom of worship as a birthright, and tried to establish it.

The famous Vaikom satyagraha⁶ is to be viewed in this background. The satyagrahis at Vaikom demanded that the government should throw open the roads around and in the vicinity of the Vaikom temple to all classes of people irrespective of caste, colour or creed. This satyagraha attracted the attention of the whole of India. "It was a land mark in the history of social legislation in Travancore which ultimately paved the way for the Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936."⁷

Education had its natural results in other fields also. The eagerness displayed by castes and communities who till then were content with their hereditary or traditional occupation, led them to towns in search of jobs. Positions in government were practically monopolised by caste Hindus. Thus demands were made in and outside the legislature that among qualified candidates, those who come from

6. The custom prohibiting the use by certain communities of certain roads formed the basis of this Satyagraham. It was started in March, 1924 by a host of Ezhavas and their sympathisers to get this disability removed. The prominent among them were T.K. Madhavan, K.P. Kesava Menon, Mannath Padmanabhan, Changanacherry Parameswaran Pillai, C.V. Kunjuraman and K. Kelappan. In the course of this Satyagraha persons like Mahatma Gandhi, C. Rajagopalachari and others visited the place.

7. T.K. Ravindran, *Vaikom Satyagraha and Gandhi*, (Trivandrum, 1975), pp. 203-4.

communities which were comparatively less represented in the public service, should be preferred.⁸

The people in general were dissatisfied with the policy of the government with regard to government services. They demanded progressive association with the government and submitted memorials to the government for the redress of their grievances. The Malayali or Travancore Memorial⁹ of 1891 was the first outward expression of these grievances. The Memorial was a joint venture by the Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims to put an end to the undue influence of the Tamil and Telugu Brahmins in the civil service of the state. The Hindu population was 1,352,550 according to the census report of 1891. The caste-wise distribution is given below.¹⁰

| Community | Population | Percentage |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Nayars | 4,83,725 | 35.76 |
| Ezhavas | 4,14,217 | 30.62 |
| Channars | 1,36,611 | 10.10 |
| Pulayas | 2,02,616 | 14.98 |
| Parayyas | 71,786 | 5.30 |
| Others | 43,595 | 3.22 |

8. *Sri Mulam Popular Assembly Proceedings, 1928*, p. 140.

9. The Memorial was signed by 1,0038 people and was submitted to the Diwan on 11 January, 1891 by a deputation consisting of K.P. Padmanabha Menon, John Nidiri, G.P. Pillai, K.M. Padmanabha Pillai, Sivan Pillai and a host of other prominent persons in Travancore. For details see *Nayar Service Society Charithram (Malayalam)*, pp.101-102.

10. K.K. Kusuman, *The Abstention Movement*, (Trivandrum, 1976), p.9.

The memorialists pointed out that their communities were not properly represented in the administration in proportion to the population. They highlighted “the denial to them of a fair share in the government of the country and their systematic exclusion from the higher grades of its service.” They further pointed out that “their country which used from time immemorial to be administered by a number of native Prime Ministers, was ruled from 1817 to 1872, for about half a century by a series of foreign Diwans. Regularly and systematically these Diwans without exception introduced their relation, castemen, and friends into the state.”¹¹ The foreign officers “tried their best to oust the Nairs and prevent them from filling any of the higher appointments. The pernicious effect of this policy is well illustrated by the gradual way in which all the Malayali Sudras were ousted from the office of Diwan Peishcar which formed the stepping stone to Prime Ministership and all of which were held by them till so late as thirty years ago.” The Memorialists contended further that “the greatest number of higher appointments is held by foreigners and even among them the number held by the Sudras was very meagre. While 293 foreign Brahmins return one man from among them to fill the higher grades of service, more than 26 times the number are necessary to return a Malayali Sudra and 61 times the number to return a Syrian Christian.”¹²

Though there was very little gain, the Nair community which was very much agitated over the prevailing trend in public appointments – this community had

11. *Malayali Memorial*, para 2.

12. *Ibid.*

considerable number of educated members who were systematically kept out of government offices of the state – was the only beneficiary out of it, whatever may be the degree of gain.

The Malayali memorial was commended and in general supported by the press in Travancore and outside. The *Malayala Manorama* warned that “it is likely that irremediable losses might happen to the State out of the internal dissension gradually if the various communities in the state are not given due share in the services proportionate to the population of the several communities.”¹³

The Malayali Memorial was the beginning of a great change in the political life of Travancore. It was the first of a series of agitations which ultimately resulted in the establishment of responsible government in the state. “It provided a model in the method of political campaigning and marshalling public sympathy.”¹⁴ It was the first movement organised and led by educated class and the first occasion on which the people united in spite of their communal and caste differences, on a political issue¹⁵ and it was the first political expression of a new middle class growing in strength in the society. This was also the first assertion of the legitimate right of participation in administration of the county for the revenue of which they had their due share, politically it was directed against the autocratic representative of the Paramount Power in the state who had been accused of playing ducks with patronage. The Malayali

13. *Malayala Manorama*, 24 January, 1891.

14. P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p.11.

15. R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *Constitutional Experiments in Kerala*, (Trivandrum, 1964), p. 5.

Memorial exemplified the fundamental rights of the citizens to petition the sovereign for the redress of their grievances and indicated something more than the scramble for the fishes and loaves of office.¹⁶

However great was the significance of the Malayali Memorial, so far as the Ezhavas were concerned who constituted the second community in the state in point of numerical importance, it was a thorough failure. The government in their reply to the Memorial contended that the Ezhavas were a body of people who were “uneducated, preferring their own occupations to going in for such education as would fit these for the public services.”¹⁷ But the government conveniently forgot the fact that these low-caste people were denied even admission to schools. Even educated persons like Dr. Palpu had to go out of the state in search of a suitable job. Hardly after five years, in 1896, the Ezhavas under the leadership of Dr. Palpu submitted another memorial¹⁸ to the Maharaja and prayed that government schools should be open to their children. The Memorialists highlighted the fact that “according to the census of 1891, there were 25,000 educated people among them but the majority were still indulging in traditional modes of self-employment like trade, astrology, private medical practice etc.”¹⁹ At the same time they were admitted in British Indian services. The disabilities

16. P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

17. File No.1899/Miscellaneous/884 (Endorsement of the Diwan), CRKGS, Trivandrum.

18. There were in fact two Ezhava Memorials. The first one was submitted in 1895 and the second in 1896. The first one was submitted by Dr. Palpu himself enumerating the various grievances of the Ezhava community.

19. K.K. Kusuman, *op. cit.*, p.9.

of the Ezhavas were raised even in the British Parliament by Herbert Roberts on 19th July 1897.²⁰

The reply of the Government to the Memorial on 31st October, 1896 reflected their “traditional reactionary attitude.” The Government pointed out that any revolutionary change in the existing social order would endanger caste antagonism which would not only arrest the social progress but do violence to communal harmony.” They added that several important Government institutions had been thrown open to the Ezhavas in common with other classes and wherever possible new schools would be thrown open to them.²¹ The Government was of the view that separate caste schools should be established and as regards the admission of the Ezhavas into public service they had already “made a departure in their favour” which would meet their aspirations under the existing conditions.²²

The press in Travancore was very often with the aggrieved communities. In a leader the *Malayali* wrote: “what we are obliged to bring to the public notice is the utter indifference which the Diwans of Travancore and the Madras government had been and are showing in this matter to the half a million out of the two and a half million in Travancore. The two distinct grievances were non-admission into Government schools and non-admission into Government services.”²³

20. For Details of the disabilities of the Ezhavas and remedial measures adopted by the Madras Government, see Cover File No.1231. C.R.K.G.S., Trivandrum.

21. *Ibid.*

22. P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p.14.

23. *The Malayali*, 23 February, 1901. Quoted by P.K.K.Menon, *op. cit.*, p.16.

The press in Travancore²⁴ was an important factor which contributed to a great extent to the political awakening of the people and the shaping of public opinion. The high percentage of literacy which Travancore possessed made propaganda through print easier. K.Ramakrishna Pillai²⁵ who was a noted journalist occupied a unique position as a fighter for the freedom of the press. Varghese Mappillay of Kottayam was another noted figure in this field.

The political atmosphere in Travancore underwent a thorough change due to all these reasons during the last quarter of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century. Even earlier after the treaties in 1795 and 1805 between the English East India company and Travancore by which the Company was raised from the position of a trading concern to that of a major political power, they began to influence policy-making in the state. Even the appointments of Diwans, at a later stage, had to be approved by the British Resident.

The government was fully aware of the disabilities of the oppressed classes. "As early as 1870 the Government of Travancore had begun to concern itself with the disabilities of the unprivileged classes, with special reference to the access of the low castes to the courts of law in the state either as parties or as witnesses."²⁶ Many of the

24. There were many newspapers in Travancore. The *Malayala Manorama*, The *Malayali*, The *Parasuraman*, The *Western Star*, The *Travancore Times*, The *Nasrani Deepika* and the *Kerala Tarakan* are a few.

25. He was the editor of *Kerala Darpanam* and later on of the *Kerala Panchika* and The *Malayali*.

26. *Kerala Darpanam*, 8th February, 1930.

restrictions imposed on the lower castes were removed either by notification or by being allowed to fall into disuse. Still the Government was not prepared to redress all grievances of the backward classes. In a way we can say that the Abstention Movement which took place in the 1930's in Travancore was the result of the failure of the Government in finding solutions to the grievances of the backward classes.

Whatever be the case, it is to be admitted that the predominance of communal politics in the state was thrust upon by the Government. That would perhaps account for the delay in the formation of a political party in the State. Until 1938 the state had been struggling hard to come out of communalism and to enter in the field of freedom movement like other parts of the country.

SOCIAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN TRAVANCORE SINCE 1888

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter III

SOCIAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN TRAVANCORE SINCE 1888

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the introduction of a series of reforms in Travancore. The Devaswom and Palace Departments under the government were maintained by caste Hindus and the Avarnas were not given employment in these departments. They now began to argue that these departments should be open to them also since it was maintained out of public funds, and that every Hindu must be able to serve the government in all its departments. An organisation called the Civic Rights League was formed in 1919 with branches all over the state. The objective of this association was to secure recognition of the fundamental rights to the depressed classes who had been denied the same for centuries. They demanded that the Devaswom Department should be bifurcated from the Revenue Department which was hitherto attached with it, thereby denying employment to non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus in it. The Diwan, V.P. Madhava Rao who was in favour of the argument of separation said that "The subject is engaging the attention of the government. The suggestions made are good and will be considered."¹

The question was raised in the Popular Assembly also. On February 1919, the assembly took up the problem for discussion and the Diwan stated: "The separation of Devaswom is neither desirable in principle nor feasible in the circumstances of the state. Any reform that is proposed must be consistent with the essential features of the

1. File No. Misc./53 of 1919, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

constitution under which the sovereign administers this state as an agent of the Deity.”² On this ground the Diwan held that it was impossible for the sovereign of this state to divest himself of Devaswom management.

But the attitude of the government began to change. In the next session of the Assembly the Diwan, P. Rajagopalachari, stated that Christians would not be employed in the Land Revenue Department so long as the management of Hindu religious institutions was in the hands of the officers of that Department. The complete separation of Devaswom from the Revenue Department would involve extra expenditure and the question of such separation was wholly one of finance. It was held that until it was possible to throw open the Revenue Department to Christians, the government would continue the policy of employing them in other departments to an extent that would compensate them for the exclusion from the Land Revenue Department.³

Realizing that mere petitions and prayers were ineffective, the Civic Rights League met on 20th March, 1919 with John Chandy as President, in order to chalk out a more effective programme of action.⁴ It tried to organise public meetings in various parts of the state. On 5th April, 1919 a meeting was held at Kottayam in which the object of the League was outlined by John Chandy: “By loving one’s country, by working for liberty and equality among all our fellow citizens, by caring for the

2. Diwan’s statement in the third session of the Assembly. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. File No.53 of 1919/Political. Cellar Records. KGS, TVM..

depressed and helping them to rise in the social scale, by not obstructing the path of freedom to the poor by giving up and working against the monstrous system of untouchability, by self-sacrifice when necessary, we can become true patriots. It is the object of our League to work on these lines.”⁵

The Civic Rights League went on with its active work, holding meetings to attain public sympathy. Under its pressure the Government at last appointed Krishna Iyengar, Forest Settlement Officer to submit a report on the issue of separation of these Departments. In April 1920 a mixed Committee of Hindus, and non-Hindus was appointed on the recommendation of the earlier one-man Commission. The Committee recommended the separation of the two Departments, and the government decided at last to yield to the demand of the people. The efforts of the Civic Rights League materialised in 1922 when at last the Government separated the Devaswom Department from the Land Revenue Department.

Along with these, constitutional developments were also taking place in the state. In Travancore the reigning monarch was considered to be the supreme legislative authority and laws were, from time to time, passed as proclamations or Regulations. The power and authority of the Maharaja to promulgate Regulations was questioned more than once.⁶ With the growing demand from the public, the Maharaja

5. Travancore Civic Rights League, *Caste and Citizenship in Travancore*, (Kottayam, 1919), p. 3.

6. When a dispute arose as to whether the Sovereign was competent to issue Regulations and Proclamations the matter was referred to the British Government. The decision of the Madras government was that “His Excellency the Governor in Council has after very careful consideration come to the conclusion that His Highness the Maharaja, by

constituted a Legislative Council in 1888,⁷ on the lines of the Indian Councils Act of 1888. At the time of the establishment of the council it was clearly pointed out that the Diwan should have the benefit of discussing with and taking the opinion of respectable persons in matters of legislation which, being one of the most important functions of the government, should receive the most careful consideration before submission to the sovereign for final approval. The Diwan (Rama Rao) could think only after taking the opinion of responsible officers. But the Maharaja who had a clearer vision of the democratic possibilities of the future insisted that provision should be made for the representation of non-official elements as well.⁸ Travancore was the first Indian state to create a Council of this kind.

The Council thus constituted was to consist of a number of members not less than five or more than eight in addition to the Diwan as its President. The members of the Council were to be nominated by the government, out of whom not less than two were to be non-officials. It had no administrative powers conferred on it. Any decision taken by the Council had to be ratified by the Maharaja and notified in the Government Gazette. The sovereign reserved his absolute authority to accept or reject the decisions of the Council. During a crisis a regulation might be passed without the

establishing a Legislative Council has not abandoned his sovereign prerogative of legislation.”

File No. 833/1927/Confidential/Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

7. *The Travancore government Gazette*, 24th April, 1883.

8 P.K.K. Menon, *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol.II, (Trivandrum), 1972, P.53.

aid of the Council, but that would be valid only for a period of six months.⁹ It was purely a deliberative body and had no administrative functions and hence was not a representative institution. “The right of the Council to amend its own rules of procedure was subject to the veto of the Maharaja. In short, the Council was like a department of the State.”¹⁰ Since most of the provisions of the Councils were taken from the Indian Councils Act of 1861, it was correctly remarked that “the Travancore legislature takes the British Indian enactments as its model and alters their provisions where necessary to suit local requirements and usages.”¹¹

In addition the Travancore Legislative Council Regulation of 1073 was passed on 21st March, 1898,¹² framed almost on the lines of the Indian Council Act of 1892. The Regulation provided for a minimum number of eight members and a maximum of fifteen. The Council had only 8 members until 1904. In that year the number was raised to ten by adding one official and one non-official member. This Council also had only very limited powers. Prior sanction of the Diwan was necessary in matters affecting the public revenue or religion or usages of any class of Maharaja’s subjects. This was the first Council which was passed by an Act of the Legislative Council in Travancore.

9. *The Travancore Government Gazette, op.cit., Section, 10.*

10. M.J. Koshy, *Constitutionalism in Travancore and Cochin*, (Trivandrum, 1972), pp. 4-5.

11. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, III, (Trviandrum, 1906), p. 551.

12 *The Travancore Government Gazette, 29th March, 1898.*

In 1904 a popular Assembly called the Sri. Mulam Popular Assembly was inaugurated by the Maharaja by an Executive Order of the Government, which was done on the initiative and advice given by the able Diwan of Travancore, V.P. Madhava Rao.¹³ This was to consist of the “representatives of the landlords and merchants in the country.”¹⁴ This assembly came into existence solely to give the people an opportunity of bringing to the notice of the government their requirements, wishes or grievances on the one hand, and on the other to make the policy and measures of government better known to the people so that all possible grounds of misconception in regard to the action of government may be removed.¹⁵

The members to the Assembly were selected by the government on the recommendation of the Diwan Peishcars and later the privilege of electing members was granted. There was widespread discontent in the country towards the method of enacting laws by the government. In spite of the fact that there existed a Legislative Council before 1904, the Maharaja chose to pass an Executive Order to form the Assembly than to pass it through the Legislative Council. The authority of the sovereign was even questioned in the High Court of Travancore. “When the matter came up before the Travancore High Court and the power was tested, it expressed its opinion on three occasions that the sole legislative authority in Travancore was the

13 No. 60 of 1904/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

14 *The Travancore Government Gazette*, 4 October, 1904.

15 *Ibid.*

Legislative Council and that the Sovereign had no power to legislature except on the reserved subjects and on an emergency occasion.”¹⁶

But when the opinion of S.Srinivasa Iyengar, the Advocate General of Madras was sought in 1918, he said that according to sound constitutional theory there was no representative Legislature in and for Travancore and that the Maharaja had primarily purported to part with legislative power subject to specified exceptions, restrictions and safeguards in favour of a Legislative Council. He commended further that such a Legislature was subordinate to his Legislative authority and in law he retained the sovereign power of legislation, that he had deliberately established a convention and given an assurance that without the consent of the Legislative Council he will neither overrule the exercise of its power except by his veto nor change its constitution so as to curtail its powers. He also pointed that it was legally right and necessary to provide in the proposed Regulation that the Legislative Council should neither have nor be deemed ever to have had any power to amend its constitution except its own rules of business and that nothing in the new Regulation or any previous Regulation should affect the sovereign power of legislation possessed and retained in all matters by the Maharaja.¹⁷ Still no concrete action was taken by the government in difference to public opinion.

16 C.R.P. 56 of 1085; 21 T.L.R. 103; O.S. No.58 of 1084.
File No. 833 of 1927/Confidential, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

17 *Ibid.*, Resident's Confidential letter, Refer File No. D.Dis./23/19 dated the 7th August, 1919.

However, the birth of a bicameral Legislature (the Sree Chithra State Council and the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly) was a landmark in the history of modern Travancore and of the agitation for Responsible Government in the state. Public opinion was expressed in the Assembly and it helped to arouse political consciousness. The Sri. Mulam Popular Assembly through its repeated representations on various subjects of popular importance kept the government informed of the pressing need for necessary legislations in the state.¹⁸

Mainly due to these factors and supported by other reasons in 1915 we come across a proposal to start an all-Travancore Political Organisation for the cultivation of public opinion and the discussion of matters connected with the well-being of the people.¹⁹ The press in Travancore strongly supported it as a fulfilment of a long felt want. It was certainly desirable that the people should unite on a common platform for the advancement of common aims and aspirations. "If such an organisation had actually come into being and taken root in the political soil at that time, communal considerations might not have assumed undesirable proportions as they did in later days, and the progress towards a fully Responsible Government might have been quicker."²⁰ The significance of such a move becomes clear if we consider the circumstances that prevailed in the state when the idea was mooted. The Indian National Congress was not at all working actively in Travancore. The impact of

18 *The Jenmi-Kudiyan Regulation of 1071 (1896)* is an example.

19 P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p.60.

20 *Ibid.*

English Education, activities of the Council and Popular Assembly, the support and encouragement given by the press in Travancore – these were responsible for such an action.

On September, 1919 the Maharaja promulgated a Regulation modifying the Legislative Council. This Regulation granted the people the right to elect members to the Council for the first time. However, people at large were not satisfied with this Regulation. The inadequacy of this Regulation was clearly understood by the members of the Assembly when the students who organised a strike on 25th August, 1921 against enhancement of tuition fees were severely beaten up by the police. “Had there been an executive responsible to the people,” this could not have happened.²¹

In deference to public opinion the Legislative Council was again modified by the Maharaja through a promulgation called Regulation II of 16th Kanni, 1097, corresponding to 2nd October, 1921.²² Public opinion was against the promulgation by the Maharaja. However, the strength of the Council was raised and the powers were further enlarged. The strength was raised to fifty with twenty eight elected members, fifteen officials and the rest non-officials.²³ Persons paying an annual land tax of Rs.5/- or more or Rs.3/- in municipal areas or Professional tax to the government were eligible to use their franchise. All graduates of recognised Universities residing within

21 M.J. Koshy, *op. cit.*, p.25.

22 For details of this Regulation, see the *Travancore Government Gazette*, 4th October, 1921.

23 *Ibid.*

the territorial jurisdiction of Travancore and retired officers of the Nair Brigade were also enfranchised.

Though there were steps taken by the government in democratising the administration, they always took special care not to loose authority from the government. Only very limited powers were granted both to the Legislative Council and Popular Assembly. People in general were not at all satisfied with the reforms. Large sections of people were not associated with these reforms mainly because of the social restrictions imposed on them. By the end of the 20's of the/ 20th century Travancore society was on the verge of an explosion. This finally led to the Abstention Movement, the first outward expression of communal struggle in the state which never lost its impact on the society.

FROM PETITIONS TO PROTEST --
FORMATION OF THE JOINT POLITICAL
CONFERENCE AND
THE ABSTENTION MOVEMENT

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter IV

FROM PETITIONS TO PROTEST -- FORMATION OF THE JOINT POLITICAL CONFERENCE AND THE ABSTENTION MOVEMENT

The period from 1921 to 1932, witnessed the steady growth of political consciousness in the history of modern Travancore, which ultimately led to the Abstention Movement. The students strike in 1921 in Trivandrum and the attitude of the government towards it made the popular leaders think of an executive responsible to the people. The grievances and sentiments were expressly echoed in the Popular Assembly.¹ *The Samadarsi* warned the Government that if they failed to introduce Responsible Government, they would have to face the challenge of the people.² It was felt that the existing practice of a few officers, not enjoying popular confidence, giving in the name of the people, information of all sorts to the Paramount Power was to be stopped. Nothing beneficial to the land could be expected from a Diwan who was a servant of another government brought into the state and who did things according to the dictates of the Raj. The Diwan of an Indian State, lent from British Indian Service, could not but dance to the tunes of the British government.

It was also realized that the citizens of the Princely States should participate in the freedom struggle of British India in so far as the establishment of Responsible

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1. Speeches of K.P. Narayana Pillai, K.P. Raman Pillai in the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly. For details see *Sri Mulam Popular Assembly Proceedings, 1922*, K.L.L., Trivandrum.
 2. *The Samadarsi*, July 5, 1923. The paper was published from Trivandrum.

Governments in the states was inextricably connected with that of democratic government in British India. The people felt that Travancore should drift with India's political currents and should not remain as an isolated unit so that she could realize the popular aspirations at the earliest opportunity.³

The demand for Responsible Government tended to get sharper as the Diwan, T. Raghaviah, failed to cultivate the popular sentiments. His suspected favouritism was strongly resented in certain quarters. He was also accused of having made himself the leader of a section with vested interests rather than the dignified head of all classes of people in a progressive state. "Thus personal, communal and constitutional issues got inextricably mixed with one another and began to flow forth as a raging river."⁴ The South Indian State's People's Conference held at Trivandrum in 1929 also demanded the introduction of Responsible Government in the State, though active steps were not taken to get the resolution implemented.

By the year 1925 there arose a number of social, caste or political associations in Travancore with definite objects.⁵ It is surprising that inspite of the existence of these organisations, people in general received very little encouragement. They had to wait until 1938 to have an organisation properly built up.

3. P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, II, (Trivandrum, 1972), pp. 319-20.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 322.

5. See File No.167/1924/Political Section dated 25th June, 1924, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. See Appendix.

After the introduction of the constitutional Reforms of 1921, people began to express their grievances. Till the year 1931 election to the Travancore Legislature was based on the provisions in Regulations II of 1921. In the four general elections conducted after 1921 the depressed classes did not get their due share in proportion to their population. The following table clearly illustrates this:⁶

(The table is according to the Census report of 1931)

| Communities | Population | Voters | Percentage |
|-------------|------------|----------|------------|
| Hindus | 31,34,888 | 94,414 | 3.01 |
| Nairs | 8,68,411 | 52,936 | 6.09 |
| Ezhavas | 8,69,863 | 12,163 | 1.39 |
| Christians | 16,04,475 | 40,844 | 2.54 |
| Muslims | 3,53,274 | 8,288 | 2.34 |
| Total | 68,30,911 | 2,08,645 | 3.05 |

Seats won by the various communities

| | 1922 | 1925 | 1928 | 1931 |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Total members to be elected | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 |
| Nairs | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| Ezhavas | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Muslims | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Christians | 7 | 7 | 6 | 4 |
| Other upper classes | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Backward Communities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

The Christians, the Muslims and the Ezhavas realized that so long as franchise was based on property qualifications, they will not get their share, and that the Nairs

⁶ R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *Constitutional Experiments in Kerala*, (Trivandrum, 1964), p.17.

would continue to get majority in the Legislature, as they constituted the largest number of land tax payers in the state. The Ezhavas were mostly landless tenants of Nair and Brahmin landlords. Very few of them were rich and educated, and they believed that the Nairs stood in the way of their progress. "As a result only 2.5% of the total population alone were able to exercise the right to franchise."⁷ Commenting on the four general elections in Travancore N.V. Joseph says: "one conspicuous result of these elections was that it provided beyond doubt that the reform of 1921 was thoroughly inadequate to protect the interests of all communities alike and maintain their balance in the state."⁸ In the government services also the Ezhavas considered the Nairs their main rivals. The following table⁹ reveals that the majority of Government positions were occupied by the Nairs while other communities did not get their share.

| Community | Population 1931 | Appointment of various communities | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Non-Malayala Brahmins | 54,141 | 2,833 | 5.23 |
| Nairs | 8,68,411 | 13,384 | 1.54 |
| Ezhavas | 8,69,863 | 912 | 0.10 |
| Muslims | 3,53,274 | 609 | 0.17 |
| Catholics | 8,09,390 | 923 | 0.11 |
| Jacobites | 3,37,872 | 1,353 | 0.40 |
| Protestants | 2,08,725 | 658 | 0.31 |
| Marthomites | 1,42,486 | 9600 | 6.73 |

⁷ K.K. Kusuman, *The Abstention Movement*, (Trivandrum, 1976), p.23.

⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*

⁹ The table is prepared out of the materials available in the Cellar Folio NO. 1126 of 1933/Confidential, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. For another table see Apendix.

C.V. Kunjuraman, General Secretary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam, handed over to the Simon Commission on 28 May, 1928 a memorandum enumerating the various disabilities the Ezhavas were suffering at that time and requesting to retain communal representation and provide a separate electorate for the Ezhavas apart from other backward communities. He also requested the adoption of adult franchise in the immediate future to enable the masses to have their legitimate share in the administration and to prevent the passing of the governmental powers into the hands of an exclusive high caste oligarchy, indifferent to the claims of the backward communities. This memorial was probably a "Counsel of utter despair, reflecting the depth of feeling that the low castes entertained against the higher castes who had powerful vested interests in the administration and public life of the state."¹⁰ The Ezhava members of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly submitted a memorial to the Diwan on 18th March, 1932 praying for widening the franchise and electorate with reservation of seats for the Ezhavas, without affecting their right to contest from general constituencies.¹¹ On 31 July 1932 the All-Travancore Ezhava Political League met and once again put forward their demands.¹² They felt that it was due to caste prejudice that they were not elected to the Legislature at the general elections. They wanted representation in the Legislature in proportion to their numerical strength.

10 P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p.335, foot-notes.

11 *The Sri Mulam Popular Assembly Proceedings, 1932.*

12 Resolution adopted at the All-Travancore Ezhava Political League under the Presidency of N.V. Kunjuraman, on 31 July, 1932, cited in P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

The Muslims also voiced their grievances through the Lajanathul Muhammadiya Association in 1932 and prayed the government for the constitution of separate electorates for the Muslims without prejudice to contest and vote from general constituencies. But it could be said that their position was better than that of the Ezhavas both in the Legislature and government services. In the 1928 general election they returned one candidate with a population of 3,53,274 and 8,288 voters while the Ezhavas could secure no seat with a population of 8,69,863 and 12,163 voters. In the government service also they secured 609 posts as against 912 posts filled by the Ezhavas.¹³ But they were economically and educationally the weakest sections.

The Christian population of the state also represented to the government on the same lines. The Travancore State Catholic Congress on 15th October, 1932 submitted a memorandum to the Maharaja enumerating their grievances and praying for their remedy. They pleaded that joint electorates should be established with reservation of seats on the basis of population.¹⁴ The Catholic population in Travancore were very much advanced in the field of education. Still they were also poorly represented in the Legislature as well as government services. The main reason for the under-representation in the Legislature was due to the high property qualifications prescribed in the Legislative Reforms of 1921.

13. File No.1126/1933/Confidential, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

14. P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

The Government was aware of the grievances and that the constitutional reforms so far introduced were quite inadequate.¹⁵ They admitted that “there are anomalies in the constitution and function of these two bodies.”¹⁶ They expressed their willingness and intention to remedy these anomalies and establish a bicameral legislature. The government stated that in remodelling the legislative institutions in Travancore special attention would be paid to the general trend of reforms in India as well as to the constitutional machinery in countries possessing a representative system of government. The government also stated that their aim was to secure adequate representation of all interests and points of view, and to fit the institutions into the scheme of Federation contemplated at the centre. They were appreciative of the advantages of bicameral legislature for Travancore and promised to promulgate a comprehensive scheme of Constitutional Reforms at an early date.¹⁷

15. The Government in a press communiqué dated 2-6-1932 made the following observation:

“The question of the reform of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly in pursuance of the announcement made by His Highness the Maharaja has been engaging the earnest attention of His Highness’ government. The government have also considered in this connection the representation in the Popular Assembly and in the Press on the subject of Constitutional Reforms”. “While the legislative Council is constituted on a low franchise (all persons paying an annual land tax of Rs.5/- and above, and all graduates being eligible as voters), the franchise for the larger House, the Assembly, stands as high as an annual payment of not less than Rs.50/- by way of land tax. There are also other anomalies in the Constitution and function of these two bodies. In the circumstances Government feel that the reconstitution of the Assembly should be undertaken not as a separate measure but as a part of a comprehensive scheme.”

File No.914/1932/Confidential, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

The government did not actually take measures, as promised in the communique to redress the grievances. Disappointing all these communities who were so far simmering with discontent on the previous reforms, the Government announced on 28 October, 1932 the Travancore Legislative Reforms Regulation II of 1108¹⁸ which came into force on 1 January 1933 in the place of Regulation II of 1097. This Regulation practically broke away all the promises made by the government in the press communiqué. It abolished the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly and the Travancore Legislative Council “ending thereby the ambiguity of the constitutional status of the former and the ill-defined relationship between the two.”¹⁹

The Regulation provided for a bi-cameral Legislature, the Lower House called The Sri Mulam Assembly and the Upper House The Sri Chitra State Council. The total strength of the Legislature was raised to 109, seventy two in the Assembly and thirty-seven in the Council. Of the 72 members in the Assembly 62 were non-officials thus providing for a non-official majority. Of the 37 members in the Sri Chitra State Council 27 were non-officials. The strength of the elected numbers was also raised. Out of the 72 members in the Assembly 43 were elected by general constituencies and five by special constituencies consisting of planters, traders and landlords. To the Council 16 members were elected from general constituencies and six from special constituencies. Those who paid Rs.25/- and above as land-tax were eligible to vote for

18. *The Travancore Government Gazette*, 29 October, 1932.

19. R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

the council and those who paid Rs.5/- and above as land tax were eligible to use their franchise to the Assembly.

The Assembly was given the power to elect its own Deputy President. Full freedom of speech for members within the Legislature was guaranteed. The constitution of the Upper House, ie., the Council with a majority of non-elected members, absolute powers being vested in the hands of the Diwan, was contrary to the wishes of the people.²⁰

The high property qualifications prescribed in the new Reforms was not at all acceptable to the Ezhava, Christian and Muslim communities in the State. They were afraid that this would defeat the very basis of their demand and that they will be thoroughly defeated in the elections held on the basis of the new regulation, since land was mostly owned by Caste Hindus. They pointed out that the five rupee land tax qualification was not advantageous to the Christian, the Ezhava and the Muslim communities, since the total extent of land owned by the Christian, Ezhavas and Muslim communities as a whole was much less than that owned by the Nair community. They also argued that the number of owners was larger among the Nairs than among the Christians, and that when property qualifications was regarded as a criterion of eligibility to vote, it was obvious that a person, who was in possession and who actually paid the land tax though in another man's name, was entitled to vote than the nominal registry holder. Moreover the Christians, the Ezhavas and the Muslims

20. For details see C. Narayana Pillai, *Tiruvithamcore Swathanthrya Samara Charithram*, (Trivandrum, 1972), pp. 24-28.

were tenants with possession of a far greater number of agricultural holdings than the Nairs. Still this was not considered as a qualification to vote and on that account the Nairs had secured an unfair advantage.²¹

The educated and well-to-do sections of all these three communities constituted a new class in the society. Members of this new class united together even at the time of the Malayali Memorial challenging the monopoly of public services by 'foreigners' and Caste-Hindus. "Where the interests of their class was threatened by a common enemy, they waited together . . . and it is characteristic of that class to unite when its common interests are threatened and to engage in rivalry and competitions on other normal occasions."²²

The leaders of these communities submitted separate memorials urging the government to put an end to property qualifications and to introduce universal adult franchise, to introduce the system of communal electorate and to reserve seats for particular communities in the Legislature. These measures they thought would undo the monopoly of the Nairs and other 'foreigners' in the Legislature.²³

The Press in Travancore also strongly supported their claims. "According to the present system of election five important communities of the state, viz., the Ezhavas,

21. Executive Committee of the Joint Political congress, Travancore, *The Present Political Problem*, (Trivandrum, 1933), pp.25-26.

22. R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

23. *Ibid.*

Muslims, Latin Catholics, Protestants and Marthomites, won't get any representation either in the Assembly or in the Council", remarked *The Dasan*. It further commented that these people constitute 20 lakhs of the total population. "If the proposed norms of representation are implemented, while 53,000 Nair voters can get 30 representatives the Ezhava and Muslim voters of 20,000 will not get even a single seat."²⁴ *The Mathrubhumi* also criticised the reforms, and argued for the establishment of Responsible Government in the State.²⁵

The Kerala Sevakan in its editorial strongly defended the demands of these communities and tried to provoke them by exhorting that the depressed classes will have to remain in the same condition for long if they failed now to come in union against these Reforms.²⁶ The paper also opined that these Reforms were quite inadequate to meet their demands.²⁷ The paper was also critical of a bi-cameral legislature in Travancore.²⁸ The genuineness of their demands can be clearly understood when we examine the speech of Sir Harcourt Butler at the Lucknow University. He remarked that "Though Travancore is the 'best princely state in India, the conservative mentality and domination of Caste-Hindus stand as a hindrance to the

24. *The Dasan*, dated January 21, 1932.

25. *The Mathrubhumi*, dated November 12, 1933. The paper criticised the reforms saying that the restrictions imposed on franchise cannot be justified. It also criticised the creation of a bi-cameral Legislature in Travancore.

26. *The Kerala Sevakan*, January 5, 1933.

27. *Ibid.*, dated 6th July, 1932.

28. *Ibid.*, 27th September, 1934.

progress of the State.”²⁹ The implication was that due to the domination of Caste Hindus the backward communities were not able to come up in the society.

The political unrest in Travancore had thus its origin in the Constitutional Reforms of 1932.³⁰ By the year 1932 these aggrieved communities had already formed their own separate organisations to ventilate their grievances. The Ezhava Political League on November 5, 1932 met at Quilon and protested against the injustice done to them by the Government. On November 28, 1932 the S.N.D.P. Yogam met at Alleppey and made their protest and it appointed a committee to formulate programme of action in association with other organisations.³¹

On 21 November, 1932 the Christians of all denominations met at the residence of E.J. John at Trivandrum.³² They again met at Trivandrum under the presidency of E.J. John and appointed a committee to study and report the political effects of the new Regulation.³³ It also resolved to submit a memorandum to the Diwan on the basis of the report submitted by this Committee. It was recommended that the system of general electorate should be retained since the creation of communal electorates would be harmful to national solidarity. Adequate reservation of seats based on population

29. *The Poura Prabha*, July 11, 1930.

30. P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

31. *S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Special*, 1953, p. 227. Also see C. Kesavan, *Jeevithasamaram* (Malayalam), Vol. II, (Kottayam, 1971), p. 4.9

32. C. Kesavan, *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*

alone would ensure the just representation of the unrepresented communities. The committee further stated that adult suffrage should not be a ground to rule out the principle of reservation of seats, and so long as conditions promoting communal discord in elections continued, the formation of popular parties on political lines was not likely to happen. The Christians felt that if the principle of reservation was accepted, it would lead to the healthy formation of political parties in the state. They feared that any attempt on the part of the government to exploit the communal spirit in elections would be detrimental to the interest of the state and the system of reservation would heal the wounds inflicted by communalism on the body politic and promote social solidarity. They further argued that the Taluk population should not be made the deciding factor in the allocation of seats since adult suffrage was ruled out of consideration. No consistent principle was followed by the government in the allocation of seats which was alleged to be arbitrary and unfair.³⁴ It is clear that their demands were moderate and genuine. The leaders of this meeting later assembled together to organise themselves to protect their common interests, and formed the All Travancore Christian Political Congress.³⁵ This newly formed Congress submitted a memorial to the Diwan enumerating their demands and praying for the removal of their grievances caused by the Reforms of 1932.

34. P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, pp. 339-40.

35. The Latin Christian Mahajana Sabha, The Travancore State Catholic Congress, The South Travancore Indian Christian Association, the Kerala Christian Service League, etc. were the main constituents in the All Travancore Christian Political Congress.

The government "after careful consideration" declared its policy that "the formation of communal electorates is altogether unsuited to Travancore They intend to create and multiply communal cleavages in the country, a feature which it is the aim of the Government to avoid. Reservation of seats for particular communities was beset with practical difficulties."³⁶ The government further made it clear its negative attitude towards the introduction of the adult suffrage and said: "It was neither feasible nor practicable to introduce adult suffrage in the State at this stage. The division in Travancore are at the present moment based upon communal or sectional interests, and unless popular parties formed on political lines come into existence the introduction of adult suffrage is likely to endanger the larger interests of the state."³⁷ This reveals that the government conveniently ignored that unless steps were taken to redress the genuine grievances of the aggrieved communities, a political party as stated by the government could never come into existence in the state. These communities would develop a national perspective and wider outlook only when their own disabilities were removed. But instead of trying to find a solution to this, the government only made policy statements which were not acceptable to the backward communities.

36. Reply to the memorialists, i.e., the aggrieved communities by C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, the legal and Constitutional Advisor to the Maharaja of Travancore, who was appointed to the post in 1932. The Reforms of 1932 was actually the result of the mastermind of C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer. For details see *Speeches and writings of Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar*, (Madras, 1937), I, p. 62.

37. *Ibid.*

The Ezhava, Muslim and Christian communities now realised that mere deputation and representation will not bring them good, and therefore decided to put a tough fight against the proposed reforms. The report submitted by the Committee appointed by the All Travancore Christian Political Congress was accepted by the working committee of the All Travancore Ezhava Political League.³⁸ It was also decided to convene a joint meeting of the Ezhava-Muslim-Christian communities to concert measures jointly for achieving their political goal.³⁹ Thus on December 18, 1932 took place the historic meeting at the L.M.S. Hall, Trivandrum in which was formed the All-Travancore Joint Political Conference.⁴⁰

The meeting resolved to represent to the government to reserve seats in the Assembly according to the population of each community.⁴¹ It was also resolved to send a deputation under the leadership of N.V. Joseph. It warned the government that these communities will be forced to non-cooperate with the ensuing elections under the new Regulation, if their grievances were not redressed by the government.⁴²

38. C. Kesavan, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

40. *Ibid.*, also see P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 342, and K.K.Kusuman, *op. cit.*, p. 31. It is to be noted that these two authors have given the date of the meeting as 17th December, 1932 without any documentation. Since Kesavan himself was a participant in this meeting the date given by him may be more authentic.

N.V. Joseph was elected as the President of the Joint Political Conference, C.V. Kunjuraman, M. Govindan, K.M. Kesavan, K.P. Kayyalakkal, C. Kesavan, P.S. Muhammed, P.K. Kunju, K.T. Thomas, K.C. Eappan, P.A. Abraham were the important representatives of the various communities participated in the meeting.

41. E.M. Kovoov, *T.M. Varughese (Malayalam)*, (Trivandrum, 1965), p. 53.

42. *Ibid.*

The deputation submitted a memorial to the Diwan on 28 Dhanu, 1108(9 January, 1933).⁴³ “It was a warning that the published electoral rules would only accentuate communal bitterness in the State and prevent the formation of parties on political lines.”⁴⁴ The memorialists demanded that the non-official seats in the Assembly should be thrown open for election in general rural multi-member constituencies with adequate reservation for the considerable communities instead of nomination by the government as suggested in the new Regulation, and that the same principle of reservation should be followed to the state council also. The government promised that an early reply would be given to the memorialists. They replied that “considerable amendments cannot be effected in the new Regulation”⁴⁵ but expressed their willingness to have a dialogue with the memorialists⁴⁶ to consider the re-grouping of the existing constituencies of the Assembly and the Council. But this suggestion was not acceptable to the leaders of the Joint Political Conference and they demanded the widening of the scope of the dialogue.

By this time it was becoming more clear that a show of strength was inevitable between the government and the Joint Political Conference. Things in the state were swiftly heading towards a crisis. Left with no other alternative, the leaders of the

43. The deputation consisted of N.V. Joseph, C.V. Kunjuraman, Theriyath Kunju Thomman, K.C. Eappan, etc. See C.Kesavan, *op. cit.*, p. 53, also see P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 342, Fn.

44. P.K.K. Menon, *Ibid.*

45. E.M. Kovoov, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

46. P.K.K. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

constituent organisations of the Joint Political Conference assembled in the London Missionary Hall, Trivandrum on 25 January 1933 and decided to abstain⁴⁷ from the general elections to be held soon.

Though the resolution was passed it appeared difficult to the abstentionists to implement it successfully. But thanks to the sincerity and painstaking efforts of its able leaders like C. Kesavan, T.M. Varghese, and the co-operation rendered by the public at large, the movement came out successful. The movement had to face stiff resistance from the caste-Hindus, as well as from members of their own communities. Nominations for the election had already been given by some members of the aggrieved communities. The Abstentionists used the tactics to vote to the Legislature candidates belonging to other communities, using the votes of the abstentionists.

The government was, however, adamant in its earlier stand and decided to put down the agitation with an iron hand. They tried their best to ban the meetings of the

47. The resolution on abstention stated: "Whereas the reformed Legislative Bodies in Travancore. . . notwithstanding the promise of wide franchise and adequate representation of the various interests in the state made in the communiqué that has announced these Reforms and in spite of the definite demands of the different communities represented in this conference for a Reform safeguarding the interests of all these communities in the matter of representation in the Legislature have made the position of all these communities worse and have created in the state an unjust and undue "predominance of one community", and . . . therefore "this conference of the delegates of the various political organisations of the Christian, Ezhava and the Muslim communities should abstain from taking part either by voting or by standing as candidates in the elections or by accepting nominations to the reformed Legislative Bodies so long as the Government do not make provision for the representation by election of all considerable communities proportionate to their population in the Legislature." *Ibid.*, pp. 343-45. For a full text of the Abstention Resolution also see C. Kesavan, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-58.

abstentionists wherever possible; and prominent leaders of the movement were put behind bars. In spite of the rigorous policy pursued by the government several meetings were held in different parts of the country to explain to the masses the pros and cons of the agitation.

T. Austin, the Diwan of Travancore was convinced of the genuineness of the demands put forward by the abstentionists. He, however, announced on 1st March 1933, the government's willingness to grant proportionate representation on the basis of population without any provision for reservation of seats and without disturbing the existing franchise rules. But during the interview granted to T.J. Mathew, Mamman Mappilay and P.S. Muhammed on 23 March 1933 the Diwan categorically stated that the existing rules regarding the distribution of seats were "substantially just and proper." This sudden change in the Diwan's attitude towards the Abstention Movement might have been due to the influence exerted on him by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, the Legal and constitutional Adviser to the Maharaja.

When C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer's attention was drawn to the comments in certain newspapers and journals in Travancore about his participation in matters of detail regarding the internal administration of the State including appointments, nominations to committees etc., he said on 18 November 1932. "It should distinctly be understood that His Highness is advised in such matters solely and exclusively by the Diwan and that is not my function to tender advice on any matter other than those relating to

broad policy on which my opinion is asked.”⁴⁸ But his activities and intervention in this matter were regarded by the Abstentionists as negation of his earlier words. The leaders of the Joint Political Conference now felt that the continuance in office of C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer would be a great hindrance to their agitation.

Realizing that their appeals⁴⁹ and requests to the government of Travancore yielded no result, the Abstentionists thought of sending up a memorial to the Paramount Power.⁵⁰ The *Kerala Sevakan* in its editorial strongly defended such an action and said: “there is nothing irregular in preferring such an appeal to the Viceroy since all their various efforts to obtain redress from the local government have failed. The right of such an appeal resides in the subjects and the time has arrived for them to use it.”⁵¹ Though the Diwan T. Austin was sympathetic towards the abstentionists, C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, the Legal and Constitutional Adviser to the Maharaja took strong exception towards such a move, with the result that this attempt also did not produce any considerable result.

Still the movement gathered momentum very soon. Since the abstentionists represented sections which constituted a clear majority of the total population in the

48. File No. 946/32/Confidential. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

49. On 22 Vrischikam 1109 a deputation consisting of C. Kesavan, Mamman Mappillay, T.M. Varghese etc. submitted a memorandum to the Maharaja enlisting their grievances. It was during this time that T.M. Varghese came to open and joined the Abstentionists. See E.M. Kovoov, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7.

50. *Kerala Sevakan*, 17 September, 1934.

51. *Ibid.*

state and “since they adopted more or less the same technique to fight these constitutional reforms as the Indian National Congress did against the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919-1921, their campaign unleashed a tremendous mass force.”⁵² Without trying in any way to paralyse the government of the state or picketing polling booths, they held innumerable public meetings to show their dissatisfaction and thereby educate the masses of the real vitality of the movement. Places like Kozhenchery, Chengannur, Tiruvalla, Vaikom, Quilon, Kottarakkara, etc. witnessed strong demonstrations of the abstentionists.⁵³

The government initiated repressive measures to suppress the movement at the earliest. The abstentionists were made victims of severe punishments.⁵⁴ Even Congress activities were prohibited in the state. K.Kumar of Omallur who was an active worker of the Indian National Congress was prohibited from delivering “any public harangue, or exhibiting or disseminating any picture, symbol or placard” due to his “objectionable speech about the present civil disobedience campaign in British India.”⁵⁵ The government’s suppressive policy even went to the extent of banning the publication of an article in *Keralasevakan* entitled “Nivarthanacharithram”, which was to be published in a coming issue.⁵⁶ This ban even without seeing the text of the article

52. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Kerala: Yesterday Today and Tomorrow*, (Calcutta, 1968), p.150.

53. File No.922/1934/Confidential, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

54. File No.912/1932/Confidential, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *The Kerala Sevakan*, September 7, 1933.

and understanding whether anything objectionable contained in it, is a clear indication that the very word “abstention” was to the government what a red rag was to the bull. Similarly the proposed publication of a book called “Abstention” was also banned by the government.⁵⁷ The paper was highly critical of the move of the government.⁵⁸ The government even tried to bring to their fold some of the Ezhava leaders by giving them some concessions.⁵⁹ But during the meeting of the S.N.D.P. Yogam held on February 19, 1933 these leaders were again forced to support the resolution on abstention.⁶⁰ C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer identified abstention in Travancore with non-cooperation in British India and contended that a large number of Ezhavas and Muslims will contest in the ensuing election to the Legislature.⁶¹

57. *Ibid.*

58. The paper in its editorial said: “The order of the district Magistrate of Quilon prohibiting the intended publication of the history of a great and political movement called “Abstention” is a measure of highhandedness which we have not heard of in other countries. The people of Travancore had accustomed themselves to the repressive policy adopted by the government to break a very legitimate movement in which four-fifths of the entire population of the state had a vital stake. But it was expected that after the General Election to the Legislature government would recover at least a measure of sobriety necessary for administration That a movement with so innocuous a programme met with the fierce opposition of government must be incredible to people outside our little state”

Ibid.

59. The Government succeeded in getting C.V. Kunjuraman, M. Govindan, Madhavan Vaidyar, President of the SNDP Yogam, etc to their fold C. Kesavan, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-71.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*

By June, 1933 the elections conducted under prohibitory orders were over. The results of the elections showed that the major victors were the Nairs.⁶²

| Community | Population in lakhs | Seats in the Legislature |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Christians | 16.04 | 10 |
| Ezhavas | 8.69 | 3 |
| Nairs | 8.68 | 36 |
| Other caste Hindus | 4.79 | 15 |
| Muslims | 3.53 | 3 |
| Depressed classes | 9.17 | 1 |
| Europeans | 5.87 | 2 |

The inaugural meeting of the reconstituted Legislature took place on 31st March, 1933. The Executive Committee now recorded their protest and levelled against the Government officials in charge of the elections various charges and demanded the dissolution of the Assembly,⁶³ as it was not representative of the major communities of the state.⁶⁴

The Joint Political Congress in a memorandum submitted to the Diwan stated that suppressive measures and unlawful interference of the government made free and fair elections impossible.⁶⁵ The government was, even after the elections, unresponsive

62. The table is taken from P.K.K. Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 355.

63. File No.148/1933/Confidential, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

64. File No.1315/1933/Confidential, Cellar Reports, KGS, TVM.

65. *Ibid.*

to the grievances and they did nothing to remove the anomaly in the Legislature.⁶⁶ They, therefore, decided to continue their agitation intensively by all constitutional means.

The impending visit of the Viceroy, Lord Wellington, in December, 1933 made the government nervous over the confused political situation in the state. The identification of the Abstention Movement with non-co-operation in British India was an attempt to convince the Viceroy of its "negative and subversive" character and thus to forestall any possible sympathy on his part towards the movement. The government was very much determined to crush the agitation, if possible, even before the visit of the Viceroy. A show-cause notice was served on the Malayala Manorama which supported the movement. Most of the leaders of the Joint Political Congress like N.V. Joseph, P.K. Kunju, T.M. Varghese and C. Kesavan were placed under gagging orders.

Meanwhile one of the greatest exponents of the Abstention Movement C. Kesavan was arrested at Alleppey on June 7, 1935 after the famous meeting of the All Travancore Joint Political Congress held at Kozhenchery on 13 May, 1935, and which requested the Maharaja to dismiss C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer from his office as Legal and Constitutional Adviser.⁶⁷ His conviction for two years imprisonment and payment of a fine of Rs. 500/- made the Ezhava community all the more determined to stand in Union against the government for their common goal.

66. Though the government nominated some Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims after the elections to the Assembly and Council the position was not much better than before.

67. File No. 893/1935/General, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Signs of reconciliation were also shown by the government in order to stave off the agitation. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer and T. Austin stated that the government was prepared to redress the political grievances if the political leaders were prepared to announce the calling off the Abstention Movement and to appeal to the Maharaja rather than the Paramount power for the realisation of their demands. The government also expressed their willingness to drop proceedings initiated against individuals and institutions. The Leaders of the Joint Political Conference now agreed to the terms stated by the government and E.J. John, President of the organisation announced the cessation of the agitation to create a proper atmosphere for a satisfactory and peaceful settlement.

Convinced of the demands of the aggrieved communities the government had already reconstituted the electorate to meet their demands. The extremist wing of the abstentionists were not satisfied with the concessions granted by the government. They however, stuck to abstention and the moderate elements among the Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims broke away. This weakened the movement to a great extent.

A remarkable achievement of the movement was the appointment of Dr. G.D. Knox by the government to prepare rules regarding recruitment to government services. He submitted his report in March 1935 and the government passed orders in June 1935 on the issue of recruitment to public services. For the first time in the history of civil service in the state, provision was made for communal reservation. An officer of high status was also appointed as Public Service Commissioner.

The government also appointed E. Subramania Iyer as the Franchise and Delimitation Commissioner. On the report submitted by him the government passed orders on 16 August, 1936 by which the franchise for the Assembly was extended to all persons who paid a tax of one rupee or more. Provision was also made for reservation of eight seats in the Assembly and two seats in the Council for the Ezhavas, three seats each to the Muslims and Latin Christians. M.K. Neelakanta Iyer was appointed special officer for preparing the voters list. It was at this time that some Nair Leaders submitted a memorandum to the Diwan in which they outlined their grievances and strongly protested against the new Reforms announced by the government in 1935 to satisfy the Abstentionists. This communal rivalry reached its climax by that time. No initiative was taken either by the Nairs or by the Ezhavas (Abstentionists) to bridge the gap. Though a few Nair leaders like Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai, Mannath Padmanabha Pillai, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai sympathised with the movement, the Abstentionists failed to get sympathy from the Nair community in general. A section of the Nairs was opposed to the Abstention Movement.

The Abstention Movement was the first communal struggle waged against the government in Travancore. The view expressed by a recent scholar that it was a “virulent socio-political agitation” cannot be completely agreed to ⁶⁸ It was neither completely social nor political in character. It was primarily communal, which paved the way for the growth of communal politics in the state. Though the abstentionists

68. K.K. Kusuman, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

had obvious grievances they did not try to form a political party based on some principles which might have led the state to its goal without such communal differences. We see that the Hindu Society was divided into many sections – it is the case now also as a continuation of the old – during the Abstention Movement. Each faction had its primary interest and the larger interest of the society was only secondary. Thus the focus was on government service and membership of legislative assembly. As Travancore had not developed local self government there were no demands concerning these. Though British India was fighting for political liberation, this Princely State and its leaders could find no time to actively engage in a fight for political freedom for the masses, but they devoted their time and energy to get the grievances of some communities redressed. This they could have achieved along with the political agitation with a wider perspective.⁶⁹ These leaders lacked national outlook which can be attributed to their failure to go along with the mainstream of nationalist movement in British India. They became conscious of this fact only by 1938 when the Travancore State Congress was formed in the same year on political lines. Forming of a political party during the Abstention Movement was ridiculed and discouraged by these leaders.

However, the achievements of this movement, in spite of its defects, cannot be overlooked. The action taken by the government of Travancore in issuing orders to

69. Such a perspective was not altogether lacking as many had gone to Malabar in 1930 to participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Some of them like N.C. Sekhar and P.Krishna Pillai went on to become Communist leaders in the '40's.

abolish unapproachability and to throw open all roads, tanks and wells to all classes of people should be attributed to the works pursued by the Abstentionists. The credit of forcing the government for the famous Temple Entry Proclamation also goes to them, though not completely. All these created greater social mobility for the people in the State.

E.M.S. Namboodiripad had remarked that “in spite of its avowedly communal character, radical nationalists welcomed the movement as the first mass political movement in Travancore. It was this movement, together with the repression which the Government launched against it, that led to the subsequent inauguration of the Travancore State Congress with its central slogan of Responsible Government.”⁷⁰

70. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

EMERGENCE OF THE TRAVANCORE STATE CONGRESS AND EARLY ACTIVITIES OF THE PARTY

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter V

EMERGENCE OF THE TRAVANCORE STATE CONGRESS AND EARLY ACTIVITIES OF THE PARTY

By the year 1936 the Abstention Movement began to show signs of weakness. The fight for freedom under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was going on in British India at that time. Though the Indian National Congress advocated non-intervention in the affairs of and agitation for Responsible Government in the princely states, it had promised its full support towards the movement. District Committees of the Indian National Congress were started in the Indian States also.¹ The organisation was rather ineffective in the two princely states in Kerala, either for lack of encouragement from the central organisation or for want of enthusiastic local leaders willing to sacrifice themselves for the country. The Indian National Congress had no direct role or relevance in Princely States and therefore, no propaganda programmes and activities were carried out to popularise the ideology, objectives and methods of agitations, in the Princely States in India. Agitations as on the same lines in British India by the Indian National Congress in Princely States, their leaders feared, would give an image of fighting between or against Indians themselves. Also issues in both British India and Princely India were different. The situation in Travancore was much more complicated and confusing since a section of the population in the state was

1. A District Congress Committee was started in Malabar in 1910. The Secretary was C. Kunjurama Menon. A District Committee was started in Travancore in 1920. See A.K. Pillai, *Congressum Keralavum*, (Trichur, 1935), pp. 378-422.

engaged in the fight for achievement of their civil rights and liberties from the Native Ruler. Therefore they could devote no time for the promotion of the activities of the Indian National Congress in the State. But conditions began to change after 1936. Following the decision to reorganise the Pradesh Congress Committees in India on linguistic lines taken at the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress in 1920, the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee was established in 1921, the jurisdiction of which included British Malabar, Cochin and Travancore.² Annual meetings were held and resolutions passed every year. In the fourth Annual Conference of the Kerala State Congress Committee held at Payyannur a resolution requesting the grant of Responsible Government to princely states was passed.

Though the people of the Princely State of Travancore had been demanding the establishment of Responsible Government in the State as early as 1929, and “an organisation called the Travancore State Congress was formed for the same purpose in 1930”³ under the leadership of Kuzhikkala Kumar, G. Raman Menon and V.R. Nanu,⁴ their attempts proved to be a thorough failure due to many reasons.⁵ At the

2. K.P.Kesava Menon, *Kazhinja Kaalam* (Mal.), (Kozhikode, 1969), pp. 74-75.

3. Statement issued to the Press by Pattom. A. Thanu Pillai, President of the Travancore State Congress. M.J. Koshy, *Last days of Monarchy in Kerala*, (Trivandrum, 1973). Appendices Part II, No. 27, p. 148. The Government Records speak of the year of formation of the Travancore State Congress as 1931 with head-quarters at Quilon and branches at Trivandrum and other places. It had no particular office. It is also stated that the organisation was inactive in 1936. See file No.1092/36/C.S.Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

4. C. Kesavan, *Jeevithasamaram* (Mal.), Vol. II, (Kottayam, 1971), pp. 54-55.

5. The leaders who founded this party held meetings in various parts of the state. But the Ezhavas, and Christians did not co-operate with them. The Ezhavas categorically denied

Third Travancore Political Conference ⁶ held in Trivandrum on November 27, 1937 under the presidency of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the question of Responsible Government was again pushed to the forefront.⁷ Public meetings were held in many places in Travancore in which the leaders explained to the people the need for establishing Responsible Government in the State. The idea behind this was to start a strong District Congress Committee of the Indian National Congress and to pursue agitation for Responsible Government through that organisation.⁸ Leaders like P.Krishna Pillai were of the view that the Congressmen in British India should adopt a clear attitude towards the problems in the princely states. They urged that people in the princely states should take part in the agitation in British India.⁹ It was felt that attainment of self-government in British India would lead to attainment of Responsible Government in India states as well. The All-Travancore Joint Political Congress also strongly pleaded in the Sri Mulam Assembly on February, 2, 1938 for the establishment of Responsible Government through an adjournment motion moved by T.M. Varghese.¹⁰

any kind of participation in political agitations of this type unless their demand for communal representation in the legislature was agreed to. For details see C. Kesavan, *Ibid.*

6. This Conference was organised by the Travancore Congress Provisional Committee.

7. M.J. Koshy, n. 3, p.1.

8. Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress, *Travancore Today – Her Struggle for Freedom*, (Cochin, 1938), p. 51.

9. P. Krishna Pillai, "Natturajyaprajakalum Congressum", *Mathrubhumi*, August 18, 1934.

10. *Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings*, Vol. XI, pp. 806-807.

Foundation of the Congress

The Haripura session of the Indian National Congress under the Presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose took a very important and far-reaching decision in January, 1938 on the Native¹¹ states. This denied the opportunity to the people of the States to fight for Responsible Government under the banner of the Indian National Congress. It shattered the hopes of the people of the States and they were now faced with the task of building up their own internal organisations unconnected with the Indian National Congress, to carry on the struggle for Responsible Government. Many strongly felt the need for a political party in the state. By this time the Abstention Movement had also begun to show signs of weakness. But the leaders were successful in drawing in to their fold prominent leaders of the Nair Community, who had earlier no sympathy towards the movement. Moreover, the attitude of the Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer towards Responsible Government in the state also forced the people to think of forming a political party in the State to pursue agitation.¹²

11. The meeting resolved that "Congress Committees in the States shall function under the direction and control of the Congress Working Committee and shall not engage in parliamentary activity nor launch on direct action in the name and under the auspices of the Congress. Internal struggles of the people of the States must not be undertaken in the name of the Congress. For this purpose independent organisations should be started and continued where they exist already within the States."

Harijan, February 26, 1938. Also see Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. II, Reprint, (Bombay, 1969), pp.78-82.

12. Earl Winterton made a policy statement in the House of Commons that "It is not the policy of the Paramount Power in ordinary circumstances to intervene in the internal administration of full-fledged states. In particular . . . the Paramount Power would certainly not obstruct proposals for constitutional advance initiated by the ruler. The consent of the Paramount Power has not been required before such advances have been approved by various princes."

In pursuance of this object in mind a large number of popular leaders¹³ of the state assembled in the office of A. Narayana Pillai, a famous Lawyer of Trivandrum. The meeting was presided over by Madhava Warriar.¹⁴ The primary aim of the meeting was to prepare guidelines to organise a political party representing all castes and creeds. The meeting decided to form a political party with the definite object of establishing Responsible Government on the basis of adult franchise. A sub-committee was appointed to draft the bye-laws and regulations of the proposed party. The second conference which was also held in the office of A. Narayana Pillai on 24th February, 1938 accepted the regulations submitted by the sub-committee and christened the association "The Travancore State Congress." In the next meeting on 26 February 1938 at the residence of E. John Philepose, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai was

Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 1937-38, Vol. 332, February 21, 1938, p. 6. In his statement Lord Lothian on 24th February, 1938 made clear that Paramountcy could certainly not be interpreted to mean that Great Britain would support a ruler in denying his own subjects the very rights which had been granted to British India.

Travancore Today - Her Struggle for Freedom, published by the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress, July, 1938.

Grasping the danger, Sir C.P.Ramaswami Aiyer denounced dyarchy in a speech in the Legislative Council as of little significance. He maintained that a Legislature which did not have complete responsibility over finances became a purely advisory body and did not get any responsibility. In reply to Lothian's views he pointed out that it was impossible, without the active concurrence of the British Government, for the Ruler, to divest himself of his undivided authority and jurisdiction over the grievances of his state in favour of any other authority.

13. The meeting was attended by prominent leaders like Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, C. Kesavan, A.J. John, C.V. Kunjuraman, E. John Philipose, Puthupally Krishna Pillai, V. Achutha Menon and others. It is to be noted that most of the leaders who assembled here were advocates of the Abstention Movement. See, *Malayala Manorama* dated 18 February, 1938.

14. *Ibid.*

unanimously elected as its President. K.P. Nilakanta Pillai and K.T. Thomas were elected joint secretaries and M.R. Madhava Warriar, Treasurer. Eighteen persons were elected members of the working committee of the Travancore State Congress. Thus a political party came into existence for the first time in Travancore which could work for its aim under the aegis of the Indian National Congress.

The accepted programme of the Travancore State Congress to lead the country to the ultimate goal of Responsible Government was not at all palatable to the autocratic Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer. He was very much determined to crush the movement as early as possible and employed all repressive means possible. Instead of responding to the wishes and aspirations of the people the Diwan chose to malign the political movements as communal in character.¹⁵ He maintained that the popular movement was the work of Christians against the Hindu Prince. The irony is that while making these accusations against the political movements, the Diwan not only managed to forget the communal character of his own administration but also ignored the fact that he himself was trying to work up communal feelings and differences against the political movements. He also disregarded the fact that the State Congress had Hindus, Muslims and Christians as its members. This was made clear by the statement issued to the press by the President of the Congress on 4th May, 1938 that "the state congress is a non-communal organisation independent of all communal organisations."¹⁶

15. Urmila Phadnis, *Towards the Integration of Indian States 1919-1947*, (Bombay, 1968), p. 120.

16. M.J. Koshy, n. 3, Appendices, p. 147.

The emergence of the Travancore State Congress was no doubt, a landmark in the history of Travancore. It was partly the result of the realization by the leaders of the Joint Political Congress that they had something higher and nobler to attain than what they were so far fighting for. They also realized their own inherent weaknesses. The Joint Political Congress was tactically and organisationally defective as it excluded the Nairs from it. The foundation of the Travancore State Congress marks the beginning of a new era of political consciousness in Travancore. People who were so far fighting for communal causes resolved to form an organisation for the protection of the interests of minorities and for the establishment of Responsible Government in the state with the active support and co-operation of Caste-Hindus. The cry for a share in all branches of administration was thus transformed into a cry for Responsible Government in Travancore. The formation of the political party was completed when the leaders of the Joint Political Congress met for the last time and resolved to dissolve the organisation on 4th July, 1938. "The germs of a political movement broad-based enough to include all classes of the people of Travancore, and having a more comprehensive democratic objective, that of Responsible Government, coalesced with the core of what had been variously called the Abstention Movement, the Joint Political Congress and the Samyukta Party. The State Congress was the outcome of it."¹⁷

17. C.P. Mathen, *I have Borne Much*, (Madras, 1951), p. 54.

Through press release and resolutions the State Congress made it clear its aims and objectives to the people of Travancore.¹⁸ The objective, as declared in its first meeting was the attainment of Responsible Government in Travancore by all legitimate, peaceful and constitutional means with universal adult franchise and with adequate safeguard for protection of minority interests.¹⁹ Thus though from the beginning itself the Indian National Congress and Travancore State Congress championed the cause of Muslim Minorities it did not take into consideration the case of other minorities like Sikhs, Parsis, Buddhist and Jains, since they were not vote banks. This need not be interpreted as a deliberate act on the part of the nationalist congressmen, but in effect it promoted an upper hand for Muslims in the politics of India and especially in Kerala even after Independence, out of which the Congress could not escape till this date in Kerala.

The State Congress adopted a five point programme in its resolution which can be listed as under:

- 1) to foster communal harmony and unity

18. The Travancore State Congress issued its first press release on 26th February, 1938, which disputed C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer's contention regarding grant of Responsible Government. It welcomed the announcements made by Lord Lothian and Carl Winterton in the British Parliament regarding the policy of non-intervention in the Indian Princely States. The resolution also requested the Government of Travancore to initiate immediate steps for the introduction of Responsible Government in the State. It further exhorted the people of the state to respond to its call and to strengthen the State Congress by enlisting in large numbers to its fold – *The Hindu*, 25th Feb. 1938.

19. Ibid. It is to be taken into consideration that the word 'Minorities' has not been defined till date by the Congress – either the INC or the TSC. Evidently the word refers to the Muslims but less in minority is Christian - Buddhist, Jain, Parsi etc.

- 2) to safeguard and work for the interest of agricultural and industrial labourers
- 3) to protect and develop the economic and national prosperity of the state especially by encouraging internal trade and industry.
- 4) to secure for the people a detailed declaration of fundamental rights, which guarantee freedom of speech and expression, freedom of the press and association, freedom of worship and religion and freedom of person including immunity from arbitrary arrest, imprisonment and deportation and detention without trial in a state and
- 5) to secure for the Indian State their lawful and legitimate place in all India constitutional scheme by establishing co-operation and unity between native states on the one hand and between native states of British on the other.²⁰

Regarding the organisation of the Travancore State Congress scholars have expressed divergent view. A pro-Government political leader of Madras, Nilkan Perumal stated thus: "The communal minded Joint Political Congress was rebaptised as the Nationalist Congress; its plank and programmes became Responsible Government."²¹ An identical view was expressed in a weekly published from Cochin

20. *Ibid.*

21. Nilkan Perumal, *The Truth about Travancore*, Madras, 1939, p. 14. It may be noted that the aim of the formation of TJPC was communal in character, but in due course the leaders realized that communal division and fight will serve no purpose to the interest of the state. They cannot be blamed for forming an association of this kind to fight for their grievances, since they had suffered so much, but their valuation by the time of their failure to form a political party representing all groups including the high castes is to be appreciated. Hence Perumal's view cannot be accepted as objective.

The emergence of a political organisation called the Travancore State Congress marked a turning point in the history of the struggle for Responsible Government in Travancore. The State Congress had to face a formidable adversary in Diwan Sir C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyer²⁵ since its inception in 1938. The inhabitants of Travancore, by tradition, evinced an abiding loyalty to the Maharaja and the ruling family. Therefore the first and foremost aim of the Congress, before launching agitations, was to secure public support to the organisation and its activities. Therefore the State Congress professed loyalty to the Maharaja and ruling family, but with the definite object of undermining the autocratic system of government in the state, they made the Diwan the main target of attack, which of course presented a formidable challenge to the Princely administration. The Government which in no way agreed with the State Congress nor favourable to the policies, programmes, aims and objectives of the state Congress, was determined to suppress the movement and destroy the organisation, and considered it a 'disloyal and subversive organisation'. They left no stone unturned in its efforts to suppress it. The Government used all possible measures towards this end including the organisation of 'loyalist parties', utilisation of the services of communal and religious bodies and employment of all kinds of repressive measures by the Government machinery.

25. Jawaharlal Nehru described C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyer as a "full-blooded apologist of British rule in India, especially during the last few years, an admirer of dictatorship in India and elsewhere and himself a shining ornament of autocracy in Indian state." See for details File No.396/1936/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS,TVM. It may be noted that the strong and consistent measures taken by Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer to suppress the agitation for Responsible Government in Travancore by suppressing the Travancore State Congress clearly shows that he fully deserved these not very complementary epithets used by Nehru.

The social and political situation of the state being so, the immediate task before the leaders of the State Congress was the extension and consolidation of its base and activities among masses by a variety of means. To propagate the ideals, programmes, aims and objectives of organisation among the masses and to establish local committees at the grass-root level through out the state, the leaders conducted a tour throughout the state under the leadership of Pattom A. Thanu Pillai on 7th March, 1938.²⁶ Realizing that this would create a grave and alarming situation in the state resulting developing an anti-government sentiment in the minds of the people, the government decided to take preventive measures. The District Magistrate of Trivandrum banned processions and meetings in Trivandrum district for a period of two months from March 7, 1938, on the ground that they would lead to breach of peace and violence. The leaders could not take the propaganda programme to other districts also, as meetings and processions were banned for two months in the districts of Kottayam and Quilon from 9th April and 26th March, 1938 respectively.²⁷

The Diwan, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer also adopted a policy of 'divide and rule' to break of new political organisation. He carried on the propaganda that the State Congress was a Christian dominated body and encouraged Mannath Padmanabhan and the leaders of the Nair Service Society to form the 'Travancore

26. *The Hindu*, 7th March 1938.

27. File No. D. Dis. 122/1938/C.3. Cellar Records, KGS, Tvm. In a letter dated 7th August 1938 addressed to the Chief Secretary, the President of the State Congress and the Leader of the Propaganda Committee, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai severely criticised the action of the Government and the policy of suppression of popular movement in the State and requested to withdraw immediately the ban imposed on meetings and jathas.

National Congress' as a counter blast to the Travancore State Congress. However, the tactics of Sir. C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer to break up the State Congress with the help of the N.S.S. leaders did not produce any positive results.²⁸ When these measures failed the Diwan resorted to other steps to suppress the movement.

A Narayana Pillai, an advocate of Trivandrum and one of the founders and organisers of the State Congress had published two articles entitled "Communal representation in public service" and "Irregularities in Assembly proceedings" in *Malayala Rajyam* and the *Malayali* respectively.²⁹ On charge of sedition and exciting class hatred he was arrested on 22nd February, 1938. The trial was completed within a short span of 5 days from 1st April, 1938 to 5th April, 1938, and he was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment and a fine of Rs.200/-.³⁰ The consequences were widely felt. The State Congress Party decided to constitute a committee consisting of A. Thanu Pillai, K.T. Thomas, T.M. Varghese and K.P. Nilakanta Pillai to defend the case of A. Narayana Pillai. They invited K.F. Nariman, a prominent congress man and a leading advocate of Bombay, to appear for him and Nariman reached Trivandrum on 31st March, 1938. The Committee also arranged a grand public reception to the advocate, but the District Magistrate of Trivandrum banned meetings and processions in

28. It may be noted in this connection that the leaders of the Joint Political Conference which transformed itself into the Travancore State Congress did not take any positive measures to get the support of the caste Hindus like Nairs and Brahmins, for the organisation, until it grew up into a semi-mass organisation. This fact might have promoted Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer to use the N.S.S. against the State Congress.

29. *The Hindu*, 23rd February, 1938.

30. *Ibid*, 5th April, 1938.

Trivandrum for a period of two months on the pretext that a strong rival section had organised themselves to oppose the receptions.³¹ Though Nariman filed an application in the Court to appear for the accused he was not granted permission on technical grounds that he had undergone conviction in British India.³² The leaders of the State Congress could expose both the government and judiciary before the people and characterised it as “the subservience of the judiciary to the ends of the executive.” It not only helped them to present the case before the people of the home state but also to draw the attention of other princely states and British Indian States of India and expose before them the arbitrary and high-handed methods employed by the Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer. Sharply reacting to the attitude of the government the State Congress expressed its protest in its memorandum submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore. “The staggering manner in which the executive identified itself with the prosecution in this case and the revengeful spirit displayed throughout were, to say the least unworthy of a civilized government. The prosecution was unjustifiable and the trial turned out to be a farce. What ensued was a miscarriage of justice. But it is not so much on this account that the episode has become tragic. The glaring way in which the judiciary was bent on to subserve the ends of the executive renders this case, the most unfortunate in the judicial annals of Travancore.”³³ Thus the congress got two birds at a single shot. The Diwan also rigged a bye-election held from Mavelikkara to

31. *Ibid*, 2nd April, 1938.

32. File N.D.Dis./252/38/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM. Also see the Hindu, 1st April, 1938.

33. File No.D.Dis./306/19848/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

the Travancore Legislature and ensured the defeat of the State Congress candidate. Both the congress and government showed keen interest in this election in central Travancore on 10th June, 1938. A Sankara Pillai and N.Narayana Pillai were put up as candidates by the Congress and the Nair Service Society respectively. Both the groups wanted to show their strength and hold among the people and carried out intensive propaganda campaigns. The State Congress put all its might in the fray and even shifted its office to Mavelikara during the election days. The N.S.S candidate had the full support of the Diwan and government of Travancore and all the administrative machinery was geared up for his success. This grave situation was brought before the Government through a telegram to the Diwan by A. Sankara Pillai on 6th June, 1938.³⁴ In the neck to neck fight that ensued N.Narayana Pillai polled 15, 200 votes and his rival A. Sankara Pillai polled only 8,599 votes.³⁵ Through this bye-election the State Congress got a golden opportunity to work with the people and mobilize public opinion and to do door to door propaganda work, even though the congress lost the elections and also expose before the people the attitude of the Government towards the State Congress and the government involvement in the success of the N.S.S. candidate. It also helped to mobilize considerable public opinion in its favour and explain to the people the political stand of the organisation. The defeat of the Congress candidate may be attributed to two reasons: 1 The inability and weakness of State Congress leaders to win over the N.S.S leadership and to convince them that the nature,

34. File No.D.Dis./1823/38/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

35. *The Hindu*, 15th June, 1938.

ideology, programme and constitution of the Travancore State Congress were entirely different from that of the parent organisation, joint Political Conferences. The Nair Service Society considered the State Congress an organisation working against their interests and, therefore identified it with the former Joint Political Conference and any sympathy or support to the State Congress was regarded as detrimental to the interest of the N.S.S. They also considered the State Congress dominated by Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims alienating caste Hindus from it, as was the case of Joint Political Conference.³⁶ Some scholars have raised an allegation that the N.S.S followed a pro-government attitude mainly to get some government appointments and also to establish a college for the Nairs at Trivandrum with the help of the government. But this allegation is not true, since the Nairs were the beneficiaries in this regard right from the 19th Century.³⁷

Though the State Congress right from its genesis was trying to establish hold on the masses in the state, it was also planning to get support and sympathy from outside the State as well, both from other Princely States and British India. With this idea in

36. It may be noted that the Eighth annual conference of the N.S.S. at Kidangoor on 15th May, 1938 a resolution was passed. This reads: "The Conference condemned and viewed with alarm the agitation for Responsible Government by the State Congress and request the Nairs not to welcome it as it was against the Hindu ideals, and urged the Karayogams should explain the true significance of their agitations to the masses." See *The Hindu*, 17th May, 1938. This would suggest that Travancore which was dedicated to Sri. Padmanabha by Marthanda Varma having all the characteristics of a Hindu State in tradition and habits would cease to be a Hindu State if the aims and objectives of the Travancore State Congress are achieved, the N.S.S. feared, and that there would be a Christian and Muslim domination not only in the political sphere, but in social and economic realms too.

37. *Ibid.*

mind also to enlighten them of the reactionary and oppressive measures of the government of Travancore, the leaders of the congress constituted a 12 members committee consisting of Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese, C.Kesavan, V.K. Velayudhan, E.J. Phillipose, K.T. Thomas, P.K. Kunju, K.M. Kora, K.A.Gangadhara Menon, K.P. Nilakanta Pillai, M.S. Aniruddhan and T.K.Narayana Pillai to go to Madras on 12th April, 1938 to explain to the people the aims and objectives of the Travancore State Congress and get their support.³⁸

At a public meeting held at the Gokhalae Hall, George Town, Madras on 14th April, 1938, the leaders not only condemned the attitude of the Travancore government towards the policies of the Congress but also exhorted the people of the British state of Madras to join hands with the State Congress in its agitation. Being two independent and separate political entities and the issues in these States being different this kind of exhortation at a meeting was rather meaningless in that it cannot be implemented due to its impracticability, but it could raise the morale of the leaders and the workers of the State Congress. They also met the leading journalists and public figures of Madras and enlightened them of the political situation in the State of Travancore.³⁹ Maharaja and the Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer viewed these activities of the State Congress as a “calculated move to discredit their administration and therefore, it resulted in an open clash between the Government and the State Congress. The reaction of the Diwan was immediate. Suspecting that the branch

38. *Ibid.*, 12th April, 1938.

39. For details see *The Hindu*, 12th April, 1938.

office of the Travancore National and Quilon Bank had given financial assistance to the State Congress delegates, the Diwan decided to liquidate the Bank by creating a run on the bank and suspended the working of the bank from 21st June to 1st July, 1938. This led to its liquidation.⁴⁰ This policy of the Diwan, turned the Syrian Christians against the government, as they owned the bank, and therefore this community was completely alienated from the government fold and they joined the Congress fold.

Encounter with the Government and the Congress Memorial

The working committee of the Travancore State Congress met on 25th February 1938 and took a very important and drastic decision to prepare and submit a memorial against the Dewan to the Maharaja of Travancore, which was submitted on the 30th May, 1938. The Memorial signed by the following members of the working committee of the Travancore State Congress, viz. Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese, K.P. Nilakanta Pillai, K.T. Thomas, M.R. Madhava Warriar, N.k. Padmanabha Pillai, Miss. Annie Mascrene, A.J. John, C. Kesavan, T.K. Narayana Pillai, E.J. Philipose, P.J. Sebastine, K.M. Kora, P. Sanku Pillai, V.K. Velayudhan, P.K. Kunju, K. Kesavan, Kannare Gopala Panicker, R. Vasudevan Pillai, M.N. Parameswaran Pillai, K.N. Kunjukrishna Pillai and A. Narayana Pillai, prayed the following:

40. C.P. Mathen, *op. cit.* p. 55.

- 1) The powers exercised by the Diwan may be vested in a Cabinet of Ministers responsible to the Legislature.
- 2) The Legislature may be reformed and franchise extended to all adults with adequate safeguards for the protection of minority interests.
- 3) A declaration of fundamental rights guaranteeing personal freedom and liberty may be incorporated in the constitution.
- 4) Necessary measures should be adopted to restore and ensure the independence of the judiciary.
- 5) The restriction upon the press may be repealed.
- 6) The service of Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer may be immediately dispensed with and
- 7) An inquiry into the administrative acts, appointments and financial transactions for which C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer has been responsible as Diwan may be held.⁴¹

No doubt the clauses mainly targeted the Diwan against his irregularities in administrative acts and financial transactions of the Government. Among the allegations made in the memorandum the interference of the executive in the free functioning of the judiciary, policy of divide and rule', nepotism which was rampant in administration, high handed action of police, etc. were of utmost importance. The

41. File No. D.Dis./308/1938/C.S., Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Diwan, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer could in no way compromise with the memorial and he considered it as 'a personal allegation against him.'⁴²

An examination of the various demands made by the state congress in the Memorandum shows that it was highly critical of the Diwan and the Travancore administration. Demand for the dismissal of the Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, appointed by the Crown indirectly meant challenging the authority of the Ruler. True that there is no direct attack on Royal authority, but a request to dismiss the Diwan amounted to it. In the British Indian Provinces the agitation for independence was in full swing under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The leaders of the State Congress would have anticipated severe action from the Crown for its demand. But the leaders were not ill treated.⁴³

Even the Indian National Congress founded in 1885 on an All India basis did not dare to put up demands of these kind during the days of inception, and they were, therefore, called political mendicants. Were the leaders of the Travancore State Congress revolutionary to demand these claims immediately after the foundation of the organisation? If the answer is affirmative several questions could be asked.

1) Was the State Congress equipped for an agitation to achieve these aims?

42. File No. D. Dis./1916/1944/C.S., Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Letter dated 13th July 1938 from Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer to C.P. Skrine, President, Trivandrum.

43. The present writer is not overlooking the retaliatory measures taken by the Diwan. The aim of the writer is to examine the real intention of the petitioners and the freedom they enjoyed.

2) Could in the existing political situation the state Congress call for a popular agitation?

3) Did it have a wide social base?

In short the aim of the leaders of the state congress in preparing and submitting this kind of memorial to the Maharaja was mainly to give wide publicity to its demands among princely states and British Indian Provinces rather than the achievement of Responsible Government, which the leaders were fully conscious, was a far cry. Both the memorial and memorandum were printed in the Union Press in Cochin in a book form containing a number of articles condemning the administration of Travancore.⁴⁴ Copies of it were despatched to officers in Travancore and British India, editors of leading newspapers all over India and even to members of Parliament. A weekly published from Delhi called 'The Princely India' published it in one of its issues.⁴⁵

The Diwan could not tolerate these acts on the part of the State Congress which was in its infant stage and resorted to repressive measures and termed it as "ill conceived and mischievous attack on himself and the "personal allegations" a challenge to his authority. He directed the Postal Superintendent to seize all the copies within the state of Travancore and the Government proscribed its circulation and also

44. File No.1916/1944/C.S., Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

45. For details see C.Narayana Pillai, *Tiruvithamcore Swathantrhya Samara Charithram*, (Trivandrum, 1972), p.218.

requested the British Government to ban it in British Indian Provinces. The State Congress really won the game since more than one thousand copies of it had already been distributed to different parts of India gaining wide publicity all over the country. Thus the first round of work for the State Congress was a real success as its demands could be brought to limelight throughout the whole country. The Diwan on the other hand had to submit, since his efforts did not materialise.

Realizing that the state congress was gaining deeper roots among the masses of Travancore and that the influence of it might pose a great danger to his authority, the Diwan resorted to other methods, including the assault of prominent individuals by 'unknown persons'.

A number of attempts were made on the life and property of Miss Annie Mascrene, a prominent leader and working committee member of the State Congress, and during the first week of April, 1938, some 'unknown persons' pelted stones at her house and this seemed to be a warning. On 29th April miscreants broke open her house, assaulted her and took away all valuables and in another instance a constable hit her with his bicycle.⁴⁶ These cannot be taken as accidental because similar incidents befell on other leaders of the congress as well. The office of M.N. Parameswaran Pillai, a leading advocate and a State Congress leader was ransacked and an attempt was made to break open the state congress office at Trivandrum. K.T. Thomas, who was the Joint Secretary of the Congress, was forced his way into the

46. Proceedings of the Sri Mulam Assembly , Vol. XII, 70, pp. 78-79, 163-164 and 284..

garage by some unknown persons'.⁴⁷ K.V. Parameswaran Pillai was assaulted and K.A. Gangadhara Menon's house was attacked and looted.⁴⁸ K.P. Nilakanta Pillai was attacked with weapons. Series of attacks on State Congress leaders would suggest that there was Government backing for it. The Government also did not take any action, when complained. The complaint lodged by Annie Mascrene, to the police and the request she made to the Maharaja for protection did not yield results.⁴⁹ Therefore she published a pamphlet on 2nd May, 1938 in which she accused and severely criticised the police. This irritated the authorities and the Commissioner of Police, Trivandrum warned her and directed to tender an apology for charge of false, malicious and defamatory in character against the police force in general.⁵⁰ These incidents evoked wide spread public indignation not only in the state but also outside. The Government's lukewarm policy was a clear indication of their complicity in the above incidents. The problem really confronted by the State Congress then was whether or not citizens were free to exercise their fundamental civic rights in the teeth of organised goondaism of hired rowdies of the government.

The report of the Commissioner of Police to the Government clearly shows the attitude of the Government and Police and their involvement.⁵¹ A study of the report

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, No.1, 11th July, 1938, pp. 55-58.

49. File No.D.Dis./3483/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.* Letter from the Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum. In the letter to the Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum, the

of the Police Commissioner would reveal that in spite of his arguments the Police Department could not be exonerated and the whole Department was evidently playing a foul game against the State Congress leaders. The State Congress leaders were looked down upon by the Travancore administration and the police. They also failed to feel the pulse of the people and understand and evaluate this political agitations for Responsible Government in its correct perspective. They also failed to understand the cosmic truth that people cannot be suppressed for ever against their legitimate aspirations and demands and democratic rights. Though Annie Mascrene was threatened with prosecution, she refused to tender any apology.⁵²

The Government anticipated an alarming and uncontrollable political situation and therefore decided to act upon the print media. The News Paper Regulations of

Commissioner of Police thus stated: "My diagnosis for the present outbreak is that the present day agitation made by Miss Annie Mascrene and others of her school of thought has been engaging the attention of the police mostly, and on that account the work of crime prevention and detection has suffered considerably and crimes of the kind are the first fruits of the industry of these political agitators which both they, as well as the loyal subjects are reaping.

Coming to the general sense of insecurity which she feels, I should submit that Annie Mascrene is one of the zealous enthusiast struggling to be free under the so-called Responsible Government. She seems to be in a high state of excitement because of her political fervour which seems to have almost upset her balance of mind and the decisions against the conduct of the police, she has taken without giving any time to the police to detect the case.

Ranging herself definitely on the opposite side of the government she is having her plays of her temper and temperaments as a dangerous free-lance to serve her political purpose. She appears a dangerous agitator in a heated temper propagating dangerous ideas. This is nothing but a campaign of vilification of officers, to be deemed as baseless and malicious. . . . It is beyond dispute that Miss Annie Mascrene and others of her standard are out to excite disorder in the country for reasons of their own by breaking the law.

52. *Ibid.* For details see the letter dated 20th may, 1938 sent by Miss Annie Mascrene to the Commissioner of Police, Trivandrum.

22nd May, 1926 conferred on the Executive extensive powers. A newspaper could be published only under a licence issued by the Government on deposit of an amount fixed as security. The licence thus obtained was non-transferable under any circumstances. With the death or inability of the licence the paper must stop publication and to get a new licensee in the name of another individual all the formalities to be repeated. Thus in a sense publication of a paper largely depended on the Government. Added to these was the prerogative of the Government to cancel the licence at any time without assigning any reason thereof and forfeit the deposit.⁵³ Through these severe restrictions imposed on the press freedom was curtailed. Hence the target of the government fell on the press. The prosecution of the authors of articles which the administration considered as objectionable, cancellation of licence without valid reasons, forfeiture of deposits and proscription of leaflets, pamphlets and newspapers became common.

To wreck vengeance on C. Kesavan, a prominent leader of the State Congress and newly appointed Editor of the Malayalam daily 'Kaumudi' published from Trivandrum, the Government cancelled its licence and its deposit was forfeited. What provoked the Government to react immediately was the publication of a message sent by George Joseph defending C. Kesavan in a sedition case, and cause of Responsible Government and the constitution of the State Congress. The weekly edition of the *Kaumudi* was also not spared.⁵⁴ Another daily which faced the fury of the Diwan was

53. For details of the regulation, terms and conditions etc refer *The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore*, Vol. VI, 1930. Pp. 1167-1173.

54. File No.78/1938/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Malayala Manorama. Intolerant towards its criticism of the policies of the Government, the paper was warned in the first instance and subsequently its licence was cancelled and deposits forfeited to the Government.⁵⁵ Papers published from outside Travancore criticising government policies and attitude were also banned entry into Travancore. Prominent among them include ‘Gomathi’ and ‘Sanatani’ published from Trichur,⁵⁶ ‘The Deepam’, ‘The Prakasam’ and ‘The Malabar Herald’ published from Cochin.⁵⁷

Individuals who criticised government were also not spared. On 19th January 1938, M.R. Madhava Warriar and T.M. Muthalai, editors of the *Malayali* and the *Malabar Advocate* respectively were assaulted. No action was taken by the Travancore administration against the assailants. A Narayana Pillai, a leading advocate and leader of the State Congress was arrested on a charge of sedition.⁵⁸ Such actions were condemned by nationalists outside Travancore.⁵⁹

While this was the fate of the press which opposed and criticised the Government, those supported the Government were duly rewarded. *Malayala Rajyam* was given the contract of printing Government publications and an editor of *Bharata*

55. File No.D.Dis./302/1938/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM..

56. File No.D.Dis./1946/1944/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

57. File No.D.Dis./92/1941/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM..

58. For a detailed report on the arrest see *The Hindu*, 23rd February, 1938.

59. See articles by A.K. Pillai in the Indian Express and Independent India given as appendices in A. Radhakrishnan, A.K. Pillai in *Adarshangalude Rakthasakshi* (Mal.), (Kochi, 1998), pp.195-201.

Patrika was appointed Legal Remembrancer to the Government. Persons who wrote articles attacking the State Congress and its programmes easily found places on Government Committees.⁶⁰ The editor of *Samadarsi* weekly was appointed a member of the Public Service Commission.⁶¹ The Government also tried to win the support of some papers through persuasion and liberal grants. The Director of Information, Government of Travancore contacted newspapers like *The Mail*, Madras and requested them to reconsider their policy towards Travancore and publish reports and articles favouring the State.⁶² This yielded positive results. *The Statesman*, New Delhi agreed to publish an “*Annual Travancore Supplement*.” A number of other papers and publications like *The Evening News of India*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *The Leader*, Allahabad, *The Mail*, Madras and the *Times of India* agreed to review their attitude and take a positive stand and subsequently adopted a pro-Government attitude and unreservedly supported the administration of Travancore.⁶³ Thus the Government partially won the propaganda game but failed to persuade and bring to its fold other newspapers.⁶⁴ The policy and efforts of the government in this regard signifies the fact

60. Memorandum dated 30th may, 1938 submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore by the State Congress.

61. C. Narayana Pillai, *Thiruvithamcore Swathantrya Samara Charithram*, (Trivandrum, 1972), pp. 135-137.

62. File No. D.Dis./297/1938/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS,TVM. In a confidential note to the Diwan of Travancore, the Director of Information, Trivandrum informed that he had contacted some newspapers and the response was positive.

63. *Ibid*.

64. *Mathrubhumi* devoted several columns to describe the struggle in Travancore.

that they were fully aware of its wrong doings and injustice meted out to its subjects. These efforts of the administration boosted the vigour and activated the fighting spirit of the people for Responsible Government.

Side by side with this policy the Government adopted other possible methods also to suppress and undermine the State Congress activities. Loyalist Organisations professing support to the Government were formed with active support, sympathy and aid from the Government. Thus was formed The Travancore State People's League. A group of pro-Government political and communal leaders organised at Changanacherry a meeting on the 13th of April, 1938, to protest against the struggle for Responsible Government. The meeting chaired by Rev. Romeo Thomas, Principal of St. Berchman's College, Changanacherry organised the State People's League and decided to undertake all possible "propaganda against all anti-Government movements and for maintaining peace in the country." Meetings were scheduled to be held throughout the State and for this purpose an Organising Committee was also formed, with C.M. Joseph as convener and Mannath Padmanabha Pillai, Kondur Krishna Pillai, Subramaniya Aiyer, P.K. Komalezhath Sankaran, John Kuthukkayam, N.V. Joseph etc., as members.⁶⁵ It seemed a contradiction that N.V. Joseph who was in the forefront during the Abstention Movement also joined the pro-Government group. This organisation could not do much against the State Congress, as it was not an

65. File No.D.Dis./270/1944/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. These activities were informed to the Chief Secretary by the Commissioner of Police.

organisation of like minded people for a common cause. Hence it had its natural death also.

Another party which came into existence on 8th July, 1938 was Travancore State People's Federation with N. Ramakrishna Pillai as President with an Executive Committee consisting of eight members. Though it professed 'to take upon its shoulders the task of carrying on healthy agitation for the attainment of Responsible Government in the state under the agies of the Maharaja and promoting the political economic and cultural interests of Travancore by all peaceful and legitimate means strictly on the lines indicated by the Indian National Congress and Mr. Gandhi,' in its functioning it was anti-State Congress. Another organisation which came into existence was the Travancore National Congress on 13th July, 1938. The declared aim of the organisation was "the attainment of Responsible Government under the supreme authority of the Maharaja by constitutional and peaceful means. The aims and ideals of the Travancore National Congress would be similar to those of the Indian National Congress."⁶⁶

The aims and objectives of these organisations including the Travancore State Congress were the same, ie. agitation for the achievement of Responsible Government for the state of Travancore. However the loyalist organisations formed after the formation of the Travancore State Congress, as we see later, did not champion the cause of Responsible Government nor did it lead any agitation worth the name for

66. *The Hindu*, dated 14th July, 1938.

attainment of its professed goals. Since they were given birth by government support they could not work against government interests and the real intention behind the formation of these organisations was to divert the attention of the people of Travancore from the State Congress and its programmes. The constitution of these loyalist organisation reveal that their leaders were heads of religious groups or communal organisations with similar or educational political views favouring the administration of Travancore. The Travancore state people's league and the Federation were dissolved and majority of its members joined the Travancore National Congress on its formation. The policy adopted by the Government towards these loyalist organisations and the State Congress was also different. While the activities, programmes and functioning of the State Congress were suppressed with an iron hand with all possible means of suppression, loyalist organisations were given all kinds of patronage and therefore could work without any 'persecution, suppression, obstruction and hindrance from the Government,' and the State Congress, therefore characterised these organisations as 'Government creatures and supporters'⁶⁷ The administration of Travancore itself made it clear the character and aims of these organisations thus: "These associations were framed by some of the people with selfish motives in order to accomplish their objects to place impediments to the smooth working of the State Congress to defeat its aim."⁶⁸ However the work and efforts of the government to crush the Travancore State Congress failed and proved ineffective.

67. For details of the attitude of the Travancore State Congress towards these loyalist organisations. See, *Malayala Rajyam* 16th Sept. 1938. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

68. File No.D.Dis./130/1945/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. In a police report sent to the D.S.P. Quilon, the Inspector of Police, Adoor had made these remarks about both the

By this time the government was fully aware of popular sentiments, and began to think of other possible means to counter the State Congress. Thus was formed the 'Loyalist Union' or 'Bhakta Sangham' through the Land Revenue Department. The declared objective of the Bhakta Sangham was "to inculcate in the masses a strong sense of deep attachment to the person and throne of the Maharaja and to deprecate strongly all attempts that may be made by organisations like the State congress, the Youth League etc. to create disturbance and spread disaffection in the country against the Royal House and the Government established in Travancore."⁶⁹ The government entrusted the Land Revenue Commission to make use of the service of public servants throughout Travancore for organising the branches of Bhakta Sangham in all Taluks and carry on active propaganda against the State Congress and undermine their activities.⁷⁰ Though the work of these unions had full government support, it could not withstand popular sentiments and public opinion for Responsible Government in Travancore. The measures of the Government, thus give us a clear picture of its attitude towards the State Congress and Responsible Government in the State and the ordeal and conditions under which the State Congress had to pursue its agitations. Both these organisations tried their best to placate public opinion in their favour by

loyalist organisations and Travancore State Congress. He stated that the agitation carried out by the leaders of the State Congress was quite peaceful and non-violent and law and order problems were created by miscreants. Clearly evaluating the political situation, he stated that the loyalist organisations were created to disrupt and disturb the work of the Travancore State Congress.

69. File No.D.Dis./314/1938/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

70. *Ibid.* In a confidential note from the Chief Secretary to Government, to the Land and Income Tax Commissioner, Trivandrum, clear instructions were issued in this regard.

organising public meetings and vigorous propaganda. A point of collision was reached by march, 1938 and the period up to May, 1938 witnessed the climax, particularly after the submission of the Memorial by the State Congress, leading to a direct confrontation between the Government and Loyalist organisations on the one side and the State Congress on the other. Thus the political situation was ripe for a non-violent agitation between the two.

PROGRAMME OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT UNDER THE TRAVANCORE STATE CONGRESS

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter VI

PROGRAMME OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT UNDER THE TRAVANCORE STATE CONGRESS

The leaders of the State Congress were aware that the attitude and policy of the Government towards the Congress could not be changed with peaceful meetings and therefore, the working Committee of the Travancore State Congress decided to launch Civil Disobedience Movement on the same lines of British Indian Provinces under Mahatma Gandhi, to press for recognition of Civil liberties and restoration of fundamental rights in Travancore while the Government was determined to crush the agitation with an iron hand with all the powers in its hand. The result, therefore, was occurrences of a series of untoward incidents including police firings and the out break of violence throughout the State. Though the leaders and followers of the State Congress showed maximum restraint, the Government's policy and determination to crush the movement led to this unpleasant situation. In spite of all repressive measures of the Government, the State Congress was committed to its goals. However, with the release of all political prisoners on 23rd October, 1938, the agitations were called off.

Various factors compelled the State Congress to launch the final weapon of Civil Disobedience Movement. The genesis of a large number of Loyalist Parties with Government sympathy and active support alarmed the State Congress leadership, though people including students at various places condemned, the leaders of the Loyalist Parties as 'anti-national' and 'opportunists.' A tense situation was created in

the Science College, Trivandrum, when the police resorted to Lathi-charge. The Government's attitude towards the Loyalist organisations was made much more clear when the third session of the Assembly began on 11th July, 1938. A Krishna Aiyer, Leader of the National Congress Party in the Assembly moved a resolution seeking protection to the members and urging the house to take necessary steps for bringing the culprits to books, against the crowd which collected in front of the college and hooted and jeered at the National Congress Leaders, when they passed by pro-Government and govt. sponsored organisation it was the Diwan-President of the House, immediately assured protection to the members and a resolution was passed to this effect. In the evening on the same day, the police made a severe lathi charge on more than 20 students, supporting the State Congress causing severe injury and the Congress condemned the incident as 'concerted and pre-medicated' action of the Government to suppress the State Congress Party. When Pattom A. Thanu Pillai moved an adjournment motion on 18th July, 1938, for discussion of this incident, the Diwan President immediately disallowed the motion for discussion and the State Congress member's walked out of the Legislature in protest. This can be taken as a clear indication of the double standard of the Government and denial of justice to the people of Travancore.¹

The judiciary was also not allowed to work independently. It was made subservient to the executive, while no action was initiated by the judiciary to assert its

1. For details see the Proceedings of the Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly, Vol. XII, No. 6, 18th July, 1938, pp. 346-47.

independent status. With instructions from the Government, the District Magistrate of Travandrum extended the ban for two months and prohibited seven prominent members of the State Congress viz, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese, K.P.Neelakanta Pillai, V.K. Velayudhan, K.T. Thomas, P.K. Kunju and G. Ramachandran from attending public meetings. The court in its order Stated “there existed a strong party opposed to Responsible Government and that if public meetings were allowed, a clash with this party might happen, leading to a breach of peace.”² The ruling of the court itself was an indication that the legitimate demand and agitation for Responsible Government could not be tolerated by the Government and the so called ‘independent judiciary’ was used a tool for this. Evidently the judiciary also supported the cause of the Government. The judiciary could not oppose the Government as it was made completely subservient to the executive. People lost faith in the judicial system of the State. The State Congress considered the ban as “a serious abrogation of the civil liberties of the people,”³ as the ban was imposed in the name of a party with no public support except its Government support. At the same time no restrictions were imposed on the National Congress or Leaders and they were allowed to carry on its propaganda without any hindrance. This clearly indicate the double standard of the executive.⁴ The Government, on the other hand, categorically Stated that there was

2. File No. D.Dis./368/1938/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see *The Hindu* dated 19th July, 1938.

3. *The Hindu*, 25th August, 1938.

4. *The Hindu* in its editorial dated 25th August, 1938 wrote “. . . . the practically complete banning by Executive Order of legitimate propaganda by a political party, the State Congress, was most unwise. But the ban not only continues with unabated vigour, it is

‘neither a policy of repression nor any curtailment of civil liberties and Government was forced to take such action on the State Congress.’⁵ In his letter to Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, the Chief Secretary to Government deliberately avoided any reference to the National Congress and its activities, while opposing the State Congress and its policies.⁶

Fully realized that the Government will not yield and passive action will not bring about the desired results, the working Committee of the State Congress met on 3rd August, 1938 at Tridandrum and formally decided to launch civil disobedience movement. The State Congress gave an ultimatum to the Government of Travancore stating “that it has become necessary as a measure of sheer self-preservation not to submit any longer to the prohibitory orders now in force throughout the State. The Committee has no other alternative but to resolve that if the present prohibitory orders are not withdrawn before August 16th, 1938 so as to restore our fundamental rights and so as to give the State Congress the same freedom of propaganda and work as is given to rival organisations, the working Committee will have to shoulder the responsibility of asserting the right of public meetings against the prohibitory order at select places throughout the State with the utmost non-violent discipline and to face whatever

directed only against a particular political organisation, while another party, the National Congress is being allowed to carry on its propaganda without hindrance. This is most surprising since the National Congress no less than the State Congress, had avowed Responsible Government as its goal.”

5. File No. D.Dis./122/1938/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

6. *Ibid.*

sufferings may be forced upon them in consequence.”⁷ The Government need not be perplexed in this decision as it was categorically Stated that any move or agitation on the part of the State Congress would be totally non-violent and exactly on the lines of the agitation in British Indian States. Moreover the history hitherto in this regard on the part of the State Congress gives no room to the Government to suspects the promises of the leaders of the Congress about their methods, as they had not so far advocated nor exhorted nor practiced any kind of violent methods, but strictly adhered to Gandhian practices. Moreover, the President of the Congress, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, requested to the Government to re-examine their policy and attitude towards the State Congress to avoid a crisis and to find out a solution to the basic problems. ⁸ As expected the policy of the Government was clear and repressive and it warned the leaders of the State Congress of “Serious consequences”.⁹ The reply of the Government was a clear indication that the Government was determined to use all resources at its hand to suppress the movement and not to concede any of the demands of the State Congress, and therefore an encounter between the Government and State Congress seemed inevitable. The State Congress which was, no doubt, working under

7. *Ibid.* Letter from Pattom A. Thanu Pillai to the Diwan of Travancore dated 4th August, 1938 Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.* In his reply to the President of the Travancore State Congress, Pattom A Thanu Pillai, the Chief Secretary to the Government warned him of the consequences of such an agitation stating that if they disobeyed the ban orders and asserted that “to ask for more would be not to ask for civil liberties, but licence, and the Government cannot allow that,” for more details refer proceedings of the Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly, Vol. XII, No.16, 16th August, 1938, p. 1168.

the support and guidance of the Nationalists Organization, Indian National Congress, decided to take advice from the undisputed leader of the organisation, Mahatma Gandhi, as to the course of action to be adopted. The State Congress, at this juncture, also decided to contact and enlighten Mahatma Gandhi of the situation in the State and decided to send a delegation consisting of Messrs. G. Ramachandran, E.J. Phillipose and explain the situation of the State. This delegation met the Mahatma at Wardha and he advised to observe utmost patience and non-violence. Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, a close confidant and disciple of Gandhi and a well known social worker was sent to Trivandrum, to explore the possibility of an effective compromise.¹⁰ Rajkumari, arrived at Trivandrum on 20th August, 1938 and held elaborate discussions with leaders of the State Congress and representatives of the Government but could not arrive at a solution, as both the parties struck on to their stands, and returned without having any positive results. Taking serious view of the situation the working committee of the Travancore State Congress met at Van Ross House, Trivandrum on 22nd August, 1938, as an emergency meet, and decided to launch Civil Disobedience agitation from 26th August 1938, on the same lines of the agitation in British India.¹¹ The leaders of the State Congress also decided that elaborate preparations should be made and the public enlightened about it before launching of the agitation, and for this purpose volunteer organisations were formed to work for this and spearhead the agitation. Extensive and elaborate preparations were made by the State Congress for

10. See for details, M. K. Gandhi, *Letters to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur*, (Ahamadabad, 1961), p. 151. NMML, New Delhi.

11. *The Hindu*, 23rd August, 1938.

this purpose and the Travancore Youth League, the left wing in the State Congress, also extended their full support to the agitation, and the situation was, therefore, heading towards a crisis in the State.

The political condition of Travancore was thus, so tense and the Government was closely watching the situation and did not make its policy open, but was preparing to face the situation with an iron hand. They (the Government) were determined to face any situation and suppress the movement and on 25th August, 1938, promulgated an Emergency Regulation entitled Criminal Law Amendment Act I and X of 1938 which was on the same lines of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Acts of 1908 and 1932, which gave powers to the Government to declare political parties illegal and district magistrates to take possession of properties including land belonging to these associations or parties and also to prosecute all persons who had made donations or contributions to them.¹² The Government according to this Law, could attach and take possession of printing press which disseminate 'seditious' literature and publications.¹³ The Government also banned the Travancore State Congress and the Youth League.¹⁴

Though the Government was determined to suppress the movement, they were not unaware of the popular sentiment and therefore, proceeded with utmost care and caution, in this regard. They realized that any action or policy towards the State

12. *Ibid.* 27th August, 1938.

13. *Ibid.*

14. For details of the speeches on the ban see Acts and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol. X, 1939, pp. 124-135.

Congress hurting the feeling of the people would do so much damage to the administration and therefore, instructed the district magistrates that the meeting and processions of the State Congress should not be disrupted or disturbed or dispersed with sufficient reason and that they may be allowed to be conducted without any interruption on the part of the authorities. Though this policy of the Government was not made known to the public, this can be taken as an indication of the Government's realization of the situation and its inherent weakness to face the movement -- that Government, be it in a princely State or elsewhere, cannot withstand popular agitations or uprisings. In fact police were given clear instructions that action against the leaders of the State Congress should be as 'quietly and unobtrusively as possible' and that meetings of the Congress need not be obstructed and leaders arrested and if arrests are to be made that should be done only after the meeting and the crowd had actually dispersed.¹⁵ But some leaders (first grade) like Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, K.P. Nilakanta Pillai, P.K. Kunju, V.K. Velayudhan, G. Ramachandran, K.T. Thomas and E.J. Philipose were discriminated against and instructions were issued to the District Magistrates that they were to be punished not only with some imprisonment and fining but also with the cancellation of the sanads in the case of lawyers¹⁶

This attitude of discrimination may suggest that if the first rate leaders are arrested, punished and put behind the bars, the Government thought, the agitation would have a natural death in the absence of proper and capable leadership for the

15. File No. D.Dis./1169/1944/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM. The Government issued these instructions on 22nd August, 1938.

16. *Ibid.*

organisation, even without banning public meetings, creating an impression among the public that the movement died of its own inherent weakness and not because of Government repression, thereby giving a clean chit of 'Clean administration' to the Government. But the calculations of the Government went wrong. Along with this policy of 'non-intervention' the Government was reinforcing its military and police forces to face any challenge. The strength of the police force was strengthened by sanctioning a temporary Armed Reserve of five hundred men and also enrolled into service eighty five and one hundred and fifty ex-military personnel respectively from Madras, Bangalore and Travancore. A total addition of 1397 staff members was made to the police force and experienced short-hand reporters were recruited to report speeches of political and public meetings.¹⁷ Thus the administrative machinery of the Government was well-equipped to meet any exigency arising out of State Congress agitation.

The agitation for Responsible Government under the State Congress was getting popular appeal and causing concern to the Government. The period from 25th August, 1938 witnessed a series of violent and untoward incidents through out the State. The imposition of ban orders on public meetings forced the leaders of the Congress to defy these orders. This was made clear and made public by the President, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai,¹⁸ and the working committee of the State Congress resolved to

17. See *The Travancore Administration Report 1938-39*, pp. 97-98.

18. Pattom A. Thanu Pillai on 25th August, 1938, issued a Statement to press stating that the immediate issue is wholly one of fundamental civil liberties. Every other issue place into

begin agitation at select places by defying ban orders. Accordingly leaders like Thanu Pillai, G.P. Nilakanta Pillai, K.Kunchu Pillai, T.M. Varghese, K.G. Mathew, E.J. Philipose and P.K. Kunju defied the prohibitory orders and addressed public meetings at select places like Quilon, Alleppy, Kottayam and Trivandrum.¹⁹ They were arrested, imprisoned and fined.²⁰ Thus 26th August, the first day passed off without disturbances except the arrest of the leaders. Minor disturbances were reported on the successive two days, but on 29th August the meeting of the State Congress at Sanghumugham beach, Trivandrum witnessed violent clashes between volunteers of the Travancore State Congress and police forces. The police had blockaded the way to the beach but they failed to prevent the crowd from entering the beach. The police resorted to lathi-charge to disburse the crowd but they pelted stones against the police, resulting in injuries to both sides. Many were taken into custody including leaders, like C.Narayana Pillai and students. Students took out a demonstration on 30th August, 1938, in protest at various places including Trivandrum.²¹ This served as an eye-opener to the leaders of the State Congress that the movement has attained the character of a mass movement which could not be obstructed or withheld by the Government with the use of arms. The Government also realized that the agitation had attained unassured dimensions. Students participation

insignificance before this one. It is impossible to submit any longer to suppression of fundamental civil liberties.

19. *The Hindu*, 27th August, 1938.

20. File No. D.Dis./130/1945/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

21. *The Hindu*, 1st September, 1938, and *Malayala Manorama*, 2nd September, 1938.

was also an achievement of the State Congress leaders. Police lathi-charges and firing became the order of the day, and demonstrations turned more violent. On 31st August, a major violent incident took place at Neyyattinkara. Following the arrest of N.K. Padmanabha Pillai who led the agitation following the arrest of Pattom A. Thattai Pillai, an angry mob obstructed the way of the police superintendent and burnt his car. People from the neighbouring villages began to pour into the town of Neyyattinkara by evening of that day and indulged in violent activities and started on a procession to Trivandrum.²² The gravity of the situation can be understood from the report of the Superintendent of police.²³ The Travancore State Force's attempts to prevent the procession from reaching its destination miserably failed and the military opened fire at the crowd resulting in bullet injuries to twelve persons, of which ten died subsequently.²⁴ This was not an isolated incident and similar situations took place at Quilon and Puthuppally. The State Congress meeting at Quilon defying prohibitory order took place on 2nd September, 1938 and in the military firing several persons were injured of which two died and forty eight policemen were injured by the stone throwing of the crowd. At Puthuppally in Kottayam district the police made a lathi

22. File No. D.Dis./1149/1944/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

In his report about the incident the Superintendent of Police Stated thus: "The school authorities were compelled to close their institutions and students joined the crowd making objectionable demonstrations. Shopkeepers were compelled to close their shops. Normal traffic on the road was obstructed. Private cars and transport buses were stoned and damaged and occupants made to shout State Congress slogans. For a time the local police were obliged to take refuge in the police station."

23. *Ibid.*

24. *The Hindu*, 2nd September, 1938 and *Malayala Manorama*, 3rd September, 1938.

charge to disburse a crowd gathered to attend a State Congress meeting which failed to achieve results and, therefore, the military resorted to firing resulting in the death of one person on the spot. Several individuals received bullet-injuries²⁵

What was the attitude of the Indian National Congress to all these developments? We shall briefly evaluate this. The State Congress formed in Travancore with active support and sympathy from the Indian National Congress to continue agitation for Responsible Government in Travancore, did not, however, get unconditional support from the parent organisation in their endeavour for the fight of Responsible Government, for they had limitations and reservations in involving themselves in princely States. Secondly, they thought that their involvement in princely States would weaken their cause in British India, and therefore they were forced to intervene with much caution. This does not mean that the Indian National Congress maintained neutrality nor that they remained mere spectators of the events. In Travancore the first intervention by the undisputed leader of the Congress, Mahatma Gandhi was on 3rd September, 1938, when he issued a statement on Travancore condemning the repressive policy of the Government. Nothing happened beyond this. Promises of support also came from the Kerala Provincial Congress Socialist Party led by E.M. Sankaran Namboodiripad and P.Krishna Pillai by way of sending volunteers to Travancore to participate in the agitation. This promise did not materialise, as it had practical difficulties for implementation. The Town Congress

25. *Ibid.*, 5th Sept. 1938 and *Malayala Manorama* dated 5th Sept. 1938.

Committee, Nellore vehemently condemned on 4th September, 1938, the military firing in Travancore on innocent people and expressed their sympathy and support. The moral support promised by them installed in the minds of the State Congress activists a sense of security and confidence to pursue the agitation to the last (till its success). It created an impression that the whole Nation was with them in their cause, though in actual reality their contribution (INC) was negligible in terms of participation. However, the State Congress succeeded in engaging the attention of not only the leaders of the Indian National Congress but also of the whole Nation. The leaders of the State Congress realized the difficulties in launching and succeeding in Non-Violent agitational methods as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. They were aware that the followers were not ripe enough to follow Gandhian methods of agitation, and therefore decided to suspend mass meetings under the auspices of the Travancore State Congress. An announcement to this effect was made by V.K. Velayudhan at Alleppy on 4th September, 1938, but exhorted to carry on peaceful propaganda work without causing trouble to the people at large.²⁶ The Government which underestimated the mass support and significance of the movement also began to realize the unwise policy of persecution it adopted for the suppression of the agitation and therefore, issued instructions, though secretly, to authorities.²⁷

26. *The Hindu*, 6th September, 1938.

27. In a circular issued to the District Magistrate the Government of Travancore made it clear that it is unwise "to disperse every meeting by using force". In another letter from the Chief Secretary to Government to the District Magistrate, Quilon dated 4th September, 1938 it was directed "to avoid shooting if possible". See File No. D.Dis./11691944/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, Tvm.

Realizing that the methods of agitation so far followed by the State Congress will not yield the desired results, a committee consisting of C. Narayana Pillai, S. Nilakanta Pillai, K.C. George, M.N. Govindan Nair and A. Achuthan, was formed to undertake a tour throughout the State of Travancore and explain and enlighten the people of the State regarding the issue of Responsible Government, non-violent principles of Mahatma Gandhi and the Governmental attitude towards it including the suppressive measures of the Government.²⁸ The meetings so arranged in towns and rural areas were well attended and hundreds of such meetings were organised by the State Congress, strengthened the movement throughout the State, while the Government also adopted a policy “ aimed at keeping the situation under control.”²⁹

Thus both the sides were seemingly for a compromise and not prepared for a clash. Col. Watkins, commandant, Travancore State Forces and G.S.A. Karim Sahib, special officer, C.I.D. took the initiative in this regard and a meeting was arranged in the Mascot Hostel, Trivandrum with the leader of the State Congress on 5th September, 1938 and the probing conditions were ordered by Col. Watkins.

1. That the State Congress leaders should admit the responsibility for the outbreak of violence as a result of its activities.
2. The State Congress should end its civil disobedience movement permanently and

28. A Statement to this effect was issued to the Press and published in the *Malayala Manorama* dated 5th September, 1938 and *The Hindu* 6th September, 1938.

29. For details of the situation see C. Narayana Pillai, *Thiruvithamcore Swathanthrya Samara Charithram*, p.432.

3. The open withdraw of all charges made against the Diwan in the memorial and memorandum.

These demands as it appears, were not acceptable to the State Congress, as it would be going back to the beginning and therefore gave the following demands as Counter demand, viz;

1. The immediate establishment of Responsible Government and declaration of fundamental rights.
2. Suspension of Criminal Law Amendment Regulation and the ban orders.
3. Release of cell political prisoners and
4. Recognition of State Congress as a political party³⁰

These demands and counter demands, at the first sight, were agreeable to both parties, but the State Congress leaders who were put behind bars thought it suicidal to accept it and therefore rejected it. They thought to remain in jail than to accept these demands and therefore failed to evolve any consensus, and the talks failed.³¹ The Government was so confident that the leaders would yield to their demands but when they realized that the Congress will not yield they decided to reinforce the suppressive measures. The Government reinforced its policy of repression and pursued the policy of arrest and conviction of leaders more vigorously, and magistrates were given instructions to proceed against the "ring leaders" who had considerable influence and

30. For details of the demands and counter demands see *The Hindu*, 9th September, 1938.

31. See File No. D.Dis./1388/1939/C.S and C. Narayana Pillai in *op.cit.*, pp. 466-67.

whose words carry any weight with the mob.”³² On the strength of this orders leaders like R. Sankar, V.K. Velayudhan, C.Kesavan, R. Sugathan, and K. Govindan were arrested and detained on September 7th 1938.

By now the leaders of the State Congress fully realized the need for educating the masses about non-violence and non-violent agitation as advocated by Gandhiji. They also understood that unless the Gandhian method of non-violence is followed it will not get the support of the Indian National Congress, whatever may be their aim or objective. Realizing this situation, the Travancore State Congress party drew up new programmes of action. They announced on 8th September, 1938 that “the public should continue the agitation in a vigorous, practical and incessant manner even when there is no control and advice of the leaders..... that until we reach our goal of Responsible Government, we are not prepared for any concession and that each one of us is ready to resist repression by sacrifice and violence by non-violence and to offer as sacrifice our lives in this fight for freedom. Victory or death may be our motto.” The people were also exhorted to carry the message of the Congress to every village and to form voluntary associations for “training the public in non-violence, to organise and regulate public meetings and processions, to enlist members, to distribute leaflets and notices, to prepare people to desist from the payment of taxes and to do propaganda work, and if necessary, to boycott the Postal Department, the Courts and

32. File No. D.Dis./169/1944/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

the Schools.”³³ Response to these announcement, even to the surprise of the State Congress leaders was spontaneous, and various organisations including student organisations sent in messages promising full support to the State Congress. The Travancore Students’ Committee, Trivandrum immediately appealed to the students to strictly follow the message of the State Congress.³⁴ Another group the “All-Travancore Students’ Association at its meeting held on 15th September 1938, in a resolution Stated that “the Travancore students should go a strike with a view to keeping the State Congress in its agitation for Responsible Government and if required, to go on strike for the whole year.”³⁵ This was a clear indication that the student community in Travancore had realized the important and significance of the agitation launched by the Travancore State Congress and its readiness to participate in any kind of non-violent agitation advocated by it. Student community as a whole, without any reservation, was ready to launch any agitational methods, if announced by the State Congress this would suggest that the agitation initiated by the State Congress, had practically become a mass movement, even without the State Congress, being aware of it at this stage. The participation of College, High School and even Elementary school students in the organised strikes and hunger-strikes and processions and rallies was an eye-opener to the State Congress leaders about their support. The students organised

33. File No. D.Dis./362/1948/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM. This Statement was issued by R. Vasudevan Pillai, a prominent leader of the State Congress.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *The Hindu*, Sept. 17th, 1938.

several picketings at various centres in Travancore which put the police force in trouble and placed themselves in arduous situation to control it.³⁶

Both the Travancore State Congress and the Government of Travancore were ready to relent for a settlement and therefore, the situation became very critical and the Government used all repressive measures. They detained all the successive State Congress “dictators” who were engaged in directing and leading the agitation and also proceeded against the organisations which supported the movement.³⁷ These leaders who were taken into custody were retained under police custody for days together and severely and brutally tortured by the police under instruction from higher authorities, with-out producing before the court, thus violating and denying the law of the land and basic human rights.³⁸ The repressive measures of the Government attained unassumable dimensions. The State Congress leaders were forced to take steps to escape from it and some of them escaped to the Cochin State and formed action committees and guided the activities of the Travancore State Congress. While this was the case of those who escaped to Cochin, those who could evade arrest of the Travancore State Police managed to publish pamphlets and leaflets explaining the grave political situation in the State. They also wrote articles in magazines and

36. File No. D.Dis./135/1945/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

37. For details about a successive list of agitators or “dictators” see N.E. Balaram, *Keralathile Communist Prasthanam*, Part I (Malayalam), p. 109. The views of N.E. Balaram are supported by the evidences provided in File No. D.Dis./130/1945/C.S. and File No. D.Dis./981/1945/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

38. C. Narayana Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

journals condemning and severely criticizing the administration in Travancore from their hide outs.³⁹ Though the political situation in Travancore was so tense, newspapers which supported the State Congress agitation published articles severely criticizing the Government and supporting the cause of the State Congress both from within and outside Travancore, fully realizing the consequences of the situation, giving a clear indication to the Government that popular agitation for a genuine and right cause cannot be suppressed by the powers of the Government.⁴⁰ Newspapers published from outside Travancore wrote articles severely criticizing the policy and attitude of the Government, though literature attacking and criticizing the policy of the Government from within the State was in no less degree.⁴¹

The authorities, by now realized that suppression of the movement was not possible by using force on the masses and therefore, began to take measures on public media. The first target of repressive measure was on the *Malayali* and the *Malayalam Manorama* stating that they steadily and persistently contravened the provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Regulation I of 1938.⁴² The license granted to the *Malayala Manorama* was cancelled by the Government on 10th September, 1938, stating that some of the editorials that appeared in the paper about the military

39. File No. D.Dis./3161/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

40. *Travancore Administration Report*, 1938-39, p. 12.

41. See C. Narayana Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 268.

42. File No. D.Dis./302/1938/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

shootings at Quilon, Neyyattinkara and Puthuppalli, were aimed against the State. The license fee was also forfeited to the Government and Manorama printing press was attached.⁴³ Following this action the paper continued to be published from Cochin with all the same kind of articles and gained wide circulation in Travancore but on 17th September 1938, the Government of Travancore proscribed this paper from circulation within the State of Travancore.⁴⁴ The subservient attitude of the judiciary can be taken note of from its reports to the Government on 13th September, 1938⁴⁵ Many other publications like '*Thozhilali*,' '*Jayabharate*,' '*Vasumate*,' '*Aryakeralam*' were also proscribed,⁴⁶ though some of them continued publication from the State of Cochin. Sale of these publications in Railway Stations were banned by the Government of Madras.

The National leadership of the Indian National Congress under Gandhiji was closely watching the grave political situation in Travancore resulting out of the

43. File No. D.Dis./302/1938/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

44. See the Govt. Notification No.295/38/dated 17th Sept. 1938, File No. D.Dis./92/1941/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, Tvm.

45. The report of the District Magistrate reads: "As the mischievous newspapers are suppressed, the movement has received a rude shock and a serious set back. The newspapers were adding fuel to the fire and it was in the newspapers that the agitations were fed day by day. There is another danger which has to be forestalled. I am told that the same newspaper propaganda will be done through Cochin newspapers. It will be advisable to prohibit the entry of such newspapers to this State. Though there may be a certain amount of criticism on our action, it has to be done so as to put down this movement. I may say in conclusion that if the firm policy we are pursuing now is followed up for sometime more, the movement in its active and dangerous form will be curbed and the strength of the movement is sure to decline."

46. File No. D.Dis./92/1941/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

suppressive, oppressive and repressive measures of the Travancore Government against the Travancore State Congress. They also felt the need for a settlement without affecting the main course of Responsible Government in the State. The leaders of the Indian National Congress particularly Gandhiji thought that “the demand for Responsible Government and the demand for the removal of the Diwan from office were ill-matched.”⁴⁷ In his letter dated 17th September, 1938, Gandhiji enlightened Changanasseri K. Parameswaran Pillai, a veteran Congress leader of Travancore, the need to withdraw the allegations in the State Congress memorial against the Diwan, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, and requested him to persuade the State Congress leaders on these lines. Changanasseri K. Parameswaran Pillai and Nimbkhair who was the President of the Civil Liberties union, Madras decided to meet the Diwan and in the meeting that took place on 19th September, 1938, the Diwan placed before them the following conditions for a peaceful settlement:

1. That the Government would not stand against the agitation for Responsible Government in peaceful and non-violent means;
2. That the leaders should give an assurance that the allegations contained in the memorial will be withdrawn and that only agitations on constitutional and legitimate means will be continued and
3. If these conditions are acceptable to the State Congress the Government on its side would release all political prisoners and if no act of violence is noticed on

47. Nilkan Perumal, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

the part of the State Congress for a period of two months, the Government would cancel the operation of the Criminal Law Amendment Regulation.⁴⁸

Seemingly the conditions of the Diwan were reasonable and workable, though nothing on the grant of Responsible Government was Stated by him. The issues were exclusively on the allegations against the Diwan and therefore, this question of conceding to the demand of Responsible Government does not wise, according to the Diwan. The two leaders decided to meet State Congress leaders in Prison and discuss the issues with them. The meeting of the political prisoners took place at the Central Prison, Trivandrum on 20th and 21st September, 1938. It was decided that no compromise talks can be held with the Government unless Responsible Government is not granted. This tough and relentless attitude of the leaders of the State Congress led to the failure of the peace-talks. The leaders also failed to convince Gandhiji about the legitimacy of their attitude and therefore, Gandhiji insisted upon the withdrawal of the memorial and requested the leaders to reconsider their stand.⁴⁹ The meeting of the leaders in Central Prison, Trivandrum, on 23rd September reconsidered the question of withdrawal of the memorial as suggested by Gandhiji and decided not to concede to the request of Gandhiji as “the withdrawal may un-meritedly discredit the State Congress and cause an irretrievable setback to the movement.”⁵⁰ Gandhiji expressed his unhappiness and disagreement with the State Congress leaders when he was

48. E.M. Kovoov, *T.M.Varghese* (Mal.), (Kottayam, 1965), pp. 191-192.

49. *The Hindu*, October 4, 1938, p. 12.

50. File No. D.Dis./324/1938/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

contacted again for guidance and insisted and asserted that unless they acted on his advice, he would not be able to give them future advice.⁵¹

The rejection of Gandhiji's advice by the State Congress leaders was a grave mistake and lapse on their part. They forfeited a chance for compromise with the Government and perhaps over estimated their ability or even capability to continue the agitation for Responsible Government in Travancore. Acceptance of the conditions laid down by the Diwan for withdrawal of the allegations would have helped them to make a better bargain, with the Government in future while the agitation was in progress. Moreover, as future events showed, it resulted in the rejection of Gandhian methods of agitation on 'non-violence' in its true spirit. They were branded as 'violent agitators' by the Government, giving the Government an upper hand in dealing with the movement. It also proved that the leaders were not ripe enough to practice and continue agitations on Gandhian methods. The demand of the State Congress to grant Responsible Government within 6 months after its genesis itself was one far from reality. Detention of top ranking leaders of the State Congress also forced the masses to lead the agitation without proper guidance and leadership, leading to mob-violence, responsibility of which the State Congress and leaders could not escape.

Perhaps the rejection of Gandhian proposal was the influence of radical left group within the Congress advocating 'direct action' for the achievement of the goal.

51. *The Hindu*, Sept. 30, 1938.

The alarming political situation that existed further worsened with the masses in rural areas participating in the agitation, shifting the lead from towns and cities to the villages and country sides. Agitated in the arrest and detention of their leaders, the mob indulged in violence in several parts of the State. "While political arrests, trials and convictions were going on at one end, there were instances of mob-violence at the other."⁵²

With rapid increase in the mass support to the movement and participation of public at large, violence also increased either because people were not properly and sufficiently aware of the Gandhian methods of agitation or lack of proper leadership due to the detention of top leaders of the Congress. This was more so during the second half of September, 1938.

A State Congress meeting was scheduled to be held on 21st September, 1938 at the Shanghumugham Beach near Trivandrum and a huge crowd of more than ten thousand people had assembled from the neighbouring villages, though heavy police and military bundobost were made to prevent inflow from outside Shanghumugham.⁵³ When the police realized that they could not prevent the inflow, they decided to disburse the meeting by force, but the crowd retaliated by pelting stones at the force.⁵⁴

52. File No. D.Dis./508/1939/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM. This observation was made by the Magistrate of Chengannoor while pronouncing his judgement on the "Chengannoor waging war case."

53. File No. D.Dis./362/1948/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

54. File No. D.Dis./3258/1944/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM. The situation was explained by the Commandant of the Travancore State Forces, Trivandrum on 23rd September, 1938, in his report from 15th to 23rd September, 1938, to the Resident of Travancore.

When the situation became so tense and uncontrollable, the military stationed under the command of captain Sankunni Nair gave orders for firing at the crowd resulting in three deaths⁵⁵ This was not an isolated instance. On the same day similar situation took place at Attingal, some 32 kilometers north of Trivandrum. Here the police and military tried to disburse the crowd, which had assembled for a similar meeting, by lathi-charge. The mob turned 'most determined and hostile'⁵⁶ and threw stones at the forces injuring so many constables and soldiers. In the military firing that ensued five persons were injured of whom two died on the spot.⁵⁷ Similar incidents of mob-violence and Government repression took place in various parts of Chengannoor between 29th September and 1st October, 1938.⁵⁸ which were considered by the Government as "constituting the ingredients of waging war against the Sovereign."⁵⁹

There can be any number of explanations and justifications by the State Congress leaders for the mob-violence. The question here is not about the propriety of the action from the innocent masses, but that of the leaders of the State Congress. Question remains to be answered whether the State Congress leaders who defied the leadership and advice of Gandhiji were responsible for this violence, for, if the

55. File No. D.Dis./3344/1938/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM. Also see Chopra, P.N. who is who of Indian Martyrs, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 175, 191 and 208.

56. File No. D.Dis./3258/1944/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

57. File No. D.Dis./33462/1938/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM. Also see C. Narayana Pillai, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

58. File No. D.Dis./508/1939/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

59. *Ibid.*

Gandhian leadership was accepted the issue of Responsible Government would have been undermined? The use of force and violent agitation, at least for a short period defying Gandhian methods and his advice did not give much credit and reward to the agitation and agitators. If the State Congress leaders, who were 'supposed to be ardent followers of Gandhiji,' advised its cadres to strictly follow non-violent methods of agitation, this kinds of casualties would not have happened in Travancore and the public sympathy towards the movement would have been much more. The action of the Travancore State Congress leaders in this direction, really alienated a large number of ardent Congress followers to keep themselves aloof from the agitation in the State, which in reality weakened the cause. Even the formation of the State Congress was the result of the Haripura resolution of the Congress and therefore the State Congress cannot claim an independent existence from the Indian National Congress, the difference only being in two geographical units – British India and Princely India. Then why the Travancore State Congress took a different turn in its agitation? The answer is so simple that the soil of Travancore was pro-leftist, even the leaders, though not that much committed since the time was not ripe for that.

The pro-left attitude of the State Congress really weakened the agitation for Responsible Government and aided the growth of leftist movement in Travancore, without the knowledge of its leaders. The later State Congress leaders though the lawyers who came to power were not known leftists.

The tragedy of these events are to be examined with the later events of the State Congress completely obeying Gandhian advice

Even the remark of the judiciary that the outbreak of mob-violence were due to the arrests and convictions of Congress leaders particularly of E.J. Kuruvilla cannot be taken as a correct reading.⁶⁰ The judiciary erred in its conclusion about the awareness of the public about non-violence and its practice or the ground work provided by the State Congress leaders to enlighten the public about it. People were exhorted to undertake agitation. Without evaluating this the verdict given by the judiciary is highly critical and badly tell upon the assessment of the judiciary throwing light to the present day observations of the judicial system. The incidents that took place on and after 29th September 1938 shows that the innocent public who were ignorant about Gandhian methods of agitation of non-violence and can be easily led by emotional slogans, were not guilty.

The arrests, detention and convictions of State Congress leaders particularly of Mrs. & Mr. E.J. Kuruvilla was the immediate cause of the large scale and wide spread outbreak of violence in Chengannoor and nearby places. On September 29, 1938, as per the instructions of the local Congress Committee workers picketed public offices. The Inspector of police fired at the crowd when his attempts to disburse the crowd by a lathi-charge failed. The firing resulted in the death of one person on the spot.⁶¹ The

60. *Ibid.*

61. *The Hindu*, Sept. 30, 1938.

result was sporadic and uncontrollable violence “cutting off communications to Chengannoor from all sides, cutting down and laying across the road huge avenue trees, by breaking mile and furlong stones and placing them on the road, by cutting down culverts and dismantling bridges and by digging trenches across some of the roads.”⁶² The gravity of the situation can be inferred from the inability and failure of the police and military forces stationed in the area to bring the situation under control and therefore, lawlessness and anarchy prevailed for two days. Normalcy was restored only after huge military contingents arrived in the area.

Kadakkal, a village about 45 kilometres north of Trivandrum, Kallara and Pangode, two villages, 32 kilometres away from Trivandrum were some other places where identical violent incidents took place. On 26th September, 1938 a group of people obstructed the collection of toll at the Kadakkal market and exhorted the people not to pay it. Tension and serious breaches of peace remaining in the locality for three days and by 29th September the situation fell out of control when the mob pelted stones against the police station forcing the police to retreat to Kottarakkara.⁶³ The situation

62. Commitment order P.E. 3 of 1938 dated 7th October, 1939, p. 17 of Chengannoor Waging war case.

63. File No. D.Dis./507/1938/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM. In the commitment order dated 29th May 1939 of Kadakkal waging war case (PE 1/1939) the Magistrate of Kottarakkara gives the following observations regarding the gravity of the situation: “There was no administrative authority at Kadakkal. Complete insecurity was reigning supreme. Schools were closed; police station was locked and practically demolished; school masters, taluk employees and Ranger had taken to their heels! Taluk office and Range Office buildings were attempted to be damaged; road communications were completely blocked up by felling trees and destroying a culvert – “The market was closed: In short every business at Kadakkal was at a standstill during this period . . . A rebel’s camp was set up and armed crowds have been posting themselves . . . jealously, guarding their newly conquered territory.”

was brought under control only after the arrival of two platoons of military at Kadakkal on 5th October, 1938.

On 30th September a policeman died in an encounter with a few youths at Kallara and Pangode. In a police firing that followed two persons lost their lives, resulting in mob-violence in the area. A detachment of troops under Lt.O.G. Eapen reached the area on 6th October, 1938 and conducted an extensive search yielding 13 guns used by the mob.⁶⁴ This would suggest that the radicals among the State Congress leadership had already gained control of not only the situation but also the organisation. It is a mystery how and why an organization pledged itself in non-violent agitational methods, though for self defence, acquired destructive weapons to be used in the encounter. The conclusion can be that the State Congress which undertook the agitation in the name of the Congress which at this point of time was led by Gandhiji, had abandoned non-violent practices and adopted violent methods as its goal, though the leaders were unaware of it, suggesting that the second wing of the State Congress leadership cheated the leaders of the State Congress. This second wing soon shifted their attitude and severed their connection with the State Congress and formed a separate party for themselves; which in later years came to be called the leftist – the Communist Party.

64. File No. D.Dis./3/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see E.M. Kavoor, *T.M.Varghese, op.cit.*, p. 85.

The actions of the State Congress in violence would recall its decision of aggressive defiance taken earlier,⁶⁵ Pointing to the fact that the State Congress had stepped off to the radical group even from the time of starting agitational methods. This was perhaps a planned performance of the socialist wing within Congress.

By this time the political situation and agitation in Travancore and the repressive policy of the Government received all India attention. The Indian National Congress was closely watching the situation, though in any way, it could not directly interfere in the princely State. The All India Congress Committee resolved on 25th September, 1938 to request the Government of Travancore to institute an inquiry into the recent happenings including the charges made by the State of provocation including firing on unarmed people resulting in deaths and injuries, together with amnesty to the prisoners.⁶⁶ Subhas Chandra Bose, the then President of the Indian National Congress sent a consolation message to the State Congress.⁶⁷ Poet Ravindranath Tagore also issued a Statement severely criticizing the repressive measures of the Travancore Government.⁶⁸

65. E.M. Kavour, *op.cit.*, p. 174. The State Congress decided that it should take the lead to have an aggressive stand in the agitation and therefore submit a memorial against the Diwan. In spite of Gandhiji's request to withdraw the memorial the Congress did not oblige just because of this stand. The course of events in later days also prove this stand.

66. AICC Papers, NML, New Delhi. Also see Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress 1935-47*, Vol. II, (New Delhi, 1969), p. 97.

67. *The Hindu*, 5th October, 1938. It reads: "The courage and determination with which the people of Travancore are facing the repression have drawn nation wide admiration and sympathy. Many lives have been lost, many more are maimed or in prison. Despite all this they have shown fortitude and capacity for disciplined suffering and sacrifice."

68. *Ibid.*

The efforts made by these eminent personalities and organisation to boost the morale and appreciating the effects of the Travancore State Congress in its agitation for the declared goal of Responsible Government in Travancore need be appreciated and this was well received in State Congress circles.

The methods, policies and measures adopted so far by the Travancore State Congress were not a peaceful one leading to severe breach of peace in different parts of the State, giving suspicion to the attitude of the parent organisation – The Indian National Congress. The declared and practicing methods of the Indian National Congress being non-violent and every possible step was taken by Gandhiji towards this direction to avoid any violent agitation – the activities of the Travancore State Congress, however, noble the causes and issues may be -- promoting and encouraging violence in the State can not be justified. The leaders of the Indian National Congress – especially the leadership under Subhash Chandra Bose, while appreciating the courage and sacrifice of the leaders and followers of the State Congress in leading the agitation, did not advocate non-violence and to avoid measures leading to violent revolts seriously affecting public life, pointing to the dominance of left using both in Indian National Congress and State Congress, sidelining the Gandhian ideas at least for a short period, though the Gandhian ideology dominated later and succeeded ultimately. None criticised the atrocities committed by the crowd nor advised them to strictly follow non-violent method and maintain restraint nor call off the agitation if took to the tools of violence. The Indian National Congress committed to non-violent

practices would have given necessary instructions or guidelines in this regard, but to our surprise it did not.

It reveals that radicalism had attained dominance in both these organisations. But to our own surprise these methods did not yield any result in Travancore.

Assistance and support were promised not only by organisations to pursue the agitations but neighbouring States also gave unconditional support, the prominent of which were the princely State of Cochin and Madras. When a camp was opened at Ernakulam, the Cochin Government freely allowed to operate it without any obstructions from authorities of Cochin, and leaders of the Cochin Prajamandal like Panampally Govinda Menon and K.P. Madhavan Nayar promised all help to the camp workers.⁶⁹ In British Malabar also Congress leaders of left wing like K.A. Damodara Menon, P. Krishna Pillai, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and P. Narayanan Nayar formed a Travancore campaign Aid Committee with head quarters at Ernakulam with close contacts with the State Congress leaders. These political contacts were not new, as left wing Congress leaders of Malabar had already established close links with the leaders and workers of the Travancore youth League as early as 1931⁷⁰

The highly volatile political situation in Travancore attracted the attention of the whole country and without any inducement from any other sources, volunteer

69. C. Narayana Pillai, n. 57 p. 475.

70. P.T. Haridas, *Emergence of the Travancore Youth League – An Analysis*, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, (Hyderabad, 1978), p. 187.

jathas were taken out to Travancore from different parts of the country of which the most prominent was the one led by A.K. Gopalan with 32 followers on 10th September 1938 from Calicut to Alwaye. The jatha was stopped by the police and the volunteers were arrested and detained at Perumbavoor and Alwaye, and four of them including A.K. Gopalan were tried and sentenced to imprisonment for six months and a fine of 1000 rupees each.⁷¹ The jatha from Madras was led by Ekambaram and it reached Trivandrum on 27th October while those from Madurai, Ramnad and Tinnevely districts of Tamilnadu reached Shencottai railway station and while entering to Travancore a section of them were arrested and the remaining members proceeded to Travancore by train.⁷² With a negligible number of eleven volunteers a Jatha reached Trivandrum from Colombo, on 22nd October, 1938.⁷³

Though the number of participants in almost all the jathas to declare solidarity with the State Congress was meagre, its impact was really great. It created an impression that the agitation in Travancore had a National appeal and that the State Congress possessed the support of the whole nation, giving a reservation to the Government of Travancore in its dealings with the State Congress, though the Government at the moment did not revise its attitude or policy. To a certain extent it

71. File No. D.Dis./163/1938/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM. It may be noted that other jathas of the same kind were led from Malabar by Mohammed Yusaf and Ganapathi Kamath. For details see Balaram, N.E. *Keralathile Communist Prasthanam*, Part I (Malayalam), p.108, A.K.Gopalan, *In the cause of People*, Madras, 1973, pp. 104-115.

72. File No. D.Dis./6/1945/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

73. *Ibid.*

served as an eye-opener to the Government that something should be done and it was felt that a review was needed in its policy towards the State Congress. The future events throw lights to these facts.

The situation remained tense in Travancore and there was no sign of easing on the part of the Government, and therefore meetings, processions, demonstrations and regular picketing were the order of the day. Educational institutions remained closed.⁷⁴ Instances of bitter police excesses, ill-treatment and inhuman methods of torture were reported every day from all parts of the State.⁷⁵ At this stage the State Congress formed an Action Council and in the meeting held at Ernakulam it was decided to organise a huge demonstration at Trivandrum on 23rd October, 1938, involving as many people as possible giving an embarrassing situation to the Government and forcing them to take an appropriate decision on Responsible Government. The selection of the date of demonstration was also intentional as it coincided with the birthday of the Maharaja of Travancore. Elaborate preparations were made by the Congress throughout the State distributing Khadar uniforms for jatha participants⁷⁶ There was promising support from all sides. The Travancore

74. File No. D.Dis./981/1945/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

75. *The Hindu* in its leader dated 17th October, 1938, severely criticised these instances and methods of police repression against State Congress leaders and masses.

76. *The Hindu*, 29th October, 1938. The Malabar Mail reported a statement of Akkamma Cherian who was the 12th 'Dictator' of the State Congress as having distributed Khadar uniform to over 20,000 participants. It shows the extensive and intense work done by the State Congress for the ensuing agitation

Boatmen Association gave call to a general strike from 17th October onwards and the Coir factory laborers at Alleppy decided to struck work from 21st onwards for revocation of Regulation I of 1938, release of all political prisoners, conducting an inquiry into the police excesses and police torture of political prisoners, and for withdrawal of ban orders issued by the Government to suppress popular demonstration and sentiments.⁷⁷

Telegrams were sent to the Maharaja before the jathas started to their destinations praying that "Ruthlessly oppressed people start today peacefully in jatha to represent grievances to His Highness Pray protection from official obstruction."⁷⁸ The jatha volunteers from all parts of the State assembled at Thampanoor near Trivandrum on 22nd October and Akkamma Cherian led the jatha to the Fort Gate. This was stopped by the military force stationed there under Col. Watkins. They were not allowed to meet the Maharaja and therefore, returned to Thampanoor and dispersed.⁷⁹

To the surprise of even the leaders of the Congress the Government of Travancore ordered on 22nd October, 1938, a day before the jathas proceeded to the Fort Gate, the release of 188 political prisoners detained under various sections and sentenced under

77. File No. D.Dis./130/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. The Inspector of Police, Alleppey in his report dated 19th October, 1938 sent to the District Magistrate, Quilon Stated that the declared strike would lead to serious law and problems in the area and it would be difficult to tackle the situation.

78. File No. D.Dis./147/1938/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

79. *The Hindu*, 30th October, 1938.

the Criminal Law Amendment Regulation I of 1938 and “suspension of the operation of all notifications issued there under,” in signifying the proposed jatha.⁸⁰

The Government which was more calculated, through its decision achieved a remarkable and great victory over the State Congress. It could, at this point of time, claim that some of the major demands of the State Congress were already conceded and could propagate that the proposed jathas and demonstrations were unwarranted and intended to deliberately break the peace of the land. The State Congress was also left in a fix as all efforts had already been made for the jatha and a suspension of the procession would demoralize the workers of the Congress and thereby compelling it to proceed. The unpleasant situation could have been averted if it was withdrawn on 22nd itself. But a declaration to this effect came only on 24th October. In a public meeting held at Trivandrum on 24th October, 1938, the president of the State Congress, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai declared the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement temporarily taking into consideration the release of prisoners,⁸¹ without any substantial achievement to the State Congress and leading the organisation to a period of stagnation in political agitations and future activities. This decision was taken due to some compelling circumstances. The leaders seemed to have overestimated the power, strength and force of the State Congress movement and its capacity to sustain the movement while they failed to assess and see the shattered strength of the

80 File No. D.Dis./323/1938/C.S. Cellar records, KGS, TVM.

81. *The Hindu*, dated 25th October 1938.

organisation.⁸² The torture and sufferings of the imprisoned leaders and followers of the Party and the rigorous repressive policy of the Government also compelled them to suspend the movement at least for a short while. They also realized and feared that popular sentiments would turn against them if they continued the agitation further.

A critical examination or analysis of the Civil Disobedience Movement launched in Travancore under the auspices of the Travancore State Congress would reveal two currents: (1) that the organization made departures from its declared policy of non-violence of Gandhian methods and defied Gandhiji who was the undisputed leader of the Indian National Congress, declaring itself, at least unofficially, as an independent political organisation. (2) this drift in the policy of the State Congress was because of the ideology of the leadership of the Party to follow even violent method to achieve the declared goal of Responsible Government. During the time of the agitation, the rise of Subhas Chandra Bose to the position of Presidentship of the Indian National Congress were really subordinated Gandhian Principles of agitation and the policy of aggressive agitations dominated, though ultimately they were forced to find rescue under Gandhian principles. Though the movement through its support of violent agitations could get support from a considerable social group, it failed to make it a mass movement, as Gandhiji could by his dedicated non-violent methods, since a major section of the population abstained and disagreed with violent agitations. The

82. P. Narayanan Nair, who was involved in the Struggle has written that the party organisation was in shambles. P. Narayanan Nair, *Aramuttandilude*, (Kottayam, 1971), p.198.

left wing of the Congress succeeded, with some exceptions in leaders, in establishing their hold over the masses at large consequent on the violent agitations and the martyrs created while the moderate leadership of the Congress failed to gain from it. At the same time the State Congress took little interest in the plight of the striking boat workers and coir workers and so could not widen its social base.

The political agitations that were going on in British India in 1938 is also to be examined to have an understanding of the situation. There was no hectic political activity led by the Congress during 1938 – 39 in British India and at a time when British India was rather calm an agitation on violent lines in princely State of Travancore would not have been supported by the major section of the Indian population, suggesting that the State Congress leaders failed to evaluate the conditions, situations and sentiments in British India. It also underestimated the strength of an organization, launched a few months back, to undertake such an agitation leading to success, though it apparently received mass support. Mass support does not mean the involvement of a few thousands but the whole masses at large. Seeing the participation of a few thousands in its rallies demonstrations or other activities the Congress leaders thought that the whole population of the Travancore State was with them, the real situation being on the reverse order. The contribution to this weakness of the State Congress can be attributed to the media as well. Even *The Hindu* which was published from Madras wrote about the movement. “The rapidity with which the freedom movement has spread in the State, and the widespread allegiance which the Congress commands from all classes and sections ... point to the urgent need for

establishing Responsible Government with in the State.”⁸³ This was rather a miscalculation and wrong judgement of the movement at that particular point of time.

The newspaper seems to have propagated that there were wide spread allegiance to the Congress but to what degree taking into consideration of the total population, whether more than 50% of the people of Travancore was with them? The answer is in the negative if so the agitation would not have lasted up to 1947 – ie; till the achievement of freedom to India. A political organisation formed in February, 1938 without any mass support, taking to a major cause of Responsible Government and leading on agitation with in a period of 6 months without any ground work to have all the people with them and demanding a major issue and launching a violent agitation itself seems ridiculous. A comparison of the activities of the parent organisation – The Indian National Congress in its activities during the same period is self explanatory, that the efforts taken by the State Congress were not advisory. It really failed to evaluate the situations in British India and also of the conditions in other princely States of India. Added to this was the ruthless ways in which the Government suppressed the movement. The withdrawal of the movement created a dilemma. What next? This is the subject of the next chapter.

83. *The Hindu*, dated 17th October, 1938 (Editorial).

PLANS FOR DIRECT ACTION - DISILLUSIONMENT AND A PERIOD OF LULL

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter VII

PLANS FOR DIRECT ACTION – DISILLUSIONMENT AND A PERIOD OF LULL

The suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement for the time being by the State Congress seriously affected the working of the Congress. While the Government considered the release of political prisoners as a concession given to the Congress and a victory for themselves the State Congress leadership was hesitant to accept it and insisted on their demand for Responsible Government. People at large who strained all their efforts for the jathas and meeting for 23rd October were disappointed with the suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement on 24th and therefore, least bothered either in the release of prisoners or in the suspension of ban orders by the Government. The leadership of the State Congress, therefore, was forced to place before the public a clear and definite programme of action, and decided to renew the agitation from 25th March, 1939 and the Working Committee meeting of the State Congress from 27th to 29th October, 1938, held at Trivandrum declared that the measures of the Government were “totally inadequate” and reiterated their demand for Responsible Government,¹ and the committee decided to launch direct action with reinforced vigour and strength.² The committee itself could not suggest a date for direct action, since much

1. *The Hindu*, 30th October, 1938.

2. The resolution adopted by the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress from 27th to 29th October 1938 states that “neither the spirit nor the tone nor the contents of the

remained to be done in preparation, and, therefore, it called upon the workers to undertake necessary preparations.³ The aim of the Congress leadership was to collect a clear picture about the conditions in the State, in particular in villages, and to assess

press communiqué issued by the Government on 22nd October is helpful in creating an atmosphere of peace in the country. The tendency to regard the Government Communiqué as a general political amnesty is unwarranted and regrettable. All that the Government have done is to release a large number of political prisoners but the communiqué deliberately avoids any reference to the question of Responsible Government. Nor is there any attempt made to meet any of the demands of the State Congress. The Criminal Law Amendment Regulation is still in force and the notification thereunder declaring the State Congress and the Youth League as unlawful associations have not been cancelled. . . . The communiqué implies nothing more than a suspension of the notifications and that no political or other concessions are contemplated. Even after the student's strike has been terminated, students are still being victimised. Volunteers and workers of the State Congress are even now detained in lock ups. Acts of violence and incendiarism are still foisted on non-violent workers. The disabilities consequent on convictions of the released political prisoners are not removed. The ban against newspapers and the cancellation of newspaper licenses are still in force. Properties distrained for the realisation of fines or confiscated have not been restored” See file No. D.Dis./2920/1944/CS KGS, TVM.

3. The following measures were suggested by the Committee:

- 1) To undertake contact programmes by taluk committees to establish mass-support for the ensuing agitations.
- 2) To form a well-disciplined satyagraha volunteer organisation including women volunteers in all taluks.
- 3) To hold taluk conferences throughout the State to educate masses of non-violent agitation.
- 4) To conduct a State wide tour by the President of the State Congress accompanied by members chosen by him to ascertain the situation in each taluk and
- 5) To hold an All Travancore State Congress Conference at Trivandrum within one month. File No.D.Dis./2920/1944/CS Cellar records, KGS,TVM. Letter from K.P. Nilakanta Pillai, Secretary, Travancore State Congress to the Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum.

the real hold of the organisation among the masses and also to carry the Congress message of non-violent agitations for Responsible Government.

The State Congress leadership geared up all its organisational machinery to make the programme a grand success and innumerable public meetings were held in different parts of the State which were addressed by State Congress leaders, and these platforms were used for according warm welcome to the released political prisoners. Huge crowd assembled to see their heroes. Leaders declared their intention to start direct action if the Government failed to grant Responsible Government within a period of one month, and requested the active support and participation in the endeavour. Volunteer training camps and taluk committees were opened, house contact programmes undertaken by workers and leaders and also enlisted volunteers and collected funds to the State Congress organisation.

These works were organised within the organisational framework of the State Congress while support and assistance poured in from outside as well, of which two organisations are noteworthy, the Travancore Youth League, formed in 1931 representing the left wing within the State Congress,⁴ and worked within the organisational framework of the State Congress, and the Travancore Student's Federation. Their strenuous efforts and able assistance offered to the State Congress are to be appreciated. The leaders of the Travancore Youth League were, at this time, concentrating their attention in organising the labourers of Alleppy and, therefore, the

4. P.T. Haridas, *Emergence of the Travancore Youth League – An Analysis*, IHC Proceedings, (Hyderabad, 1978), p. 188.

support and work of this wing helped the State Congress to have the backing of this group of labourers in the State, and the leaders like N.Srikantan Nair, T.K. Varghese Vaidhyan, Ponnara G. Sreedhar, C.K. Velayudhan, R.Sugathan ably assisted in their efforts and exhorted the people not to pay taxes to the Government and encouraged them to picket the toddy shops. They also collected funds for their expenses. Leaders from Malabar like A.K. Gopalan and K.Damodaran visited Travancore and participated in these programmes.⁵ Suspension of ban orders helped them and the students to launch the Congress programmes without serious obstruction and interference from the police force of the State. Student leaders addressed innumerable meetings in different parts of the State and tried their best in consolidating their hold on student community for making their participation in the agitation

It was at this time that the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress met at Trivandrum from 28th November, to 1st December 1938 and assessed the situation. The committee held elaborate deliberations on the organisational work and resolved to entrust the work of supervising, directing and co-ordinating the committees in different zones to various persons,⁶ and to call upon the people to abstain from consuming toddy, arrack and other alcoholic drinks, tobacco in all forms,

5. File No.D. Dis./362/1938/CS Cellar Records, KGS, TVM., M. Rashid, *K. Domadaran* (Mal.), (Kottayam, 1982), pp. 65-67.

6. The work in Nagarcoil was entrusted to K.P. Nilakanta Pillai and K.N. Kunjukrishna Pillai, in Quilon to T.M. Varghese and K. Kesavan, in Alleppey to V.K. Velayudhan, in Tiruvalla to K.P. Gopala Panikkar, K.M. Kora and P.J. Sebastian, in Kottayam to E.J. Phillipose and in Alwaye to T.K. Narayana Pillai. See File No. 2920/1944/C.S./ Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

opium and other intoxicants and to authorise local, taluk and division committees and Congress workers to carry on a peaceful non-violent propaganda work towards this end. It was also decided to observe 8th to 14th December, 1938 as membership campaign week and to take out peaceful demonstrations and hold meetings during the proposed visit of the viceroy in Travancore. Another important decision taken by the Working Committee was to hold a special session of the State Congress at Vattiyoorkavu near Trivandrum on 22nd and 23rd December, 1938.

Because of the wide and active propaganda campaigns of the State Congress and other organisations popular sentiments in favour of Responsible Government reached so high that any agitation launched might get mass participation thereby making it a mass movement. Volunteers and workers of the Congress were involved in contact programmes to take the ideas to the masses. The Working Committee did not recommend picketing of toddy and arrack shops. Taking note of the resolution of the Working Committee, the Government on 3rd December, 1938, issued a press note asking the people to desist from the programmes of the State Congress based on the Working Committee Resolutions and also warned them that 'every means in its control' will be used by the Government to prevent these programmes of the State Congress.⁷ As both groups were determined a confrontation seemed imminent

The work of the State Congress in forming volunteer organisation and volunteer camps and the training given to them was, no doubt, a remarkable achievement of the

7. *Ibid.*

State Congress and the Working Committee which met on 29th October, 1938 appointed a sub-committee to form a Male Volunteer Corps with T.K. Narayana Pillai as organiser and G. Chandrasekhara Pillai as captain and a Female Volunteer Corps called Desasevika Sangh with Annie Mascrene as organiser and Akkamma Cheriyan as captain. The Committee also prescribed the uniforms for the volunteers and designations to the different cadres, and accordingly, volunteer camps were established throughout the State including remote rural areas with clear indication of making the ensuing agitation a popular and mass movement which would serve an eye opener to the Government. The Inspector-General of police reported to the Government that these camps were located in the houses of prominent State Congress leaders or sympathisers of the respective locality and the most cases financed by them.⁸ It is to be noted that the camps were first established in the northern taluks of the State as the volunteers of the camp could very easily escape to Cochin and Malabar in the event of any emergency. Leaders from these places were also invited to the camps to give training in the methods of non-violent agitational methods and one of the prominent persons who took an active and keen interest in sending instructors to these camps was the Editor of Mathrubhoomi, K.A.Damodra Menon of Calicut.⁹ The other leaders in the fray deputed from Malabar for imparting training to the volunteers were C.H. Kesavan, K. Ramunny Nayar, P.V. Raghava Marar, I.I. Gopalan and the general policy followed by them was to avoid towns and keep themselves in confinement during day

8. File No.D.Dis./981/1945/C.S. Cellar Record, KGS, TVM.

9. K.A. Damodara Menon, *Tirinjunokkumbol* (Mal), (Kottayam, 1981), pp. 84-85.

time concentrating their activities in rural areas, to evade the notice of the authorities and the volunteers who participated in the camps also avoided in moving in groups during day time.¹⁰ The Government kept a close watch on the activities of the State Congress and arrested Ramunni Nayar at Neyyattinkara on 8th December, 1938.¹¹ Regarding the general methodology followed in the camps an officer of the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) reported that "There are no words of command, but only signals of command. Commands are given by movements of the hand. There are right hand movements and left hand movements. These signals are kept very secret and great care is taken to see that the secret does not leak out. Signalling with flags and light is also taught. Gardening, house-keeping and domestic economy are also taught in these volunteer camps. The volunteer are taught to evade lathi-charge and bullets. They are also taught to escape by breaking through police cordons. There are special uniforms for the volunteers. Over and above these general items of training a sort of communist education is imparted to the educated amongst the volunteers The important subject that they taught dealt with anti-fascism, political society, economic history of the world, Marxist theory and its application to society, capitalism and state capitalism, history of the Indian National Congress and Travancore State Congress, and other kindred matters. The training in each camp lasted for seven to fourteen days."¹²

10. File No.D.Dis./981/1945/C.S. Cellar Record, KGS, TVM., P. Narayanan Nair, *Aranooottandilude* (Mal), (Kottayakm, 1973), p.196.

11. *Ibid.*

12. File No.D.Dis./135/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

The report suggested that the State Congress was prepared for the agitation and the people were educated about the methods of propaganda and techniques of agitations. It was clear from this report that the State Congress' programmes of propaganda work had acquired the dimension of a popular agitation with participation of masses. The Government also realized that they could not face the situation unless the whole governmental machinery is used. The report also pointed to the fact that the ensued agitation by the Travancore State Congress was taking its roots to the public at large which the administration had taken note of.

The female volunteers under Akkamma Cherian travelled length and breadth of the State to propagate the vision of Desasevika Sangh and members were given training in singing National Songs at various places like Kottayam and Alway.¹³ The Government was very much alarmed at the situation and, therefore, in a Press Communiqué dated 3rd December, 1938 warned the people not to associate themselves with the State Congress or encourage and help it and requested the public to disassociate themselves with these bodies.¹⁴ Also, the Criminal Law Amendment Regulation X of 1938 was promulgated by the Maharaja on 8th December, 1938, which gave enormous powers to the Government to deal with the situation.¹⁵

13. File No.D.Dis./826/1939/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

14. File No.D.Dis./2920/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see *The Hindu*, 4th December, 1938.

15. The Criminal Law Amendment Regulation X of 1938 reads: "any person who wore any uniform, badge or other distinctive marks, emblem or other device signifying his association with any political organisation or took part in its control or management or engaged in organising and training any member was guilty of an offence punishable with

The Government could not wait for long to proceed against the leaders of the State Congress. First in a Press Communiqué, on 3rd December, 1938, the leaders were warned of 'dire consequences' if they proceeded with the proposed agitation.¹⁶ The police forces were given strict instructions to deal with the situation. Accordingly the police assessed the situation and decided that no stone should be left unturned in the attempt to crush the present anti-Government agitation which is likely to lead to serious breach of peace.¹⁷ It was evident that the Government was determined to suppress the agitation by hook or by crook, and measures were initiated immediately on 10th December 1938. The Diwan began his prosecution measures against the signatories of the memorial leading to detention,¹⁸ and a Royal Proclamation was issued constituting a Special Tribunal to try these leaders. All members of the State Congress Working Committee were also arrested.¹⁹ T.M. Varghese was arrested on 18th December, 1938 and before his arrest he issued a Statement to the Press, "some people are arrested and released on bail, some others detained in custody, while some others easily accessible are not arrested. But for the basic motive of creating

imprisonment from six months to two years." Acts and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol. X. Trivandrum, 1939, pp. 527-532.

16. *The Hindu*, 4th December, 1938.

17. This decision was taken by the police at a meeting held in Trivandrum on 9th December, 1938 with the City Police Commissioner in the chair. File No.D. Dis./3405/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

18. Government Order No.ROC. 9699/Judicial, dated 10th December, 1938.

19. *The Hindu*, 15th and 17th December, 1938.

disintegration among them all the twenty one could have arrested 'en masse' and let on bail...²⁰

The reason for the immediate action of arrest and detention of State Congress leaders can very well be attributed to the Memorial issue. The Diwan, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer was very much annoyed and disturbed over the Memorial submitted against him and he was awaiting the withdrawal of it by the State Congress leaders, and was keeping a close watch on the State Congress leaders expecting a favourable action from them either on their own or because of some pressure from outside. As this did not materialise he resorted to pressure tactics leading to the arrest of leaders, by which he thought that a decision in his favour will be taken by them.

The Memorial issue assumed unexpected (unprecedented) dimensions by this time. The Working Committee of the State Congress which met at Trivandrum between 28th November and 1st December, 1938 had a detailed deliberation on the issue but failed to take any decision. Even before this meeting on 12th November, 1938 a delegation consisting of Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese, V.K. Veleyudhan, P.J. Sebastian, P.K. Kunju, M.N. Parameswaran Pillai and G. Ramachandran went to Wardha and enlightened Gandhiji of the real political situation of Travancore, but Gandhiji insisted upon the withdrawal of the Memorial to facilitate for his intervention in Travancore matters. After their return the Working Committee again met on 23rd November, 1938 to discuss the issue in which a group led by Pattom

20. *Ibid*, 20th December, 1938.

A. Thanu Pillai stood for an unconditional withdrawal as suggested by Gandhiji while another group led by T.M. Varghese strongly opposed it. The youth wing in the State Congress was also opposed to the withdrawal. The Committee, therefore, could not decide upon this issue.

The deliberation in the Working Committee of the State Congress brings forth the question of real leadership of the Organisation, as to whether it was working under the guidance of Gandhiji or serving as independent. Events prove that the State Congress which was under the grip of the leftists or socialists were reluctant to accept the advice of Gandhiji while the moderates were willing to abide by the advice of Gandhiji. It would suggest that the majority in leadership was with the left wing and was not ready to accept neither the Gandhian methods nor to obey Gandhiji's advice, in result the organisation acted on its own, and remained independent for sometime (which ultimately led to their defeat). As we see later the Congress withdrew the memorial as suggested by Gandhiji, suggesting that the refusal to withdraw the Memorial was due to the fact that radicals had attained dominance in the State Congress leadership which ignored Gandhiji's methods of agitation.

In spite of the fact that all kinds of ground works were undertaken by the State Congress for the impending agitation they could not withstand the repressive measures of the Government and, therefore, was forced to withdraw the Memorial unconditionally as suggested by Gandhiji. The prestige of the organisation could have

been kept high if they had adhered to the advice of Gandhi, but their refusal and later acceptance really undermined the reputation of the Congress among the masses.

The Memorial controversy had become by this time a major political issue. Gandhiji who was appraised of the situation took a strong stand for withdrawing it unconditionally and published articles pleading for the same.²¹ He further added that the State Congress should “either withdraw the accusations made against Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer or should not make them a major point of issue. If they take the latter course there can be no satyagraha for it. The decision in this matter may be taken by the local people.”²² The Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress disagreed with Gandhiji and informed him that the withdrawal of the memorandum would altogether discredit the State Congress and weaken the movement and lead to the loss of morale of the followers of the organisation at large. But Gandhiji insisted in his stand and wrote in the ‘*Harijan*’ dated 8th October, 1938, that “persistence in the allegations especially without ability to prove them can but seriously harm the movement,” and he observed that “it is their clear duty to withdraw

21. In his article on ‘Travancore Affairs’ published in the ‘*Harijan*’ dated September 10th, 1938 Gandhiji wrote: “I have read the Memorial of the Working Committee of the State Congress making the most serious charges against the able Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer. They should never have been made, even if the memorialists had evidence in support. Such evidence is irrelevant in the case of Responsible Government. Leaders who have been locked up should make amends by withdrawing the charges against the Diwan.” *Harijan*, 10th September, 1938. Also see A. Sreedhara Menon, *Triumph and Tragedy in Travancore, Annals of Sir C.P.’s Sixteen Years*, (Kottayam, 2001), p.170.

22. M.K. Gandhi, *Letters to Sardar Vallabhai Patel*, (Ahammedabad, 1957), p.135.

the charges and thus free the movement of the initial blunder and the handicap. There is no greater discredit than the refusal to acknowledge errors.”²³

The house of the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress was sharply divided over the opinion and advice of Gandhiji regarding withdrawal of the memorial. The moderate group within the State Congress led by the President Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, who did not like to win the displeasure of Gandhiji strongly supported the withdrawal, while the extremist group led by T.M. Varghese vehemently opposed the move, thus creating a clear cleavage within the organisation of the State Congress and a split in the Congress seemed imminent. The signatories of the memorandum who were in the central jail, Thiruvananthapuram again met and decided to request Gandhiji not to insist on the withdrawal of the Memorial. In his Interview note dated September 24th 1938 Sir C.P informed the Maharaja that “the prisoners in jail headed by Pattom A. Thanu Pillai have drafted a telegram to Gandhiji stating that they should not be asked to withdraw the allegations against the Government. The decision in this regard recorded in the minutes reads as follows: “Your Highness decided that omitting the defamatory portion, an extract from the telegram drafted by Pattom Thanu Pillai to Gandhiji may be sent as from the Superintendent, Central Jail.”²⁴

As Stated the Royal Proclamation dated December 13th 1938 setting up special courts for trial really forced Gandhiji and the leaders of the Travancore State Congress

23. *Harijan*, 8th October, 1938.

24. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 170.

for a settlement. On 18th December, 1938, a long 273 word telegram was despatched to Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, the President of the Travancore State Congress, by Gandhiji from Wardha stating thus:

After serious and prayful consideration we have come to the conclusion that the allegations made against the Diwan in the Memorandum submitted to His Highness should be unreservedly withdrawn in the interest of larger struggle for Responsible Government. But while, therefore, withdraw the allegations fully and unequivocally we would be untrue to ourselves, to the cause and the public, if we did not state that the allegations were made by us with a full sense of responsibility and with a belief in them as full as it is possible to have.²⁵

Gandhiji also advised the leaders of the State Congress that if the Government still persisted with the trial, the accused should not defend themselves and also that if they are given any sentence by the court, they should cheerfully undergo the same.²⁶

In the light of the Diwan's measures instituting prosecution measures and Gandhiji's insistence of withdrawal of Memorial some of the extremists among the State Congress leadership decided to face any situation and to start direct action immediately. Some of them even went to Ernakulam to seek support from Cochin.²⁷

25. *Ibid.*, p.171.

26. *Ibid.*

27. File No. D.Dis./4114/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Expecting arrest at any time, to ensure implementation of their proposed plan, the Working Committee of the State Congress which met at Trivandrum on 18th December, 1938 constituted an Action Council with nine members with A. Narayana Pillai as President.²⁸ The fact that more than sixty prominent persons of reputation and locals had expressed their full support and sympathy towards the movement and expressed their willingness to become the successive presidents. The radical wing among the State Congress under the leadership of M.M. Varkey and E.T. Kuruvilla took measures to submit another Memorial to the Viceroy in the event of withdrawal of memorial under pressure from Gandhiji. They also decided to make as much confusion in jail as possible and to observe hunger strike time and again as a mark of protest.²⁹ The leaders thought that the Government would face a more tough time to face the situation because of mass support to the movement and active involvement from their side.

The kind of spontaneous response from the public itself was a great testimony to the effectiveness of the State Congress propaganda. However, Gandhiji insisted

28. It is to be noted that majority of Working Committee members of the Travancore State Congress were already confined and the remaining five members, viz. Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese, E.J. Phillipose, K.T. Thomas, and T.K. Narayana Pillai were arrested and imprisoned by the Government with the belief that this would end the agitational programmes of the State Congress.

For more details see *The Hindu*, 19th December, 1938 and also file No. D.Dis./3404/1945/C.S. Cellar Record, KGS, TVM. It may also be noted that the State Congress had a successive list of leaders, about which the Government was unaware and that A. Narayana Pillai had deputed A. Achuthan as his successor and R. Sankar was to follow suit. For details see *The Hindu* dated 23rd December, 1938.

29. *The Hindu*, 13th December, 1938.

time and again on the withdrawal of the allegations and the leaders of the State Congress were left with no other alternative but to obey him, for, refusal will result in an isolation from the Indian National Congress, which in turn would weaken and isolate the State Congress. Total political isolation would lead to strengthening the Government's hands and greater suppression of the agitation. The leaders, at least a major group, thought that the people would leave them if Gandhiji was disobeyed. The shattered health of the imprisoned leaders like N.K. Padmanabha Pillai, A.J. John and R.Vasudevan Pillai also forced the leaders to reconsider their decision.³⁰ The imprisoned leaders of the State Congress Working Committee met at the Central Prison, Trivandrum on 23rd December, 1938 and decided to accept Gandhiji's advice and took the important decision of "withdrawing the personal allegations against the Diwan contained in the Memorial in obedience to Gandhiji's advice."³¹ Consequent on the withdrawal of allegation, all the prisoners were released on 6th January, 1938.

The withdrawal evoked mixed response both among the leaders and the public. A group of the State Congress leaders like E. John Kuruvilla, K.C. George, A.K. Pillai, M.M. Varkey and organisation like the Travancore Youth League severely opposed it. They stood by the full text of the original Memorial and argued that the withdrawal was a surrender and suspension of the fighting programme of the Congress.³² The acting President of the State Congress R.Sankar opposed this view and argued that the

30. File No.3414/D.Dis./1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

31. *The Hindu*, 24th December, 1938.

32. A Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p.172.

withdrawal of Memorial was “an act of the highest moral and political courage” and also stated that

the withdrawal of the personal allegations in the Memorandum by the Working Committee even in the face of some real and genuine opposition from the rank and file of the movement is wholly an indication of the measure of the strength of the State Congress and the implacable hold it has on the affection and loyalty of the people of Travancore. Any other interpretation would be unfair and preposterous and wholly against the truth.³³

Newspapers also wrote editorials on the subject. *Malayala Rajyam* in its leader dated 28th December, 1938 expressed the view that the withdrawal was “as a result of the fear endangered in the hearts of the Congress leaders by the adoption of drastic measures against the Congress and the launching of prosecution against the signatories.”³⁴

The Government, however, was not satisfied with the withdrawal of the Memorial and considered that the issue should be settled in a more satisfactory and acceptable manner to the Government. The British Resident of Travancore, C.P.Skrine was also dissatisfied in the manner of withdrawal and this was the main reason for the lukewarm response of the Government. The Resident who was in constant touch with the political crisis in Travancore had, conducted an inquiry on his own about the

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Malayala Rajyam* (Kottayam), 28th December, 1938.

allegations against the Diwan in the Memorial and has made the following observations in his letter addressed to the political secretary to the Viceroy on October 11th, 1938

Not a shred of real evidence of bribe taking or malversation of public funds of C.P. has been produced. In one of the chief cases alleged by the enemies, that of the State Transport Scheme, I have ascertained from trustworthy and well-informed European sources that not an anna has been misappropriated by the Diwan. With two and a half crores deposits and shares it may be taken for granted that the Directors of the National and Quilon Bank would have bought Sir. C.P. if they could.”³⁵

The Resident also advocated to take more stringent and rigorous action against the memorialists in the light of his findings. In his telegram to C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, Resident Skrine wrote “Mere verbal withdrawal under orders from High Command will not impress upon authorities or public. Gesture is without meaning unless the signatories make full apology and admit they were misinformed or misled, failing presume you will proceed with the trial. Have you decided on the Judge yet?”³⁶ The Maharaja of Travancore also agreed that the manner of withdrawal of the allegations were both unsatisfactory and the Diwan pointed out to him the pros and cons of the withdrawal and the prosecution.³⁷ It was recorded in the minutes of the

35. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

36. *Ibid.*, p.173.

37. *Ibid.*

Diwan with the Maharaja that “finally Your Highness agreed that some time may be taken by reason of the circumstance that the orders for withdrawal of further prosecution have to be passed by the special Tribunal. In the meantime steps could be taken through Mr. Patel, if possible, to see if a more satisfactory form of withdrawal cannot be obtained and also a definite declaration giving up demonstrations and civil disobedience during Viceroy’s visit.”³⁸

Vattiyurkavu Conference

It was in this background of the Memorial contravening that the State Congress decided to hold its annual session at Vattiyurkavu, an eastern suburb of Trivandrum on 22nd and 23rd December, 1938, though the annual session really fell either on 17th or 23rd February, 1939 the dates of first and second meetings respectively held for the formation of the Travancore State Congress. The formal decision to form a political party called the Travancore State Congress was taken only at the second meeting and, therefore, the annual session really fell on 23rd February, 1939 – The mystery of holding the session – prematurely remains to be answered. State Congress leaders were so hasty to hold the annual session two months before schedule. The answer is so simple that they found and foresaw an erosion in their followings because of the active work of the Youth League and their vigorous propaganda against the withdrawal of the Memorial. The State Congress leaders also realized the fact that the Youth League, and the Socialist Groups, would gain mass support in Travancore for

38. *Ibid.*

many reasons, if political activity of the State Congress remained standstill till February, and strengthen the Youth League, which in turn will result in the disintegration of the new political party committed to the establishment of Responsible Government in the State.

Moreover the propaganda campaigns undertaken by the extremist sections of the State Congress and the Youth League had adversely affected the organisation and led to demoralisation in the ranks of ordinary workers of the State Congress. They also succeeded in creating an impression among the workers that the State Congress is a passive one and will not take strong agitational methods against the Government. Therefore, it was necessary for the State Congress leadership to evolve a suitable (attractive) programme of action to prevent probable erosion from its restive rank and file. It was with this view in mind that preparations were made all over the State to ensure participation of at least one hundred thousand (one lakh) people in the annual session.

The Government all the time was keeping a close watch over the existing political situation in the State and was taking necessary steps to prevent the proposed meeting of the State Congress. Even though the proposed meeting ground at Vattiyoorkavu was about 6 kilometers away from the Kawadiyar Palace of the Maharaja, the Government in its plan to ban the meeting, entertained the view that it was very near the palace and therefore, processions, jathas, demonstrations, meetings and the like contemplated in connection with the proposed annual session will

certainly lead to violent clashes between supporters and opposers of the movement and pose a serious threat to the existing state of peace and tranquility and possible danger to life and property. The Government, therefore, thought its duty to ban the meeting and the District Magistrate of Trivandrum, K. Parameswara Panikkar issued a ban order on 13th December, 1938 prohibiting the holding of meeting throughout Trivandrum District effective for two months.³⁹ Elaborate arrangements were made by the Government by giving strict instructions and posting police and military forces who guarded and patrolled all roads leading to Vattiyookavu a few days before the scheduled meeting. These measures of the Government failed to force the leaders to withdraw from their decision and they decided and declared to hold the conference defying the ban order of the District Magistrate. In spite of the ban order and elaborate arrangements made by the Government to prevent the meeting, thousands of Congress workers including women poured in and assembled at the scheduled venue, to the surprise of the Government, and the meeting went off peacefully on 22nd December, 1938 under the presidentship of A. Kunjan Nadar, who was selected as the “Director of Neyyattinkara.” The President – elect of the meeting A. Narayana Pillai who was away in Trirunelvely (Tinnevely) arrived at Trivandrum by train on the evening of 22nd December 1938 but was obstructed by the police while proceeding to Vattiyurkavu in procession and therefore, a meeting was held at the railway station maidan presided over by him. The police, however, did not interfere in the

39. *The Hindu*, 14th December, 1938.

proceedings.⁴⁰ The Travancore Student's Federation of Socialist leanings, which had already supported and participated in earlier agitations of the State Congress took keen interest in the conduct of the conference, as per schedule. However, the organisers of the conference, like A.Narayana Pillai, A. Kunjan Nadar, S. Nilakanta Pillai, K.R. Elankath, A. Achuthan, Phillipose Muthalali and R. Kesavan Nayar, were arrested after the meeting for engaging themselves in unlawful activities defying ban order.

The success of the Vattiyurkavu conference was a significant achievement of the Travancore State Congress. It once again asserted that the objective and aim of the Travancore State Congress was the attainment of Responsible Government for the people of the State. In a resolution the Conference authorised the working President to formulate a programme of direct action including a) 'holding of meetings, conferences, processions and volunteer rallies in defiance of prohibitory orders, (b) open distribution of prohibited literature throughout the State of Travancore and outside (c) Picketing of liquor shops and withdrawal of deposits from the postal savings bank (d) to conduct satyagraha before the palace of the Maharaja and (e) Non-payment of taxes and other dues to the Government'⁴¹ It was also decided to concentrate immediately on the prohibition campaign in every taluk in the State. Desasevikas who were already given training were asked to lead the campaigns and hold meetings. This was considered the beginning to the picketing of liquor shops 'in

40. *Ibid.*, 23rd December, 1938.

41. *Ibid.*

select areas to prepare the people in their political fight in the near future. The resolution also exhorted the people that in carrying out these programmes the principle of non-violence in thought word and action' should be observed. Though the violation of ban order and conduct of the conference was treated as a great victory to the State Congress, the police and military forces of Travancore deserve, special mention for their policy of 'limited intervention,' which avoided use of force and bloodshed. The political administration also took a very balanced policy towards the State Congress, and managed the situation.

Though the Indian National Congress was following a policy of non-intervention in the political affairs of the Princely States on the basis of the Calcutta and Haripura sessions resolutions⁴² Gandhiji was keeping a close watch on the

42. The following is the text of the Haripura resolution of the Congress taken in February, 1938.

"The Congress stands for the same political, social and economic freedom in the States as in the rest of India and considers the States as integral parts of India which cannot be separated. The Purna Swaraj or complete independence, which is the objective of the Congress, is for the whole of India inclusive of the States, for the integrity and unity of India must be maintained in freedom as it has been maintained in subjection. The only kind of federation that can be acceptable to the Congress is one in which the States participate as free units, enjoying the same measure of democratic freedom as the rest of India. The Congress, therefore, stands for full Responsible Government and the guarantee of civil liberty in the States, and deplore the present backward conditions and utter lack of freedom and suppression of civil liberties in many of these States."

"The Congress considers it its right and privilege to work for the attainment of this objective in the States. But under existing circumstances, the Congress is not in a position to work effectively to this end within the States, and numerous limitations and restrictions imposed by the rulers, or by British authority working through them, hamper its activities. The hope and assurance which its name and great prestige raise in the minds of the people of the States find no immediate fulfilment, and dissilution results. It is not in consonance with the dignity of the Congress to have local committees which cannot function effectively, or to tolerate indignity to the National Flag. The inability of the Congress to

political upheavals in the Princely States including Travancore. This had its natural effect on the leaders of the State Congress as well.

The withdrawal of the Memorial at the instance of Gandhiji created a rift in the State Congress, as feared or expected. The moderate groups accepted the decision while the socialist or radical group who were active workers of the Travancore Youth League, vehemently opposed it, and decided to sever their connections with the Travancore State Congress and work independently. They also decided to conduct vigorous propaganda campaigns against the State Congress and the withdrawal and to prepare and submit

give protection or effective help when hopes have been raised, produced helplessness in the people of the States and hinders the development of their movement for freedom.”

“In view of the different conditions prevailing in the States and the rest of India, the general policy of the Congress is often unsuited to the States and may result in preventing or hampering the natural growth of a freedom movement in a State. Such movements are likely to develop more rapidly and to have a broader basis, if they draw their strength from the people of their State, produce self-reliance in them, and are in tune with the conditions prevailing there, and do not rely on extraneous help and assistance on the prestige of the Congress name. The Congress welcomes such movements, but in the nature of things and under present conditions, the burden of carrying on the struggle for freedom must fall on the people of the States. The Congress will always extend its good will and support to such struggles carried on in a peaceful and legitimate manner, but that organisational help will inevitably be, under existing conditions, moral support and sympathy. Individual Congressmen, however, will be free to render further assistance in their personal capacities. In this way the struggle can develop without committing the Congress organisation, and thus unhindered by external considerations.”

“The Congress, therefore, directs that, for the present, Congress committees in the States shall function under the direction and control of the Congress Working Committee and shall not engage in parliamentary activity nor launch on direct action in the name and under the auspices of the Congress. Internal struggle of the people of the States must not be undertaken in the name of the Congress. For this purpose independent organisations should be started and continued where they exist already within the States. The Congress desire to assure the people of the States of its solidarity with them and of its active and vigilant interest in and sympathy with their movement of freedom. It trusts that the day of their deliverance is not far distant.” *Harijan*, dated 26-2-1938.

another Memorial repeating the old charges against the Diwan. The decision in this direction was taken at a meeting in Cochin in which leaders like E.J. Kuruvilla, D. Muthaiyya, A.K.Pillai, Puthuppally Raghavan etc. participated and pamphlets and leaflets were distributed criticising the State Congress' decision, and to start the struggle on their own.

They (The Left Wing) also held a number of public meetings, explaining to the public the injustice done to the people of Travancore by the withdrawal of the Memorial and also collected signatures for the submission of another memorial on 6th January 1939. The activities of the Youth League naturally irritated the Government and through a notification dated 3rd January, 1939, forfeited copies of the Memorial. However, the Youth League succeeded in submitting the Memorial to the Maharaja on 6th January, 1939 and repressive measures continued against the Youth League unabated.⁴³

The activities of the Youth League put the State Congress leadership in a fix and they were forced to place before the people a definite programme of action. As a face-saving measure they decided to implement one of the decisions contained in the Vattiyurkavu resolution, namely the prohibition campaign. R.Sankar, the then acting President of the State Congress issued circulars to all branch committees instructing to carry on intense propaganda campaigns for prohibition during the entire month of

43. Government notification No.1/1939/C.S. dated 3rd January 1939. File No. D.Dis./1915/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

January, 1939.⁴⁴ The leadership faced practical difficulties in implementing the programme in letter and spirit, as a section of the Working Committee members were opposed to it, and therefore, those who advocated it, carried on this campaign merely to conciliate Gandhiji.⁴⁵ But it should be noted that the programme enabled the State Congress leadership to keep the movement for Responsible Government alive, which had been practically weakened after the withdrawal of Memorial.

The gulf between the State Congress and Youth League further widened on the issue of the visit of the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, to Travancore on 9th January, 1939. The State Congress had earlier decided to conduct peaceful demonstrations during the Viceregal visit to make him known the popular demand of the people of Travancore for Responsible Government in the State.⁴⁶ Full work in this direction was placed with the Youth League and they conducted extensive propaganda work and had made elaborate arrangements enlisting innumerable volunteers,⁴⁷ to participate in the demonstration making it a grand success and an eye-opener to the Viceroy. They also entertained the view that this grand demonstration would help the Viceroy to feel the

44. State Congress circular dated 1st January, 1939. File No.D.Dis./859/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

45. The Travancore Police Daily Report suggests that there was sharp division among the Working Committee members regarding the propriety of prohibition campaign. The Ezhavas who were the professional toddy tappers objected to this and practically abstained for the campaigns, as they feared that this would throw out of employment thousands of Ezhavas of the State.

46. File No.D.Dis./2920/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

47. File No.D.Dis./859/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

pulse of the people. But taking instructions from Gandhiji the State Congress Working Committee which met at Trivandrum on 31st December 1938 decided to cancel all proposed programmes of demonstrations for fear of violent clashes with the police resulting in severe casualties and loss of life and property. To the League, ready in full swing, the decision was a bolt from the blue sky and the Youth League, decided to proceed with the organised demonstrations as scheduled and conduct it successfully, though several of its leaders were arrested by the police and released after the departure of the Viceroy. The State Congress was criticised in bitter terms by the Youth League terming or characterising the action as “tantamount to disowning and betraying” them.⁴⁸

With this, the point of disagreement had reached the highest point which necessitated both to depart. The Youth League constituted a War Council to direct its programmes independently and it issued an ultimatum to the Working Committee of the State Congress on 16th January, 1939 stating that “unless the Working Committee immediately launches a programme of direct action, the Youth League will be forced to take independent action.”⁴⁹ The resentment and general public feeling against the State Congress was expressed by P.J. Sebastian. He Stated, “as matters stand today I cannot face the people at Changanacherry; I am being hooted. So too many of our friends in their places. We will be failing in our duty not only to ourselves but to our countrymen at large on behalf of whom we are carrying on our struggle, if we prove

48. File No.D.Dis./3337/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

49. *Ibid.*

untrue to our ideals; what lead shall we give to the country now; it shall certainly be one of direct action of a revolutionary type.”⁵⁰ Faced with such a serious situation the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress which met at Trivandrum on 19th January, 1939 was forced to review the political situation in the State and issued a Statement, with a view to pacify the workers and clarify the stand of the Party. It stated, “that about three hundred workers and volunteers are today in the various lock-ups attached to police-stations under conditions of indescribable difficulties without even being brought to trial for weeks together. The treatment of these under trials is worse than even that of condemned criminals and have become utterly intolerable. The position today is thus in a sense worse than what it was “immediately before the general release of political prisoners three months ago and is steadily deteriorating every day.”⁵¹ The political situation of the State also compelled the State Congress leadership to declare openly its attitude and policy of actions towards the attainment of Responsible Government in the State. The Working Committee therefore, announced its decision to resort to direct action within the shortest time possible and the deliberations between 17th to 20th January, 1939, which witnessed heated discussions and exchange of views, decided to give an ultimatum to the Government giving six weeks time from 19th January and also placed before the Government a nine point demand for immediate consideration. The demands were:

- 1) Immediate steps for the consideration of Responsible Government.

50. File No.D.Dis./2920/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

51. *Ibid.*

- 2) General amnesty to all political prisoners,
- 3) Repeal of Criminal Law Amendment Regulations
- 4) Recognition of State Congress for purposes of political negotiations
- 5) Restoration of licence to the newspapers and removal of the ban imposed on them,
- 6) Restoration of properties confiscated and repayment of fine realized,
- 7) Immediate inquiry into shooting and other excesses,
- 8) Withdrawal of prosecutions launched in consequence of labour strikes; and
- 9) Withdrawal of prosecution against students and removal of all disabilities imposed on them.⁵²

The Working Committee also warned the Government that if these demands were not conceded, direct action will be launched which include picketing of liquor and tobacco shops and depots, defiance of salt and forest laws, non-payment of market fees, tolls and land revenue, and circulation of prohibited newspapers.⁵³

While giving this kind of an ultimatum to the Government the State Congress leadership was fully aware that the implementation of the agitation at this point of time when the prestige and image of the State Congress was at a low ebb following the

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

withdrawal of Memorial, would be a difficult task. But the people could not look to the Youth League as an alternate political force as it has attained the image of a left wing and could not claim the image of a popular political force in the State, which could substitute the State Congress.

The State Congress was evolving plans to execute its decisions and it divided the State into nine zones for effective work each under a leader. T.K. Narayana Pillai was placed in charge of North Parur, E. J. Kuruvilla of Kottayam, P.J. Sebastian at Changanacherry, K.P. Gopala Panikker at Changannur, V.K. Velayudhan at Alleppey, for Kayamkulam P.K. Kunju, Quilon under T.M. Varghese, Trivandrum under G. Ramachandran and Nagarcoil under K.N. Kunjukrishna Pillai.⁵⁴ It was also decided to observe 13th February, 1939 as 'Responsible Government Day.'⁵⁵ It should be noted that the Working Committee even at this stage was sharply divided over the issue of reaching a consensus regarding the date for the commencement of direct action. While one elder group led by moderates like Pattom A. Thanu Pillai and T.M. Varghese advocated for postponement till the ground work is finished, another group led by G. Ramachandran and E.J. Phillipose stood for immediate commencement of agitations,⁵⁶ leading to the postponement of the decision to its next meeting on 6th March, 1939.⁵⁷

54. File No.D.Dis./3978/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

55. File No.D.Dis./859/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

56. File No.D.Dis./4164/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

57. *Ibid.*

At a meeting held on 6th and 7th March 1939 it was announced that Civil Disobedience Campaign would begin on 25th March, 1939. It was also decided 'never to meet again' and a Council of Action was constituted with Pattom A. Thanu Pillai as President, G. Ramachandran as Convenor and T.M. Varghese, P.K. Kunju, V.K. Velayudhan, P.J. Sebastian and K.M. Bhoothalingam Pillai as members. 'Shadow Cabinets' were also formed to assist and guide the agitation from outside.⁵⁸ The decision of the Indian National Congress in a resolution moved by Rajendra Prasad on 6th March 1939 supporting the movements in Native States for establishment and civil liberties, in reality inspired the people of Native States in general and Travancore in particular to start direct action on 25th March, 1939.⁵⁹

The Maharaja of Travancore at this time was camping in Peerumede, and the Diwan telegraphed to him of the decision of the State Congress which stated, "Arrangements not organised yet. Without giving them time to organise I propose proceedings against Council of Action under ordinary preventive sections of Criminal Procedure Code asking them to keep the peace for one year. Likely all of them be sent to jail today or tomorrow. As movements not strong expect this step will help in minimising agitation."⁶⁰ The telegram clearly indicates the policy of action and attitude of the Government towards the proposed agitation. All prominent leaders of

58. File No.D.Dis./859/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

59. *The Hindu*, 13th March, 1939.

60. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p.175.

the State Congress were subsequently arrested and sent to jail, leading to a crisis in the Congress.

Mahatma Gandhi who was keeping a close watch on the political developments in Travancore disapproved of the decision of the State Congress to renew Civil Disobedience and advised them to suspend the proposed agitation indefinitely and 'open, a way for honourable settlement with the authorities.'⁶¹ The State Congress had deputed E.J. Phillipose to meet Gandhiji who met him and explained the vulnerable political situation in the State but failed to persuade Gandhiji to change his decision. Once again the State Congress was placed in a difficult situation in taking an appropriate decision at a time when popular enthusiasm in favour of the agitation remained high. But because of the swift action of the Government the leaders of lesser note who escaped detention were not confident enough to take up the leadership and give proper direction to the struggle. Added to this political vacuum in leadership there was the fear that the extremists in the State Congress would resort to violent methods leading to military action.

Gandhiji's advice was a blessing in disguise. The leaders of lesser note considered it unwise to take to direct action when all the prominent leaders were behind bars and taking advantage of the advise given by Gandhiji a meeting was convened at Alwaye on 22nd March, 1939, in which it was decided to call off the

61. *Ibid.*

proposed direct action,⁶² though they were aware of the demoralisation this decision would make on the workers of the State Congress.

The decision of the Congress was quite wise. The Diwan on 22nd March, 1939 had informed the Maharaja who was still at Peerumede as follows: "I am glad that going around the city I have observed no disturbance nor demonstration and the reports that I receive from everywhere point to the conclusion that the arrests have caused no surprise or resentment."⁶³ It is important to note that the date of suspension of direct action by State Congress coincides with the date of report of the Diwan to the Maharaja. Peaceful atmosphere prevailed just because of the suspension of direct action and not because of the Government's preparation to face it. Since the Government machinery was fully prepared to face any eventuality, there would have been bloodshed, if the State Congress had decided to go ahead with its decision of direct action. Further the following telegram sent to the Maharaja at Peerumede on 23rd March, 1939 gives the details of action taken and the motive behind it. "Gandhiji issued Statements suspending Civil Disobedience here, Jaipur and in other States. Says thinking out new orientations. Time being Civil Disobedience finished. As Thanu Pillai Ramachandran members of council action sent to jail in consequence of threat Civil Disobedience further detention cannot be justified. Hence subject to Your Highness commands my recommendation they be released. This will strengthen our

62. *The Hindu*, 23rd March, 1939.

63. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p.175.

hands and prove that our sole object was to combat Civil Disobedience not to carry out personal spite.”⁶⁴ As proposed by the Diwan the Congress leaders were released.

From the telegrams sent by the Diwan to the Maharaja the point to be examined is the role of the Maharaja in his attitude to the political agitations and whether the Diwan was acting on his own or with the advice of the Maharaja. The Diwan used to inform the Maharaja and sought his advice before any action was taken, and therefore, the decision to suppress the movement was not of the Diwan but of the Maharaja. He could not just imagine the loss of power by the agitation for Responsible Government, but wanted to show that all actions of suppression were taken without his knowledge by the Diwan who remained as an autocrat.

Gandhiji's decision served in two ways, one positive and other negative. 1) Positive in the sense that it avoided blood shed and loss of leaderships. Negative in the sense that the masses or workers lost their morale in participating in an agitation, creating the impression that the movement will be called off at any time by the leadership- that it was a feeble leadership. 2) For the State Congress it served as a face saving scheme for the time being. 3) Travancore might have witnessed and a scene for a much more severe tragedy (than the Punnappa Vayalar) if State Congress had resorted to Direct Action without able leadership. This was averted.

The suspension of direct action did not bring normalcy in the relation between the Government and State Congress. In an atmosphere of mistrust talks continued

64. *Ibid.*, pp.175-176.

between the two and Government retained a large number of political prisoners in jail and prosecution measures for alleged political offences continued. The action taken by the Government by disqualifying nineteen Congress members of the Legislature on grounds of undergoing imprisonment for six months or more, and the cancellation of sanads of ninety two Congress lawyers for two years were not withdrawn.⁶⁵ Even in the absence of prohibitory orders the police broke up the meetings and demonstrations organised by the State Congress.⁶⁶ The talks on political reform that had been initiated between the Diwan and the Congress in July-August 1939 were suspended on the outbreak of war in September on the ground that such talks could not take place 'until normal conditions are restored and the position is stabilised'.⁶⁷

In the meantime the State Congress had decided to hold its annual session at Karunagappally on 6th and 7th September, 1939, though the Government was not favourable to hold the session. The Government issued a Press Communique on 4th September, 1939 demanding the State Congress to postpone or cancel the conference. In the Press communique the Government made it clear its apprehensions that "all preparations are being made for processions and demonstrations" and that "it is further estimated that large crowds may gather at the conference."⁶⁸ A deputation led by Pattom A. Thanu Pillai met the Diwan on 5th September 1939 and requested to grant

65. File No.D.Dis./4177/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

66. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p.176.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*

permission for the proposed annual session but during the meeting the Diwan raised more objections and, therefore, the deputation failed to yield results. The Diwan informed the Maharaja about it the same day that "I told them that in view of the present situation it was expedient that any conference be held, as conceivably resolutions would be moved, though not passed, advocating non-cooperation with the war and other similar unhelpful resolutions may be passed."⁶⁹ In the light of Government objections the State Congress decided that only the business part of the meeting should go on as scheduled, giving up all demonstrative part of the original programme. Pattom A. Thanu Pillai wrote to Sir. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer about the decision of the State Congress on 6th September, 1939 and again requested permission for the scheduled conference.⁷⁰

The Karunagappally conference took place on the scheduled dates as originally planned, without any obstruction from the Government side as there was no ban or restrictions imposed on it. "It passed resolutions paying homage to the martyrs in the freedom struggle and thanking Mahatma Gandhi for 'the consistent support and guidance which he had unstintedly given to the Freedom Movement in Travancore.' The conference reiterated that the goal of the State Congress is the immediate attainment of full Responsible Government under the aegis of His Highness the Maharaja based on adult franchise and protection of minority interests to be achieved by all peaceful and legitimate means. It also called for the release of all political

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*

prisoners and grant of a general amnesty. It was also decided to launch an effective mass contact programme with a view to educating the people on the issue of Responsible Government. Though the conference ended peacefully, Government subsequently blamed the organisers for having failed to pass a "specific resolution affirming their loyalty to the Ruler."⁷¹

The shashtaiabdapoorthy celebrations of the Diwan, Sri C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, was decided to be celebrated on a grand scale in October-November, 1939 in the name of the public, for which the actual initiative was taken by the Government officials and organisations and individuals under obligation to the Government. The Travancore State Congress was very much opposed to this idea and exhorted the people to keep themselves away from the programme.⁷² About the decision taken by

71. *Ibid.*, p.177.

72. The Resolution in this regard of the Travancore State Congress reads: "Celebrations in honour of or at the instance of an officer in authority, especially the head of the State of the administration, are definitely opposed to public policy. The Government of Travancore themselves have made authoritative announcements discountenancing such attempts even so recently as May last. Nevertheless, efforts are being inspired to celebrate the Shastiabthipoorthy of Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer in such a manner as to make it appear to the outside world that his administration is both successful and popular.

Sir C.P. has throughout the period of his administration been against democracy and during the recent talks with the State Congress deputation on constitutional reforms, has not concealed his opposition to the idea of Responsible Government even as a distant goal. He has been persistent in his resistance to democratic advancement and has not scrupled to adopt any means within his reach in his endeavour to suppress a genuine popular movement for the establishment of Responsible Government.

Sir C.P.'s administration has been characterised by the suppression of civil liberties, which had been long enjoyed by the people of Travancore. He has effectively muzzled the press in this country. Even mild criticisms of his acts and measures are viewed with obvious disfavour by him and those who have incurred his displeasure are visited with dire consequences. Thus freedom of the Press, freedom of speech and freedom of

the State Congress regarding disassociation with the shashtaiabdapoorthy celebrations Gandhiji expressed the following: "In my opinion the State Congress had every right to disassociate itself from the glorification of the Diwan's administration. Even an adversary is entitled to many happy returns of the day. But it is another matter when an attempt is made as it is said to have been made in the present case, to make political capital out of an innocent event like a birthday."⁷³

On 28th October, 1939 the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress met at Trivandrum and adopted a resolution isolating "itself from all the celebrations connected therewith" and also decided to begin an organised and constitutional agitation for the achievement of Responsible Government.⁷⁴ It was also decided to carry on agitation in this regard and formulated the following programme for immediate future.

- 1) That the 8th, 16th and 24th of every Malayalam month should be observed as Civil Liberties Day, Responsible Government Day and Political Prisoner's Day respectively.

association have been throttled by him. Further, it is a regrettable fact that Sir C.P. has been responsible for a growing lack of confidence in the minds of the people in the judicial administration of the State.

His policy of repression has been responsible for the brutal excesses on the part of the police and the military extending even to shooting down of many persons in different parts of the country. Even a legitimate demand for an impartial enquiry into these occurrences has not received any response from him". *Harijan*, November, 1939,. Also see A. Seedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, pp.177-178.

73. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Ibid*.

74. *The Hindu*, 30th October, 1939.

- 2) That the organisation of the volunteers and Desasevikas and the opening of training centers for them shall be undertaken immediately.
- 3) That the programme shall be revised from time to time by the Working Committee of the State Congress.”⁷⁵

The decision of the Working Committee to oppose the Shashtiabhthapoorthy celebrations marked the first step in the programme of agitation of the State Congress. The reaction of the Government to the programmes of the State Congress was sharp and it was determined not to allow any kind of organised agitation, especially since 24th day of the month of Vrischikam (10th November, 1939) which coincided the Shashtiabhthapoorthy day of Sir. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer. On 2nd November, 1939 the party held a protest meeting at Petta near Trivandrum. The programme of action to be taken against the State Congress was elaborately discussed at the palace interview on 21st October, 1939 and the decision taken was recorded as follows: “Your Highness approved the proposal that if they intend to celebrate three days with processions and demonstrations, the steps to be taken would be not to have recourse to the ordinary law of prohibitory orders but action under the Defence of Travancore Rulers.”⁷⁶ In the wake of this decision the Defence of Travancore Rules were invoked to suppress the agitation. Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, E.J. Philipose, K.A. Gangadhara Menon, T.K.

75. File No.D.Dis./92/1941/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

76. File No.263/1939/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Narayana Pillai, M.N.Parameswara Pillai etc. were arrested, on 2nd November, 1939.

Regarding the arrest the Diwan wrote to the Maharaja on 4th November, 1939.⁷⁷

The Government was bent upon its motive of suppressing the State Congress movement at any cost, and therefore, the arrests of political leaders continued during the month with a view to demoralise the public at large. Rosamma Cheriyan who reached Trivandrum on 24th November, 1939, to preside over a public meeting was arrested on charge of sedition.

Gandhiji who was keeping a close watch on the political situation in Travancore wrote in the 'Harijan' that "the policy of Travancore Government is understandable. The repression seems to me to be unjustifiable. It is wrong to put the best and wisest persons in Jail. I know that those who have been arrested are sincere, devoted and able workers."⁷⁸

It may be noted in this connection that the Government in its policy of suppressing the movement, took repressive measures even against a former judge of

77. "The persons who were arrested are Pattom Thanu Pillai, M. N. Parameswaran Pillai, T.K. Narayana Pillai K.A. Gangadhara Menon and E. John Phillipose. Two other persons who are more or less loafers but who were trying to incite the crowd have been detained not under the Defence of Travancore Rules but under the ordinary law. Kannara Gopala Panikkar has been arrested near Tiruvalla, but R. Sankar, one of the most poisonous men of the group is absconding . . . I gave Your Highness the details of meetings and demonstrations started and contemplated by the State Congress and also of the arrests that have been made. I may add that R. Sankar who has been absconding has now been arrested and is under detention." See File No.263/1939/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

78. *Harijan*, December, 1939.

the High Court, Changanasseri Parameswaran Pillai, by withholding his pension for his article in '*Navakeralam*' encouraging Civil Disobedience Movement and spreading false rumours, regarding Government enterprise including transport. This decision was taken by the Diwan with the express knowledge and permission of the Maharaja. Both of them might have had the impression that the action taken even against a judge of the High Court will persuade the people to desist from the agitations, which, however, proved a miscalculation.

It may be noted that the attitude of the Palace and Dewan to the agitation for Responsible Government was totally negative and in no way ready to relent on the issue. The negotiations between Gandhiji and Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer and the Maharaja and Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer point to this attitude. In the light of the deteriorated political situation in Travancore some of his friends advised his intervention and Gandhiji telegraphed to the Diwan on 22nd June, 1939. "State Congress people ask me visit Travancore open their Conference. Do you favour my visit?"⁷⁹ The information was immediately conveyed to the Maharaja and the Diwan sent a reply to Gandhiji. "Have received the telegrams. Invitations by State Congress to open their conference is in direct negation of the idea of direct approach advocated by yourself. Trust you will not accept suggestion made to you."⁸⁰ In his reply to this telegram to the Diwan Gandhiji said: "I shall respect your wish but permit me to say that you are imputing motives to the State Congress wholly unwarranted by facts for

79. File No.263/1939/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

80. *Ibid.*

invitation to me was intended facilitate direct approach. I was unprepared for your cold reception of my friendly approach.”⁸¹

The telegrams of Gandhiji and its wordings are noteworthy. He was so humble and respected any constitutional authority unless otherwise warranted. He could have gone to Travancore ignoring the wishes of Maharaja or Diwan, but was unwilling to do so. Gandhiji would have been given a warm welcome in Travancore by the State Congress if their invitation had been accepted, regardless the measures taken by the Government and the scheme of the State Congress, like the *Vattiyookavu* conference, would have been a success. But Gandhiji’s ideas and ideals did not permit it, and therefore, he refused to proceed in the event of opposition from Government. While this was Gandhiji’s attitude it is interesting to examine the attitude of the ‘Maharaja and Diwan.’

The Maharaja and the Diwan, who was formerly an active Congressman did not like the visit of Gandhiji to Travancore evidently for two reasons – 1) the visit would increase the image of Gandhiji among the masses of Travancore; 2) his visit would help the State Congress to strengthen the cause of the agitation for Responsible Government in Travancore. The Government also feared that this would lead to a point where the Government will be forced to accede to their demands against the interest of the Palace and Diwan. Therefore, the administration of Travancore considered Gandhiji as an outsider and did not want a direct discussion with him on Travancore

81. *Ibid.*

affairs or his involvement in these affairs. In short the Palace as well as the Diwan were afraid of Gandhiji's intervention and desired to avert a crisis, which may take place, out of their control and also tactfully avoided Gandhiji. The fear as well as the intention of the Diwan is clear in the following words of the Diwan himself, "I propose to enter into no discussion with them (the State Congress) but to ask them firstly whether they are approaching Your Highness through the Diwan purely as subjects approaching their Ruler. If their attempt is to approach their Ruler as representatives of the State Congress or on behalf of Gandhi or under the leadership of any outsider no purpose would be served by the interview. If the answer is satisfactory (which I doubt) I shall then ask them to put down in writing whatever they have to urge so that the matter might be carefully considered."⁸² The point is that how the Diwan who is a paid officer of the State can make the remark that the 'interview will be of no use.' It would suggest that the Diwan was confident that his advise will be confirmed by the Ruler, as they had common interests. The Diwan cannot be blamed for his actions, since they were taken and carried out with the express permission of the Maharaja. Had the Maharaja been sympathetic to the popular movements, as the case of Ruler of Cochin, the Diwan would not have taken such a stiff position and executed retaliatory, punitive and suppressive measures. The truth is that the Maharaja failed to feel the pulse of the movement and strength of public opinion at a time when freedom to the nation was at her door steps. The Maharaja was clearly reluctant to give up or abandon his rights and privileges and to accept the people's will. At the same time, he desired

82. *Ibid.*

to create an impression that he is for or supporting the cause of Responsible Government in the State, and the Diwan remained the main hindrance. It is to be appreciated that the Maharaja of Travancore could successfully manage throughout in this direction. The Maharaja seemed to the public as an innocent figure with sympathy with the public and support to them. But sacrifice of power and position was considered suicidal by the Maharaja of Travancore. He could have averted the casualties by giving orders for constitutional reforms, but desisted from it. The Diwan would have implemented his orders, as is seen from palace interview notes, but he did not give any instructions to this effect.

Even the move to ignore Gandhiji who commanded respect throughout India, was with the express permission or knowledge of the Maharaja. He also remained opposed to national unity and one India.

The people of Travancore, unaware of the under currents as well as the actions and role of the Maharaja during the period of agitation for Responsible Government, had held him in high esteem. Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer was so generous to shoulder all blames for himself to exonerate the Maharaja of his crimes. This shows the great mind of a great man -- C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer. He would have been a true democrat had he not taken up the assignment in Travancore.

However, the net result was that there followed a period of lull in the activities of the State Congress, which in some way or other helped to organise for the socialists in the State Congress and to materialize a communist platform at the expense of the

State Congress. The period from 1939–1942 marks the growth of this movement and the weakening of the State Congress movement not only in its activity but also in its functions. This was more so in the period of the Second World War. Britain went to war on 3rd September and the Viceroy declared India to be a belligerent country. The Congress ministries resigned in protest and there were demonstrations against the Viceroy's decision. In Travancore, the Diwan made use of the war situation to end all negotiations. The Defence of Travancore Rules could also be made use of to suppress civil disobedience if any. It gave an opportunity to the Government also to withhold negotiations with the State Congress on any issue of constitutional reforms. The Indian National Congress leadership including Gandhiji could not respond due to the world war crisis.

While the state congress was inactive the leaders Pattom A. Thanu Pillai and T.M. Varghese went on a deputation to meet Gandhiji and enlighten him of the political situation in Travancore, and seek his advice. Gandhiji advised them to initiate direct negotiations with the Government, if possible, and to suspend all activities of direct action. He enunciated this "New technique" regarding Indian States on the lines of his "New Right" on Travancore, applicable to not only Travancore, but all Princely States in India where agitation for Responsible Government was going on, and this policy stressed upon "the immediate suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement, opening honourable negotiation with the authorities, avoiding any anxiety about the satyagrahis in prison, lowering the pitch of immediate demands in order to quicken the progress towards the final goal and as a test, the fulfilment of the

constructive programme by the mass as a condition precedent to civil disobedience.⁸³ The moderate group of the State Congress led by Pattom A. Thanu Pillai agreed to this suggestion while the radicals disagreed and considered it as a retrogression and climb down.⁸⁴ Therefore Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese and V.K. Velayudhan got in touch with the Diwan, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer for discussion on constitutional reform to be introduced in the state during July-August and September 1939 and in the course of the discussion the Diwan put forward two conditions for any meaningful negotiation; one, not to launch civil disobedience movement and two, not to have external interference in state politics. By external interference what the Diwan had in mind was Gandhiji's intervention. Diwan informed them that "If you are going to agitate for Responsible Government pure and simple, there is no use in my discussing with you the details of any scheme that government might formulate."⁸⁵ He further made it clear that the government had "no intention of introducing Responsible Government in the sense of the responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature."⁸⁶ The Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress met on 14th July, 1939 and held elaborate discussions on these matters raised by the Diwan and maintained that the State Congress, as a political organisation and force in the State, had every right to take advise from any 'outsider' of its choice or body outside the state, thereby

83. *The Hindu*, 10th September, 1939, p.16.

84. *Travancore Policy Diary Bulletin* (TPDB), Vol. I, No. 109, 15th June 1939.

85. File No.D.Dis./361/1948/C.S./Political. See for details the deliberations dated 7th August 1939 about the Deputation with the Diwan in the file.

86. *Ibid.* Also see *The Hindu*, 9th September, 1939.

rejecting the conditions of the Diwan. It also categorically asserted its stand on the establishment of Responsible Government in the State. However the Karunagapally annual session of the State Congress decided to open negotiations with the Diwan, on the advice of Gandhiji.

During the interview on 2nd August, 1939 the leaders of the State Congress discussed the issue of release of political prisoners then in Jail and of persons against whom prosecutions had been initiated. The Diwan reported to the Maharaja regarding this issue that

Instructions have been given that only those who are guilty of violence are to be proceeded against and those against whom cases are pending and have been either guilty alleged to be guilty of offences like breaking down culverts, burning buses and so forth. That so far as the prisoners are concerned, a clear distinction has been made between those who are guilty of violent, and subversive speeches and others who on the spur of the movement joined a political gathering.

That those persons like Annie Muscrine, A. Narayana Pillai and Neelakanta Pillai who are guilty of personal and virulent abuse tending to undermine the respect for and confidence in Your Highness and the members of Your Highness' family or Your Highness' Government will not be

released until the term of their sentence is over or until they openly regret and definitely apologise to Your Highness.⁸⁷

The Maharaja of Travancore simply listened to these Comments and orders of the Diwan but did not even voice any disagreement and therefore, the recommendations of the Diwan were carried out. The Diwan while intimating the above decisions to the Maharaja also informed him that he has declined to have any further talks or interview with them unless and until the State Congress intimated him in writing that Responsible Government in the Parliamentary sense will not form part of their programme or agitation, which clearly indicates that the Diwan with permission from the Maharaja was in no mood to concede the demands of the State Congress for Responsible Government in the State pointing to the fact that any move in this direction will be resisted by the Government. The Government also adopted certain appeasing measures to win the support of a section of State Congress leaders. The sanads of some of the lawyers which had been cancelled were restored on their tending apology and they were allowed to practice again. M.N.Parameswaran Pillai who was a lawyer was allowed to practice again. Some other leaders, considering the political reality and weakened situation of the State Congress, having their personal aims in mind, sought pardon for having taken part in the agitation, and the administration favourably considered their cases and pardon was granted by the Maharaja.⁸⁸ Even in this case the final decision was not taken by the Diwan but by the

87. File No. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*

“enlightened” Maharaja himself. In the palace interview minutes dated June 17, 1939 it was recorded that Your Highness decided that Pandalam Raman Pillai and his wife may be granted pardon and that the letters sent by them along with the pardon granted by Your Highness may be published.⁸⁹

This clearly points to the role of the Maharaja in taking decisions and his involvement in Travancore politics and attitude towards popular agitation.

Another significant event was that the SNDP Yogam which supported the movement so far, disassociated itself with it and supported the Diwan and leaders like V.K.Velayudhan, who so far was with the State Congress, supported the Government disowning the State Congress, in obedience of the mandate issued by the SNDP Yogam.⁹⁰ Covetable government jobs were offered to some others like P.N. Krishna Pillai, the Trade Union activist of Alleppey with communist leaning, who was subsequently sent to U.S.A. to study problems relating to labour. These policies on the part of the government and other organisations like SNDP led to the demoralisation of the ranks of the State Congress organisations, giving an upper hand to the Government.⁹¹

The suspension of the move for direct action in March, 1939 itself had badly affected the morale of the State Congress workers, and the action of Government to

89. *Ibid.*

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*

win the support of a section of State Congress leadership in which they succeeded, resulted in a period of lull or inactivity in the State Congress for about eight years till 1946.

However, the failure of peace talks with the government again compelled the leaders of the State Congress to reconsider their stand and in a statement dated 23rd September, 1939 Pattom A. Thanu Pillai appealed to the people of Travancore to 'forget all about talks and negotiations' and announced the intention and decision of the party to renew the programme of agitation, with a view to keep public feeling and enthusiasm in high spirit, fully knowing that the political situation in the state was not favourable or conducive to renew agitation immediately, due to a variety of factors.

The period from 1939 to 1944 witnessed not only inactivity but loss of faith in the State Congress Organisation and growth of Communist movement in Travancore. Perhaps the communist movement in Travancore might not have taken its roots, if the State Congress had taken a different stand in its policies. The State Congress failed to create an impression of a 'working party' and not a 'statement party' and no agitation worth the name, with a few exceptions of course, were launched by the Party, though announcements and background works were done in this direction. Withdrawal of agitations at the last stage, adversely affected the prestige and fame of the Party among the masses. This of course acted as a blessing in disguise to the leftist party and its workers to tarnish the State Congress as an ineffective political organisation which did not stand to its words, and project the leftist organisations like Communist League as a

wing or party which could withstand all formidable tides and succeed in its ideals, in their fight against the Diwan.

The State Congress by its successive announcements and withdrawal of direct action as per declared schedule, had weakened itself into a political party of “mere announcements or declarations”, among the common masses, which enjoyed, in any agitation, the pivotal position in making the agitation a success or failure, and therefore, the party found it impossible to impart any vigour to the agitation, leading to a loss of appeal to the organisation (the State Congress) among masses. The real appeal of the Travancore State Congress among the mass is clear in the report of the Diwan to the Resident of Cochin in September, 1940 which stated that “The State Congress itself is moribund and has little hold on the people here, so much so that we are releasing all except the most dangerous of the State Congress prisoners from our jails and over fifty have been released in the last few weeks. None but dangerous agitators and communists are being detained. I entertain little doubt that but for the direct and indirect assistance apart from acquiescence afforded by persons connected with the Cochin Government, the movement would have collapsed much earlier.”⁹²

The Cochin Government followed a liberal policy towards the Travancore State Congress also permitted the State Congress to work for Responsible Government in Travancore from its soil and did not take any action against the party and its workers, making it known that they sympathised with the State Congress. So Cochin served a

92. File No.D.Dis./593/1940/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, Tvm.

base to the Congress leaders to work at a time when the organisation was banned in Travancore and its leaders threatened with imprisonment. This brings to light the difference in policy of these two Native States towards popular demands and agitations, the Cochin Raja being favourable to the sentiments of His subjects while the Maharaja of Travancore strongly against any such concessions to His people. The State Congress and its leaders would have been in real trouble and the movement fizzled out if such a safe platform for work had not been provided by the Maharaja of Cochin.⁹³

However the Diwan of Travancore relaxed his policy towards the State Congress and on 2nd February, 1940 issued orders releasing detained leaders like A.Kunjan Nadar, S.Nilakanta Pillai, M. Sreedharan Nayar, N. Thanu Pillai, Paul Ratnam, P.K. Raghavan Pillai and T. Muthaiyya.⁹⁴ First rank leaders like A. Sankara Pillai, C. Narayana Pillai, N.S. Krishna Pillai, G.P. Sekhar, S. Sivan Pillai and S.V. Muthukaruppa Pillai were released from jail on 4th May, 1940.⁹⁵

Though the leaders of the State Congress were released there was not much political activity in the State for a few months. The Working Committee of the

93. While acclaiming the Maharajas of Travancore as enlightened and liberal, as against truth, the Maharaja of Cochin who did not take stringent measures to suppress the popular movements in His state but also helped the agitators of Travancore, has not been given his due place by academic historians.

94. For details of the release of these leaders see *The Hindu*, 4th February, 1940. Also see File No.D.Dis./593/1940/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

95. File no.D.Dis./988/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, Tvm. Also see T.P.D.B. Vol. II, C.No.126, dated 5th May, 1940.

Travancore State Congress which met at Ernakulam on 15th October, 1940 deliberated in detail on the measures to be adopted to reactivise the organisation and regain its influence. It was decided “to chalk out a constructive programme which includes all kinds of humanitarian work from cottage industry to rendering aid to the suffering poor.”⁹⁶ It was also decided not to involve in any kind of political activities during the period of constructive programme work.⁹⁷ The State Congress at this time was not in a position to renew its political campaigns and agitation in the State due to political and financial reasons.⁹⁸ The Diwan during his meeting with G. Ramachandran, the fourteenth President of the State Congress, had agreed to release all political prisoners detained in the State and also promised that no action will be taken against those leaders residing outside the state for State Congress work on their return to Travancore, thus enabling all state congress leaders including C. Kesavan to return to their home state without fear of arrest or harassment.⁹⁹ The embarrassing financial position of the party also compelled the leaders to close down their camps in Cochin State and return to Travancore resulting in a period of political inactivity in the State. Thus the renewal of agitation in 1939, instead of strengthening the Congress, really

96. *The Hindu*, 16th October, 1940, p. 5.

97. *Ibid.*

98. The camp of the State Congress at Ernakulam faced severe financial crisis and was about to be closed. To overcome the difficulty T.M. Varghese visited many places in British Malabar, Cochin, Madras and even Ceylon and collected funds. He succeeded in collecting Rs.2000/- from Coonoor by exerting his influence on the Syrian Christians of Travancore living at Coonoor. For details see File No.D.Dis./114/1940/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS,TVM.

99. *The Hindu*, 31st October, 1940.

weakened it.¹⁰⁰ As the challenging attitude of the Government was so strong the Congress workers could not even think of agitation. Added to these the absence of top ranking leaders in the State most of whom took refuge and in camps in Ernakulam, thus gave the image of a leaderless organisation to the State Congress. In reality the leaders from the camps at Ernakulam could neither lead their cadres in Travancore nor properly organise and conduct agitations.

Reference has been made to the disaffection and dissatisfaction among the rank and file of the State Congress organisation on the suspension of direct action and the passive policy followed by the party. Much fuel was added to the fire during 1939 to 1944 during which period the Government took a stiff stand towards the State Congress and the party lost support of top ranking leaders and major communities. Following the suspension of direct action in March 1939 the Ezhava community represented by the SNDP Yogam, decided to keep away from the politics of the State. It should be borne in mind that the SNDP Yogam which so far was involved only in communal interests, since the formation of the State Congress in 1938, changed its stand realizing the futility and dangers of communal politics, and had offered its unstinted support to all the activities of the State Congress. The Board of Directors of the Yogam which met at Alleppey on 29th April 1938 even passed a resolution which welcomed "the State Congress which has been started with a view to establishing

100. Robin Jeffrey comes to a similar conclusion but he locates the failure of the movement in the release of the prisoners. See Robin Jeffrey "A Sanctified Label - Congress in Travancore Politics 1938-48 in D.A. Low ed. *Congress and the Raj*, New Delhi, 1977, p.454.

Responsible Government under the aegies of the Maharaja and appeals to the Ezhavas to join the State Congress and to make its activities more vigorous.”¹⁰¹ This had its natural impact on the Ezhava Community. Many of the Directors and members of the Yogam joined the State Congress and became its active workers and took part in the agitations even though the Government of Travancore suspected the activities of the Yogam. So there was the possibility of an organisation engaged in communal bargains, realizing its weakness and changing into a national organisation. But it was not to be. The President of the SNDP Yogam in his address dated 28th May, 1939 said, “Although the Ezhavas also joined in the State Congress activities, I think the time has come for them just to pause and think whether they should follow it in all its ways”¹⁰² In short Travancore, which was dominated by communal politics up to 1936, went back to its earlier position, with the decision, creating rift among Hindu castes and groups, which of course only weakened the political activities of the State. The situation was worsened by the decision of the Board of Directors of the SNDP Yogam on August 13th, 1939, that “the members of the Board should not continue as

101. *Malayala Manorama*, 1st May, 1938. It may be noted that since the formation of the State Congress the S.N.D.P. Yogam offered its unstinted support to all its activities. Several directors and members of the Yogam voluntarily joined the State Congress as members and took active part in the agitation sponsored by the State Congress. After the Resolution the Government began to suspect the activities of the Yogam and gave instructions to the district administration and Police Commissioner “to watch their identification with the State Congress.” The Government even issued a show cause notice on 3rd June 1938 on the Yogam threatening to revoke its licence. However the Yogam continued its support to the State Congress till its withdrawal.

102. File No.D.Dis./301/1939/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. For details see the report of a police officer dated 29th May, 1939 contained in it.

members of the Working Committee of the State Congress.”¹⁰³ The statement of the President of the SNDP Yogam issued to the press¹⁰⁴ is of greater significance. It practically resulted in withdrawing the support of the Ezhava community, which constituted a major section of the Travancore population and a section which was hitherto involved actively in the agitation for Responsible Government, ignoring their caste prejudices giving way for a common platform to all people of Travancore against the Diwan administration.¹⁰⁵ The decision of the President suddenly drew back the political conditions of Travancore to the days of the Abstention Movement dividing the political ethos along castewise divisions. This had also resulted in widening the rift between caste and non caste Hindus of Travancore. In short the Government finally won in their game of divide and rule and could weaken the State Congress organisation and thereby the movement for Responsible Government in the State. This, however, does not mean that the Ezhava community en-mass disassociated with the State Congress, a few still remained in the congress, but the major section of

103. File No.D.Dis./641/1939/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

104. In a statement issued to the Hindu K. Ayyappan, the President of the S.N.D.P. Yogam explained: “Whatever might be the future attitude of the State Congress the S.N.D.P. Yogam should hereafter be still itself for safeguarding the interests of the Ezhava community, without detriment to their communities. The hostile attitude of the Government towards the Ezhava Community, which resulted from the misunderstanding that the S.N.D.P. Yogam had identified itself with the State Congress and was acting against the Government had affected their interests adversely, both political and otherwise. The participation of Ezhavas in the State Congress activities had taught them in bitter lesson – that they should not be involved in common agitations against Government sacrificing their special interests....” *The Hindu*, 5th December, 1939, p.8.

105. Robin Jeffrey attributes the change in SNDP position to the success of the dual policy of inducement and threat adopted by the Diwan. Robin Jeffrey, *op.cit.*, p. 455.

course drifted from the movement. Moreover the SNDP Yogam adopted a pro-Government attitude. R. Sankar, the General Secretary of the State Congress resigned in 1944 and took charge as the General Secretary of the S.N.D.P.Yogam. He made a public announcement in the Karunagappally S.N.D.P.Yogam meeting "that the interests of the Yogam is to fully co-operate with government and that so long as he is the General Secretary of the Yogam he would not meddle in the State Congress affairs."¹⁰⁶ Others who left the party included prominent leaders like P.K. Kunju and V.K. Velayudhan who exercised profound influence in their communities. These activities not only weakened the State Congress but also divided the Travancore political fabric on communal lines, creating a serious crisis for the Travancore State Congress.

106. Letter from the Acting General Secretary, S.N.D.P. Yogam, Alleppey to the Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum, dated 15th August, 1939. File No.D.Dis./641/1939/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM..

GROWTH OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT - WAR CRISIS AND THE CONSTITUTION OF 1947

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter VIII

GROWTH OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT – WAR CRISIS AND THE CONSTITUTION OF 1947

The activities of the State Congress during the period 1938-40 had its own ups and downs. It grew as a popular movement and gained full mass support at certain times and lost popular confidence at certain other occasions leading to mass erosion of popular support due to its policy of suspension of direct action and its inability to counter the manipulations of the Diwan. This naturally led to the rise and growth of a radical wing within the Congress, who were dissatisfied with the functioning of the State Congress based on Gandhian ideals. This wing not only disagreed with the State Congress in its ideas, ideals, and practice or function but strongly advocated direct action against the Government which was not acceptable to the 'moderate' State Congress leaderships. At various occasions they lodged their protest in this regard but could not succeed. The Youth League, an organised radical group with leftist leanings, which so far worked within the organisational framework of the State Congress obeying the leadership, now decided to sever its connections and to function as an independent radical section. This led to the formation of an active leftist movement in

Travancore politics.¹ This again weakened the State Congress activities in the State which later transformed itself into the Communist Party in Travancore. The social and economic condition of Travancore helped the Communists to win their support of the common people. In the initial days the leftists even contacted Subhash Chandra Bose for his help and guidance for organising a left wing group,² though they were not admirers of this great leader.

The radical group held their first secret meeting at Alleppey on July 9th, 1939 and advocated revolutionary views and stressed the need for shedding blood to achieve political goals.³ In all their subsequent meetings they severely criticised the State Congress for having given up direct action on Gandhiji's advice. Denouncing the policy of Gandhiji, they declared that "his leadership would not fetch Responsible Government."⁴ Though this group of radicals so far had agreed with the State Congress in their policies or methods of agitation, they remained discreet and did not come out in the open. They now began to form themselves into another political entity, openly and vehemently attacked State Congress and Gandhian leadership. They looked up to Subhas Chandra Bose as their hero. As the radical wing went out of the State

1. P.T. Haridas, *Emergence of the Travancore Youth League – An Analysis*, Indian History Congress Proceedings, (Hyderabad, 1978), p. 186.

2. See for details of correspondence File No. D. Dis./250/1940/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

3. File No. D. Dis./138/1945/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

4. File No. D. Dis./1140/1945/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Congress, the labour unions of Travancore which had left leanings under N. Srikantan Nair and others, also severed their connections with the State Congress. This resulted in the erosion of popular base of the State Congress. The difference between the State Congress and Radical Group manifested itself for the first time at the Karunagappally Conference held on 7th September, 1939. When the State Congress leader M.N. Parameswaran Pillai moved the resolution that “the State Congress will always hold on to its goals of Responsible Government and will always have the undoubted right to agitate constitutionally from exploring the possibility of any scheme put forward by Government and even accepting any scheme which the State Congress may think, may be worked at present for what is worth . . . ,”⁵ P.T. Punnoose, the leader of the radical group expressed dissatisfaction and put forward an amendment to the effect that “either full Responsible Government or something that leads the way to it.”⁶ When there was a sharp disagreement on the amendment it was put to vote and was defeated by one hundred and seventy five votes to ninety one.⁷ This show of strength in the meeting reveals that at least more than one third of its members were with this radical group. But the State Congress leadership did not take this fact seriously and did not try to bring this faction into their fold diplomatically. If some kind of diplomatic moves

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.* Also See *Kaumudi*, 31st May, 1939.

7. File No. D. Dis./1141/1945/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

were taken by the State Congress leaders to pacify the radicals right from this meetings, a rift in later years could have been averted.

Following the outbreak of the Second World war the economic condition of the labourers was steadily on the decline and they were looking forward for a saviour which they found in the Radical Wing (The State Congress which had no labour organisations did not take into account this economic situation). Since the Radicals championed the cause of the labourers, they could get their unstinted support without much pain. Travancore, during this time was on the brink of a famine, the most affected class being the labourers of Alleppey. More than 25,000 workers employed in the coir factories at Alleppey, Sherthalai, Quilon and other places were thrown out of employment. The price of food stuffs and other essential commodities went high resulting in severe financial strain on them (while the State Congress leaders like their counterparts in British India did not take into serious consideration about this financial crisis of the people) the leftist leaders tried to exploit the situation and succeeded to consolidate their hold upon the working classes, giving an impression though not in effect that they were their real saviours, raising the slogans of socialism and revolution, which obtained a popular appeal.

Though the activities and working of the State Congress were weakened and that of the radical group gained strength the Government of Travancore was having a close watch over the situation in the State. The Diwan, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer was severely opposed to any Communist movement or ideology, and therefore had a strong

negative attitude toward the radicals. He even issued confidential orders to the police to shoot whenever they found a red flag.⁸

The emergence and gradual growth of the Communist movement in Travancore can be traced back to the days of organisation of labourers especially coir factory workers of Alleppey, Sherthalai and Quilon, when the Congress organisational framework was very weak. The leftist leaders during this time were fully engaged in the organisation of their party ignoring the Congress.⁹ The first meeting of this radical group of the State Congress was held at the "Eye Clinic" at Thevalakkara in which ten to fifteen members assembled and exhorted the need of bringing together all left minded people and also decided to hold a conference on a large scale in the near future.¹⁰ A reception committee was also formed. The news of the proposed conference spread like wild fire and the police forces became alert. Therefore, their

8. File No.D.Dis./366/1940/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. It may be noted that the Diwan, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer issued strict instructions to the Police to shoot at sight whenever they noticed a 'Red Flag' of the Communists without taking orders from the superiors and that these actions will not be questioned by the Government. This would suggest that even any excesses on this account will not be taken seriously and questioned by the government and those guilty will be punished, giving a free hand to the Police to commit any kind of atrocities in this regard. No Diwan or administration of the time might had given this kind of a clean chit to the Police. This can be taken as a clear evidence of the Diwan's opposition to the communist ideology and movement in his State and his efforts to suppress it in which he miserably failed, as it proved by the subsequent events.

9. File No.644/1940/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. The Police reports contained in the file speaks about hectic activities of the Communist while no action to forbade it is seen taken by the Government.

10. N. Srrkantan Nair, *Kazhinja Kala Chithrangal*, Part II, National Book Stall, (Kottayam, 1976), p.66.

activities were kept secret and responsibility to decide the venue and selection of representatives to the Conference was entrusted with Swami Padmanabhan and V.K. Purushothaman, two labour union leaders of Alleppey. According to N.Srikantan Nair the secret meeting as scheduled was held at an underground coir godown where all leaders except T.V. Thomas were present, who was nominated as the convener of the meeting. M.N.Govindan Nair was elected as the new Secretary.¹¹ But no active work either in the direction of attainment of Responsible Government nor for party consolidation was undertaken by this committee, but party work was undertaken by all the leaders of the left wing. Within a period of two years, ie. by 1940 the left wing was able to organise itself into a solid group with a workable organisational framework, with good mass support. It would suggest that for more than 9 years from the formation of the Communist League, the Communist Party remained in its infancy in Travancore. The organisers of the Communist League neither the workers of the left wing of course convert it into an attractive mass organisation, nor work in unison to gain popular appeal and gain substantive influence among the masses, mainly due to the influence of the State Congress in Travancore.

The Government was closely watching the activities of the left wing and on April 8th, 1940 the police arrested K.C. George, a noted Communist leader of Travancore, with a lot of Communist literature.¹² The Government, so far was

11. *Ibid.*

12. File No. D. Dis./463/1945/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Report dated 10th April, 1940 of the I.G. Police, Travancore to the Chief Secretary to Govt. Trivandrum.

suspicious about the Communist activities in the State but could not proceed against in the absence of concrete evidence, but the arrest of K.C. George proved beyond doubt that there existed in Travancore a strong Communist organisation with its headquarters at Ernakulam.¹³ The Diwan who was deadly against any kind of Communist activity in his State considered it as a serious threat to the Princely State of Travancore and a ramification of a widespread conspiracy against the Government of Travancore, decided to take strong and stringent action and issued a warning that “this State cannot afford to be weakened by the insidious invasions of the socialistic and Communistic doctrines who without any idea of tranquillity ... are out to create conflicts for conflicts sake, conflagration for conflagration’s sake and civil disturbance for its own sake.”¹⁴ The police forces of the State were given a ‘Red Alert’ and a meeting of the police officers of the State was convened immediately on 10th April, 1940 to chalk out ways and means to counter this leftist movement, in which it was decided “to arrest prominent and potential agitators of the Communist type, to find out whether there was any Communist underground cell in the State having contacts with the British Indian agitators, to watch labour centres and labour agitators, to keep in touch with heads of educational institutions to combat attempts made to foment trouble amongst the students etc.”¹⁵

13. *Ibid.*, Report dated 4th July 1940 in File No.D.Dis./157/1940/C.S. Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

14. File No.368/1940/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS TVM. Also see the Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings, Vol. XV, No. 8, June, 1940, p.540.

15. File No. D. Dis./157/1940/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. See the proceedings of the Police Officers at Trivandrum on 10th April 1940 contained in the File.

Though the Government anticipated strong action and the Communists determined to face any eventuality, the political situation in the State soon changed consequent on the German invasion of Russia. The Communist Party, which formulated its ideas, programmes and agitations on the basis of Russian attitudes, which hitherto was not a party in the II World War, immediately declared the war as a "People's War". The party also declared in unequivocal terms its full support to the Government of Travancore,¹⁶ thus altogether changing its former stand ignoring the cause of Responsible Government and leaving the State Congress alone in the fray....¹⁷

The Government felt relaxed in the decision and declaration of the Communist party and it changed and softened its policy as well. There were many at that time who doubted the sincerity of the Communist Party and thought that the real motto was the consolidation of party power under the guise of support to the Government, to avoid Government persecution at a crucial time. Following same lines the All Travancore Trade Union Congress,¹⁸ a pro-left labour organisation also passed a resolution.¹⁹

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. File No. D. Dis./350/1942/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see file No.D.Dis.358/1942/C.S. KGS, TVM

The All Travancore Trade Union Congress was organised by leaders like N.Srikantan Nair among the Coir workers of Alleppey, Sherthalai and Quilon and was formally inaugurated at Alleppey on 26th January, 1942, from the very inception it was dominated by communist sympathisers and travelled in the same track with the communist party of Travancore.

19. P.G. Padmanabhan was the General Secretary of the All Travancore Trade Union Congress. For details of the deliberations and Resolutions see File No.D. Dis./424/1944/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Innumerable anti-Japanese and anti fascist meetings and demonstrations were held by the party to prepare the people for an “all for war effort”. The Government of Travancore soon realized that these are not to give support to Government, but to propagate the Party’s ideas and ideals among the masses and consolidate its position at the expense of the Government in the guise of war efforts, inviting no opposition from the Government.²⁰ The Government, therefore, viewed the activities of the Communist Party with utmost suspicion and even warned them of dire consequences for utilising the food campaign as a “means of violent and subversive propaganda”²¹ The Party continued its activities without hindrance, and the Government in spite of its warning did not take any stringent action against them. No doubt, this led to divided loyalties in the State Congress.

As Stated, though the Communist Party was trying its best to consolidate its forces and mass support, the State Congress on the other hand was tottering stage. The party got an opportunity for revival during the time of the Quit India Movement.²² At the Wardha session of the Indian National Congress on 14th July, 1942, a resolution called the ‘Quit India Resolution’ was adopted and the All India Congress Committee

20. See the Hindu, 28th August, 1942. Also see File No.D. Dis./350/1942/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS TVM.

21. The Sri Mulam Popular Assembly undertook a detailed deliberation in this regard. See proceedings of Travancore Sri Mulam assembly, Vol. XXII, No.1, 19th July, 1943, p.16.

22. Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India on 22nd March, 1942 by the British Government to initiate negotiations with political leaders in India for a proposed constitutional reform, but the leaders of the Indian National Congress decided to reject Cripps proposals and started direct action against British rule in India).

which met at Bombay on 7th and 8th August, 1942 ratified the decision of starting a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale under the leadership of Gandhiji.²³ Though the Quit India Resolution and the subsequent political agitations had no direct relevance to the Princely State of Travancore, the leaders of the Travancore State Congress thought it an opportune moment to revive their policy of direct action against the Diwan and a chance to revitalise the Congress activity in the State which was then in a defunct state. To express its solidarity with the Indian National Congress and its policies in British India, the State Congress held protest meetings against the arrest of Gandhiji on 9th August, 1942.²⁴ Students also became a part of the protest meetings and a meeting of the students convened in the University College, Trivandrum, which then served as the nerve centre of all political activity of students, a resolution was adopted which reads: "We the students of Trivandrum protest against the arrest of Indian National Congress leaders and that we resolve to boycott all educational institutions until the Congress and the British Government come to an agreement"²⁵ Following this resolution, innumerable meetings, jathas and demonstrations were held by the students waving black flags as a mark of protest.²⁶

23. *The Hindu*, 8th August, 1942.

24. *The Hindu*, 10th August, 1942.

25. File No.D. Dis./468/1947/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM

26. *Ibid.* Also see the *Hindu*, 13th August, 1942.

The Government of Travancore which was keeping a close watch on the State Congress activities, banned public meetings and processions for a period of fifteen days from 10th August, 1942, and the District Magistrates were instructed to prevent observance of any hartal and closing of shops.²⁷ All the newspapers of the State were prohibited from printing and publishing news relating to the State Congress movement and the All India Congress Working Committee and the Working Committee of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee were also banned.²⁸ Thus the Government tried to prevent the spread of the Quit India Movement.

The Quit India Movement in British India, in fact, did not create a favourable political atmosphere to the Travancore State Congress in the State for two reasons – 1) the political cause was not related to the Princely State and, therefore the State Congress had to strive hard to convince its ranks about the genuineness of political agitations and failed in this effort, (2) leaders like Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, G. Ramachandran and others were arrested and imprisoned thereby leaving a major

27. For details see file No.D.Dis./462/1947/CS Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Pattam A. Thanu Pillai and G.Ramachandran were not arrested in connection with the Quit India Movement. The standing committee of the All India State Peoples Conference which met at New Delhi had elaborate deliberations about the proposals of the Cripps Mission and the future constitution of India and the possibility of establishing a national government in India and to arouse thirst for freedom and need for unity among people of the princely states and passed a resolution to the effect that 19th April, 1942, may be observed as All India State People's day, and on that basis the Travancore State Congress. As decided to celebrate it by holding meetings and demonstrations through out the state (See copy of the Resolutions passed at New Delhi, on 2nd April 1942 in File No.D. Dis./1155/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

28. File No. D. Dis./462/1945/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

political vacuum in the State Congress leadership. In the absence of a strong and effective leadership the workers did not know how to carry the agitation forward. The erosion of a major section, the Ezhavas, added fuel to the fire. Another section which abstained itself from the agitation was the left wing in the State Congress. The leaders of this group who attended the conference strongly pleaded for extending support to the British in war against Germany and disassociated themselves from the Quit India Movement²⁹ This attitude also prevented any large scale labour participation in the Quit India Movement. However the State Congress leaders could condemn the anti national stand taken by the Communists.

The Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress decided to revive the movement from August, 26, 1942, on the expiry of the ban order, but they could not implement it in full swing as the Government extended the ban orders for a further period of fifteen days from 25th August, 1942.³⁰ However, in spite of the ban orders the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress decided to defy these ban orders issued by the Government and hold meetings at all important places in the State like Trivandrum, Quilon, Changannur and Changanacherri.³¹ The courage and spirit to uphold nationalist spirit, fully knowing the consequences, of the State Congress leaders is to be appreciated, as leaders like E.J. Phillipose, S.Sivan Pillai and Annie

29. File No. D. Dis./68/1945/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

30. See *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

Mascrene informed both the Magistrates and Police of their decision to defy ban orders and address public meetings beginning from 26th August, 1942,³² Not only that they informed Magistrate and Police of their decision but also appealed to them as well as the officers of the State to resign their jobs to join freedom struggle and not to strengthen the hands of imperialism.³³ The leaders who defied the ban orders³⁴ were subsequently arrested and imprisoned creating a situation of no political leadership and this resulted in the fizzling out of the Quit India Movement.³⁵ Here the courage, sacrifice and readiness to sacrifice even their lives for the motherland by the State Congress leaders should be appreciated.

An analysis of the Quit India agitation in the Princely State of Travancore clearly indicates that it was a failure for many reasons and hence did not produce any remarkable result in the State. The cause of agitation in British India demonstrated in the Quit India Movement was “freedom” from an alien power, the British while the

32. File No.D.Dis./462/1947/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. The Standing Committee of the All India State Peoples conference which met at new Delhi had elaborate deliberations about the proposals of the Gripps mission and the future constitution of India and the possibility of establishing a national government in India and to arouse thirst for freedom and need for unity among people of the princely states and passed a resolution to the effect that 19th April 1942, may be observed as All India State People’s day, and on that basis the province state congress decided to celebrate it by holding meetings and demonstrations through out the state. (See copy of the resolution passed at New Delhi on 2nd April 1942, in File No. D. Dis./1155/ 1944/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM).

cause of Responsible Government in Princely State was not freedom but people's representation in the administration of the land. The involvement of the Princely State in the Quit India agitation was only to show its solidarity with the British Indian counterpart and policies of its unquestioned leader Gandhiji and a means to revitalise the State Congress. It is also to be noted that the State Congress took up the agitation of Quit India Movement at a time when a major section of its leaders in the Ezhava, Christian and Nair segments had resigned from the organisation causing much damage to the party and its influence. Majority of the population in the State either did not participate (abstained from it) or did not show much interest and involvement in it. The State Congress which should have anticipated the arrest of its top ranking leaders failed to evolve an organisational framework to substitute, and inform its cadres about the future course of action in such an eventuality. The leadership of the State Congress also ignored the effect of the change of attitude of the Communist Party and labourers and their organisations and their negative attitude and work against the State Congress and its impacts on the movement. The withdrawal from and open opposition to the movement by the Communist, though suicidal, caused severe harm to the movement. The leadership of the State Congress also underestimated organisational net work of the Communist Party and its ability to convince its ranks, that their stand, work and activity were for the nation and in its good spirit, though it was on the contrary. They believed that they could win the battle as against the mere spirit of nationalism of the Congress men and lacked all other factors. The treacherous aims

and attitudes of the Communist Party is clear from the fact that the students and labour organisations which staged protest meetings and organised demonstrations and strikes when Gandhi was arrested immediately changed their stand and came out in open to support the Government by withdrawing from the movement and actively supporting the Government policy. Due to all these reasons the movement failed.

Towards the end of the 1942 they faced social problem the involvement in which they thought, would revitalise the party. This was the acute food shortage in the State consequent on the out break of II World War. There was scarcity of rice and other essential commodities, which adversely affected the weaker sections. The economic slump caused by the war to the people of the coastal areas was also brought to the notice of the Government.³⁶

Leaving temporarily from political agitations, the State Congress leadership found an opportunity to involve itself in these sharp social problems and realities, and consolidate its base before launching any political agitation. The State Congress committee which met at Trivandrum on 7th February 1943 had a detailed discussion on these problems and arrived at some definite proposals for its future programmes. It decided "not to call off the fight in toto, but to withdraw the programme of speech and to enter into the taluk and local committees organised for the collection and distribution of food stuffs and to resist vehemently any opposition or interference from

36. File No. D. Dis./68/1945/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM

the Government.”³⁷ Severely criticising the Government of its food policy, the party exhorted its workers to ‘engage in the production, collection and distribution of food stuffs and the propagation of Khadar.’³⁸ Though the State Congress had no idea of any agitation to be launched against the Government, they could not make any compromise on the resolution regarding the propagation of Khader, as they (the Government) thought that this is a planned move of the State Congress leadership against the Government in the name of a resolution supporting the Government. The Government therefore, decided to proceed against, and arrested T.M. Varghese, R. Sankar, the acting President and Secretary of the State Congress respectively.³⁹ Though the Government was not opposed to the first part of the resolution the second part of it on Khadar and criticism of Governments food policy was considered by the Government as a deliberate means of propaganda for the State Congress and a demonstration of its ‘anti Government activities.’ This fear of the Congress prompted the Government to warn the leaders of ‘appropriate and deterrent action’ if they purported to carry out the programmes adopted at the All-Travancore Congress

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. The Inspector General of Police in his weekly note submitted to the chief secretary to Government, Trivandrum stated that there was widespread and popular response from the public to this request and that if the same tempo and spirit prevailed in future programmes of the state congress it would be difficult to control popular enthusiasm and therefore it should be prevented. See File No.D.Dis./462/1947/C.S./ Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Committee.⁴⁰ The State Congress which existed only in name could not and did not undertake any political or social programmes worth the name, following the warning of the Government and therefore, political activity under the State Congress was at a standstill during this period. This was due to 1) most of the top ranking leaders of the State Congress being under detention, and 2) due to the acute food problem which made the people weary of political agitations, 3) the Gandhian leadership in British India failed to inspire the people of Travancore either by supporting their cause and action in un-equivocal terms or by involving itself in the agitation in Travancore and 4) the people of Travancore rather lost faith, it seems, in Gandhian ideology and leadership as it did not help them in their earlier activities and involvement. The people of Travancore were left alone to decide and conduct their methods of agitation and programmes without any help from outside. Even Gandhi's intervention, though limited, did not help the agitators in Travancore, but the Diwan and Maharaja ignored Gandhiji and seemed more stringent in their attitude towards the State Congress. This also led to loss of faith in Gandhi and his leadership in Princely State of Travancore. Gandhian principles of non-violence and peaceful agitation failed to gain strength in Travancore, as a large section of the population, except perhaps a section of the elitist group in the State Congress, in Travancore evinced more interest in Communist principles of violence and violent direct action.

40. The Inspector General of Police in his report to the Chief Secretary to Government, Trivandrum made it clear that further detention of political prisoners (leaders of the Travancore state congress) would adversely affect the government, and therefore the release of political prisoners would in turn benefit the government. See *Ibid*, 30th March, 1943.

In British India the movement against the British was in full swing and after the Quit India agitation, Gandhiji began a fast on February 10, 1943 while he was under detention at the Aga Khan Palace. This engaged the attention of not only the people of British India but also the subjects of Travancore as well. The leaders of the Travancore State Congress found a golden chance to revitalise its activities and re-establish its hold on the people of Travancore by taking up this issue and the State Congress working committee which met at Karumadi in Central Travancore on February 23, 1943 decided to appeal all the public organisations, institutions and individuals to wear black badges or black dots on their foreheads and also to observe one day's fast on 28th February, 1943. This call had its effects. Congressmen and students in Travancore very well responded to this request.⁴¹

The Government thought it unwise to detain the leaders of the Travancore State Congress when there was comparative peace in Travancore in spite of the political activities of the State Congress. The Government also feared that the detention of leaders would enhance sympathy towards the leaders and hatred towards the Government in the minds of the public at large and therefore ordered the release of political prisoners.⁴² In consequence leaders like Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese, M.N. Govindan Nayar, T.V. Joseph, David, V. George, G. Sreedharar,

41. These were reported by the Inspector General of Police, Trivandrum in his daily report to government, for details see file No.D.Dis./863/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

42. In his letter dated 25th July, 1943, the Diwan of Travancore informed the Resident of Travancore, H.J., Todd about the decision of the Government of Travancore regarding the release of these political prisoners. See for details file No. *Ibid.*

K.M. Basheer, K.P. Janardhanan Nayar, P.K. Karunakaran, T.P. Punnoose and Kumbalathu Sanku Pillai were released on 19th July, 1943.⁴³ The administration succeeded in its aims by releasing the leaders of the State Congress, since the leaders on their release, decided to co-operate with the Government in extending aid to the suffering masses. An official decision in this regard was taken by the Travancore State Congress on August, 1, 1943, at its Working Committee meeting at Trivandrum in its resolution offering its co-operation to Government in the production, collection and proper distribution of the food materials in the State.⁴⁴ Along with this a decision was also taken to strengthen the State Congress organisation through a constructive programme, which could be practiced in the present political condition of the State. The weakness of the organisation and the erosion of its base in Travancore for many reasons became evident to the leadership from the results of the 1944 elections.⁴⁵

The Government of Travancore dissolved the Legislature on 1st March 1944 and ordered fresh elections in July 1944.⁴⁶ By this time Travancore witnessed a clear, sharp and dangerous political and communal polarisation. The Communist party and the State Congress stood together and put up nineteen candidates supported by the labour unions⁴⁷ of left leanings. On the other side the two communal forces in the

43. File No.D.Dis./462/1947/C.S./ Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

44. *Ibid.*

45. File No.K.Dis./947/1945/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

46. *The Hindu*, dated 29th June, 1944.

47. File No.D.Dis./215/1947/C.S./ Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

State represented by the SNDP Yogam and Nair Service Society united in an electoral alliance and put up sixteen candidates.⁴⁸ Both these groups had considerable mass support in their respective castes and the State Congress failed to understand this fact and ignored it. They were under the illusion that they could win the battle with the help of the Communists, who had, no doubt, a profound influence in the working class in some areas of the State like Alleppey and Shertalai. It remains a mystery that the State Congress leadership did not make any attempt to bring these groups to their side and the result was disastrous.⁴⁹ Added to this uncomfortable position of the State Congress, nominations of fourteen candidates including their prominent leaders were rejected on account of their political convictions.⁵⁰ Though the party made appeals for removal of these dis-qualifications,⁵¹ the Government rejected their appeals on the ground that the candidates as well as the leadership of the State Congress failed to tender an unequivocal expression of regret and an application for pardon, a condition which was not at all acceptable to the State Congress.⁵² It is suggested that the failure

48. See the letters to Pattom A Thanu Pillai, from the Diwan of Travancore dated 7th and 9th March 1944, and File No. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.* For details see the Hindu 20th July, 1944.

50. The State Congress could not capture majority in the elections, for argument sake, that fourteen of its prominent leaders were disqualified by the government on grounds of their political convictions. This of course can be taken as a solid reason for the defeat, but had their nominations were accepted by the government these leaders would not have won elections.

51. D. Daniel, *Struggle for Responsible Government in Travancore 1938-1947*, (Madurai, 1986), p.132.

52. *Ibid.*

of the State Congress was just because of the unholy alliance of the two communal organisation in the State. But the State Congress leadership failed to assess why a large chunk of its followings hitherto stood with them had rejected them and joined with the leaders in the respective communal organisations. In the given political situation, it was certain that the State Congress candidate would be defeated even if the disqualification was lifted since they did not have the support of the majority sections of population. Though all Nairs and Ezhavas in the State did not support either the NSS or SNDP, their influence among the population could not be underestimated. There was also a fear among the people that the movement would be withdrawn by the Indian National Congress under Gandhi's leadership.

The State Congress suffered another set back in their election campaign consequent on the demise of Rama Varma, the nephew of the Maharaja, on 22nd March, 1944, resulting in a ban of all kinds of demonstrations and meetings for three months. The party could not conduct effective propaganda campaigns for its candidates. Due to all these reasons only eleven candidates of the State Congress were declared elected out of nineteen contested.

An analysis of the political agitations in Travancore under the auspices of the Travancore State Congress during the period 1938 to 1944 would clearly reveal that very active and hectic political activities were undertaken by the party from the very day of its inception in 1938 to 1939 but the party faced severe set backs from 1940 to July, 1944, due to so many reasons, and the party was reduced to a torpid condition.

The stern and stringent action taken by the Government against the organisation, retirement of a large number of leaders from the political field, negative attitude of communal organisations like NSS and SNDP towards the Congress, the failure of the State Congress leadership to understand the strength of these organisations, overestimation of the Communist Party and its hold on the people of Travancore, the negative attitude of the State Congress towards the equally important socio-economic problems of the people of Travancore, over dependence on Gandhi for the agitations in the State, the negative effect of Gandhi's intervention, strong and negative attitude of the Diwan, C.P. Remaswami Aiyer towards Gandhiji, failure of Gandhiji to end the repressive and suppressive measures of the Travancore Government, limitations of the Congress leadership and their failure to involve actively in Travancore politics, declaration of non-intervention by the Indian National Congress as its policy towards political agitations in princely States, assumption of the leaders of the State Congress that legitimacy of their cause and means would eventually lead to success, their miscalculation regarding the participation of the public at large ignoring their caste and communal aspirations and affinities, Illusion about Gandhi's involvement forcing the Travancore administration for an immediate settlement – all these factors led to the colossal failure of the movement during this time. It would seem that if a different attitude and agitational programme was followed by the State Congress on its own, it would have been more successful and that it would have forced the Government to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards the agitations.

The left wing of the State Congress which later turned itself into the Communist Party first supported the agitation and later abstained from it, not on the basis of the demands of the agitation, but on the basis of certain international developments. This created a feeling in popular minds that they had no patriotic feelings in their actions and that they were undependable. The work and actions of the leftist wing never served or helped the State Congress as the recalcitrant and superfluous political fervour displayed by them on many occasions placed the leaders of the State Congress in a quandary, and the State Congress leadership failed to understand the real aims of this leftist wing. The State Congress also failed to evolve a clear political agitational programme on their own, one that was designed to involve the workers and other depressed sections of the society. Though the Indian National Congress or Gandhiji had never declared in unambiguous terms that the cause of Responsible Government in princely States would be taken the State Congress leaders placed their whole dependence upon Gandhi and chartered their programmes as per Gandhian methods.

The State Congress leadership was under the assumption that the party was the only political organisation working for the homeland and undergoing sufferings and therefore, they would be unconditionally supported by all sections of people. The Communists took advantage of the situation when Gandhiji's involvement did not yield immediate results in Travancore. The Diwan on his part, used every opportunity for establishing Diwan's rule in Travancore and his continuance in office.

The war years offered the Diwan the needed pretext to supersede all kinds of political movements. The war created very serious problems in terms of employment, food availability etc and this affected the common people move. The inability of the leadership of both Indian National Congress and travancore State Congress to make use of this situation and seek remedies and to revitalise the party by taking up their cause and agitations on its basis resulted not only in loss of popular support but also affected adversely their credibility as an organisation committed to social, political and the economic causes of the people. Any political agitation initiated or undertaken without giving due consideration to the economic and social problems of the people was bound to fail and this happened in the case of the State Congress also. The failure of agitations launched in 1939-40 and 1942 are instances in point. While this was the case of the State Congress leadership, this inaction or indifference or even miscalculation of the State Congress leadership was fully exploited by the Communist leadership and this facilitated the Communists to strengthen their Party. During this period the Communists concentrated their activities on labour strongholds, offered help to them and earned their sympathy and goodwill. The work of these Communist groups resulted in the shifting of the allegiance to the Communist Party especially in the case of the Travancore Students Federation and other labour unions. It is to be made clear that these groups did not show allegiance to any side during the early periods of agitation. The State Congress, because of its own inaction or lack of farsightedness, did not get the sympathy of these groups, and this made them hostile to

it. Most of the labour unions and student organisations in Travancore which were earlier sympathisers of the Travancore State Congress, later shifted their allegiance and sympathy to the Communist Party. Moreover under the guise of helping the Government in its war efforts, the Communist Party was really involved actively in consolidating its base and influence among the masses of Travancore. The State Congress was more or less inactive during this time and only Quit India Movement gave them an opportunity to agitate, but as we have seen, they failed in this too. The war condition it should be admitted presented difficulties not only to the State Congress but also to the Government of Travancore as well.

In the previous section we had taken up for discussion the activities of the State Congress during War period. In this section the growth of leftist forces in Travancore would be taken up.

A study of the attitude of Communist leaders towards the State Congress and its work is necessary for an understanding of their success. In the beginning, close association with the State Congress was advocated. P. Krishna Pillai, a noted Communist leader had exhorted his cadres as early as 1939 that isolation of the State Congress and the pursuit of political activities on their own supported by the Communist League would be suicidal and would result in a split in the State Congress and its cadres in Travancore.⁵³ He added further that the people of Travancore had not

53. For details see *Prabhatham* January, 9, 1939. Article by P. Krishna Pillai.

realized the dramatic influence or change that a Responsible Government in a State would bring about in the condition or in the economy of Travancore, and that the Karachi Resolution of the Indian National Congress could be taken as a guideline in this regard. Thus a grand alliance of agriculturists, peasants, labourers in other sectors, the unemployed and all others who aspire for freedom from Diwan's rule should be formed and the people educated about the relevance of the State Congress and its agitation for the attainment of Responsible Government in the State. State Congress workers should try immediately to strengthen the unity and support of the agricultural labourers and students.⁵⁴

The Communist Party and its leadership had a clear perspective both towards the Indian National Congress and the Travancore State Congress and their agitational methods and programmes. In March 1939, it exhorted the people of Travancore thus: "In the ensuing agitation the following points to be born in mind are to be taken care of."⁵⁵

- 1) That all members or people participating in the agitational programme should strictly adhere to the principle of non-violence.
- 2) That the Travancore Police had adopted a policy (to escalate people) of sending rowdies to places of mass gatherings create trouble and that a band of rowdi police

54. *Ibid.*, dated September 4, 1939.

55. P. Krishna Pillai, "Thiruvithamkur Veendum Samarankanathil," *Prabhatham*, 27th March, 1939. Since it is an important point, it is quoted in full.

force had been formed by the Government and these are evident from the events that happened at the Quilon Taluk State Congress meeting.

- 3) That whatever may be the provocation, utmost care should be taken to have no violence from the part of the masses. Then only the agitation can be led to success.
- 4) Therefore, it should be ensured that the agitational programmes should be initially launched only in places where people would not be over enthusiastic and unruly.
- 5) That the volunteers of the State Congress participating and leading the agitation should be instructed and trained thus.

Fully accepting the Gandhian leadership and his agitational methods, the Party wanted the people of Travancore and all progressive forces to unite under one banner of the State Congress, and to agitate as per the decisions and instructions of the Party or its working committee and that all the well wishers of Responsible Government should follow the Party with strict discipline, during the time of agitation.⁵⁶

It should be appreciated that the Communists were fully aware of their weaknesses at the time and the weakness of the State Congress and the reasons for the failure of the State Congress agitations during 1938-39. They were also fully aware of the consequences to the State of Travancore, if they disassociated themselves from the State Congress movement. By advising the followers to strictly adhere to Gandhian

56. *Ibid.*

methods of agitation based on non-violence, it can be assumed that even the leaders of the Communist Movement like P. Krishna Pillai were not hard liners or anti Congressists at that time. The State Congress leadership no doubt, did not analyse the various social political and economic aspects involved in the agitation and take up other problems of the people of Travancore. The leaders of the Communist Party were deeply involved in analysing the various aspects of these problems, but did not share these ideas with the State Congress leaders, lest it would weaken the Communist cause. The Communist leadership thought that the condition of Travancore was not conducive to launch a strong political agitation on its own and therefore, decided that it may support the State Congress in its agitations for Responsible Government. From the statements of Krishna Pillai it was clear that it was not wise to launch a strong political agitation against the Diwan.⁵⁷ The Congress leaders failed to analyse these situations and apply their mind to evaluate the real conditions, while the Communists realized that much more political awareness has to be created in the minds of the people before launching any political agitations on its banner. The Communists during this time had no organisational strength.⁵⁸

The origin and steady growth of the Communist movement can be traced back to the days of the formation of the Communist League in Travancore in 1931, and that this organisation can be rightly regarded as the precursor of the Communist party in

57. *Ibid.*, dated 5th June, 1939.

58. *Ibid.*

Kerala.⁵⁹ Even before the formation of the Communist League, Communist ideas had influenced a section of the people Travancore due to a variety of factors, of which the social and economic factors are significant. The main section of the society attracted to the Communist ideology was the agricultural and industrial labourers of Travancore leading to the formation of labour unions in the State with active sympathy and support from the 'Communist' leaders, which they (the workers) lacked from other quarters.

Because of their attitude and statements on various issues especially pertaining to labourers, the Communists could very easily gain influence in Travancore affairs. The support promised to the Government in their activities by the Communists after the entry of Soviet Union in World War II, gave them an opportunity to declare that they stood by the Government. This gained them official support, and freedom to work for a better base among common people. The Government of Travancore under C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, who was deadly against any Communist movement in the State, failed to grasp the intentions of the communists and prevent them from consolidating their social base. But this was only one side of the picture . The other was that consequent on the adoption of the people's War Policy, serious differences had risen, within the labour movement and within the Communist Party, and the Party found itself isolated.

59. P.T. Haridas, *op.cit* pp.186-187.

It was the war which created problems for the Communists. But in the months following the declaration of war, the Communists continued to work within legal organisations. They could come out openly only after the ban on the Communist Party had been lifted. When the war began Communists exhorted the people to use all their might to fight against the British Government. But problems arose when this was sought to be extended to labour unions. This is clear from the following resolution of the Travancore Coir Factory Workers' union passed at the annual conference at Alleppey on 25th January 1942 which reiterated the view that 'the establishment of Responsible Government was an urgent necessity'.⁶⁰ This resolution appeared contrary to the opinion expressed by the President of the Travancore Trade Union Congress on several occasions that 'the labour movements had nothing to do with the political agitations.'⁶¹ The deliberations of the conference, however made it clear to the Government that the labour leaders were determined to organise the working class 'in support of the State Congress for realizing the goal of Responsible Government'.⁶² Regarding their alleged move to come together it was reported to the Government by a police officer that "Evidently, they are out to organise the labour efficiently and coordinate the several unions into one All Travancore Trade Union Congress with a view to have a mass following to start any agitation at some critical time, if so wanted. I think that the whole scheme is cleverly planned by the State Congress

60. File No.808/1943/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

61. *ibid.*

62. *ibid.*

leaders. During the time of the last agitation conducted by the State Congress they had not the labour and they are now out to organise and strengthen it to suit their purposes.....⁶³ It is true that the Trade Union Congress was formed with the precise object of co-ordinating all labour unions to fight for their demands. But it is wrong to think that this scheme was ‘cleverly planned by the State Congress. In fact the State Congress during this period did not extend its support to the trade union movement, nor cooperated with it. The police officer who gave this report was unaware of the Communist programmes or was trying deliberately to hide the leftist activities, and implicate the State Congress leadership. In June 1941 Germany attacked Soviet Union. With the entry of the Soviet Union in the War, the Communists began to characterise it as a Peoples’ War. This led to the adoption of a different strategy by the Communists. Now co-operation and not confrontation was advocated. But the implementation of this policy was not smooth.

In support of the Peoples’ War Policy the Working Committee of the Travancore Trade Union Congress which met at Alleppy on 31st March, 1942 passed a resolution requesting the various trade unions and the labourers of Travancore to ‘maintain the most peaceful atmosphere in the industrial world and to cooperate with the Government in War efforts.⁶⁴ While supporting war efforts it expressed “their

63. I.G. of Police, Travancore, 27th January, 1942, Report to C.S. to Govt. File No.806/1942/D.Dis. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

64. P.G. Padmanabhan, Joint Secretary, A.T.T.U.C. Alleppey, Letter to Govt. Trivandrum. File No.D.Dis./424/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

anxiety to see the creation of an atmosphere, wherein, the trade union activities of the State can be conducted and without obstruction from Government. The Trade Union Congress also called upon the workers and peasants 'to get ready to rank themselves and take up arms against Fascism.'⁶⁵

As mentioned before the Indian National Congress launched the Quit India Movement in August 1942. This badly affected the relations between the Communists and State Congress members. In accordance with the Peoples War Policy the Communist Party of India and the trade unions in Travancore disassociated themselves from the Quit India Movement.⁶⁶ The Managing Committee of the coir factory workers union met at Alleppey on 2nd September, 1942, and passed a resolution that

while Fascism is focussing its attention in India and a section of the public is longing to introduce a military administration on the ground of internal calamities, the civil disobedience campaign which is to start at this critical juncture is nothing but a self invitation to fascists. This committee therefore, desired to express its opinion that the responsibility of each labourer is to resist the threatening dangers and support the cause of a national government. Therefore, the labourers should keep aloof from the

65. I.G. of Police, Travancore, 27th January, 1942. Report to C.S. to Govt. File No.806/1942/D.Dis./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

66. Trayancore Police Daily Report, C. No.243, Part I (S.B.), 31 August, 1942, file No.D.Dis.1189/1944/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

civil disobedience movement contemplated by the Indian National Congress and the State Congress.⁶⁷

The immediate shift of its policy supporting the Government led to loss of face and alienation of Communist Party from the nationalist mainstream. In fact the Party had lost the halo attached to it earlier as a fighting and revolutionary outfit and their rivals, the Congress socialists and the followers of Subhas Chandra Bose, who continued the policy of determined opposition to British Imperialism, had acquired a new halo of their own in the eyes of the public.⁶⁸ To add to the discomfiture, the Communists had also let loose a campaign of calumny against the nationalists who supported the Quit India Movement and the independence struggle being waged in south east Africa by the Indian National Army under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose. The support extended by the Party to the Pakistan movement led by the Muslim League had also adversely affected its image. This situation is described by Rafiq Zakaria⁶⁹ thus: "I was non plussed by the support that the Communist Party gave to the League's demand for Pakistan. They justified it on ethnic grounds, distorting its religious basis. They put an intellectual cover on a reactionary communal demand. I

67. *ibid.* C.No.250, 7th September, 1942, D.Dis./1151/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. The Resolution quoted was in Malayalam which was translated by the Police and presented in the File.

68. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Triumph and Tragedy in Travancore*, (Kottayam, 2001), p.211.

69. Rafiq Zakaria, *Price of Partition*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, (Bombay, 1998), p. 112.

could not get over this somersault. My Muslim detractors mocked me, they said I would rue the day I opposed Jinnah.”⁷⁰

The Communists, however, decided to strengthen the organisation and regain its lost image. The party conducted study classes and set up volunteers camps at several centres like Alleppey, Kottayam, Changanacherry, Quilon and Balaramapuram and trained them in ‘Guerilla Warfare’, squad drill etc.⁷¹ It also distributed revolutionary literature among the workers and blamed the Government for all the difficulties that they experienced.⁷² Besides, the stalwarts of the Communist Party of Travancore K.C.George and P.T. Punnoose, went to Malabar seeking guidance and instructions from Communist leaders of Malabar. Leaders of Malabar like, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, A.K. Gopalan, K. Damodaran, P. Krishana Pillai, C.H. K^anar^an and other Communist leaders frequently visited the industrial centres of Travancore to give the labourers better instructions and training.⁷³ Assisted by them, they were able to wean away labour from trade unions into the Communist hands.⁷⁴ By the end of 1945 the labour population in Alleppey of about 40,000 strong came under the control of the

70. *Ibid.*

71. Proceedings of the Travancore Sree Mulam Assembly, Vol. XXI, No.3, 31st May, 1943, p.163.

72. Weekly note from I.G. of Police, Travancore to C.S. to Govt. Trivandrum on 14th December, 1942. File No.D. Dis./462/47/CS. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

73. Short note on communist party submitted to the Registrar, Secretariat, Trivandrum, by the I.G. of Police on 26th March, 1948. File No.D. Dis./262/1948/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS TVM.

74. *ibid.*, dated 18th December, 1945. File No.D. Dis./168/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS TVM.

Communist Party, gaining a super hand to them in Travancore politics in later years.⁷⁵ By now the revitalisation policy of the Communist Party by various means reached a point of demonstration of strength, which was inevitable for them for political existence and continuance, they were waiting for.

The Communist Party which had been alienated from the people now reaffirmed its hold to a certain extent by these mobilizations.⁷⁶ But the elections of July 1944 dismayed the Communists. The failure was attributed to the wrong policy adopted in 1941. "We were the most isolated from the patriots, the least influential in our own class and the least united among ourselves in this period. It was in this period that an alternative left leadership began to take shape within the national movement in Kerala; it was again in this period that our undisputed leadership of the workers came to be challenged by rival trade unions under whose leadership a fairly good section of the workers began to get organised; it was again in the period that a very serious intra-party crisis developed and threatened the very existence of the party as a united leadership of the national working class, peasant and other mass movements in the province."⁷⁷ The Party realized that it has lost influence or hold on the people of Travancore by their policies and programmes, which were not acceptable to and,

75. Report sent by the Inspector of Police, Alleppey Station to the District Magistrate of Quilon dated 16th December, 1945. File No.D.Dis./168/1945/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

76. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Punnappra Vayalarum Kerala Charithravum*, D.C. Books, (Kottayam, 1999, p.15.

77. *Ibid.*, p.13.

therefore, rejected by the people, especially their anti national policy in the Quit India Movement.

Reforms of 1946

It was under these circumstances that Sir C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyer announced constitutional reforms in Travancore. In the economic sphere the post war development further worsened the situation. The shortage of food that prevailed during the war period did not abate even after the end of it. There were irregularities in the ration system. As the prices of coir products fell the owners of small factories closed down their establishments throwing out of employment about 20,000 labourers most of whom were from Ampalapuzha and Shertallai taluks.⁷⁸ Taking advantage of the food crisis and the acute unemployment the extremist leaders held propaganda meetings in which they attributed to the Government the whole responsibility for the sorry State of affairs.⁷⁹ These developments posed a serious threat to the administration. Added to these there took place rapid political and constitutional changes in India since the end of World War II. On 19th September 1945, Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, announced the intention of British Government to convene a Constitution Making body to discuss with those elected the early realization of self-Government in India. In December, 1945, elections to the central and provincial

78. See for details in N. Srikantan Nair, *Vanchikkappetta Venad* (Malayalam), (Ernakulam, 1947), p 5.

79. Fortnightly report from the I.G. of Police, Travancore to the Registrar, Secretariat, Trivandrum, File. No.D.Dis./84/1946/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

legislatures were held and the Congress succeeded in forming ministries in seven out of eleven provinces.⁸⁰

A very important episode in the political history of Travancore in the 1930's and 1940's was the aborted move on the part of Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer to introduce what came to be known as the "American Model" constitution. The people of Travancore, of course, were familiar with the Westminster or British type of parliamentary Government under which the executive was responsible to the legislature or parliament and the cabinet could be thrown out by a vote of no-confidence by the latter. The people of Travancore actually wanted the establishment of a Government on the Westminster Model, which was not provided in the American Model to be introduced in Travancore. It is also to be noted that in British India when Provincial Autonomy was introduced in 1937 under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935, popular ministries responsible to the legislature assumed office. Even in the neighbouring princely State of Cochin, partial Responsible Government was introduced on the same pattern and ministers responsible to the legislature were entrusted with the administration of some departments.

The demand for Responsible Government in Travancore can be traced back to 1937 when Barrister George Joseph at a meeting of the Joint Political Conference held at Punalur demanded that Responsible Government should be introduced in

80. *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, 1945, p.149.

Travancore of the earliest.⁸¹ He even put forward a proposal that the Maharaja of Travancore should invite the leaders of the Samyukta party in the legislature to form a popular ministry and also exhorted the people of Travancore to start a popular agitation for Responsible Government in case the demand was not conceded. At that time the Maharaja of Travancore was on a foreign tour and therefore, Sri.C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, the Dewan, who was in charge of administration was given full charge to deal with the situation.⁸² On the 17th June, 1937 Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, reported to the Maharaja that

Things are fairly quiet and from the political point of view there is very little I have to report excepting certain favourable aspects. One of them relates the attitude taken by the Samyukta party in relation to the demand for immediate Responsible Government which was made at a public meeting by George Joseph at Punalur. Joseph who has recently been returned on the Congress ticket to the Central Legislative Assembly spoke widely as usual and Stated that the next step after the electoral victory of the Joint Political Congress would be for them to wait in deputation on Your Highness and ask for the leader of the largest party to be called upon to form a responsible Ministry and that agitation should be directed to this end. Soon after this,

81. File No.D.Dis./1896/39/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS TVM. Also refer A. Sreedhara Menon, *Triumph and Tragedy in Travancore*, (Kottayam, 2001), p. 189.

82. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Ibid.*

I sent for Mammen Mappilai and T.M. Varghese and told them that if they concurred in this programme of George Joseph they should be prepared for frank and open opposition on the part of the Government who would not hesitate to adopt a definite policy calculated to put a stop to mischievous agitation, doubly mischievous, because as things are proceeding there is no earthly chance of Responsible Government in British India within a measurable time. Both of them wholly agreed with me and Stated that whatever George Joseph may have said, their party in council and outside would, while pressing for greater representation in the services and so forth, keep away from all agitation regarding Responsible Government. I told them that a mere Statement to this effect in my drawing room was of very little use and it was necessary for them openly to say so, if they did not want opposition from Government which will till now had observed an attitude of neutrality but could do so no longer in view to such possible agitation. Both of them were as good as their word and within a couple of days of their promise to me the enclosed leading article in "Malayala Manorama" has appeared which definitely negates all idea of starting an agitation for Responsible Government and goes on to say that people are unripe for it. Varghese has also made a speech, which is extracted in the paper, more or less to the same effect. This means that whichever party may start extreme political agitation, it will not be the Joint Political Congress. I must add

that recently whenever they have passed their word, the Christians and Ezhavas have kept it.⁸³

The passage clearly indicates that from the very beginning of the demand for popular representation in Government Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer was against granting Responsible Government to the people of the State and he followed a consistent policy through out and the American model may be considered as a move to counteract demands for Responsible Government. He had already put forward his arguments to support his claims, of which the Paramountcy plea is worth mentioning.

It may be noted that with the decline of the Joint Political Congress and the formation of the Travancore State Congress the demand for Responsible Government became more vociferous and persistent. This was at a time when the Maharaja of Travancore was exercising autocratic powers and their ministers and Diwans were acting not only as their spokesmen but also as the executors of their policies. The Palace was not inclined towards granting Responsible Government either in partial or in full measure as in the case of Cochin or British Indian Provinces. As far as Travancore was concerned Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, the Diwan was given a blank cheque by the Maharaja. To him it was evident that "Supreme Royal Authority and Responsible Government were mutually contradictory, ie the one was the negation of the other. It was a misnomer to speak of Responsible Government under the agies

83. *Ibid.*

..... of the Maharaja.⁸⁴ The Diwan put forward several arguments for the denial of Responsible Government to Travancore as demanded by the Travancore State Congress.

He Stated that the grant of Responsible Government would come in the way of the discharge of the obligations which the Native States owed to the Paramount Power according to the provisions of the treaty with the East India Company or the British Crown. In his letter addressed to the Maharaja from Bombay after meeting the Congress leader Sardar Vallabhai Patel on October 12, 1938 Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer explained thus:

I also explained to Sardar Patel that the exercise of Paramourtycy in its present form cannot be contemplated side by side with the grant of Responsible Government to the subjects. I quoted an example, namely, that if a legislature under a Responsible Government passes a law to fetter imports from England or English industries, the Maharaja would be faced with two alternatives; either to agree with the Legislature and incur the opposition of the British Government or overrule the Legislature and incur the immediate opposition of his own subjects. He quite concurred that neither Gandhi nor he had thought about this before.⁸⁵

84. File No.D.Dis./1896/1939/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

85. *Ibid.*

Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer had clarified his stand even before during his speech in the Sri Mulam Assembly on February 2, 1938 while replying to the debate on the adjournment motion moved by T.M.Varghese urging the Government to take urgent steps to introduce Responsible Government. He had asserted that the introduction of Responsible Government in Native States was not possible without violating the treaty obligations entered into between the Ruler of the State and the Paramount Power. He Stated that

If the Ruler accepts the advice of the Minister the treaty obligations are imperilled and the ruler will be accountable to the Paramount power. If, however, he accepts the treaty obligations, he comes into conflict with his own Minister and the legislature to which the Minister is responsible. The position of the Ruler in such circumstances would be most unenviable.

Responsible Government means, in civilized connotation, the handing over of the power to people at large, to be exercised by the representatives of the people through their accredited leader. This means that the Maharaja constitutionally ceases to be able to fulfil the obligations which were taken on to himself by the treaty with the Paramount power.

Treaties between the king of the King Emperor and Indian States are irrevocable. In these treaties there are mutual rights and obligations which are intended to be fulfilled by His Majesty on the one hand and by the Rulers and their successors on the other. The maintenance of these treaties, in their present form is

inconsistent with any grant of Responsible Government in the sense of the Government of the people, by the people, as Responsible Government is essentially founded on power over Finance and power over Law and Order.⁸⁶

C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer's opposition to the grant of partial or full Responsible Government in any princely State in India became all the more clear to the people of Travancore when he Stated in the Sri Mulam Assembly while responding to the introduction of partial Responsible Government in Cochin, that any reform introduced in the Native States without the prior permission of the Paramount Power lacked legal validity.⁸⁷ When this remark of C.P.Ramaswami Aiyer was raised in the British House of Commons by Captain Neilgers, Earl Winterton replying on behalf of the Under Secretary of State for India clearly Stated that it was not the policy of the Paramount Power in ordinary circumstances to intervene in the internal administration of full powered States. He also added that "In particular, I can assure Captain Neilgers that the Paramount Power will not certainly obstruct any proposal for constitutional advance initiated by the Ruler. The Paramount Power would in ordinary circumstances confine itself to tendering advice when consulted."⁸⁸ This statement clearly indicates that the Paramount Power will not, in any way stand against the introduction of constitutional reforms including Responsible Government in Native States, since the matter comes under the purview of the respective Native States.

86. *ibid.*

87. File No. D.Dis.332/1941/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

88. *ibid.*

This would suggest that Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer's statements were not due to lack of knowledge of the policy of the Paramount Power but intended to withhold the introduction of Responsible Government in his State. He was not honest in his Statements as he himself considered it a very important and far reaching announcement which laid down clearly the very opposite doctrine to what was enunciated by Lord Curzon and Lord Reading in the case of Hyderabad (Sir C.P. need not have been so much bothered about these things).

Instead of issuing objection Statements against the grant of Responsible Government in Travancore, which in his view was against Treaty Regulations he could have referred it to the Paramount Power for clarification, whether this would stand in the way of Treaty Regulations, but he never did so, knowing well (or clearly) that such reference would be against his (or Palace) wishes.

Similar opinion was expressed by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer on other occasions as well. After his visit to Travancore in August 1941 Sir Francis Wylie, the Military Advisor to the Viceroy, refers to his conversation with Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer on the question of Responsible Government in the State thus:

The Paramountcy plea (to deny Responsible Government) was in fact the nearest excuse and the real reason while the great Diwan did not concede Responsible Government was either he did not believe it desirable on quite other grounds or simply he did not want to make any such concessions at all. I mentioned in

fact to suggest for the Diwan's consideration that both these reasons were probably in operative. All that C.P. said was 'Of course, of course', Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer with all his qualities would be a far greater man if he were not so sly.⁸⁹

This indicates that the British were well aware of Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer's intentions in spite of the high esteem and honour they had for him. The Royal Family of Travancore was not ready to surrender any of its powers to the people of the State and Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, the Diwan, as a loyal servant of the Ruler, committed to protect the interests of the Royal Family, was only inventing some excuses for implementing the policy of the Palace. His intention was to keep the Palace above all controversies.

The Diwan also put forward another argument that the grant of Responsible Government would militate against the Hindu character of the State of Travancore.⁹⁰ He had advanced this argument before national leaders like Sardar Vallabhai Patel and tried to convince them of its validity. In his letter to the Maharaja of Travancore from Bombay after his discussions with Sardar Vallabhai Patel on October 12, 1938, he Stated:

89. File No.239/1941/C.S. /Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 192-93.

90. This refers to the ceremony called Trippadidanam by the Ruler of Travancore, Marthanda Varma on January 3, 1750 after which the Ruler of Travancore came to be known as Sri Padmanabha Dasa, who were supposed to be ruling the State as the servants of the Lord Sri Padmanabha.

He (Sardar Patel) fully realizes the impossibility of granting Responsible Government, if the Hindu character of the State is to be preserved. As a matter of fact, he says that Gandhi is becoming increasingly alive to this aspect of the matter and is willing to help the State. How far we can rely on this assurance it is impossible to say. But it is obvious from what Sardar Patel told me that Congress would not encourage violent methods of Civil Disobedience in order to gain Responsible Government.⁹¹

These Statements were clear indications that the Palace was not inclined to grant Responsible Government and it was using the Diwan to act on its behalf. The Diwan as a servant of the State could not act against the wishes of the Palace and any open assertion by him of this truth would have caused embarrassment to the Palace and, therefore, it is quite possible that he could not have indulged in such plain speaking.

The idea of the American Model constitution was first expressed by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer in his talks with the State Congress leaders like Pattom A.Thanu Pillai, V.K. Velayudhan and T.M. Varghese on July 7 and 8 and August 2, 1939. The Diwan considered the proposal as a compromise formula by which he could reconcile the tension and anxiety of the Palace to maintain the supremacy of the Maharaja of Travancore in the administration of the State of Travancore with the aspirations of the

91. File No.838/1938/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS TVM.

people for Responsible Government. This can be considered as the first instance that serious talks took place between the State Government and Travancore State Congress on Important political and constitutional matters affecting the future of the State.⁹² The official minutes of the talks prepared on August 2, 1939 throws abundant light on the various aspects of the grant of constitutional reforms in the State.

With regard to the question of constitutional reforms, it was made clear that the Travancore Government do not propose to inaugurate Responsible Government in Travancore in the sense of responsibility to the Executive to the legislature and that a scheme based on such a responsibility is beyond the purview of the discussion. If the State Congress and other political bodies, which naturally will have to be consulted in this matter, will, accepting this basis, put forward other schemes, they will be considered by the Government carefully. So far as the Government themselves are concerned, they have already indicated, by the constitution of the public work committee, their willingness and anxiety to give all possible information as to the working of their departments to representatives of the people and to secure their cooperation in the actual administration of the departments. It is the intention of the Government, if such a scheme and such a procedure commend themselves to the people at large, to widen the range of such committees and enlarge their

92. See File No. 1896/1939/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

ambit so that such committees will function in regard to the important departments of the State and their advice will be normally accepted save where for definite reasons, Government find themselves unable to act on their advice. Such committees will be constituted and such powers exercised on the basis of a Legislature fully elected with no special reservations or weightage excepting in the case of some backward communities. Such a legislature will be elected by a Primary College of Electors who in turn, will be adequately and thoroughly representative of the people at large in as much as they will be elected by and derive mandate from a body representing the adult population of the State. To that primary college may be assigned the task of local self Government, a fairly comprehensive devolution of which subject is essential for rural uplift.

It will thus be observed that it is not intended that there should be any distinction between subjects and subjects with reference to the jurisdiction of these committees but that on the other hand, they will function throughout the range of the normal activities of the State. In other words there may be a primary electorate based on the widest possible franchise, the ideal being to have either adult suffrage or the nearest possible approximation to it. The question of literacy test is also open to discussion. The primary electorate will elect village Boards or

Panchayats the members of which will be put in charge of local affairs subject to the general supervisory powers of the Government. The members of these village boards voting together for each territorial unit will be the College of Electors for the Legislature.

There will of course, be a Public Service Commission, which will be in full exclusive control over appointments.⁹³

The question was raised as to whether this will not amount to conferring a merely advisory status on the Legislature. The answer was that, in strict law, no other deduction was possible. If the Executive were not to be responsible in the technical parliamentary sense to the legislature, the legislature can only be advisory. It was however pointed out that it was a distinction without material difference in as much as a convention will naturally grow up of a normal acceptance of the advice of the committees.

Arising out of the further questions, it was stated that the above scheme is merely provisional and tentative and is open to additions and alternatives as a result of further discussions with the political parties and communities in the State. But such discussions and consultations as to the merits of the scheme or

93. It may be noted that a Public Service Commissioner was appointed by the Govt. of Travancore in 1936 as a result of the Abstention Movement.

the formation of an alternative scheme (which also maybe attempted) will be depended on a definite eschewal of the demand and agitation for Responsible Government on the parliamentary model; and discussions will be started with political organisations only after this point has been cleared.⁹⁴

The State Congress leaders had already made it clear to the Diwan that the American Model constitution under which the Executive cannot be removed was not acceptable to them. Though talks with the Diwan failed Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, the president of the Travancore State Congress intimated the Diwan of his desire to continue talks on the issue but Diwan's attitude was negative. When the II World War broke out the Government considered that resumption of talks could be considered only after restoration of normalcy. Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer declared in the Sri Mulam Praja Sabha that "The kind of Responsible Government could sustain itself only if there were two parties and not many, more or less evenly matched, differing in policies and programmes but alive to the same fundamental needs. The Responsible Government in the sense in which England understood it under Gladstone and Disraeli would not be a proper way in India. There are other methods and means by which the same result can be obtained."⁹⁵ But no progress could be made till the end of II World War in 1945.

94. File No.D.Dis.327/1939/C.S. and File No.1896/1939/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

95. File No.234/1940/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

The Diwan revived his scheme of American Model once again in 1946 and on January 11, 1946 informed the Maharaja that he had discussed the whole position with the Maharani and she had agreed that the proposal would help to maintain the essential dynamic character of the State and continuity of policy that is so essential for further progress.⁹⁶ This would ensure “the fullest association of the people in the formulation of policies”⁹⁷ and mould world opinion in favour of the Government. The Diwan informed the Maharaja that

under the scheme as I visualise it (a) Your Highness’ powers of ultimate Governmental control and veto will be preserved in tact and will be exercised through a duly constituted advisor, the Diwan (b) There will be two Houses of Legislature (i) the Lower House elected on the basis of complete adult suffrage thus eliminating all communal electorates and special privileges or weightages or disqualification in respect of any community or group (c) The other, ie. upper house will be functional or facultative in character and will consist of representatives of landed interests, commerce, industry, education , local self Government and various other avocations and professions. This house will correspond to the senate of the United States and will not be an ornamental or superfluous body like the English House

96. File No. D.Dis.426/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

97. *ibid.*

of Lords, but have coequal powers with the Lower House (d) various committees of the legislature will be constituted which will be in charge of the policy, though not the details of the entire range of administration, with the exception of a few selected subjects like the Privy Purse, Crown Property, Devaswoms and Political Relations and External Affairs and the Army (e) The Executive will not be liable to be removed on the adverse note of the Legislature but will continue for a fixed term, but the Government will normally be bound to carry out any resolution passed by the two houses of the legislature unless the right of veto is exercised for grounds stated. This system gives right to formulate policy to the people at large and guards against the mischief of mob-rule or sudden and hasty decisions. At the same time, it will preserve the status of the Sovereign and its constituted Advisor, the latter of whom, for specific periods, will be in charge of administration. The Secretaries to Governments and all Heads of Departments and officials will work under his direction. They will not be members of legislature but will be able to and may be required to be present at the sittings to address the house or give requisite explanations.⁹⁸

98. *ibid.*

The above scheme was presented to the Maharaja and on January 12, 1946 he approved the whole scheme and steps were taken to inform the Viceroy about the proposed constitutional reform as this would lead to nationwide publicity and especially in Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Delhi. It was also decided to obtain the views of nationalist leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sardar Vallabhai Patel etc. The idea of implementing the constitutional reform by a Royal Proclamation was later abandoned as the Diwan thought that such a step would worsen the political situation in the State and intensify agitation in the State. The Diwan himself expressed the following opinion in the regard: "The fact that your Highness issues a Proclamation to this effect may silence well conducted opponents within the State but will not satisfy persons outside and in my opinion it is far better than the resultant controversy and the answering of objections and the skirmishes that are likely should take place by and against the Diwan who will have the opportunity to speak and write about the major conventions that surrounded Your Highness."⁹⁹

This Statement of the Diwan suggests that he was ready to take up the responsibility of defending the scheme by clarifying doubts of the people and answering possible public criticism against these reforms. The Diwan was also very keen and anxious that the Maharaja should be kept out of all controversies.

A press communiqué was issued on January 16, 1946 announcing the new constitutional reforms and the introductory portion of the communiqué highlighted the

99. *ibid.*

innumerable progress Travancore made under successive Rulers during more than a century and made specific mention about the inauguration of the Legislative Council in 1888, the Temple Entry Proclamation of November, 1396, the abolition of capital punishment in the State; the scheme of universal and compulsory primary education, the establishment of the Travancore University, the starting of heavy and basic industries in the State, etc.¹⁰⁰ The time was considered ripe enough by the Ruler of the State of Travancore to introduce large scale measures of constitutional reforms, involving among other features, the adoption of universal adult suffrage. It was also declared that the main objective of introducing these reforms was to enable Travancore to adequately occupy its legitimate place in a united and self-governing India while at the same time preserving the historical and constitutional traditions of the Ancient State.¹⁰¹

This new constitutional reform provided for a bicameral Legislature comprising entirely of elected members and the method of nominations to the legislature was completely dispensed with. The, lower house will be constituted on the basis of territorial constituencies and without recourse to any reservations, communal or otherwise. The upper house, which will be functional and facultative in character, will represent various professions, advocations, and interests like agriculture, industry, labour, fishing, commerce, trade and the learned professions like teachers, doctors,

100. The Travancore Information and Listener, Vol.. VI, No.6, February, 1946, p.7.

101. *Ibid.*

lawyers, engineers and technicians. The two Houses will have co-equal status and functions. The legislature will normally operate through subcommittees in respect of their control over administrative policy. It will have jurisdiction over the entire field of Government barring certain specified topics like status and property of the sovereign and Royal Family, External and Political Relations, Devaswoms and the Armed Forces. The Government would implement the agreed decisions of the two Houses subject to its rights of veto on grounds to be publicly announced. Both Houses of the Legislature will elect their Presidents and Deputy presidents.

The Executive administration of the State will be vested in the Diwan who shall be appointed by the Maharaja for a specific term. He will be assisted by Secretaries, Heads of Departments and other officers who will be chosen partly by the Public Service Commission and partly under rules and orders in that behalf. The officials will not be members of the legislature. They will be required to attend the sessions of the Legislature in order to answer the questions and to give information and explanations, but will not be allowed to vote. Neither the Diwan nor any member of the Executive Government can be removed by the vote of the Legislature. The Diwan as the Head of the Administration has the right to address or send messages to the Legislature or suggest the initiation of particular items of legislation or financial measures.

The judiciary will be independent of the legislature. The Maharaja will appoint judges of the High Court while the Executive Government will appoint the subordinate

judiciary on the advice of the High Court. The court can pronounce on the constitutionality of laws passed by the legislature.

It was also proposed to have a constitution based on the above principle to be formulated by a Royal Proclamation as soon as practicable. The fundamental aim of having such a constitution is stated in the communiqué thus: "The maintenance of continuity of Executive Administration is provided for as it is considered to be absolutely essential, especially when long term plans for the development of agriculture, industries and commerce have to be carried out which should not be liable to constant fluctuations or frequent modifications arising from changes in the political scene on the varying combinations of the communal or political groups."¹⁰²

The communiqué concluded by clarifying the position of the Diwan thus: "The position of the Diwan vis-a-vis the Legislature and the judiciary will be approximated to that of the president of the United States, subject always to the rights, privileges and prerogatives of the sovereign."¹⁰³ It was this comparison of the Diwan with the President of the United States that gave these reforms the appellation "American Model Constitution."

Official papers gave wide publicity describing it as "the outcome of the wise Statesmanship and broad outlook of an accomplished political genius."¹⁰⁴ In reality,

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*

104. *Ibid.*, No.7. March, 1946, p. 24.

however, the reform made no significant departure from the constitution promulgated in 1932. It kept the rights and prerogatives of the Maharaja intact and retained overriding powers with the executive which was not responsible to the legislature. It can very well be assumed that with the introduction of a constitutional reform of this type, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, the Diwan, sought to safeguard his position as Diwan in Travancore within the framework of monarchical set up and to give an end to the issue and demand of Responsible Government.¹⁰⁵ The Diwan Stated in the Legislature “..... that is not the intention of the Travancore Government to introduce a Responsible Government on the British model. That may be taken as an absolutely settled fact..... I felt it my duty to try and persuade the Constituent Assembly to adopt an irrevocable executive on the Travancore Model.”¹⁰⁶

It is to be noted that all political parties of Travancore including the leftists were waiting for an opportunity to make a compromise with the Government and rehabilitate their fortunes. The Travancore State Congress Working Committee met on 30th August 1946 at Trivandrum and decided to enter into negotiations with the Government regarding the constitutional reforms and the representation to the

105. It may be noted that in a press conference at Bhaktivilas, the official residence of Diwan, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, opined that “..... there was something good in the monarchical system, because it provided the elements of stability, and could be the spear point of national will..... If only the Princes could relieve their responsibility and fulfilled their destinies, the monarchical system would certainly be worth-preserving. For details see *Travancore Information and Listener*, No. VI, No. XI, July, 1946, p.15.

106. The details of the statement – refer Proceedings of the Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly, Vol. XXVIII, No.1, dated 4th Feb. 1946, p.30.

constituent Assembly of India on the basis of full Responsible Government.¹⁰⁷ On the basis of this resolution elaborate deliberations were made with the Government by prominent State Congress leaders, like, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai and T.M. Varghese. But the Diwan, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer placed two conditions before them before any discussion was begun and asserted that these were non-negotiable, viz.

- 1) The supremacy of the legislature subject to certain safeguards and veto, and
- 2) The obligation of the executive to carry out the directions of the legislature.¹⁰⁸

The leaders of the State Congress were, no doubt, suspicious of the intention of talks with them, and considered the talk as meaningless, because of these two pre conditions, and decided to suspend it.¹⁰⁹ The Communists who took a different attitude towards it all along after the entry of Soviet Union in World War II, decided to condemn “the subordinate’ move of the State Congress for peace talks. Even after the declaration of the Diwan in unambiguous terms of his idea not to introduce Responsible Government they did not change their stand.¹¹⁰

107. *Ibid.*

108. Refer proceedings of the *Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly*, Vol. XXVIII, No.1, 20th July, 1946, p.34.

109. File No.346/46/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS TVM. Also see Sreekantan Nair, *Kazhinjakalachithrangal* (Kottayam, 1976), p.16, C. Narayana Pillai, *Thiruvitamkur Swatantraya Samaram*, (Trivandrum, 1972), p.232.

110. For details see K.C. George, *Diwan Bharanam Avasanippikkum* (Malayalam), (Calicut, 1946), pp. 9-10.

Reactions of the Press

The announcement of reform proposal evoked both favourable and unfavourable reactions from various quarters. The *Times of India*, Bombay in its editorial commented that “this Travancore experiment has obvious potentialities of the greatest importance.” It also stated that by establishing relations between the Executive and the Legislature and the Judiciary in an Indian State, there are real possibilities of resolving effectively and satisfactorily a compromise between the hereditary and theoretical rights and population requirements.¹¹¹ *The Pouradhwani* and *Kerala Bhushanam*, two newspapers published from Travancore welcomed the proposals wholeheartedly.¹¹²

Sir N. Gopaldaswami Aiyangar remarked in an interview that “in the constitutional history of India, the proposals will form an important landmark.” Sardar K.M. Panikkar also welcomed it and stated, “The proposals are so far reaching and important that they will be considered a landmark in Indian history. You have shown the way to the rest of India. There can be no question that in the circumstances of Indian States an irremovable executive (the Ruler) should be the pivot. The American model which you have evidently followed will, I am sure, find acceptance in British

111. For details see the *Times of India*, Bombay, 17th January, 1946.

112. File No.346/1946/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. See the paper reports in the file.

India also. I feel happy and grateful that you should have time and again maintained Travancore's pride and place."¹¹³

The British Prime Minister C.R. Attlee in a letter to Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer Stated that "it is in my view a great advantage to India, to have in Travancore with its enlightened ruler and experienced Diwan a laboratory wherein can be worked out the application of the principles of democratic Government to Indian conditions."¹¹⁴ Pethick Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India characterized it as an "extremely interesting constitutional experiment"¹¹⁵ Harold Laski, Chairman of British Labour Party even suggested that other Indian States should follow this example.¹¹⁶

Though the proposed constitutional reform measures were highly appreciated in some circles, the reaction to it from the political parties of Travancore was negative. The fact that these reform proposals was an attempt by the Diwan to reconcile the hereditary rights of the traditional monarchy with the aspirations of the people for self-Government based on the principles of Parliamentary Democracy invoked no appreciation from the people. They considered the whole scheme as a ploy on the part of the Diwan to further strengthen his autocratic powers. Moreover the Diwan failed to convince the people of this real intentions. The extension of office for a period of

113. *ibid.*

114. *Ibid.*

115. *Ibid.*

116. *Ibid.*

five years granted to the Diwan by the Maharaja in January, 1946, with a view to enabling him to promulgate the Reform Scheme in detail further confirmed their suspicion. However, the moderate group under Pattom A. Thanupillai and P.S. Nataraja Pillai in the State Congress stood for the reforms and felt that the reforms should be given a fair trial. The extremist group severely opposed the idea and therefore, the State Congress finally rejected the proposals. This made creative and constructive talks impossible. But the Diwan who was confident about the possibility of implementing the scheme continued his task of drafting the constitution personally.¹¹⁷

The Communist Party also vehemently opposed the scheme and it directed its efforts towards paralysing the administration of the State in all possible ways. From the beginning of 1946 the labour leaders worked out their political strategy in more aggressive proportions than ever before. Strikes became common for securing their demands of increased wages which could attract labourers to its fold easily.¹¹⁸ The

117. On 16th January, 1946, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer informed the Maharaja that "The Proclamation has to be drafted most carefully, each word being scrutinised with the utmost care. The American Constitution drafted with the help of two of the greatest men produced by the United States, Hamilton and Jefferson, was discussed for seven years before the present United States Constitution emerged. As most of the clauses of that Constitution have been interpreted with the aid of American decisions, the present task will be easier but I expect four or five months to be occupied in drafting the proclamation which, in my opinion, may be issued within three months from now."

File No.D.Dis./122/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

118. For details of labour union work and their proposed plans and activities against the government see fortnightly report to the Registrar, Secretariat, Trivandrum, from the I.G. of Police, Trivandrum dated February 28, 1946.

leaders through meetings and demonstrations exhorted the people to remain united and organised.¹¹⁹ The Government realized the seriousness of the situation. The Diwan admitted in the Sri Mulam Assembly that “..... The position in the State is one of some complexity. Definitely there is a move to organise strikes in every industry. On every occasion attempts are made to start a general strike throughout the State consequent on the difficulty in one industry..... That is the exact position as it is developing, ie. if the demands of the labourers in a particular locality are not redressed, then all the other labourers throughout the State will strike work on a large scale.”¹²⁰ The Government was correct in their assessment of the situation as is evidenced by the sporadic strikes in various factories like the Rubber factory at Travandrum, Punalur Paper Mills, the Match factory at Perumbavoor, the coir factories at Alleppey, Sherthalai and Aroorkutty.¹²¹ The Travancore Trade Union Congress called upon the labourers to strike work on 5th September, 1946¹²² to register their protest against what they called “the continued repressive policy of the Government on the labourers and the Communists.”¹²³ The strike was not total and only partial but it helped the leaders of the labour unions and Communist Party to form a clear idea of their hold on the labourers. They assessed that the majority of labourers stood with

119. *ibid.*

120. Proceedings of the Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly, Vol. XXVIII, No.6, 27 July, 1946, pp. 481-482.

121. File No. D. Dis./84/1946/CS Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

122. *Ibid.*

123. K.K. Kunjan, *Thiruvithamkur Mardhanangal* (Malayalam leaflet), September 8, 1946. File No. D.Dis./740/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

them and this gave them enough courage and confidence to continue the activities more vigorously.

These developments had its natural reactions. The growth of the trade union movement under the Communists forced the land lords and industrialists to counter the move by closing down their factories. Some industrialists granted some concessions to their employees while others resisted and even organised rival trade unions and sought the help of the Government in suppressing the labour agitations.¹²⁴

The Diwan was against any kind of Communist activity in his State.¹²⁵ Government posted military at all centres of labour unrest and some industrialists even declared lock-outs.¹²⁶

The Government was determined to suppress the violent activities of the Communists and therefore, ordered the arrest of all prominent labour leaders like V.A. Saimon, R. Sugathan, V.K. Karunakaran, P.T. Punnoose, V.K. Bhaskaran, C.S. Gopala Pillai and A.K. Thampi. Public meetings were also banned for a period of three months from September 7, 1946.¹²⁷ In protest against the arrest of these leaders the factory workers of Alleppey went on a strike on 20th September, 1946. A conference

124 File No.D.Dis./133/1946/CS Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

125. File No.D.Dis./120/1946/CS Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

126. *Ibid.*

127. Note submitted to the Registrar, Secretariat, Trivandrum by the I.G. of Police, Travancore, dated 22nd September, 1946 in the fortnightly report. File No. D. Dis./84/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

was also held at Alleppey by the Communists on 23rd September 1946 under the presidentship of T.V. Thomas which was attended by over one hundred representatives from various trade unions.¹²⁸ The meeting vehemently criticised the oppressive measures taken by the Government and placed before it a charter of nine demands as follows:

- 1) release of all political and labour workers;
- 2) guarantee to personal liberties such as freedom of speech and association
- 3) grant of bonus and unemployment allowance if no work;
- 4) protection in old age and sickness;
- 5) reduction of working hours;
- 6) withdrawal of the military and police from labour areas;
- 7) reorganisation of all industries;
- 8) elected representatives of the people to the Indian Constituent Assembly; and
- 9) ending of the Diwan rule and establishment of an interim Government consisting of the representatives of the people elected on adult franchise to frame the future constitution of Travancore.¹²⁹

128. N. Srikantan Nair, *Vanchikkappetta Venad*, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-10.

129. Statement issued by K.K. Kunjan, Alleppey, on the 5th October, 1946. See for details file No.D.Dis./732/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

The main slogan which rent the air during this time was "Terminate the Diwan rule." They requested the help of the Travancore State Congress and the S.N.D.P. Yogam to extend their whole-hearted cooperation in their endeavour and exhorted the labourers to spearhead the struggle for securing these demands.¹³⁰

The stern stand taken by the labour leaders caused much concern and anxiety to the Government and on October 1, 1946, they promulgated the Emergency Powers Act by which a state of emergency was declared in the State of Travancore.¹³¹ By this Act, the State obtained the power to ban strikes and hartals, processions, flags, meetings, books, films and dramas, to confiscate the property and to extern persons involved in 'subversive' activities. It gave the bureaucracy absolute power over the individual and corporate life of the people.¹³² The labourers and unions which were already on a warpath with the Government was more provoked by this act of the Government. The Trade Union Congress and the Communist Party jointly conveyed their strong protest and disagreement against the promulgation of the Act and threatened to go on a general strike.¹³³

130. *Ibid.*

131. See file No.D.Dis./1142/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see N. Srikantan Nair, *Vanchikkappetta Venad*, op. cit., p. 12.

132. News Bulletin No. 1 of the Travancore People's Association, Bombay dated 29th October, 1946. See file No.D.Dis./769/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

133. Travancore Information and Listener. Vol. VII, No.3, dated November 3rd, 1946, p. 17.

The Government realized the tense and serious situation and the need for effecting a peaceful settlement with the agitating labourers, and convened a Tripartite Labour Conference at the Legislative Chamber, Trivandrum, on 7th October, 1946. The representatives of the employers, the labourers and the Government attended the meeting.¹³⁴ The Diwan Stated that the Conference effected 'a general agreement on all important labour questions.'¹³⁵ Later events indicated that the labourers or labour unions were not satisfied in the conference, and the statement of the Diwan in the Administration Report was not true. Efforts were being made by them to organise demonstrations and strikes throughout the State in protest. The Diwan, therefore warned the Trade Union leaders of 'serious consequences' if they observed a general strike. Emphasising the general policy of the Government the Diwan asserted:

Government could not countenance any strike or threat of strike based on any demand appertaining to the relations between employers and labour. Any attempt at general strike would be regarded by them as a challenge to ordered Government and they would have no alternative but to take all necessary action to deal with such a situation . . . that labour could not possibly strike because Responsible Government was not given nor sought to be given by Government. So long as the present

134. Fortnightly Report from the I.G. of Police, Travancore to the Registrar, Secretariat, Trivandrum, dated 21st October, 1946. See file No.D.Dis./84/ 1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

135. Travancore Administration Report (TAR), 1946-47, p. 94.

Government policy lasted, Responsible Government in the British sense was not going to be contemplated in Travancore. That being clear and final, if on that basis there was going to be a general or sympathetic strike, it would have to be dealt with all the powers under the command of Government.”¹³⁶

The Tripartite Labour Conference, however marked the breakdown of final efforts for a peaceful settlement, and the Travancore Trade Union Congress which met at Alleppey on 13th October, 1946, decided to observe a general strike with effect from 22nd October, 1946.¹³⁷ It also constituted an Action Council of five members consisting of the representatives of the communists, socialists and trade union activists to formulate the future course of action.¹³⁸ By now the issue of the American Model Constitution had been clubbed with the labour unrest in Travancore and the Communists decided to make this an opportune movement to face the Government in battle – the result was the Punnapra-Vayalar Revolts.

The Punnapra-Vayalar uprisings, which of course, was one of the most tragic episodes in the history of Travancore, occurred during the Diwanship of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer. It will not be doing justice, if we characterise it as a mere Communist uprising, though Communist ideology influenced it and it was led by the Communists for their own ends. It began essentially as a revolt of the peasantry and

136. *Travancore Information and Listener*, Vol. VII, No. 3 dated November 3, 1946, p. 17.

137. K.C. George, *Punnpra Vayalar* (Malayalam), (Trivandrum, 1972), pp. 42-43.

138. File No.D.Dis./265/1948/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

working class in the Ambalappuzha-Sherthalai area under the leadership of the Communist Party, but acquired the dimensions of a popular local uprising aimed at the overthrow of the existing political order as well, as there was much tension in the industrial and labour fields in the State.

For a proper understanding of this Revolt the various aspects involved are to be taken note of. Various conflicting theories have been advanced regarding the origin and character of the revolt and the later events connected with it. Various issues involved in it such as the socio economic background, the role of the Communist Party in precipitating the outbreak, the involvement and role of the Palace and the Diwan, the American Model Constitution and its role, and Independent Travancore etc. have to be analysed. Moreover to understand the psyche of the Communists which turned into a 'kind of revolution' one has to take into consideration, the feelings of the communists who were kept off the parent body, the State Congress. The repressive acts of the Diwan in resting from his promise to allot 3 seats in the Legislature to the Trade Unions, his ban on their participation in elections etc. added to the list of grievances already existing among Communist supporters. Christians' fears on the Primary Education Bill and Diwan's recently introduced constitutional reforms on the American Model Constitution¹³⁹ added fuel to the fire.

139. The reform proposed in January 1946 while promising adult franchise to elections to Legislatures provided no provisions to bind the Executive to decisions of the Legislature – reducing it thus to a mere debating society. The Legislature was to act through subcommittees in respect of their control over administration and its policy, with the Diwan the immovable executive, given the right to veto its suggestions.

There were other factors also which created a sense of disillusionment among the people. These centred round the State Peoples' fears on their position arising out of the Cabinet Mission talks in their application to the States, in the non-transference of Paramountcy to a Central Government, which made them apprehend the States being used as British military enclaves from where "seeds of conflict will be spread in India."¹⁴⁰ In this the Travancore State Congress feared, that even if the Constituent Assembly of the type demanded by the Indian National Congress was obtained, it could prove of little use in the question relating to the internal administration of the State even if the people's representatives did find a place in it.¹⁴¹

Thus it was increasingly realized that it was demonstrations from within which was likely to promote their objectives on Responsible Government. The realization that the Cabinet Delegation was in itself necessitated by the enthusiasm of the Indian National Army trials and by the strike of the Royal Indian Navy¹⁴² only added to their

See Communiqué issued by the Government of Travancore on Constitutional Reforms, 16th January, 1946. File No.G-20/1942-46, pp. 35-39, AICC Papers, NMML, New Delhi. For severe criticism on it see meeting of Cashew Factory Workers' Union under the presidentship of K.P. Nanoo, 5th April, 1946, Travancore State Congress meeting on 1st April 1946, presided by N.V. Chacko. File No.D.Dis./394/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. and the Diwan's Statement on it and K.A.Mathew's arrest, 24th March 1946. File No.D.Dis./946/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

140. See circular issued by the Communist Party on the observance of Anti Empire Day on 7th July, 1946. File No.D.Dis./592/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS TVM.

141. See intercepted letter of Pattom A. Thanu Pillai (writing from Delhi) to C.Narayana Pillai, 21st April, 1946. File No.D.Dis./375/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

142. See Circular issued by the Communist Party of Travancore on the observance of Anti Empire Day. File No.D.Dis./592/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

fervour for a revolt which was influenced further by the return of some Indian National Army heroes of the locality and their support to the Communists.¹⁴³ In these circumstances the food crisis provided the right handle for the uprising.¹⁴⁴ The imminence of this revolt was obvious even as early as September 1946 to E.M.S. Namboodiripad. He referred to the situation of Travancore as being on the brink of a fight on the scale of 1938 demonstration – with a prominent difference in that the earlier one had “vakils and other prominent people”¹⁴⁵ in the first rank but now was to be that of the labourers.

The socio-economic background of the uprising also may be taken note of. The peasantry and working class of the area had been subjected to a number of social disabilities and economic hardships. The caste Hindus held a dominant position in the society and the peasants and workers belonging to the lower strata of the Hindu society suffered from serious social handicaps. The Ezhavas, Pulayas and other lower castes

143. There was a growing gap between the Travancore State Congress leadership and the labour unions as a result of the British Malabar Communist activities in these areas. In July 1946 a demonstration was held against T.M. Varghese of the Travancore State Congress by labourers from the A.D. Cotton Mills and released INA men, for the Travancore State Congress' non-observance of hartal on the arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru earlier. See Police Report of State Congress meeting at Kavanad, 27th July, 1946. File No.D.Dis./657/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

144. 1944-45 had been a particularly bad period for Kerala as a result of scarcity of rice. As the District Relief Committee and Serindia Travancore Relief Committee remarked, nearly 30% of the population was subjected to starvation. See File No.47, pp. 163-165, AISPC Papers, NMML, and memorandum submitted by the above committee 26th September, 1944, File No. 47, pp. 151-160, AISPC Papers, NMML.

145. Observation of E.M.S. Namboodiripad in *Deshabhimani*, dated 2nd October, 1946. Also see File No.23/1946 CS Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

constituted the majority of the workers and peasants of the State while the Nairs and some Christians constituted the janmis of the State. Leading janmis of the area were Kattiyattu Sivarama Panikkar, Pattathil Velayudhan Kartha, K.C.M. Anthraper and Parayil Tharakan.¹⁴⁶ The labourers and peasants were subjected to social and economic exploitation. Agrestic slavery in its worst form also prevailed in the area and some of these tenants were even subjected to physical assault and torture either by their landlords directly or their agents resulting in a feeling of alienation and animosity among the peasants. They were even denied the elementary human rights and what was needed was proper leadership for collective action, which was provided by the Communists.

In the economic sphere also the oppressed group were much discontent caused by the acute scarcity of rice and other essential commodities like sugar, kerosene etc and black marketing and profiteering became the order of the day.¹⁴⁷ As a result while the prices of all essential commodities went up high in the market, thousands of labourers were thrown out of employment, either because of lock-outs or for other reasons, resulting in deprivation of their normal means of livelihood and leading to starvation. There were reports of starvation deaths in the coastal area and of consumption of oil cake and similar articles by the poor people.¹⁴⁸ The fishermen folk

146. See file No. *Ibid.*

147. *Ibid.*

148. "According to a report of the servants of India Society 21,050 people died of starvation in the area. Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer who visited Sherthalai and Alappuzha to make exhaustive enquiries about the veracity of these reports informed the Maharaja in his

mostly belonging to the Latin Christian community had almost daily skirmishes with the boat owners, ie. their masters, regarding boats which were taken on a high rent from the owners. Left with no other means, they thought of resorting to violence to get their grievances redressed and all sections of the working class, viz. the agricultural labourers, coir factory workers, toddy tappers, fishermen folk, oil mill workers, resorted to collective bargaining, under the Communist banner. The Communists, as a policy of extending mass support promised the land less people that in the event of their coming to power there would be distribution of land in the State on the basis of population figures, each one thirteen and a half cents.¹⁴⁹

In the circumstances, clashes between the employers and the janmis on the one side and the workers and peasants on the other became almost daily occurrences and

interview note on November 21, 1944 that there were no such cases of starvation deaths and that they were exaggerating the distress in the area in order to get money. He also says that the representative of the society promised payment to every person who have information about death by starvation and he encouraged wrong statistics. the Diwan, however, concedes that a certain number of families could not afford to buy food grains due to high cost and that he has arranged sale of food grains to such families at half price through local relief organisations.”

A.S. Menon, *op. cit.*, Notes, p.338. It may be noted that the Diwan's note was a concealment of the real situation to the Maharaja as he himself had admitted that a number of families were unable to buy food grains. The misery remains that the Royal Family did not take any measure to ascertain the real situation and give any relief, on its own, to the poor people.

149. It may be noted that the people were misled by the Communist. The communists were aware that through this agitation they could not gain power. Still they propagated that they would distribute 13½ cents of lands to its followings a promise enough for the labourers to participate in the agitation, without knowing the real nature and after effects. File No. D. Dis./592/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. For details see the Police confidential Reports in the file.

this brought the police and military on the scene. The Government gave the military and police officials special powers to tackle the situation and preserve peace in the area. The custodian of law and order resorted to coercive measures against the working class. It was the interest of the employers and janmis that they protected. This brought about direct confrontation between the working class and the police and military and the former was aided by the Communist Party leadership in the stand taken by them. It is estimated that about 70,000 people had organised themselves in trade unions under Communist leadership in challenging the might of the State. In the circumstances what began as protest by the peasants and workers acquired political dimensions.

The fortnightly report of the British Resident Col. Edwards which was sent to the Political Department under the Viceroy after the incidents of October 1946 and which is available in the National Archives gives us valuable glimpses of the situation prevailing in Ambalappuzha-Sherthalai area prior to the outbreak. According to the report the food scarcity enhanced by the low ration in the State, the return of the demobilised men from the army in good number and the consequent unemployment, the rise in the price of essential commodities and the labour unrest throughout the State were the social and economic causes of discontentment. The steps taken by the Government to suppress all agitations and the arrest of the State Congress leaders and Trade Union workers, student leaders etc., were the political causes of the uprising. The report specifically refers to the defiant attitude of the agricultural workers who

under Communist influence refused to give any paddy to the Government or to Janmi and to take as a matter of right 10 out of every 100 coconuts plucked by them.”¹⁵⁰

An important political development at the national level at this time was the assumption of office at the centre by the Congress and the formation of the Interim Government by Jawaharlal Nehru on 2nd September, 1946. The Communists were highly critical of the Nehru Government at the centre. After the end of the II World War the Communist Party changed its policy of cooperation with the British and advocated a policy of direct and open confrontation. The Communists also characterized the Nehru Government as an unholy compromise between the Congress and the British. The Communists stood for the removal of the Nehru Government to achieve real freedom for the country.

It was in this background that on 13 August, 1946 a big Communist jatha was excited into raiding the houses of the landlords and manhandling them. Following the security proceedings taken against some leaders, a secret conference of the representatives of the Travancore Trade Union Congress was held on 25th September

150. *Ibid.*, Also see A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 210-211. Also see report sent by the Intelligence Bureau of the Criminal Investigation Department of Madras (1946), CRR, IOL, ACC. 133, NAI. See also Pattom A. Thanu Pillai's statement in the Hindu, 31st October 1946. Also see activities of the Catholic Youth congress and arrest of Cheriyan J. Kappan for asking "Cultivators to forcibly occupy forest lands belonging to the government and to cultivate them, promising support to such cultivators." Paper cuttings of API news, 26th October, 1946, CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

1946 where repressive policy of the Government was discussed and it was resolved to consolidate the workers and prepare for a struggle.¹⁵¹

Faced with the inevitability of a showdown between the Government and the working class under Communist leadership the party organised a number of volunteer training camps at Punnapra, Vayalar, Muhamma, Kalarkode (Kalavankoodam), Olathala, Menasseri, all situated within the Taluks of Ambalappuzha and Sherthalai, with Vayalar as headquarters which they called the Moscow. All these places were the strongholds of the Communists. Each of these training centres consisted of not less than 2000 workers. The weapons which the Communist led volunteers collected for confrontation with the Government forces were sharpened bamboo sticks, stones, pickaxes, hammers, and knives. Trenches were dug in Vayalar. The ex-service men who had returned from active service in the war and sympathisers of the Communists were also enlisted to impart drill in military fashion to these volunteers. In the event of firing by the military these trainees were taught to lie flat during firing and they were informed that in this position the bullets will not hit them, which allowed them to tackle with long spears.¹⁵² The Vayalar camp was under the charge of C.K. Kumara Panikkar known as 'Vayalar Stalin'. The report of the British Resident Col. Edwards States that the workers were made to believe that the "State forces are powerless, that

151. Paper cuttings of API news, 26th October, *op.cit.* Also see observations of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, 20th October, 1946. File No.D.Dis./231/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

152. For details see CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

they have only weapons without ammunition and that the State forces cannot successfully oppose them. They also taught them how to lie flat during the firing and impressed on them that the bullets could not hit them and that they could easily tackle them with long spears.”¹⁵³

It was not as if the Government were entirely unaware of the trouble brewing. On 30th September 1946 an Emergency Ordinance was promulgated resting in the Executive of the Police, extensive and arbitrary powers which included provisions to arrest and house searches without warrants, detaining persons without trial, banning of meetings generally, proscribing news papers and political organisations.¹⁵⁴

The major riots at Punnapra-Vayalar took place between 24th to 27th October 1946 but disturbances began in the middle of October itself. The reports given by C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer to the Maharaja on 16th and 18th October 1946 points to this fact that there existed very tense and serious situation in the areas. It stated that:

A few days ago some of the labourers employed in the coir factories near Sherthalai tried to coerce their employers into giving them better ways and amenities and on receiving an

153. *Ibid.* Also see Report of Intelligence Bureau of the Criminal Investigation Department Office, (Madras, 1946), See CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

154. See Travancore Government Gazette Extraordinary, 30th September, 1946, File No.47, p.99, AISPC, 2nd instalment, NMML. Also see Memorandum presented by A.K. Pillai to Conrad Corfield, 28th November 1946, CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI K.C. George, describing this period, argued that it beat that of the Gestapo's fascistic methods. See K.C.George, *Immortal Punnapra Vayalar*.

unfavourable answer the labourers assaulted some of the owners and set fire to some thatched huts. Hearing of this I directed the I.G. of Police to take necessary action and effect the arrest of the miscreants concerned. This was done: but evidently under Communist influence a large crowd gathered yesterday, many of the members of which were remarkably armed with daggers and knuckle dusters which seems to have been imported from outside the State. They assumed a threatening attitude towards the police.

On receiving a telephone message late last night from the I.G. of Police who is camping now in Kottayam I ordered despatch to the spot of 100 military personnel fully armed. They left last night and it is hoped that their presence would be a deterrent factor. The new and unexpected development, however, consisting in the people arming themselves is the result of a contagion from British India and has to be most carefully watched and strongly combated.

Late last night I received an intimation from the I.G. of Police that the situation near Sherthalai has now been brought under control. I have ordered a complete search to be made of all the likely places where any weapons may have been stored. This search may give rise to some minor incidents and the whole of the Reserve Police would be required on the spot. In order to

make up the deficiency that may be so caused in respect of the Reserve Police, the I.G. thinks and I agree with him, that one more company of 100 men may be sent to Alleppey for two or three days. I am arranging that the Army personnel should return in time for the Birthday procession.”¹⁵⁵

The Diwan was fully aware of the highly tense and volatile political situation and the inevitability of strong military action to be taken to suppress and close down the volunteer camps. He, therefore, tried to avert such a situation with certain moves at the administrative and political levels. He instructed his officials to concede all legitimate demands of the labourers to ensure a peaceful settlement. Talks were initiated with the trade union leaders on their demands and officials expressed their willingness to redress all their grievances. At this stage the talks took a different turn and the Trade Union leaders demanded end of Diwan's Rule and grant of Responsible Government which could not be agreed to by the officials. Hence the talks failed¹⁵⁶.

Again prominent State Congress leaders like Pattom A. Thanu Pillai and R. Sankar were persuaded to interfere and the task of initiating a settlement fell on R. Sankar, who also got the approval of the SNDP Yogam to embark on his peace-move. He met the Diwan and the rebel leaders more than once and made all efforts to avoid possible bloodshed and loss of life in the event of an encounter. Though R.Sankar

155. Report of the Intelligence Bureau of the Criminal Investigation Department Office, (Madras, 1946), CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

156. *Ibid.*

appraised the Communist leadership of the seriousness of the situation arising from the determination of the Government to crush the insurrection at any cost even with the help of the army, the leaders as well as the rank and file of the Communist Party were not ready for a settlement on their new demands and to dissolve the training camps.¹⁵⁷

A violent confrontation between the two parties thus became inevitable and imminent.

Following the banning of the Travancore Trade Union Congress and the Communist Party a general strike was declared by them on 23rd October 1946, it being the Maharaja's birthday. This signalled the start of an agitation at Sherthalai, Vayalar and Alleppey where buses and boat services carrying rice became the convenient targets.¹⁵⁸ About 70,000 workers struck work and normal life was paralysed in the area. The water transport came to a standstill. The port workers also joined the fray. All factories in Alleppey, Sherthalai and Vayalar came to a stand still. On 24th October 1946 there occurred a clash between the Reserve Police and the agitators including demobilised members of the Malabar Police¹⁵⁹ at Punnapra where the police party was overpowered by the agitators and 4 policemen including a sub Inspector of Police, were killed.¹⁶⁰ The insurrectionists cut telephone and telegraph wires, bridges and

157. *Ibid.*

158. Reports of the Intelligence Bureau of the Criminal Investigation Department Office, Madras, 1946, CRR, IOL, Acc. 133, NAI.

159. Telegram from the Crown Representative to Secretary of State, dated 29th October 1946. File No. 343-P/46, CRR, IOL, Acc. 133, NAI.

160. A party of processionists, trained and equipped with "wooden spears, axes and locally available weapons, made a planned attack on a police party encamped in a house at Punnapra. The Inspector of Police, Velayudhan Nair, supposed to be a Communist sympathiser and three other constables died and ten others injured. The rebels were

small culverts were completely demolished. The 'rioters' held the day till State troops arrived on the scene during late in the day. The retaliation by the 'rioters' in some centres witnessed the death of several persons in the general firing by the State Forces. On 25th October 1946 the Maharaja issued a Proclamation imposing Martial Law in the Taluks of Ambalappuzha and Sherthalai.¹⁶¹ The Proclamation also authorised the Diwan to frame such regulations and issue such orders as were deemed necessary by him to tackle the situation and called upon the people to cooperate with the police and military in maintaining peace. The Martial Law was to be in force in these taluks till such time as it was withdrawn by the Diwan through a notification in the Government Gazette. More detachments of the military were sent to the area to take charge of the situation and quell the riots and the Diwan called for help to be rushed by the Paramount Power from their stores, equipment and troops stationed at Bangalore.¹⁶² In order to coordinate the activities of the civil and military authorities and to ensure unity of command the Maharaja conferred the rank of Lieutenant General on Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer and entrusted to him the formal command of the State Forces.¹⁶³ In the retaliatory firing by the State forces which followed more than 2000 workers were

able to seize 9 rifles from the police. See reports of the Intelligence Bureau, Madras, *op.cit.* Also see reports in *Statesman* dated 25th and 26th October 1946. For statements and accounts of participants see K.C. George, *op. cit.*, pp.72-90.

161. The Travancore Gazette Extraordinary dated 25th October, 1946, Travancore Government Press, Trivandrum, Also see K.C. George, *Ibid.*

162. Resident to Polindia, 24th October 1946. File No. 343-P/46, CRR, IOL, Acc.133, NAI.

163. The Travancore Gazette Extraordinary dated 25th October, 1946, Travancore Government Press, Trivandrum.

killed, in order to bring down the statistics on those killed they were burnt by petrol being poured over them.¹⁶⁴

During the next few days also there occurred violent clashes between the rebels and military in various parts of the area to the north of Alappuzha town. Kattur, Mararikulam, Menasseri, Olathala etc. witnessed scenes of stern military operation. The flash point was reached on 27th October 1946 when the volunteer camp at Vayalar near Sherthalai became the main target by the Armed Forces. Vayalar was a water logged area. It is surrounded by water on three sides. All attempts of military to land at the place in the night and face the rebels proved futile and the agitators were well armed with bamboo shafts, axes, stones etc. The rebels had already destroyed the culverts and put up barricades to prevent free movement of military vehicles.¹⁶⁵ Before opening fire the military dropped leaflets from a helicopter and made announcements through megaphones asking the volunteers in the camps to disperse, but the rebels disobeyed, and they were determined to resist any military action. The military then opened fire from all the three sides with machine guns and the indiscriminate firing lasted for about five hours. The rebels resisted with remarkable courage facing the bullets. Many of them even crawled on their bellies in order to

164. For details see File No. D.Dis./398/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. For a detailed report of the Police firings and casualties see the relevant portions in the file, which of course is as per the Government estimate provided by the police. A detailed report of the police is also available.

165. Reports of the Intelligence Bureau, Madras, *op.cit.*

escape bullet injuries. However, they could not hold on indefinitely as they were no match for the well equipped military.¹⁶⁶

The punitive measures taken by the State forces and the declaration of Martial Law no doubt restricted it to Sherthalai, Punnapra and Vayalar areas and did not allow it to spread to other places in the State or to the frontier districts.¹⁶⁷ This was of particular significance in that this underground movement had taken its direction mainly from the Malabar Communist Party leaders, before and during the riots and there was always the danger of Communist brethren from across the border participating in the movement even directly.¹⁶⁸ The British Indian wing advised them to continue the struggle till all repressive measure were withdrawn, the leaders released, the ban on the Trade Union Congress withdrawn and the demands of the workers granted. The Diwan took up for himself full responsibility and blame for the military action which he said had been taken “deliberately” as he had seen” no point in going piecemeal.”¹⁶⁹

166. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p.217.

167. See Intelligence Bureau Reports, *op.cit.*

168. It does not redound to the communist movement in Kerala much, that while making the Travancore people the casts paw of their agitation at the moment of struggle they extended little help.

169. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer in an interview to the Associated Press of America on the disturbances at Travancore. For details see *The Tribune* dated 5th November, 1946.

As rightly observed by the Intelligence Report of the Criminal Intelligence Department “the Communists in their haste to lead all struggles”¹⁷⁰ had exploited the situation of grievances and had unleashed a rebellion, even before the time was really ripe. The grievances, as Diwan himself, apportioning an amount of blame on Travancore State Congress, ‘indirectly’ acknowledged, stemmed from “the great political discussions and decisions ahead in the country including British India and the Indian States”¹⁷¹ on which the State Government as well as British Indian parties themselves had as yet to declare their intentions. The manoeuvres of the Travancore State Congress in making what the Diwan called speeches “violently attacking the Government and urging the people to direct action against the Government”¹⁷² were merely in the nature of preparations to the coming eventuality they foresaw.

The Communists thus in their miscalculations not only queered the pitch so carefully prepared by the Travancore State Congress in their hastiness, but in addition, contrary to their expectations that the Travancore State Congress and other parties would line up with them in the struggle, were left unsupported.¹⁷³

170. See Intelligence Report, *op. cit.*

171. C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer at the inaugural address of the Agricultural Society, immediately after the police action, 26th October, 1946, reported on 29th October, 1946, CRR, IOL, Acc. 133, NAI.

172. *Ibid.*

173. See State Congress Committee Report.

The Travancore State Congress on this issue took altogether a different line. While supporting the Government in its upholding of the low figures on casualties, (of 94 persons killed at Vayalar, 37 at Menacheri and 40 at Punnapra amended to a total of 190 later)¹⁷⁴ it ended on a note warning the Government against repression and proclaimed that a Government which could not protect its own people without proclaiming martial law had no place in governance.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand it deplored the violent methods adopted by a section of labour, under the guidance of Communist leaders whose activities, were dictated and controlled by a 'foreign party', it expressed itself on the side of labour to whom it appealed to free themselves from the Communist leadership responsible for their troubles. It took this opportunity to warn the industrialists and landlords in turn that their relationship with their employees could no longer be that of the master to the servant but one of cooperation.¹⁷⁶ The Diwan characterised this attitude of the Travancore State Congress as "unhelpful, obstructive and provocative"¹⁷⁷ and as one of hunting with the hounds and running with the hares.

174. For details see Travancore State Congress Committee Report, after their investigation at Vayalar on 16th December 1946, Punnapra on 18th December 1946, Menacheri on 2nd February 1947. File No. 12/1948/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see statement issued by Pattom A. Thanu Pillai. File No.15/1947/C.S. *Ibid.*

175. But in its (State Congress) private report (as reported by a police officer) it had declared that "but for the declaration of martial law the situation would have gone beyond control." This statement justified declaration of martial law. File No.12/1947/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

176. Speech of Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, dated 29th October 1946. *The Hindu* dated 31st October, 1946.

177. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer's reaction to the statement of Pattom A. Thanu Pillai. *Ibid.*

The Travancore State Congress' policy though partly dictated by its animosities arising out of the grip of the Communist leadership from British Malabar over Travancore labour was dictated to a greater extent by the needs of British Indian leadership which imposed "a policy of promoting tranquility and forbidding active movements against State authority on the eve of transferring power by the British to Indian hands."¹⁷⁸ Thus in its policy of "wait and see" the position of the Travancore State Congress had been made difficult by the hasty action of the Communist uprising.

The Communist uprising, on the Diwan's own assertion, was completely suppressed within a period of 4 days, in spite of which the martial law in the affected areas was allowed to continue.¹⁷⁹ In the mopping up operations which continued, 17 Trade Unions were banned, members of the Travancore Trade Union Congress arrested, leading writers and literary critics in any way connected with the Communist programmes, along with 5 out of 11 members of the Travancore State Congress Working Committee were put behind the bars. With the Emergency Act with its powers to detain, intern or extern anyone even on suspicion of their acting or with intentions to act against the Government, the Diwan banned all meetings, indoor or public, of a political nature processions and hoisting of flags national or other wise.

178. See the statement issued by Pattabhi Sitaramayya on the policy of All India State People's Conference dated 13th January, 1948. For details see File No. SPI.1945-48, pp. 48-49. AICC Papers, NMML. See also File No.205/1947/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

179. Memorandum by P.K. Pillai to Corfield dated 28th November 1946. CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI. Also see Resident's reports for November 1946, Ibid.

Even areas outside the boundaries of the Martial Law were not exempted from its spheres.¹⁸⁰ What was more significant was the novel method adopted by the Government in impounding all ration cards of the ‘suspects’ permit to purchase rice and textiles.¹⁸¹ The success of this measure is at once obvious in his repetition of the same threat to coerce signature on his ‘independence’ stand taken subsequently.

As a result of these repressive measures Travancore was not only made free of any demonstrations for the Diwan to make his next move.¹⁸² His success in dealing with insurrections made him lose all fears of any threats of a deterrent nature in the threats of ‘direct action’ by the Travancore State Congress. It was in this sense that the hasty action of the Communists in their insurrections, before the time was ripe, had proved impolitic.

Different views have been expressed about the Communist uprisings. K.C. George who was one of the leading organisers of the revolts said that “The revolt formed a significant scene in the long fight organised under the leadership of the Communist Party and the organised labourers for the achievement of Responsible Government and for ending the ‘American Model Constitution’ and the rule of the

180. The Reserve Police arrested several persons at Kottayam and Koothatukulam. For details see article by Annie Mascrene, *Malabar Herald* dated 9th November 1946. File No.47, AISPC Papers, NMML.

181. *Ibid.*

182. The decision of the Gwalior Conference of the AISPC to stay the hands of the states people from starting any agitation also helped the Diwan. File No.205/1947/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Maharaja and Diwan.”¹⁸³ He Stated further that “the fight dismantled the creations of British imperialism to exploit the Indian independence and destroyed altogether the predictions of native rulers . . . Thus it will stand for ever as an important chapter not only in the history of the freedom movement in Travancore but also in India...”¹⁸⁴ C. Narayana Pillai, a veteran participant in the agitation for Responsible Government in Travancore and a State Congress activist expressed the view that “the incidents at Punnapra-Vayalar are to be considered only as the criminal actions of a small group of leadership” and condemned the Communist Party on the ground that it misguided the innocent labourers to the field of carnage.¹⁸⁵ The All Kerala Students Congress was of the opinion that “The labour movement was well-organised, well-disciplined and extremely powerful. It is the irresponsible lead of the labour movement by the Communists through wrong ways that has occasioned the present mishappenings and the pitiable downfall.”¹⁸⁶ Thus one can see some views vehemently defending and supporting the uprisings while others opposing and critical of the Communist actions. It must be remembered that the Communists were in an eagre mood to regain their hold on the masses through any means and this they achieved by these uprisings, as being characterized as martyrs of the land. Whatever may be the criticism against the Communist Party for this large scale holocaust, the uprisings in October 1946 opened

183. K.C.George, *op.cit.*, p.185.

184. *ibid.*, p. 242.

185. C. Narayana Pillai, *op. cit.*, p. 1080.

186. See *ibid.*, Also see file No.D.Dis./11/1947/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

a new chapter in the history of the leftist movement in Travancore as well as in India. In this connection the opinion expressed by George Woodcock is worthy of mention:

The memory of the battle at Punnapra and Vayalar still arouses strong feelings in Travancore. The Communists have transmuted the incident into a symbol of heroism and martyrdom, an epic day in the party's history; ... The rebellion was instigated not by foolish but highly intelligent men, and they did it because, even if success were impossible, defeat would profit the cause, which in the long run it did¹⁸⁷

This was, of course the truth as the Communists leaders knowing that they will not win the case, sacrificed the lives of innocent people for the growth of the Party in Travancore, which they won at the cost of heavy casualties, about which they were unconcerned.

Whatever it is, it is to be appreciated that the working class, for the first time in the history of Travancore, making common cause with political leaders of their line, organised a violent fight against the Governmental machinery. Full credit to the organisation and participation of the labourers in these agitations cannot go entirely to the Communists, but their organisational framework very well succeeded in bringing together all labourers for a common cause, forced by the economic situations.

187. George Woodcock, Kerala, *A Patriot of the Malabar Coast*, (London, 1967), p. 248. Also see P.V.K. Kaimal, *Revolt of the Oppressed*, (Konark, 1994).

The Constitution of 1947

The Diwan who was quite earnest about implementing the constitutional reforms went ahead with the task of drafting the constitution personally. But as political events went against him and public opinion could not be gathered on this and dissatisfied over Travancore affairs Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer decided in November 1946 to make his exit from Travancore.¹⁸⁸ On 10th November 1946 the Diwan wrote to the Maharaja thus:

Attempts have been made by me to contact and persuade the leaders of the Congress Party and the Rulers and I may say, at the risk of being egoistic, that the persons with whom I have talked profess to see something in my arguments. I may specially refer to the question of Responsible Government in the British sense not only in Indian States but also in British India. There is a drawing consciousness in the minds of leading Congressmen that the spectacle that presents itself in Sind and Madras is due to the adoption of this system. I, therefore, find both in British India and Indian States that my Statements and arguments are not taken at their face value and are regarded, mainly as an attempt on my part to strengthen my personal power and position and to maintain my authority indefinitely in

188. Letter addressed to the Maharaja of Travancore dated 10th November, 1946. File No.306/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Travancore or in the alternative, as an attempt to aggrandize Travancore and place it on a special position of vantage superior to that enjoyed by other Indian States. To put it briefly, the suspicion of my motives and jealousy against Travancore are gravely jeopardizing the possibility of my arguments carrying their legitimate right.¹⁸⁹

The letter is a clear indication of his disappointment in this regard, and a confession that he could not protect the Royal interests.

Though his resignation was accepted it was subsequently withdrawn under pressure from the Maharaja. He returned to Trivandrum on 20th December 1946. The immediate task before him on his return was to release a press communique, which he did on 24th January 1947, outlining the objectives and main features of the proposed new Constitution for the information of the public.¹⁹⁰ The Constitution provided for a bicameral legislature – a Lower House called Sri Mulam Praja Sabha constituted on the basis of adult suffrage, and an Upper House called Sri Chithra State Council representing various interests and occupations and institutions. Provision was also made for an elected President and Vice-President for both the Houses. Section 24 of the Constitution restricted the Legislature from enacting any legislation on the following 6 matters:

189. *Ibid.*

190. Press communiqué dated 27th January 1947, Government Press, Trivandrum. Also see *The Hindu*, dated 27th January 1947.

- 1) The Royal Family of Travancore or any member thereof or the management of the house hold.
- 2) The Travancore State Forces including the Ruler's body guard.
- 3) The Devaswam or Hindu Religious Endowments.
- 4) The Relation of the Travancore Government with the British Government, the Government of India or with other Princely States or Princes.
- 5) Matters governed by Treaties, conventions or Agreements made by the Government of Travancore with the British Government, the Government of India or with foreign princes or States.
- 6) The Provisions of the Reforms Act and the Rules passed under it.

These provisions were clear indication of retaining the sovereignty of the Maharaja not only over the Legislature but also over all powers of the Government. The scheme also did not envisage the office of ministers. The Diwan retained veto power on the decisions of the Executive Committees elected by the Legislature. Provision was also made that if a no confidence motion was passed by the Legislature by two third majority against any member of the committee he should resign his position.

The judiciary was empowered to pronounce on the constitutionality of laws passed by the Legislature, but restricted to question the actions of the Diwan.

However none of the provisions of the new Constitution, in any way, affected the powers of the Maharaja to enact laws or take action under his inherent sovereign power.¹⁹¹

The reforms were widely criticized through India and the Working Committee of Travancore State Congress which met on 30th January 1947 at Trivandrum viewed these as attempts to consolidate the powers of the Diwan and decided not to participate in any discussions relating to these constitutional reforms.¹⁹² The All Travancore Congress Committee which met at Trivandrum on 17th February 1947 requested the Government to take “immediate steps” for convening a constituent Assembly consisting of members elected on the basis of adult franchise to prepare a constitution for Travancore.”¹⁹³ However Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, President of the All India State People’s Conference welcomed the reforms and tendered some suggestions for the improvement of the proposed constitution. He was not happy over the negative attitude of the Travancore State Congress which was expressed in his letter dated 15th April, 1947 to Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, President of the Travancore State Congress.¹⁹⁴

The intention to introduce the American Model Constitution in Travancore by the Diwan may be viewed in the background of his idea of an Independent Travancore

191. Press Communique, *op. cit.*

192. *The Hindu* dated 1st February 1947.

193. See File No.122/1947/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see C. Narayana Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.115.

194. *Ibid.*

with the end of British paramountcy. He held discussions with some prominent men and leaders of various communities and accepted some modifications to be effected in the new Constitution. The Maharaja promulgated the Travancore Constitution Act XII of 1947 on 7th April 1947 which replaced the Legislative Reforms Act II of 1932.¹⁹⁵ The Government appointed Franchise and Delimitation Committee consisting of 35 members with Justice Sankaran as President. The dissolution of the Travancore Legislature was ordered to conduct fresh elections.¹⁹⁶ The commission was empowered to make recommendations on such matters as delimitation of constituencies.

The annual session of the Travancore State Congress held at Nagercoil on 8th and 9th April 1947 reviewed the situation in Travancore and accepted the resolution that: "... The State Congress and the people will not be satisfied with anything less than full Responsible Government and that a Constituent Assembly on the basis of adult franchise should be convened to evolve a Constitution acceptable to the people . . ."¹⁹⁷ The Working Committee which met on 16th May 1947 at Trivandrum resolved that "The administrative powers should be transferred to the people. All confusions would have ended if that was done at once. People demand complete Responsible

195. T.A.R. 1947-48, p.10. A. Sreedhara Menon has given April 8th, 1947 as date of promulgation of this Constitution Act without proper documentation. See A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p.205

196. T.A.R. *Ibid.*

197. *Prabhatam*, 10th April 1947.

Government. No power on earth could successfully prevent this lawful demand.”¹⁹⁸

Though these resolutions expressed disagreement and opposition on the new constitutional reforms, in the elections that ensued the State Congress participated and the first popular ministry came to power in Travancore headed by Pattom A. Thanu Pillai. But when the members of the Travancore Legislature decided to participate in the deliberations in the constituent Assembly, the new experiment lost its relevance. Thus the American Model ended in fiasco.

198. File No.D.Dis./235/1947/C.S., Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

INDIA ATTAINS FREEDOM - 'INDEPENDENT TRAVANCORE'- AND FORMATION OF POPULAR MINISTRIES

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter IX

INDIA ATTAINS FREEDOM – 'INDEPENDENT TRAVANCORE' – AND FORMATION OF POPULAR MINISTRIES

India was on the threshold of independence by 1947. The attitude of the princely States underwent some changes by this time. When the British Government formally decided to transfer power to Indian leaders, the princely States were free to decide their future. They could join the Indian union or stand independent, or join Pakistan. It was the second choice that was exercised by the Diwan in Travancore. The political conditions in Travancore remained in turmoil when the Maharaja and the Diwan decided to declare themselves independent of the Indian Union against public will. The action by the Ruler and Diwan was a clear indication of denial of justice to their people who were so far agitating for the establishment of Responsible Government in the State, and therefore failed and indicated to feel the pulse of the people of the State. National leaders including Gandhiji vehemently opposed this policy of Travancore and the State Congress which was agitating for this cause reacting against this move and launched an agitation in June 1947.

Princely States and the Cripps Proposals

Indian States were not mentioned in the short term offer¹ of Cripps because they were already co-operating with the British Government. In the long range plan, however, the Draft Declaration announced that provision would be made for the participation of Indian States in the constitution making body.² It further declared that “whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its Treaty arrangements, so far it may be required in the new situation.”³

Thus the Ruler, though not affected by the Cripp’s proposals, was very much concerned with its long term proposition and, therefore, sought clarification regarding their position in the long-term plan. For this purpose, a Princes’ delegation⁴ met Sir Stafford Cripps on April 2nd 1942, in the course of which the Chancellor, the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, argued that, although the States would like to co-operate and

1. Under the short-term offer, it was maintained that, until the new Constitution was prepared, all political parties must give their active and effective co-operation in the Councils of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations for the defence of India and the prosecution of the World War effort as a whole.

See for details R. Coupland, *The Cripps Mission*, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 29.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. This delegation consisted of the Chancellor (the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar), the Pro-Chancellor (the Maharaja of Bikaner) and the Maharaja of Patiala. The Maharaja of Chhattari represented the Nizam. See No. 192, FPD, Political Secret, 1942, 20.

participate in a United States of India, provision was necessary for “non-adhering States or groups of States” to “have the right to form and negotiate for a union of their own with full sovereign status in accordance with a suitable and agreed procedure specially devised for the purpose.”⁵ Sir Stafford Cripps promised the Chancellor that he would urge it on behalf of the Princes before His Majesty’s Government.⁶

Sir Stafford Cripps, in this context dealt with the question of paramountcy and said that while, in the case of States adhering to the Union Paramountcy would be “automatically dissolved”⁷ with regard to non adhering States, the Crown would retain the means to implement its obligation and there would be no change on the question of paramountcy and other related matters except with their consent.⁸

Reference has been made regarding the issue of paramountcy in the earlier chapter. But a discussion on various issues relating to it is to be made for a proper understanding of the situation, and the circumstances leading to the declaration of Independence of Travancore by C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.* It is to be noted that in consultation with the Reforms Commissioner H.V. Hodson, and later V.P. Menon, the Viceroy wrote in a letter to the Secretary of State that a Union of States was not within the range of practical politics “and that it was not worth wasting time considering it.” He was “emphatic that it would be disingenuous to encourage the States to go on thinking along these lines.” For details see V.P. Menon, *Story of Integration of Indian States*, (Calcutta, 1956), p.46.

7. No.192, FPD, Political Secret, 1942.

8. *Ibid.*

Issue of Paramountcy and the Cabinet Mission Plan

On February 19, 1946, the Labour Government announced the appointment of a Cabinet Mission comprising of Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Pethick Lawrence and A.V. Alexander to negotiate with the Indian leaders on the issue of granting Responsible Government to India. Announcing the Mission, Prime Minister Atlee referred to the Indian States and expressed the hope that Princely India and British India would co-operate with each other.

On his arrival in India Sir Stafford Cripps explained the procedure which the Mission would adopt in its negotiations. He made it clear that in its negotiations the Mission would adhere to the earlier procedure and would consult only the Rulers.⁹ This disappointed the All India States Peoples Conference which had all along demanded¹⁰ that the State people's opinion should also be taken into account. Authorised by the standing Committee of the AISPC, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to the Mission insisting that it should meet the representative of the AISPC. In the

9. V.P. Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

10. In Rajasthan, the Marwar State's People's Conference met under the Presidentship of Jai Narain Vyas on February 28, 1946. The president said that the State's people could not be ignored in the future policy of India. "Rulers of the States do not represent the people and if the Cabinet Mission does not consult them (the people) it is bound to fail." See for details *National Herald*, Lucknow, 3rd March, 1946. K.C. Reddy, representative of the AISPC in London who, in the course of a press interview, while expressing satisfaction at the decision of the British Government to send the Cabinet Mission, "Could not help pointing out that Atlee's speech left much to be desired in relation to the people of Indian States." Reddy believed that, unless the Paramount Power relinquished its treaties with the Princes, the latter could not fit in the picture which independent India envisaged.

letter Nehru emphasised that “independence conferred upon India would not be complete unless it applied to State’s subjects too.”¹¹

On behalf of Travancore and some other princely States Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer met the Mission. In the course of his talks with the Mission he suggested two points in relation to States.¹²

- 1) the States were opposed to the creation of Pakistan and were in favour of a United India with a strong Central Government; and
- 2) after the transfer of power to India the British Crown should not exercise powers of paramountcy over the States and they should be allowed to enter into treaties and engagements with the new Government of India.

The Diwan, no doubt, stood for a united independent India and a strong Central Government but clearly expressed his unwillingness to join the Indian Union after the lapse of Paramountcy.

The Cabinet Mission ultimately announced its proposals on the 16th May 1946 in which it was agreed to set up immediately an interim Government ‘to formulate ways and means for the early transfer of power to the Indian hands.’¹³ It also Stated

11. Refer Statement issued by Jawaharlal Nehru, on 19th March 1946, File No.SPI/1945/48, pp.104-105, AICC Papers, NMML, New Delhi.

12. T.I.L., Vol. VI, No. 9, May 1946, p. 36.

13. R.C. Majumdar, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III, (Calcutta, 1963), p. 754.

clearly in detail about the much disputed and discussed issue of paramountcy and Stated that:

. . . . with the attainment of independence by British India, whether inside or outside the British Commonwealth, the relationship which had hitherto existed between the rulers of the States and the British Crown will no longer be possible. Paramountcy can neither be retained by the British Crown nor transferred to the new Government¹⁴

Again in a press conference in Delhi on the same day Sir Stafford Cripps announced that "Paramountcy cannot be handed over to a third party without the consent of the States. They will, therefore, become independent....."¹⁵

The reaction to this Statement from different quarters was a mixed one. While some native rulers and their Diwans welcomed it some others vehemently opposed it. In Travancore the Diwan, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer expressed the view that the Princely States should regulate their relations with the new Government of India only in accordance with the new agreements and treaties. Further he made a Statement in the Sri Chithra State Council that Travancore was prepared to work in the closest alliance with the Indian National Congress and to make a common cause with them for

14. For details refer to the Statement by the Cabinet Delegation and the Viceroy, 16th May 1946. File No.D. Dis/265/1946/CS, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

15. *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1946, pp. 153-155.

the purpose of attaining freedom,¹⁶ if the present position of the dynasty and ruler of Travancore is preserved in tact.¹⁷ This would suggest that instead of integration with the Indian Union the Diwan had in mind an independent Travancore State leading to a policy of keeping the State away from the national mainstream.

The main political organisations in India expressed a different stand and were opposed to the proposals of the Cripps Mission. Both the All India Congress Committee and the All India States' Peoples' Conference expressed their strong resentment and opposition to the proposals and passed resolutions¹⁸ in which they expressed their anguish and concern regarding the uncertainty created by the Cabinet Mission proposals. The unquestionable leader of the congress, Gandhiji expressed the view that the Mission has left the question of paramountcy "very much in the air" and he demanded for transference of paramountcy to the new Indian Government.¹⁹ The strongly worded resolution on the future of Indian Constitution²⁰ moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 13th December 1946 in the Constituent Assembly of India reads thus:

16. T.I.L., Vol. VI, No. 9, May, 1946, pp. 32-33.

17. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, No.1, September 1946, p. 5.

18. File No.206/C.S./1946/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

19. For details see Proceedings of the Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly, Vol. XXVIII, No.1, July 20th, 1946, p. 24.

20. In July 1946 elections were held to the Central Legislative Assembly and the Constituent Assembly of India met for the first time on 9th December, 1946.

No State can have an administration which goes against the fundamental principles or gives less freedom than obtaining in other parts of India....whether the present Rajas or Nawabs will continue or not, concern the people of the States The decision will rest on them. Our Republic shall include the whole of India ... If the people of a particular State desire to have a certain form of administration, even though it might be monarchical, it is open to have it If monarchical figure heads are approved by the people of the State, whether I like it or not, I certainly will not like to interfere. Nobody challenges them in India, and anybody ought to challenge them and anybody does challenge, well we accept the challenge and we hold our position.....²¹

This Statement of Nehru was a clear indication that if the people of a particular State preferred monarchical rule to democracy by free will the Indian Government will not stand in the way or use force to merge into the Indian Union, while it had an indirect message that if the ruler was against integration and the people for integration the Government of India would interfere, thereby giving the freedom to the people of the respective States. Nehru was aware that not the people of a single State in India would adopt to remain independent of the Indian Union except the rulers for their own ends. Hence by this declaration Nehru was fully convinced that the people in Princely

21. See for details k.M. Munshi, *Indian Constitutional Document*, Vol. II, (Bombay, 1967), pp.113-119.

States will not opt for princely rule against a democratic administration in the Indian Union.

Thus the position of Princely States after the lapse of paramountcy became a matter of serious concern to both Princely States and British Indian leaders. The constitutional developments in British India had its impact on the Princely States as well. The speeches of and resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru virtually shook the very foundation upon which the rulers had based their policies to be adopted towards the future Government of India. The gravity of the situation forced several princes to participate in the constituent assembly. However, some States convened a meeting at Bombay on 29th January 1947 and adopted the following fundamental propositions as conditions to their States' acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plans namely:

- a) The State should enter into the Union on the basis of negotiation and the final decision should rest with each State;
- b) The State should retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded by them to the Union;
- c) At the close of the interim period paramountcy should terminate and it should not be transferred to the new Government of India; and
- d) The union should not interfere with the constitution of the State, its territorial integrity and the succession of its reigning dynasty.²²

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 387-388.

These decisions taken at the meeting were only a reassertion of their earlier stand.

On 20th February 1947 Clement Atlee announced in the House of Commons the decision of the British Government to transfer power to Indian hands not later than June 1948.²³ He also reiterated the Cabinet Mission proposals regarding the Princely States and stated that the British Government in India will not hand over their powers and obligations under paramountcy to any Government in British India.²⁴ It was left for the native States to decide their future relations with independent British Indian Government. It was on the basis of these Statements that the Government of Travancore formulated its future course of action.

Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer and the Declaration of Independent Travancore

The demand for and final declaration of Independent Travancore by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer was only a logical culmination of the stand Travancore had taken in the Memorandum to the Butler committee of 1928 and in its talks with the British Government on the question of its entry into Indian Federation envisaged in the Government of India Act of 1935. The stand taken by Travancore in its relation with the centre at different occasions clearly indicated this culmination of events. An

23. D.C. Gupta, *Indian National Movement*, (Delhi, 1970), p. 266.

24. K.M. Munshi, *op.cit.*, p.189.

examination of the background for this is necessary to understand how this position was arrived at.

The Butler committee, which was set up by the British Government to examine in detail the relations between the Paramount Power and the Native States with reference to the rights and obligations arising from treaties, engagements and usage and also economic and financial relations between the two, was presented by the Diwan of Travancore M.E. Watts in April 1928 with a Memorandum. It pointed out that subject to the comprehensive power of intervention exercised by the Paramount Power in respect of negotiations, control of legislation, administration of justice, official appointment and cases of complaints the State could be regarded as autonomous in the exercise of its internal sovereignty.²⁵ The Memorandum also referred to the rank enjoyed by the Ruler of Travancore. He was next in rank to the Rulers of Hyderabad, Baroda and Mysore and demanded "a higher rank than they have now come to occupy."²⁶ It also referred to the usage of some words like 'Durbar' by which the British Government referred to an Indian Princely State and requested to substitute the word by 'Government'.²⁷

25. P.K.K. Menon, *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol. II, (Trivandrum, 1966), pp.150-151.

26. *Ibid.*, p.154.

27. *Ibid.*

The Butler Committee made two important observations in its report submitted in 1929 regarding the exercise of Paramountcy. 1) that “if any Government in the nature of Dominion Government could be constituted in British India, such a Government should clearly be a new and written constitution. The relations of the States to such a Government would raise questions of law and policy which we cannot now and here foreshadow in detail. 2) That in view of the historical nature of the relationship between the Paramount Power and the Princes, the latter should not be transferred without their agreement to a relationship with a new Government in British India responsible to an Indian Legislature”²⁸ Again the Simon Commission in 1930 also recognised the force of this contention.

“Two important issues which caused concern to the Indian States related to their representation in a Federal Legislature and the scope and extent of the powers to be exercised by a Federal Government in relation to the States. Firstly, were the States to be represented by members nominated by the Ruler or by democratically elected representatives of the people? The answer to this itself hinged around the answer to the allied question whether sovereignty was vested in the Ruler or in the people. Secondly, was the Federal Government to be vested with the powers of the States or vice-versa? These were contentious issues that had to be settled amicably by discussion among the parties concerned.”²⁹

28. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Triumph and Tragedy in Travancore. Annals of Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer*, (Kottayam, 2001), p.226.

29. *Ibid.*

The intentions of Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer to retain Travancore as an independent political power was again reflected in the Memorandum submitted to the Loathian Committee which visited Thiruvananthapuram in November 1936. The Memorandum claimed for Travancore the right to retain authority even in subjects which, it might cede to a federal authority. It also demanded for Travancore special treatment in respect of its rights concerning salt and customs. The question of discontinuance of payment of annual tribute was also raised since in a federal set up the components are not subordinate to the centre. It also requested for the recognition of the Travancore High Court as a High Court under Section 217 of the Government of India Act of 1935. The real intention of the Diwan was to plead for an independent status to the State in all possible ways. Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer presented before the Loathian Committee thus:

It is abundantly clear that the British Government are going back not only on their intentions as expressed in the Round Table Conference and Joint Parliamentary Committee, but are resiling from the position they were compelled to assume when they amended the Government of India Act after the well known Bombay meeting of March 1935. To give an instance, Section 6(2) of the Government of India Act was enacted in order to make it clear that it is the Ruler who has to determine the extent of the Legislative and Executive authority of the Federal Organisation and it is the Ruler who has to empower the Federal

authorities to exercise their functions. The proposed Draft Treaty of Accession was, in fact, drafted on this footing. But at present the contention is that Section 6(2) is not to be applied but Section 125 under which the Federation is to get all powers and the Federation is to empower the Ruler to exercise powers delegated by the Federation to the Ruler. In other words, instead of the Federation being the agent to the Ruler in certain matters of all India importance as was at one time contemplated, it is the Ruler who has to be the agent of the Federation, when at their discretion, he is vested with certain jurisdiction.

This is an intolerably humiliating position from the point of view of the dignity of the Ruler, but apart from sentimental considerations, the legal difficulties consequent upon such a position are such that I cannot honestly recommend the adherence to a Federation on such terms.

This is one of the numerous instances of deliberate breaking by the British Government of their word. One more instance may suffice to prove this beyond doubt. In certain matters of all India importance, the power of legislation may have to be uniform but the power of actual executive administration would naturally have to be vested in the Ruler. With reference to every simple item this has been resisted by the Committee who have suggested at every turn that the executive administration must

also be in the Federation. Furthermore, in the case of certain subjects, it was taken for granted throughout the Round Table Conference and the deliberations of the Joint Parliamentary Committee that the Ruler's consent was necessary before federal authorities were enabled to function within the State. The committee wants now to remove the necessity of the Ruler's consent in most of these cases and to substitute therefore, the discretion of the federal authority. In fact, therefore, this imposes in addition to the vague and indefinite jurisdiction of the Paramount Power statutory jurisdiction of the Federal Executive and the Federal Legislature over and above the Ruler of a State who, according to my considered opinion (if the Loathian Committee's ideas to be carried out), will be reduced to the position of a Zamindar in a British Indian Province.

I consider that in the circumstances, that steps should be taken quite confidentially to let certain number of people know the exact state of things so that when the time arrives, public opinion in the State may be co-ordinated and made to express itself in unmistakable terms with regard to the in expediency and danger of joining the federation on the present terms. I may add that I have made clear that the raising of the salute and the

revision of the Inter Portal convention are conditions precedent to Travancore joining the Federation.³⁰

In August 1937, the Government of Travancore made it clear that it will not cooperate with the Government of India in implementing the Federal Scheme at least in one respect. In a confidential letter to the Diwan, the Resident suggested that Travancore State might accede to the Federation with respect to item No.53 of the schedule to the Government of India Act of 1935, in result that the Travancore High Court and Subordinate Courts will be dependent on the Federal Court.³¹ The Diwan outrightly rejected this proposal and recommended to the Maharaja of Travancore to this effect. He suggested that it should be rejected on the ground that "This is a contingency which even if we join the Federation we must avoid."³² This suggestion or recommendation of the Diwan was approved by the Maharaja on August 14th 1937.³³ With regard to the discussion with the Resident of Travancore Col. G.P. Murphy, the Diwan informed the Maharaja on 1st August 1939 that he was not satisfied in the nature of his discussions with the Resident, Col. G.P. Murphy on such substantive issues like salute, customs, excise etc and informed the Maharaja that "In

30. Letter dated 30th November 1936 from C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer to the Maharaja. See File No.35/1936/C.S/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 227-228.

31. See for details File No. 144/C.S/1937/Political Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

32. *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

the net result my deliberate view is that Travancore has nothing to gain but something to lose from the economic point of view and a great deal to lose from the political point of view if we join the federation.”³⁴

Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer's idea of an Independent Travancore found expression again in his Memorandum submitted to the Resident on October 11, 1939 commenting on the Wardha Resolution of the All India Congress Committee. The Memorandum reads:

It must be collected that the arrangements that now govern the relations of the British Government with the Indian States and which are included in the comprehensive term 'Paramountcy' involve certain inescapable assumptions. It has not been found possible to furnish an accurate definition for the term 'Paramountcy' but it depends upon certain rights and obligations arising by virtue of specific treaties and usage. Such relation is not transferable to third parties and certainly not unilaterally. The Congress claim that India be declared an independent nation necessarily involves the immediate independence of the various units of India including, of course, Indian States like Travancore which, unlike British Provinces, have not been conquered and which have entered into relations with Great Britain under negotiated treaties of allegiance and alliance. The

34. File No. 35/C.S/1936/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

relations between States placed in that position and the future 'Independent India' can be only determined by new treaties to be entered into in the future and it is possible that some Indian States may decide not to enter into legal and political union with an independent India.³⁵

This Statement was a clear indication of the Diwan's idea to remain as an independent entity as and when occasion became favourable. By repeating this desire off and on at every possible platform he was trying to get the support from the British administration thereby, he thought, that the Indian National Congress leaders could be persuaded by the British, to accept his demand. On October 19, 1939 the Resident of Travancore, Murphy, informed the Diwan that "he should take into consideration the likelihood of intensified attacks against the State from certain quarters in that event"³⁶ and the Diwan replied that "They (the Political Department) may be informed that if and when the department thinks that the publication of the Memorandum would be helpful I shall do so. I am not much worried about the possible intensification of the attacks because they cannot be more intense than they are at present."³⁷ This evidently brings to light the determination of the Diwan to suppress all possible political agitations against his actions in this direction. He was also consistently adamant in his stand on Independent Travancore.

35. File No.38/C.S./1939/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

Right from 1904 Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer entertained the idea of two political States in India even after independence. He Stated:

The truth was right through during negotiations with Parliament and Ministers from 1919 to 1932, in which along with personages like Dr. Beasant, I took part, I was in favour of a residual authority being alone vested in the Centre which should in my opinion be in charge of Defence and Foreign Relations and certain essential public works of inter-State and continental significance, other powers and jurisdictions to vest in the States (Provinces as they were then called). What used to be called Provincial Autonomy and what Gandhi was always emphasising was an article of faith in the early years of the Congress and from the time I joined the Congress in 1904, I was an advocate of Provincial Autonomy in the above sense with ultimate authority in certain inevitable matters in the Centre.³⁸

By the year 1944 the idea of Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer regarding Princely State's Autonomy in all internal matters had been crystallised in his mind. He Stated that

38. Letter from Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer to K.M. Munshi dated January 9, 1944, File No. 666/19490/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 229-230.

The States, should, in my view, come into a scheme whereby the various administrative and political units in India, while exercising a full measure of autonomy in local matters would co-operate with other units in the composition and working of the central legislative and executive organisations. Such organisations will function effectively within and without the limits of India and national and co-ordinating as well as representative bodies. Within the limits of India the relationship between the units will be one of equality and there will be no question of Paramountcy as such inter se, though the rights residual and otherwise of the Centre will have to be firmly established and implemented My point is this, namely that treaty rights or no treaty rights, no Indian State has a right to exist which does not come into any scheme by which there is created a central direction or central control of matters that appertain to the Indian States and British India alike, or which does not loyally conform to all political arrangements that may be arrived at for the governance of India and all ideologies that may be evolved as a result of free and equal discussion and resultant compromises.³⁹

39. Address delivered on October 6, 1944 by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer before the Bombay branch of Indian Council of World Affairs. File No. 176/1944/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

His indication was of course to reconcile the requirements of State Autonomy in internal matters with those of central direction and control over matters of common concern.

The well-calculated plan of action for an Independent Travancore was voiced confidentially by the Diwan again in 1946 when the question of participation in Constituent Assembly arose. He expressed thus:

I am strongly of the opinion that the Indian States as a whole or at least Travancore in particular, should now take a line without implementing which the dynastic and historical traditions of the State cannot be ensured. There is no doubt that, by taking a definite line based on the so called treaties and by declining to join the Indian Federation, it is possible to be disassociated from Indian constitutional developments and to see that the present posture of affairs is temporarily continued; but to succeed in this attempt the support of the British and their army would be essential because both the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress will stir up trouble and revolt in the Indian States and in most cases such forces will not be sufficient to put down widespread trouble which I anticipate in the course of the next 12 months. To rely upon the British Government in such contingencies is to rely upon a broken reed. English character in

general and Englishmen in particular will always swim with the tide. To rely upon British help and assistance would be unwise.⁴⁰

The Diwan was wise enough to envisage such an eventuality and to be realistic about the political outcome in the near future.

In February, 1946 Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer clarified his stand and asserted that Travancore would remain out of the Union of India after the lapse of Paramountcy. He said that:

I made it clear that this does not mean that Travancore will submit to the exercise of Paramountcy by the British Crown after it has made itself ineffectual as a factor in British Indian politics. In other words, I emphasised that Travancore will and must be relegated to the position before the treaty with the East India Company in 1795, namely as a perfectly independent unit.

I was asked if Travancore will stand by itself against the pressure of British Indian political parties and my reply was that our position could not be worse than it was during the Mysore war, when England was unable to help either Hyderabad or Travancore and Hyderabad, Travancore, and the English East India Company had to enter into a treaty for mutual protection.

40. File No. 455/1937/C.S./Political Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p.233.

Travancore would rely upon its geographical isolation, the protection afforded by its sea board and if necessary, try to defend itself politically and economically against any attempt at subjugation. I added that the time had come when the pious formulae have to be given up and one has to face facts. If there is going to be a civil war in India as the result of Jinnah's attitude, the Travancore Government would stand out of the struggle and should not be expected to help either party to the fight as all the resources would be needed to help ourselves. In other words, if India is going to be independent, important States like Hyderabad, Mysore and Travancore should also be treated as independent, subject of course to their conferring with each other and with the Governments of the future as to the treaty relations which will guide their mutual obligations and rights.⁴¹

These observations of the Diwan forwarded to the Maharaja and approved by him was a clear indication of the future course of action on the part of the Government and the Royal Family. The attitude of non help and non intervention by Travancore to the Indian side in the event of the Civil War was indicative of an Independent Travancore Declaration.

41. File No.134/C.S/1946/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p.234.

The Independent Travancore Move was further voiced with much more strong determination in his Memorandum submitted to the Cabinet Mission. Sir C.P.Ramaswami Aiyer emphasised the following points in his meeting with the Cabinet Mission on April 9, 1946, which was sent for perusal to the Maharaja on April 12, 1946.

- a) Travancore would be willing to negotiate new treaties or agreements with an independent India provided it was one independent India with a central organisation.
- b) The moment India was declared independent the treaties which were justified only on the basis of allegiance offered by one side to the other for defence and protection against external and internal enemies would cease to operate.
- c) Paramountcy would inevitably fall to the ground and will be eliminated as soon as and if the independence of India were declared. Both from historical and legal points of view the statements by Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru that the successor Government would automatically succeed to paramountcy is unacceptable.
- d) With more than 500 princely States no effective organisational framework is possible. Only those States, which can stand on their own legs, should be regarded as separate and individual units. Others should be grouped so as to enable the several States to act through accredited agencies charged with representing their joint interests. There should not be more than 15 or 20 units of Indian States for

this purpose. The minimum financial resources and population for each unit should be decided after further negotiation and discussion.

- e) A united India is of paramount importance. There should be an effective Central Government operating in regard to British India and Indian States dealing with common matters concerning the country as a whole. These should include defence, external affairs, management of armament factories, the regulation of the production of steel, chemicals and explosives, magazines, mica, thorium, uranium, aluminium, iron, etc which are fundamental to welfare, agriculture production, etc.
- f) Travancore would send 50% of its representatives to the Constituent Assembly of the future from the Legislature of the State. But the State would never join a Constituent Assembly that was not meant for the whole of India.⁴²

Though Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer strongly defended and stood for a United India with a strong central administration, from his arguments, what he envisaged was central administration with independent princely States with sovereign right for internal administration excepting a few subjects listed above. He also hinted indirectly that Travancore will not even join a Federation of this kind, if India is divided, and preferred the existence of Travancore as an independent sovereign State in India. This was a clever step taken by the Diwan towards the fulfilment of his aim in future as the political overturns proved that partition was inevitable. After meeting the Cabinet

42. For details File No.828/1946/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Mission the Diwan wrote to the Maharaja that he had won in his efforts. He wrote that “when the permanent Government is set up and the British authority disappears, Paramountcy will not only disappear but all the rights hitherto exercised by the British Government will revert in the States which will be restored to the position occupied before these treaties were concluded with the East India Company. This is most important concession that I fought for and succeeded in getting.⁴³ The Diwan was confident that he had succeeded in getting the British Government’s approval for his suggestions and believed that on the strength of the Statements of the Cripps Mission in this regard, he could declare Travancore independent with the consent of the British.

Undoubtedly, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer in his capacity as Diwan of Travancore and the spokesman of the Princely States of India in general and that of Travancore in particular played a very important and dominant role in extracting from the British Government an assurance that with the withdrawal of British power and consequent lapse of paramountcy, the Princely States of about 600 in number would become independent, as the treaties between them and the British become inoperative or defunct. It was also left to the respective Rulers of the Princely States to decide whether to join the Union of India or Pakistan or declare independence. A general impression was created among the people that C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer was personally responsible for advising the Maharaja of Travancore in this direction and that the Ruler was not keen in this regard. This is contrary to facts as is evidenced from the

43. *Ibid.*

various letters and intimations sent by him to the Maharaja. The Maharaja never opposed this scheme nor made any comments against it nor disapproved his suggestions but gave his consent to proceed at every point. When the Diwan appraised the Maharaja of the disastrous implications and consequences involved in such a move the Ruler directed the Diwan that he (the Ruler) 'wanted to fight it out', whatever might have been the odds.⁴⁴

It is reasonable to believe that the Diwan had anticipated the course of events to come and, therefore, resigned his position as Diwan of Travancore and left Travancore on 7th December, 1946. But the Maharaja's personal appeal through a messenger, at his residence in Madras, forced him to rejoin as Diwan on 20th December 1946.⁴⁵ His resignation was obviously due to the following reasons: 1) His concern about the possible and ominous consequences in the pursuit of his idea of Independent Travancore, 2) He had realized that only if he relinquished the official position he could convince the people that he was not interested in self-aggrandisement, and this would enable him to influence the discussions in Delhi about the future of the Princely States. He might have also thought that he would get enough time and freedom to speak and write about the concerns of the Travancore Royal Family and the State. His interest in literary activity for which he had been collecting materials for the last forty

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*

years also forced him to leave the job.⁴⁶ In his request to the Maharaja to permit him to relinquish the office of the Diwan this point was very much made clear. His resignation was subsequently accepted and a press communiqué was released.⁴⁷

Declaration of Independence for Travancore

In British India lord Mountbatten replaced Lord Wavell as Viceroy and he assumed office on 24th March, 1947. He was sent to India by the British Government with definite and clear instructions to make all possible and necessary arrangements for the transfer of power “in a manner that will best ensure the future happiness and prosperity of India.”⁴⁸ On his arrival he held deliberations with leaders of both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim league. These discussions finally led him to the conclusion that the Cabinet Mission Plan as such was not workable and in the given political situations as the Indian National Congress vehemently stood for a united or unpartitioned India and the Muslim League for creation of an independent Pakistan or a Divided India. He, however, succeeded in settling the issue with them and after final discussion with the Home Government, published certain definite proposals on 2nd June, 1947. Named as the “Mountbatten Plan”, it proposed the

46. *Ibid.*

47. The letter reads: “For partly sentimental and partly religious reasons, I am asking Your Highness’ permission to relinquish my office on 14th January instead of January 1st (the beginning of Utharayana). As I am proposing to devote myself to literary and philosophic work for the rest of my life, the dates may be symbolic.” *Ibid.*

48. *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1947, p. 14.3.

division of India into two independent dominions, India and Pakistan and the official transfer of power to take place on August 15, 1947, instead of June 1948, as declared by Clement Atlee earlier.⁴⁹ People with some exceptions, throughout India welcomed the declaration, though with reservations and disappointment about partition. Thanks to the efforts already undertaken by Sardar Vallabhai Patel and V.P. Menon, majority of the Princely States had already agreed to join the Indian Union without much threat or compulsion.⁵⁰ In the changed political situations larger States like Travancore and Hyderabad decided to declare independence, and talked of entering into treaty relations with other States.

Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, who all along tried all his efforts for an Independent Travancore and waiting for an opportune moment to declare it open, found this as the most favourable time and declared the independence of Travancore. On the 11th June 1947 the Diwan announced in a press conference at Bhakti Vilas, Trivandrum, the official residence of the Diwan that, "Travancore would assume and maintain an independent status after the transfer of power by the British Government and the lapse of paramountcy."⁵¹ A second press conference was also held at the V.J.T. Hall, Trivandrum on 25th June, 1947 in which the Diwan refuted the suggestion that

49. R.C. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, pp. 805-806.

50. V.P. Menon, *Towards the Integration of Indian States*, (New Delhi, 1969), p.76.

51. Press note by the Government of Travancore, 11th June, 1947, See file No.D.Dis/268/1947/C.S./Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Travancore being a small State has no right to claim independence. He compared its population and revenue with those of other princely States of comparable size and British Indian Provinces and also with some Dominions of the British Commonwealth and strongly argued that Travancore with a population of seven million and a total revenue of 9¼ to 9½ crores of rupees at that time had every right to claim an independent and sovereign status. He also declared that Travancore would have joined a United India, but now that the country was going to be divided the State would not join the Constituent Assembly of a Divided India.⁵² He stressed at the press conference that the decision on Independent Travancore was taken by none other than the Maharaja himself and strongly repudiated the suggestions and arguments of it being the decision by someone else and described such talk as ‘Calumnious and defamatory’.⁵³

In order to establish commercial transactions he decided to enter into treaty relations with Pakistan. He also expressed his Government’s readiness to co-operate

52. This was not the stand taken by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer during the period immediately prior to the withdrawal of resignation, and re-assumption of duties of Diwan at the Maharaja’s request on December 20, 1946. In a letter addressed to the Maharaja on December 18, 1946 he said “If Mr. Jinnah stands out of the Constituent Assembly and continues to stand out until and unless Pakistan is created, that is no ground in my opinion for the non-co-operation of the States with the Constituent Assembly.” Evidently he had changed his stand after having taken up the active advocacy of the course of Independent Travancore in the interests of the Royal Family after his return to the State. File No. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

with the Government functioning in India to evolve co-ordinated and harmonious policies as to matters of common concern. In support of this announcement he cited the proposed partition of India and the constitution of two dominions under the aegis of the British crown. On 18th July 1947 the Maharaja issued a Royal Proclamation creating an Independent Travancore which reads: "All the elements necessary for a happy and national existence was present and I feel confident that with the blessings of 'Providence' and the co-operation of my people, Travancore will realize its destiny as a Sovereign State working in close collaboration with the rest of India in all matters of common concern."⁵⁴

The Diwan gave undue importance and publicity to this Proclamation, though he was aware that the people were not with him and strongly stood for integration with the Indian Union. Yet he took it as a challenge and left no stone unturned to win the game. In support of his move and to win the co-operation the people he embarked on an active propaganda campaign. He called upon the people to rally round the Maharaja of Travancore⁵⁵ and set in motion the propaganda machinery of the State administration. Strict instructions were issued to public servants to take full part in what he termed as 'a matter of life and death to the State',⁵⁶ and employed the police,

54. File No.196/C.S./1947/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *Constitutional Experiments in Kerala*, (Trivandrum, 1964), pp.22-23.

55. T.I.L., Vol. VII, No.11, July 1947, p. 44.

56. *The Hindu*, 13th June, 1947, p.6.

revenue and excise officers to canvas support.⁵⁷ He made an appeal to the people to forget about individual and communal differences and to stand together with the Maharaja in this time of 'crisis'.⁵⁸ He held a number of press conferences subsequently in which he exhorted the people to raise slogans such as 'Independence or Perish', 'Sacrifice for Independence', 'Oppose Violence and Revolution', 'Die for Independence of King and People', etc.⁵⁹ The Diwan was very well aware that the Travancore State Congress and majority of the people of the State were against his move but wanted to create an impression that his move had the approval of the people at large and that the Ruler and his people stood united in their endeavour to be masters in their own houses.⁶⁰ He concluded his announcement by saying: "At this juncture the path of prudence, the path of safety, the path of glory, the path of achievement, the path of realisation, is the path of independence of Travancore."⁶¹

In pursuance of his policy Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer held a discussion with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who agreed to receive a trade agent of Travancore in Pakistan on its establishment as an independent dominion.⁶² The Government of Travancore

57. *Pouraprabha*, 24th June 1947, p.3

58. T.I.L., *op.cit.*

59. C. Narayana Pillai, *Thiruvithamcore Swathantrya Samara Charithram* (Mal), (Trivandrum, 1972), p.1159. Also see File No. 196/1947/C.S./Political Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. This file contains very detailed recommendations and instructions for making the Independent Travancore a success.

60. *The Hindu*, 17th June 1947, p.6.

61. T.I.L. *op.cit.*, pp.17-18.

62. *Ibid.*

nominated G.S.A. Karim Saheb, a retired Inspector-General of Police, as the representative in Pakistan and directed him to take charge of the new assignment after the laps of Paramountcy.⁶³ Besides, for negotiating arrangements with India, he nominated G. Paramaswaran Pillai, a retired Chief Secretary to the Government, as the representative at Delhi.⁶⁴ He sent trade agents to the Muslim States of Bhopal and Hyderabad.⁶⁵ He also made an announcement on 12th June 1947 on behalf of the Nizam of Hyderabad that Hyderabad would set itself as an independent State.⁶⁶ When Travancore was invited by the Government of India to join the Constituent Assembly convened early in June 1947,⁶⁷ the Diwan conveyed the decision of the State of Travancore not to join the Constituent Assembly and participate in its proceedings.⁶⁸

Independent Travancore Move Opposed

The declaration of Independent Travancore and the advocacy of the cause by the Diwan Sri C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer naturally had strong reactions not only in

63. *The Hindu*, 22nd June, 1947, p.7.

64. *Ibid.*, 28th June 1947, p. 5

65. File No.368/C.S./1947/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM

66. File No.370/C.S./1947/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

67. H.V.R. Iyengar was the Secretary of the Constituent Assembly of India, New Delhi. He wrote a letter to the Diwan of Travancore in the Constituent Assembly. File No..238/1947/C.S., Cellar Records, KGS, TVM

68. Letter dated 13th June 1947 from Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, Trivandrum to the Secretary, Constituent Assembly of India, New Delhi. See for details File No.238/1947/C.S., Cellar Records, KGS, TVM

Travancore but also throughout the whole of India. The Diwan claimed that the move had full support from all sections of the people of Travancore and, therefore, it should be taken as a move towards the fulfilment of the aspirations of the public at large. At the same time he was aware that he stood for an unpopular cause as is evidenced from his own Statements communicated to Sardar Vallabhai Patel in a letter a couple of years later.⁶⁹ No doubt he succeeded in obtaining support from leaders like R. Sankar, Barrister A.K. Pillai, Thangal Kunju Musaliyar, A.A. Rahman etc., who so far stood with the State Congress and the reason for their shift remains a mystery.

Even though this was the case there were strong protests from all quarters to the stand taken by the Travancore administration. Mention may be made about the N.S.S. leader Mannath Padmanabhan, who had stood all along with Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer for the Independent Travancore cause. He isolated the Diwan and joined with the State Congress and made a fighting speech at Muthukulam on 25th May 1947. He was subsequently arrested on June 14, 1947, tried and sentenced to two years simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs.1000/-.⁷⁰

This move of the Diwan also drew the attention of leaders of the Indian National Congress. They considered the attempt of the Diwan as 'unpatriotic' and expressed deep concern that 'India would be split into fragments.'⁷¹ The All India

69. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

70. V.P. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

71. File No.D. Dis./508/1947/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM, Refer Letter dated 19th June, 1947 to the Diwan of Travancore.

State People's Conference which met at New Delhi on 11th and 12th June 1947 passed a resolution protesting against the action of the Travancore administration, and condemned it as 'being undemocratic and reactionary' and demanded the Government to revoke the 'disastrous step'.⁷² The All India Congress Committee passed a unanimous resolution on 15th June 1947 that "The Congress cannot admit the right of any State in India to declare its independence and to live in isolation from the rest of India. That would be denial of the course of Indian history, and of the objectives of the Indian people today."⁷³ The resolution marked a remarkable change in the policy of the Indian National Congress towards princely States. So far it followed a policy of non-intervention in the Political affairs of the latter while the Diwan's action forced them to adopt a policy of active intervention. Moreover, it also exhorted the people of Travancore to intensify their political agitation against the Diwan and his actions. This was the first time the Indian National Congress gave such a call to the people of Travancore.⁷⁴

National leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru also condemned the stand of Travancore as unpatriotic and anti-national. Nehru declared the States which refused to join the Indian Union as 'hostile' and also warned them that strong and stringent action would be taken against those States which had declared

72. File No.26/C.S./1947/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also See *The Hindu*, 15th June, 1947.

73. *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 1947, pp.137-138.

74. *Ibid.*

independence. He categorically stated that “We will not recognise any independence for any State in India. Further any recognition of such independence by any foreign power, which ever it may be and wherever it may be, will be considered as unfriendly act.”⁷⁵ Gandhiji also asserted that such a declaration was ‘tantamount to a declaration of war against the free millions of India.’ In a post-prayer meeting on 13th June 1947 Gandhiji appealed to all the princes in India to join the Constituent Assembly without delay and warned them that “Times have changed, and if the princes do not take time by the fore-lock they would cease to be”⁷⁶ Pattabhi Sitaramayya issued a Statement on 9th June 1947 and “posed the question as to what constituted Travancore independence beyond an ‘autonomous status’ for the State.” He also said that “the only difference is one of phraseology and approach and I ardently hope that Travancore will clear the position, remove the misunderstanding and strengthen itself with the support of its people, throwing open the portals of self-Government through agreed gateways.”⁷⁷ N. Gopalaswami Iyyengar and Jayaprakash Narayan also severely criticised the Diwan’s action. Ambedkar Stated that “The only way by which the Indian States can free themselves from Paramountcy is by bringing about a merger of sovereignty and suzerainty; this can happen only when the Indian States join the Indian Union as constituent units.”⁷⁸ The Government of India even contemplated upon serious steps

75. *The Hindu*, *op. cit.*

76. A.S. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*

77. *The Times of India*, 18th June, 1947.

78. *The Hindu*, 24th June 1947.

in the form of economic boycott⁷⁹ and issued orders for taking a census of all Travancore subjects who were employed by it either as officers or subordinates in their departments with a view to deciding what policy they should adopt towards Travancore subjects.⁸⁰ The Associated Press of India reported on June 22nd 1947 that the Central Government were also examining certain steps to be taken against Travancore which are of a serious nature and may lead to a crisis in the relations between the Travancore State and the Indian Dominion.⁸¹ Various religious and social organisations in the State also came out with strong protest. The council of the Marthoma Church, the All Kerala Catholic Congress, The Nair Service Society etc adopted resolutions condemning the decision of the administration.⁸²

Though strong protests came in from various quarters C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer obtained support from the All India Muslim League and the All India Hindu Mahasabha. Muhammed Ali Jinnah welcomed the decision of Travancore to send its representatives to Pakistan. He hoped this would improve the trade and commercial relations between these two independent and sovereign States. In a telegram dated June 20, 1947 he informed the Diwan that "Pakistan will be glad to have your representative and will be ready to establish relationship with Travancore which

79. *Ibid.* Also see A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit*

80. *Ibid.*

81. *Ibid.*

82. File No. 26/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

will be mutual advantage. Travancore has my best wishes for its prosperity and welfare.”⁸³

V.D. Savarkar, President of All India Hindu Mahasabha also extended his support to Travancore in a telegram on June 20th 1947. He Stated that “In the very interest of Akhand Hindusthan itself, I strongly support the Maharaja and the far-sighted and courageous determination to declare the independence of our Hindu State of Travancore. The Nizam has already proclaimed his independence and other Muslim States are likely to do so. Hindu States bold enough to do so have the same rights.”⁸⁴

The Diwan found another excuse for his Independent Travancore when a movement was started for the unification of Kerala State. In 1946, the demand for the formation of a linguistic State of Kerala for the Malayalam speaking people by merging Cochin, Travancore and British Malabar, became a strong political issue. The Diwan found in this movement a serious threat to his policy but the political developments in Cochin and the formation of the Tamilnadu Congress relieved him of his concern. The Maharaja of Cochin announced in the Cochin Assembly on 29th July 1946 his intention “to work towards merging Cochin in a United Kerala Province.”⁸⁵ This statement had mixed response as the State Congress, Communists and other

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Ibid.*

85. *The Hindu*, July 30, 1947.

political parties supported it while the Tamilnadu Congress vehemently opposed it.⁸⁶ It was argued that Tamilians constituted 1/3rd of the total population of Travancore and any attempt to integrate Travancore with Kerala will be detrimental to their interests. M.N. Janardhanan Pillai and V.S. Krishna Pillai moved an adjournment motion in the Sri Mulam Assembly and argued that the Maharaja's statement had created serious anxiety and alarm among the Tamil citizens of Tovala, Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam, Vilvancode, Shenkottah, and Devikulam taluks of Travancore.⁸⁷ Linguistic affinity of the people, constituting 1/3rd of the population, to the Madras Province was cited as the main hindrance for the formation of United Kerala. The Diwan stated in the Assembly that "one of the main grounds which are militating against the entertainment of the idea of a Kerala province comprising Travancore is this very matter. Obviously in Travancore one third of the population speaks Tamil and equally obviously those people are more akin linguistically to Tamilnadu than to Kerala. Therefore, from Trivandrum to Cape Comerin the people of Travancore will, if the underlying idea of the Cochin scheme is adopted, become part of the Tamilnadu province and obey the orders of the Governor of the Province of Tamilnadu. Then there is the area from Trivandrum to Parur and that portion will come under the Kerala province envisaged in Cochin The Kerala province idea is therefore, unthinkable and would involve a partition of Travancore. Hence this

86. File No.84/1946/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

87. *Proceedings of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 9, August 1, 1946, p.824.

Government made up their minds not to be a party to any Kerala province , , , , ,
 Clearly Travancore cannot join the Kerala without also joining the Tamil province.
 Unless there is a partition of Travancore for the purpose of putting one-half or one
 third into Tamilnadu and the rest in the Kerala province, the scheme cannot be got
 through. That is why we emphatically negatived the proposition.⁸⁸

The remarks of the Diwan was intended not against a partition of Travancore
 but a united Independent Travancore which he had entertained in his mind for long,
 though he had not expressed it in public till its declaration on 11th June 1947.⁸⁹

Even though the Diwan severely opposed integration, the Malayalees who
 formed the majority in Travancore supported the Cochin scheme of merger. All
 political parties – The Travancore State Congress, The Cochin State Praja Mandal, and
 the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee offered their unstinted support for the
 realisation of this aim.⁹⁰ Large scale propaganda meetings were held in different parts
 of the States of Travancore and Cochin and British Malabar and on 26th and 27th April
 a meeting was also convened by the United Kerala Convention at Trichur with
 K.Kelappan in the Chair, who was then the President of the Kerala Pradesh Congress
 Committee. About 300 delegates participated in the meeting and T.M. Varghese

88. *Ibid.*, No.7, July 30, 1946, p.825.

89. Press Note by the Government of Travancore, 11th June, 19747, for details see File
 No.D.Dis. 268/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

90. See for details File No.16/1946/C.S./Political, Cellar Record, KGS, TVM.

moved a resolution that “This convention of the peoples’ representatives of Kerala proclaim that Indian States such as Travancore and Cochin and the British Indian areas including Mahe should be considered as integral parts of Kerala on geographical, cultural, linguistic and economic basis and should form a separate self governing unit under the Indian Union. The administrative power in this unit should be vested in the hands of the people.”⁹¹ A Working Committee was also constituted consisting of fifteen members for propaganda work and to organise the people for the formation of a United Kerala. The Maharaja of Cochin in whose territory the convention was held, agreed to act as the patron of the United Kerala Movement.⁹² The express willingness of the Maharaja of Cochin to act as the patron of the United Kerala Movement shows the ‘Great mind of a Great Man’ He was aware that he was going to lose power of administration in this effort and is going to be an ordinary citizen in his State after independence, but supported people’s cause and always stood with them throughout, unlike Travancore. This also suggests that the Maharaja of Cochin was not power crazy unlike the Maharaja of Travancore, who could not tolerate any loss of position or power and desired to retain it at any cost. The Cochin Raja respected popular sentiments while his counterpart in Travancore refused. However, this aspect of the nature of these rulers has not been analysed and the Ruler of Cochin given his credit so far by historians.

91. See File No.D.Dis/490/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

92. *Ibid.*

The Tamil Population in Travancore had been very much alarmed and concerned about the developments in Travancore. They felt a sense of isolation in Travancore and for the redressal of their grievances an All Travancore Tamilian Congress was formed as early as December 1945 by some educated Tamilians of South Travancore which was subsequently renamed as the Travancore Tamilnad Congress. S. Nathaniel an advocate of Nagarcoil, was its first president.⁹³ Its aim and objective were to organise the Tamil population of the State to protect their political interests.⁹⁴ Since its formation the Party had been involved in organising meetings, taking out demonstrations and holding conferences throughout the State explaining their case and cause and tried hard to obtain popular sympathy and support of the people at large. When the Maharaja announced his stand the President of the Travancore Tamilnad Congress stated that "The Maharaja of Cochin has, by his Statement, unconsciously thrown out a challenge to the inhabitants of Tamilnad in Travancore and in British India and generally to the linguistic minorities in the State. If the Maharaja of Cochin is anxious to preserve his culture and language, the

93. *Kanyakumari*, Vol. V, N.8, 26th September, 1962.

94. It may be noted that the Tamilnad Congress characterised the Travancore State Congress as a party of the Malayalees and demanded the creation of a Tamil district in Travancore with the attainment of Responsible Government. Bitter rivalry and difference of opinion existed between the State Congress and the Tamilnad Congress especially in Tamil dominant areas in Travancore. Moreover in 1948 and 1954 the Tamilnad Congress organised popular agitations to attain their aims, as against the aims and programmes of the Travancore State Congress.

Tamilians of Travancore are equally anxious to preserve their culture and language.⁹⁵ And that is why they have organised the Travancore Tamilnadu Congress and staked a claim for a separate Tamil province in Travancore, which composed of the predominantly Tamil Taluks.”⁹⁶ This statement marked a beginning of a separatist tendency among the Tamil speaking population in the State and a warning to the promoters and supporters of a United Kerala. It also gave clear indication that the Tamilians of Travancore will not join in any move or agitation in this regard and stand only for union with Tamilnad. However, these developments gave Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer a safe position to take a firm stand on Independent Travancore, as his move will not affect, in no way, the rights and status of the Tamil speaking community in the State. The efforts and agitations of the Travancore Tamilnadu Congress lost its significance when the Diwan of Travancore announced the ‘Independence of Travancore’, and they felt considerably relieved of their anxiety. They also lost a strong ground for their demands and agitations.

Though the main ground was lost, the Travancore Tamilnadu Congress did not remain idle. They decided to press their demand for a separate district in Travancore,

95. In a sense Tamil separatism had its roots in the activities of the Tamil Nadu Congress. It began perhaps with the demand for a separate district in Travancore and manifested itself in its statement that they were equally anxious to preserve their culture and language (as that of Cochin). The Raja of Cochin agreed for a United Kerala not because of any intention ‘to retain and culture of the Malayalees’ but the Tamil speaking population of Travancore who were more orthodox, interpreted it for their own ends.

96. See for details of the Statement, *The Hindu*, 5th August, 1946, p.4.

and adopted an independent course of action, to show that they were not working as a part of the State Congress and will not co-operate with the State Congress in their activities. The Working Committee of the Tamil Nadu Congress met at Nagarcoil on 18th July 1947 and resolved to start direct action against the Diwan's declaration of independent Travancore. An Action Committee of six members was also constituted.⁹⁷ Leaders travelled throughout the State and outside and explained their cause. On 31st August 1947 the President of the Tamilnadu Congress Stated that "unless the Travancore State Congress made an unequivocal declaration conceding the right of self determination to the Tamilians of Travancore, it could not win their confidence. The Travancore State Congress did not represent the Tamil speaking population of the State and if it were to reflect the will of the State's people as a whole, it should be reorganised so as to consist of two autonomous units – one representing the Tamils and the other representing the Malayalam speaking population."⁹⁸ He also made it clear that his organisation while fighting for self determination, will not stand in the way of agitation for Responsible Government in Travancore by the State Congress.⁹⁹ However the Tamilnadu Congress failed to get enough support to launch agitations and, therefore, could not implement its programmes.

97. P.S. Moni, *Thiru Thanizhar Iyakkam* (Tamil), (Nagarcoil, 1956), p.31. Also see File No. 268/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

98. *The Hindu*, August 3, 1947. Also see File No. *Ibid*.

99. *Ibid*.

The proposed agitations of the Tamilnadu Congress, though weak, divided the Travancore polity into two separate groups working in opposite directions and, therefore, at least for a short period, weakened the State Congress. It also deepened the political crisis of the State at a time when a strong and united action, was required for the people against the Diwan's declaration of Independence. People realized the seriousness of the situation and showed "more enthusiasm in political matters than before."¹⁰⁰

The Communist Party which kept itself away from political agitations after the Punnapra Vayalar incidents also promised to help the State Congress. The Congress also obtained support from the Nair Service Society. Thus the political situation of the State turned favourable to the State Congress for a renewed agitation. With support from all sections of people it carried out intensive propaganda campaign. Pattom A. Thanu Pillai exhorted the people to hold meetings and pass resolutions and observe 'Constituent Assembly Day' on 13th June 1947.¹⁰¹ He also requested the people to react against Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer's negative stand with regard to the participation in the Constituent Assembly,¹⁰² and urged the Government to elect representatives to the Constituent Assembly.¹⁰³

100. File No.226/1947/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

101. File No.364/1947/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. (fortnightly report from I.G. of Police, Travancore dated 20-6-47, to the Registrar, Secretariat, TVM.

102. *Ibid.*, 11th June 1947, File No.268/1947/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

103. *Ibid.*

Thus when the Travancore State Congress stiffened its stand against the Government and was determined to intensify its agitations and called for a referendum to settle the issue of Travancore joining the Constituent Assembly and the Indian Union, the State of Travancore was again in the throes of a political crisis. State Congress leaders like Pattom A.Thanu Pillai shifted to Ernakulam in Cochin State and even thought of setting up of a parallel Government to agitate against Independent Travancore and ensure the accession of Travancore to the Constituent Assembly and the Indian Union.

These political developments again forced the Government to take suppressive measures and put down the agitation in all ways possible. The police was instructed to concentrate their attention on important places and to break up meetings and to arrest the leaders and to proceed against them. Accordingly, the district magistrates banned meetings and processions for a period of fifteen days from 12th June 1947.¹⁰⁴ Government also invoked provisions of the Emergency Powers Act 1946 by which no public procession could be held for a period of six months with effect from 29th June, 1947 without written permission of the concerned district magistrates.¹⁰⁵

The ban orders of the Government forced the State Congress leadership to shift their centre of activity to Ernakulam in Cochin State and a State Congress camp started

104. File No.268/1947/C.S. Political, Cellar Records KGS, TVM.

105. *Ibid.* Also see *The Hindu*, 20th June, 1947.

functioning there in June 1947. Propaganda materials were printed by the Communists at Trichur and Ernakulam and these were taken to Travancore by couriers appointed for this purpose.¹⁰⁶ Excise and Labour Commissioners were given strict instruction to take necessary action in this regard and seize all such literature at centres.¹⁰⁷

By this things moved to a situation that a rapprochement between State Congress was inevitable. State Congress now advocated direct action and called upon the people to launch Civil Disobedience and exhorted them to be prepared for a 'mighty conflict'¹⁰⁸ They chalked out an seven point programme and placed it before the people. The course of action included:

- a) To disobey all prohibitory orders;
- b) To organise meetings and processions on all days;
- c) To face lathi-charge and shooting through non-violence;
- d) To defy all possible civil laws;
- e) To deny cooperation to all the programmes of the Government;
- f) Not to attend educational institutions by students and courts by advocates;
- g) To act in each stage according to the programmes, directions and instructions given by the leadership from outside.

106. File No.425/1947C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

107. *Ibid.*

108. File No.278/C.S/1947/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

State wide publicity and propaganda were given to the Seven Point Programme of the State Congress by secretly distributing undated pamphlets, under the caption 'Samaram Enkil Samaram'.¹⁰⁹ It of course had its results. People enthusiastically responded to the call of the State Congress and innumerable meetings were held in different parts of the State defying prohibitory orders. Very often the supporters of the Diwan though few in number, tried to disrupt the meeting.¹¹⁰ They raised slogans supporting 'Independent Travancore' and the meetings organised at Thodupuzha on 9th and Pala on 13th July 1947 were disrupted. The planned policy of suppression of Government went to the extent that at Thodupuzha, anti-Congressmen of about 500 hired by the Government, went through the streets cheering the Maharaja and the Royal Family and raising slogans in support of 'Independent Travancore.' They passed resolutions criticising and condemning the actions and policies of the State Congress.¹¹¹ The involvement of the Government was very clear from the opinion of the District Magistrate Kottayam.¹¹² It became almost clear that the involvement of Government will lead to bloodshed.

109. *Ibid.*

110. *Ibid.*

111. File No.508/1947C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

112. *Ibid.*, B. Paramu, District Magistrate, Kottayam in his letter dated 16th July 1947, addressed to the A.S. to the Diwan opined that the meetings were "very successful ones." This is a clear indication of the involvement of the administration in this case and that these programmes were planned and directed by the administration.

The advocates of 'Independent Travancore' convened a meeting on 11th July 1947 at V.J.T. Hall, Trivandrum and pandemonium broke out when speakers supported Independent Travancore and State Congressites opposed it.¹¹³ At Alleppey the students joining hands with the State Congress workers took out a procession defying ban orders and consequently the police resorted to lathi charge and disbursed the crowd.¹¹⁴ Against this action of the police a complete strike was organised on July 15th 1947 by the students of University College, Law College and Ayurveda college, Trivandrum and several high schools in Trivandrum. On 13th July the State Congress held a meeting at Petta in Trivandrum city. When opponents of the Travancore State Congress, in their bid to disrupt the meeting, attempted to raise certain questions to the speakers and the State Congressites opposed it, there followed, shouting, of slogans supporting 'Independent Travancore' and the 'State Congress'. Police resorted to lathi charge and firing in which three persons including a student of 13 years by name Rajendran were killed.¹¹⁵

In spite of the troubled and tense political situation in the State the Government issued a press note on 15th July 1947 stating that "There is no longer any reason for further discussion or controversy regarding what is now an accomplished fact, viz. the

113. File No.268/1947C.S/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

114. File No.508/1947C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

115. *Ibid.*

independence of Travancore.”¹¹⁶ The administration by this press note intended to reassert its earlier stand of declaration of independence to Travancore. Adding fuel to the fire the Maharaja Sri Chithra Tirunal in an address broadcast over the Thiruvananthapuram Radio on July 18, 1947, the date on which the Indian Independence Act was passed by the British Parliament, declared that with effect from August 15, 1947, “Travancore will resume its independence and sovereignty in full measure.”¹¹⁷

The declaration of ‘independence for Travancore’ under the guidance of Sir C.P. Rameswami Aiyer and the subsequent political events in the State represented a turning point in the history of the State. It gave an opportunity to the State Congress to strengthen their hold among the masses. The Diwan’s idea to exploit the terms of the Cabinet Mission Plan went wrong in Travancore and he failed to get popular support in the State. He became unpopular and had to face a strong and united agitation on the issue. The Congress left no stone unturned to champion the cause and finally succeeded in its endeavour.

The Interim Government and Indian States

The ‘Independent Travancore’ move of the Travancore administration and the subsequent developments in and outside the State synchronised with some important

116. Government Press Note 15th July 1947, File No.D.Dis/467/1947C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

117. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

developments at New Delhi. The Indian National Congress was trying its best to preserve the integrity of India. The actions of some Native States like Travancore and Hyderabad caused much concern to the leaders of the Congress and Government in Delhi. The plan of some States to enter into treaties with Pakistan and of a few others to assert their independence forced these leaders to think in terms of creating 'an organised bond between the Government of India and the States'¹¹⁸ For this purpose, they decided to gain popular support throughout India in favour of considering the States which are geographically contiguous to India as legally and morally part of it. They were also anxious to complete this accession of Indian States to the Indian Union, if possible, before August 15, 1947.

To deal with the issues arising between the Government of India and the Indian States, it was decided by the Interim Government to create a new States Department by the middle of June 1947. Communicating this decision to Sir C.P.Ramaswami Aiyer, the Resident of Travancore Edwards, informed him that the following arrangements have been suggested by the Government of India.

1) That the States should agree to the location by the successor Governments of their own Agents in State Territory and/or;

118. V.P. Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

2) That each State or group of States appoint a fully authorised representative or representatives to be located at the head-quarters of the appropriate Government to provide information, to elicit replies and to secure co-operation.¹¹⁹

The Travancore Government rejected the first proposal and wrote to Col. Edwards that "The Travancore Government do not agree to the location by successor Governments of India of their own agents in Travancore territory until and unless negotiations for the purpose are initiated and carried out by mutual consent between this Government and the Domain Governments after they came into being."¹²⁰ The second proposal was accepted and G. Parameswaran Pillai was nominated as the Representative of Travancore in Delhi.¹²¹

In July 1947 Government of India initiated crucial discussions with the Government of Travancore with a view to softening its rigid stand on independence. The States Department was placed under the charge of Sardar Vallabhai Patel with V.P. Menon, the Constitutional Advisor to the Viceroy, as Secretary. Sardar Vallabhai Patel appealed to the princes to join the Constituent Assembly and accede to the Union on three subjects of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications. On 12th July 1947 the Resident informed the Diwan of Travancore that a meeting with the representatives of the States and the States Department would be held in Delhi on 25th July 1947 under

119. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

120. *Ibid.*, p.241.

121. *Ibid.*

the presidency of the Viceroy. In an earnest attempt to render the negotiations with the States meaningful, V.P. Menon met some of the Rulers and their advisors and discussed the issues with them at his residence on 10th July 1947.¹²² V.P. Menon also informed the Diwan that

when on the 15th of August the States get back their sovereignty, the 500 and odd States will be literally released from the centre and will have no contact either with the centre or among themselves. This is too dangerous a position and if the transitional period is not safeguarded the result may be complete chaos. Transitions are always risky and in India especially at present great danger of unsocial elements rearing their heads; unless they are checked at once, it may soon be too late to do so.¹²³

He also assured that "What we ask for is only executive and legislative authority in these matters. In other respects, the sovereignty of the States (which past conditions did not allow them to exercise in full) is completely preserved. Further your course of action as regards adhesion to future constitution is in no way prejudiced by the present accession."¹²⁴ Again on July 20, 1947 V.P. Menon wrote to the Diwan enclosing a

122. V.P. Menon, *op. cit.*, pp.102-103.

123. File No.121/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

124. *Ibid.*

copy of the Draft Instrument of Accession and informed his readiness to come to Trivandrum at any time for discussions. But before the receipt of the letter Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer left Trivandrum to Delhi on the request of the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten for talks with him. Copies of V.P. Menon's letters were made available to the Diwan at the Travancore House, Delhi,¹²⁵ The Diwan replied on 20th July 1947 which reads:

Coming from a sincere well wisher of the States and of myself in particular like yourself, your comments will have my closest attention. I may add, however, that the time at my disposal for studying the matter and for giving the close and detached consideration to it, which it needs, for consulting my advisors and for discussing the subject with His Highness has been very short. Indeed as I have seen the Draft Accession Treaty today (less than 24 hours before my meeting with His Excellency) and as His Highness has not seen it, you will readily concede that I cannot give you an answer straightaway. Let me conclude again, as I began, by assuring you of the most earnest and meticulous attention to every sentence of your letter and to the terms of the Draft Treaty of Accession.¹²⁶

125. *Ibid.*

126. *Ibid.*

In the talks with Lord Mountbatten in Delhi on 21st and 22nd July 1947 the Diwan mainly raised issues contained in V.P. Menon's letter of July 14, 1947. He asserted that all treaties and agreements entered into by Travancore with the British would come to an end on 15th August 1947 and that Travancore had already denounced the Inter Portal Convention and the Cochin Harbour Agreement. Regarding the Periyar Lease of 1886 the Diwan "indicated that was the way in which Paramountcy was working in the past and pointed out that the kind of Paramountcy under any disguise cannot further be agreed to."¹²⁷ More interesting was his comment on the accession of Travancore to the Union. He reasserted his stand that under no circumstances Travancore would send its representatives to the Legislature or Executive of Dominion and insisted that the references by him and others to a strong Centre and India remaining a Dominion were on behalf of a United India.¹²⁸ However, with regard to Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications the Diwan agreed that certain loose relationship would have to be established with the successor Governments, particularly with India for geographical reasons.¹²⁹

It was at this crucial stage that V.P. Menon intervened. It was left to him to devise a formula that would satisfy the requirements of both the Centre and the States. The viceroy, though agreed to most of the contentions of the Diwan, stated that his

127. *Ibid.*,p.248.

128. *Ibid.*

129. *Ibid.*

difficulties to face other Princely States at the Conference on 25th July, 1947 and that they would not agree to have a different status to the State of Travancore. It suggested that the Viceroy was making it clear that Travancore cannot expect to claim a special treatment in its treaty obligations with the British . During the talks the Diwan was convinced that the idea of independent State of Travancore entering into treaty relations with the new Government of India on a footing of equality was not within the range of practical politics and therefore, he finally agreed to the accession of Travancore to the Union subject to the final approval by the Maharaja. On his request the Viceroy gave him a formal letter on 22nd July 1947 addressed to the Maharaja explaining the whole position. The letter was handed over to the Maharaja on the same day and the Diwan advised the Maharaja to accede to the Indian union without delay. On 23rd July 1947 the Government of Travancore informed the public about the deliberations of the Diwan with the Viceroy at Delhi through a press note and Stated that “The final results of these discussions which are still in the confidential stage will be published as soon as possible.”¹³⁰ The Maharaja did not give his consent immediately as he wanted more time to take a final decision.

In the meantime a special meeting was held at Delhi on 25th July 1947 which was attended by Rulers, Diwans and other representatives of States. The Viceroy endorsed the views of Sardar Vallabhai Patel regarding accession of Princely States to the Indian Union and called upon the Princes to solve the problem relating to States on

130. *Travancore Information and Listener*, September, 1947.

a friendly and co-operative basis. He Stated: "Now the Indian Independence Act releases the States from all their obligations to the Crown. The States have complete freedom – technically and logically they are independent and are theoretically free to link their future with whichever dominion they may care. But . . . there are certain geographical compulsions which cannot be avoided. Out of something like 565 States, the majority are irretrievably linked geographically with the Dominion of India. The problem therefore, is of far greater magnitude with the Dominion of India than is with Pakistan."¹³¹ The sincere and earnest efforts of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, V.P. Menon, the Viceroy and other leaders of the Indian National Congress and the pressure from the people compelled most of the Native States to accede to the Indian Union before August 15, 1947.

The decision of the Diwan and Maharaja to proclaim an Independent Travancore had already alienated them from the people of the State. The Travancore State Congress Committee with support of all India leadership, met at Alleppey on 22nd July 1947 and reviewed the political condition in India in general and Travancore in particular and decided to intensify agitations to achieve integration.¹³² Exhorting all sections of the people to participate in it the committee placed before the Government the following demands: That,

131. K.M. Munshi, *Indian Constitutional Document*, Vol.II, (Bombay, 1967), pp.413-422.

132. Report submitted by the I.G. of Police, Travancore to the Diwan dated 23rd July 1947. File No.508/1947/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

- “1) Full Responsible Government be introduced immediately;
- 2) The Diwan be forthwith relieved of his office’
- 3) The State of Travancore to join the Constituent Assembly and the Indian Union;
- 4) An interim Government composed of popular representatives be immediately established with the duty of taking steps to convene a Constituent Assembly based on adult franchise to frame a constitution for Travancore.”¹³³

It was also decided to start direct action from August 1, 1947, and Pattom A.Thanu Pillai was chosen as ‘dictator’ to take necessary steps in this regard.¹³⁴

Meanwhile an attempt was made on the life of the Diwan, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer on 25th July 1947, while attending the Swathi Thirunal Centenary Celebrations at the Swahi Tirunal Music Academy, Trivandrum. The Press note issued by the Government described the event thus: “.....The Diwan was leaving the Pandal after the music performance and when he neared the entrance where his car was waiting for him, one man rushed at him with a sword stick and hit him on the neck and the fingers of the hand, which was raised to ward off the blows causing some injuries. Fortunately, his life is safe The assailant has escaped. Investigation is proceeding.”¹³⁵ The Diwan described the event thus:

133. *The Hindu*, July 25, 1947.

134. *Ibid.*

135. Government Press Note, 26th July 1947, File No.D.Dis/494/1947C.S/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

On the 25th July fell the Centenary celebrations of the great music composer, Swathi Thirunal, a former Ruler of Travancore and it is now clear that carefully designed and correlated steps had been taken to kill me on that day. At the conclusion of the function as I was proceeding to get into my car, some persons engaged themselves in heated talk with the Inspector-General of Police who, thus did not follow me. Lights were put off all over the pandal just as I was about to enter the car. A man clad in military shorts jumped up and brandished a curved knife. Instinctively I warded the stroke with my left hand, fingers sustaining bruises. Four successive strokes followed, one grazing the ear, one hitting the back of the skull, one cutting the left cheek (the flesh hanging loose) and one cutting the lower palate. The jugular vein was not severed because of the cloth (Angavasthram) round my neck. It was miraculous and providential that no artery, bone or cartilage was severed and only flesh wounds were sustained. I was unconscious for a while but my breath control served me in good stead and holding the half severed portion of the cheek with my hand, I drove to the hospital where a most capable surgeon dressed and sewed up the wounds which included a minor injury to the lips. In three weeks the wounds were healed completely and the sutures were removed. My residence was turned into a hospital but there was

no danger to life unless sepsis set in. My regular habits evidently helped me and I practically recovered and resumed normal diet etc. by the 10th August. By the 15th August the accession of Travancore to the Dominion was notified and I tendered my formal resignation on the 19th. The assailant had a car with the engine running just outside the pantal and has not yet been apprehended.¹³⁶

The incident demonstrated two things: a) several people, presumably adherents of the State Congress and the communists must have planned ahead and also secured help from the police and employees of the electrical department. The lights were switched on immediately after the escape of the assailant. b) that his continuance as Diwan was purposeless and futile in view of the personal bitterness created by propaganda.¹³⁷

The District superintendent of Police, and the Inspector of Police, Trivandrum were punished with compulsory retirement from service for their failure to take precautionary measures. The Government announced a reward of Rs.10,000 for those who identified the culprit.¹³⁸ No body came forward with any information. The

136. *Ibid.*

137. *Ibid.*

138. N. Srikantan Nair, *Thiruvathamcore Inidian Unionalil* (Mal. article), *Kerala Kaumudi Weekly*, June 13, 1976, Book I, Vol.44. It may be noted that C.Narayana Pillai had recorded it as Rs.20,000/- in his book. C. Narayana Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 1194.

Government made it clear that “such dastardly act of terrorism will not deter them in the discharge of the heavy responsibilities at this juncture and that all such activities will be firmly met.”¹³⁹ A number of leaders of the Travancore State Congress including Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese, A.J. John, C.Kesavan, Kumbalathu Sanku Pillai, P.S. Nataraja Pillai, K.P. Neelakanta Pillai and Communist leaders were arrested on 27.7.1947.¹⁴⁰ The State Congress nor the Communist party had any role in the plan of assassination of the Diwan. The arrested were later released.

It was later established that N.Srikantan Nair, an activist of the Kerala Socialist Party was the brain behind this plan, and it was well executed by his close associate K.C. Subramonia Aiyer popularly known as K.C.S.Money.¹⁴¹ K.C.S. Money was later arrested and acquitted as C.P.Ramaswami Aiyer and other witnesses did not appear before the trial court during the course of trial.¹⁴² However, the “attempt on Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer’s life came as a dramatic climax to the political agitation that had been going on Travancore for over a decade for the achievement of Responsible Government.”¹⁴³ It almost put an end to the issue of ‘Independent Travancore.’

139. Government Press Note, July 26, 1947.

140. N.Srikantan Nair, *op.cit.*, p. 53..

141. *Ibid.* Also see Vol.45 and A.Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

142. N.Srikantan Nair, *op.cit.*, p.53 .

143. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Trivandrum District Gazetteer*, (Trivandrum, 1961), p. 243.

The Travancore administration was convinced that it could not postpone anymore its decision to join the Constituent Assembly and the Indian Union. It also realized the possibility of losing the services of the eminent Diwan who stood with the Royal Family all the time. The State Congress expressed shock and sympathy and hoped that their demand of Responsible Government would be granted immediately. The Government of Travancore realized its helplessness to combat the emerging political situation and on the advise of ailing Diwan, the Maharaja informed the Central Government of his decision to accept the Instrument of Accession and Standstill Agreement. But the Diwan from his sick bed guiding the negotiations in Delhi required certain clarifications on such issues as the control of State forces, currency and coinage, customs, export and import control, railway, police, irrigation and electric power etc. The letter of the Diwan addressed to V.P. Menon Stated that "The State will of course be prepared to come to special agreement so as to come into line with all India policies and to prevent unfair practices or smuggling but the States inherent rights to fiscal autonomy and to levy and to retain export and import duties must be guaranteed as conditions precedent to accession as already agreed during discussions."¹⁴⁴

G. Parameswaran Pillai, the representative of Travancore at Delhi, held discussions with States Department officials in Delhi, C.C. Desai, Additional Secretary

144. File No.D.Dis./494/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

of the Department in his letter dated 10th August 1947 gave the following assurances to the Diwan to clear doubts of the Travancore Government. The letter Stated that:

- a) Both the Instrument of Accession and Standstill Agreement do not invest the Dominion Government with any jurisdiction or power to interfere in the sovereignty or internal jurisdiction of the State except to the extent permitted by terms of the Instrument itself.
- b) Accession on Defence does not extend or relate to the Travancore State Forces, but when they are attached or to operate with Dominion Forces, they will come under the jurisdiction of the Dominion.
- c) Accession in respect of neutralisation will not affect any State law on the subject promulgated with respect to Travancore subjects.
- d) Accession in regard to maritime shipping and navigation, admiralty and carriage of passengers and goods by sea or by air will not affect any of the existing rights of the State which are saved under the Standstill Agreement.
- e) Accession on External Affairs will not debarr the State from having trade fiscal and commercial relations with foreign

countries or from having Trade Commissioners in foreign lands for the furtherance of the States' trade. However, such trade commissioners will have to work in complete co-ordination with the representative of the Dominion of India, confining themselves strictly to trade and commerce of Travancore State. For diplomatic purposes they will be deemed to be part of the office of the Dominion representative.

- f) The inherent right of the Travancore State's fiscal autonomy and its rights to levy and retain its own export and import duties will not be affected in any way by the Instrument of accession.
- g) Negotiations for fresh agreements in respect of matters which come within the scope of the Inter-Portal Convention of 1865 and the Cochin Harbour Agreements of 1925 and 1936 which the Travancore Government propose to denounce on the lapse of Paramountcy must take a little time and pending negotiations the existing agreements as provided for in the stand still agreement must have to be continued.
- h) Neither the Instrument of Accession nor Standstill Agreement will interfere with the State's internal currency or coinage,

financial arrangement or taxation or the internal postal or telegraphic system or tariff policy.

- i) While reserving to itself the freedom of action in regard to export and import for its own purpose, the Travancore Government will have to co-ordinate its policy and take steps to prevent smuggling and other unfair practices.
- j) As regards the jurisdiction of the Railway Police neither the Instrument of Accession nor any reference to it in the Stand Still Agreement will affect the existing arrangements on the Schencottah-- Thiruvananthapuram lines. However, for the sake of uniformity of police administration, the Travancore Government was expected to delegate to the Dominion Government police jurisdiction in respect of the Shoranur-Cochin line.¹⁴⁵

A close examination of these promises would reveal that Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer was eager to extract as much concessions and privileges as possible, to the Royal Family. On the basis of these assurances the Maharaja signed two copies of the Instrument of Accession and the Diwan two copies of the Standstill Agreement and the States Department was telegraphically informed of this on 12th August 1947.¹⁴⁶ These

145. File No.639/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. Also see A.Sreedhara Menon, *Ibid*.

146. *The Hindu*, 15 August, 1947, p.8.

signed documents were sent to Delhi on 13th August 1947. Thus the accession of Travancore to the Indian Union became a reality. The accession of the State to the Indian Union also fulfilled one of the four demands put forward by the State Congress. On August 19th 1947 Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer tendered his resignation from the post of Diwan of Travancore handing over the charge of the post to P.G.N. Unnithan, the senior most officer in Travancore Civil Service.

Having not been granted Responsible Government so far the Travancore State Congress decided to press its demand and decided to observe August 1, 1947 as Travancore People's Day.¹⁴⁷ A seven point programme was chalked out and the people were requested to observe these programmes in 'a thoroughly peaceful and non-violent way.'¹⁴⁸ They were:

- 1) All the labourers and 'industrialists to strike work;
- 2) Shop keepers to close down their shops;
- 3) Workers to stop the running of buses and boats;
- 4) Students to abstain from classes;
- 5) Volunteers to hold meetings and demonstrations;

147. Press Statement of Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, 31st July, 1947. File No.D.Dis/ 560/1947/CS/ Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

148. *Ibid.*

- 6) People to organise public processions, to sing national songs and to hoist the national flag over private houses and public institutions, and
- 7) The reporters to give full details to the Congress central office regarding lathi charges, firing and other incidents.¹⁴⁹

Of the seven point programme the item hoisting national flag caused much alarm and anxiety to the administration and to prevent such actions the district magistrates were given strict instructions to take all kinds of precautionary measures.¹⁵⁰ The Government also issued orders to the police and military to deal with the situation firmly and in a manner they found appropriate.¹⁵¹

Responding to the call of the State Congress August 1, 1947 was observed as Travancore People's Day throughout the State. Innumerable meetings were held and processions taken out in various parts of the State in a peaceful manner.¹⁵² All educational institutions remained closed for an indefinite period because of students participation in the movement.¹⁵³ The wise decision of the Government to lift ban on

149. The details of the deliberations of the State Congress leadership meeting are contained in the report submitted to the A.S. to the Diwan by the I.G. of Police, Travancore dated 29th July, 1947. See for details File No.439/1947/CS Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

150. C.S. to Government, Trivandrum, express phonocom to the District Magistrate, Quilon dated 31st July 1947, file No. *Ibid*.

151. Government Press Note dated 29th July, 1947. See for details Filr No.D.Dis/560/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

152. File No.439/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

153. File No.D.Dis/388/1947/CS/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

public meetings and processions sufficiently early on 31st July 1947 helped to avoid untoward incidents in the State. It also helped the people to observe the Travancore people's day without obstruction from the administration. Though in general the condition was peaceful at two places, Vada-kara and Changanacherry in north Travancore the police used force to disburse the students. Police tried to seize the National flag at Vatakara from the students which ended in a lathi-charge, and fourteen students including three girl students sustained injuries.¹⁵⁴ At Changanacherry a procession of about 300 students holding the National Flag in their hands was disbursed by force.¹⁵⁵

The State Congress decided to continue the agitation for Responsible Government and the camp at Ernakulam under the leadership of T.K. Narayana Pillai chalked out a programme for the following week, and a circular was issued on August 2nd 1947 in which they appealed to the people as follows:

- 1) To hold public meetings in all villages of the State to explain the political situation and to raise contributions for the agitation;
- 2) To form an Action Council in each taluk and to prepare a list of succession 'dictators'.

154. Report dated 8th August, 1947, from the I.G. of Police to the Registrar, Secretariat, Trivandrum, file No.D.Dis/439/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

155. Report of the A.S.P. Kottayam, dated 9th August 1947. See for details File No.D.Dis/380/1947/C.S. Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

- 3) To enlist students for full time political work; and
- 4) To organise jathas consisting of 300 volunteers from each taluk for marching to Trivandrum at short notice.¹⁵⁶

At this stage the leaders of the Travancore State Congress thought that they should get the consent and support from national leaders like Sardar Vallabhai Patel before launching this agitations and Pattom A. Thanu Pillai and T.M. Varghese went to Delhi on 31st July 1947. Sardar Vallabhai Patel suggested the suspension of direct action and not to press for the removal of the Diwan and also informed them that New Delhi would not interfere in the internal affairs of the State. This was because of the fact that Travancore had already agreed to accession and he did not want to create any embarrassing situation to the Travancore administration. Vallabhai Patel also knew that with the signing of the Instrument of Accession Travancore had come to the heels of the Central Government and that there is no meaning in continuing agitations in Travancore. He could not reveal it for political reasons and therefore, the request. The leaders of the State Congress, without knowing this fact were very much disgusted and disappointed in the meeting. However, the leaders returned without much promise and to their surprise Travancore acceded to the Indian Union on August 13, 1947. August 15th was celebrated as Independence of India Day by the State Congressites throughout

156. Confidential Daily Report (Extract) dated 9th August, 1947. For details see File No.D. Dis./387/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

the State of Travancore.¹⁵⁷ As a surprise Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer relinquished his position as Diwan on 19th August 1948.¹⁵⁸

The Travancore State Congress thought that of their four demands, the second demand was also granted with the exit of Sri C.P. Ramawami Aiyer from Travancore politics. P.G. Narayanan Unnithan, the senior most officer in the Travancore Civil Service resumed charge of the Diwan.

Till his exit from the Travancore politics, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer upheld the monarchical system of administration in the State. To him it provided administrative stability and continuity of national life and that the Royal Family and the Ruler would be above party politics. He also pleaded that economic prosperity of a State could be achieved only in such a set up. Even while introducing constitutional reforms in the State he took sufficient safeguards to retain princely and Diwan rule in Travancore. But whatever might have been the stand taken by the Diwan including Independent Travancore, when he realized that this scheme is not workable in free India, he rose to the occasion and changed his stand and advised the Maharaja to accede to the Union of India, against the wishes of the Ruler. This averted a possible bloodshed in the State. If the Maharaja remained adamant on his idea of Independent Travancore the Central Government would have resorted to police action or military interference as in Junagad and Hyderabad.

157. File No.D.Dis/508/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

158. *Travancore Government Gazette*, 19th August, 1947.

On analysis, though the actions of the Diwan cannot be justified, it is doubtful whether he could be blamed for it. As a servant of the State working in a monarchical system, he was forced by law to obey the orders of the Maharaja, and this was what he had done. He only acted in a way to achieve the aspirations of the Royal Family of Travancore. His opinion on many matters including 'Independent Travancore' were rejected by the Maharaja by ordering 'fight it out'. A clear admission regarding the role of the Palace in this regard came from none other than a member of the Royal Family of Travancore, Gouri Lakshmi Bai and this exonerated the Diwan. She said in an address delivered to the IAS Probationers at the Institute of Management in Government at Thiruvananthapuram in October 1997 that the decision on 'Independent Travancore' was taken by the Royal Family itself in order to ward off the possibility of North Indian domination.¹⁵⁹ This could be seen as finding some excuses for the unjustifiable and anti national actions of the ruler. Instead of swimming in favour of the currents they acted against the wishes of the people, and abandoned it when defeat was certain. The Diwan, as clever and wise he was, realized the danger and impracticability of the scheme. In the letter dated January 31, 1949 he wrote to Sardar Vallabhai Patel he Stated thus: "As for my advocacy of independence, you are aware of its history, but it was not due to any selfish or personal motives. I worked as I thought in the interest of the State whose stewardship was committed to me and which I firmly believed had a special position in India. I knew that the cause I espoused was

159. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 258.

unpopular and even my sons and close friends differed from me but I followed the path I thought I should tread in utter loyalty to a Ruler, who from his early years trusted in me and whom I kept fully informed of the problems and its difficulties and perils.”¹⁶⁰ This brings to light that the Diwan’s efforts were to safeguard the interests of the Palace, though he was aware of its ultimate failure. Till his retirement from service he remained a true servant of the master.

In Travancore, though two of its four demands had been granted, the Travancore State Congress decided to intensify the agitations, in spite of strict instructions from Sardar Patel not to initiate any direct action. The working committee of the State Congress which met on 29th August 1947 at Alleppey under the presidency of Pattom A.Thanu Pillai decided to fight for ending Diwan’s rule and for the establishment of an interim Government in the State and also for the final goal of attainment of Responsible Government in the State.¹⁶¹ Elaborate preparations were made by the Travancore State Congress for the final agitations and they constituted Action Committees in different taluks.¹⁶² It is probable that the decision and proposed action on its part was unwarranted as advised by Sardar Vallabhai Patel, but the State Congress was left with no other option, lest they should be considered as a defunct

160. *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

161. File No.D.Dis/508/1947/CS/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

162. File No.D.Dis/446/1947/CS/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

political organisation by the people of Travancore if no political activity was carried out.

The Communists who could not come to the political scene after the suppression of the Punnpra Vayalar, were watching for an opportunity to make their presence over the political scene of Travancore. The decision of the State Congress gave them such an opportunity. They promised their full support to the movement of the congress, especially at a time when the administration had softened its stand towards political agitations. The workers also supported the move. As a result the Communists could assume greater influence over the State Congress. The Inspector General of Police informed the Government of Travancore that "The Communist sympathisers are striving to revive the Communist Movement in the State and as a first step they are spreading objectionable leaflets and other publications surreptitiously. At Koothattukulam and Poonjar, these elements are slowly growing active and they are making common cause with the State Congress and pretend to be under their banner to exploit the situation to foment troubles. The Congressites are courting their help in their struggle. A few of those who are underground and absconding are trying to win over the labourers to their side again."¹⁶³ In spite of their commitment on the observance of non-violent methods in the agitations, the Administration Reports suggest that they were forced to submit to the Communist group and change their

163. Report from the I.G. of Police to the Registrar, Travancore Secretariat, Trivandrum dated 22nd August, 1947. See for details File No.D.Dis/447/1948/CS/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

programmes at certain occasions.¹⁶⁴ Propaganda meetings and demonstrations were arranged on a large scale throughout the State which were addressed by leaders of both parties. They reiterated the demand for responsible Government and threatened direct action.

In the face of the threat of agitations, the Government took all possible measures to check Communist activities once again in the State, but they failed to single out the Communists. Strict instructions were issued to the police officers to detect and arrest all Communist activists throughout the State. The Government also directed that "In view of the present political agitation and of the possibility of the Communists in the State engaging in subversive activities, specific action should be taken in all directions to detect Communist activities, if any, by continuing in an increased measure the work done in this direction. Local officers have to be instructed to watch communist activities, if any, and take immediate deterrent action and communicate to the superior officers so that the position of Communist trouble may be clearly understood by all concerned."¹⁶⁵ The Government however failed to take stringent measures due to the fast changing political situation of the State especially after the attack on the life of C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer.

164. The report submitted by the Tahsildar of Harippad to the District administration on 16th August 1947 gives us a detailed picture of how the Communists were able to press their demands over the State Congress leadership in their joint venture of the agitations. For details See File No.D.Dis/508/1947/CS/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

165. Letter from the Additional Secretary to the Diwan to the Inspector-General of Police Trivandrum dated 5th August 1947, for details See File No.D.Dis/448/1947/CS/ Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

The renewal of agitations had its results. People thought that the decision of the administration to accede to the Union of India and Ramaswami Aiyer's exit were the result of popular agitations by the Travancore State Congress. It also created a feeling that the grant of Responsible Government was also not a far cry and that the State Congress would achieve it soon. The State Congress leadership also gave an ultimatum to the Government to take a decision in this regard immediately but not later than September 2, 1947.¹⁶⁶

The political condition in the State of Travancore was changing very fast consequent on the exit of the Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer and the assumption of office by P.G.Narayanan Unnithan. As he was a native of Travancore people welcomed this appointment. He had a tough task before him in dealing with the political situation of the State. High officials advised him to establish peace by compromise,¹⁶⁷ and it was suggested that a meeting of the representatives of all political parties to discuss the issue of Responsible Government be convened.¹⁶⁸ Representing the major political party, the State Congress, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai and T.M. Varghese met the Diwan and he promised them to consider their demands favourably.

166. File No.D.Dis/508/1947/CS/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

167. *Ibid.*

168. *Ibid.*

The Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress which met at Trivandrum on 30th August 1947 requested the Government to release its prominent leaders like C.Kesavan, K.Sanku Pillai and S.V. Muthukaruppa Pillai. The Government again held discussions with State Congress leaders on 1st September 1947 and later held discussions with high officials.¹⁶⁹ Subsequently the Diwan advised the Maharaja to grant Responsible Government to the State of Travancore and accordingly the Maharaja issued a Royal Proclamation on 4th September 1947 granting Responsible Government¹⁷⁰ ending all political agitations in the State on that issue. The decision was welcomed with joy and rejoyce by the people of the State. The State Congress celebrated their victory by organising public meetings and demonstrations throughout the State.

Before the formal transfer of power, a representative body was constituted by the Royal Proclamation consisting of elected representatives on the basis of adult suffrage.¹⁷¹ A Reforms Committee was also appointed for drafting a new constitution for the State.¹⁷² There were some disagreements with regard to the constitution of the

169. *Ibid.*

170. *Travancore Information and Listener*, Vol. III, No. 2, October 1947, pp.5-6.

171. *Ibid.*

172. This Committee had 15 members with Pattom A. Thanu Pillai as President. The members were P.S. Narayana Pillai, T.A. Abdulla, M. Ramakrishna Pillai, S. Krishna Aiyer, T.M. Varghese, C. Kesavan, A.J. John, M. Govindan, C. Ravi Varma, E.P. Varghes, S.I.Pandya Nadar, Mannath Padmanabha Pillai, P.Vivekanandan and T.M. Chithambarathanu Pillai. See *Ibid.*

Reforms Committee and the Tamilnadu Congress represented that it was not given due representation in it. However, the Government did not yield and the demand was rejected.¹⁷³

The Reforms Committee submitted its report on 20th November 1947 and accepting the recommendations the Government issued orders for elections to the new Representative Body during January-February 1948.¹⁷⁴ Some untoward incidents took place between the State Congress and the Tamilnadu Congress at various places – in particular Keezhukulam and Mangad in the then Vilavancode Taluk of Travancore. When the situation went out of control police opened fire in which 3 persons died.¹⁷⁵ In the elections the Travancore State Congress captured 94 out of 108 while the Tamilnadu Congress won in 14 seats.

The first meeting of the representatives of the new legislature was held on 20th March 1948 under the presidency of the Diwan, P.G. Narayanan Unnithan and elected A.J. John as the new President. On the recommendations of the new Legislature the Maharaja promulgated the Travancore Interim Constitution Act VI of 1948, by which the new representative body was named the Legislative Assembly and the Council of

173. See for details of the representation submitted to the Diwan by the Tamilnadu Congress and the reply of the Government, File No.D.Dis./527/1947/CS/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

174. See for reports on elections, *The Hindu*, 24th December, 1947.

175. Report of the Inspector of Police, Vilavancode dated 11th February 1948. See for details File No.D.Dis/360/1948/CS/Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Ministers was made responsible to the Legislature.¹⁷⁶ On the retirement of the Diwan on 24th March 1948 a Council of Ministers was sworn in with Pattom A. Thanu Pillai as Prime Minister and C. Kesavan, T.M. Varghese as ministers.¹⁷⁷ Thus the first popular Ministry fulfilling the aspirations of the people for Responsible Government was achieved in Travancore after a prolonged fight.

176. Travancore Administration Report, 1947-48, p.10.

177. Travancore Government Gazette Extraordinary, 24 March 1948. It was only later that the term 'Chief Minister' began to be used.

THE POLITICAL MOVEMENTS ANALYSED - CONCLUSION

M. Sumathy "From Petitions to Protest - A Study of the Political Movements in Travancore 1938-1947" Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

Chapter X

THE POLITICAL MOVEMENTS ANALYSED – CONCLUSION

An analysis of the different aspects of the struggle for responsible government in Travancore clearly indicates that this was the most extensive and the best organised of the popular movements in the State. Right from the last quarter of the nineteenth century Travancore witnessed several agitations, but the Government never faced during any period earlier a struggle organised under a single political party with the declared objective of securing democratic rights and Responsible Government.¹ One cannot overlook the fact that this kind of an agitation was possible in Travancore only after the formation of the Travancore State Congress in 1938, and all the agitations earlier though strong were led by communal organisations representing various groups on communal lines. The formation of a political party with a common objective in 1938, was no doubt a turning point in the political history of Travancore. The Travancore Polity which was divided on communal lines joined together for a common political demand of attaining Responsible Government, ignoring their

1. The idea of Responsible Government in Travancore, though not in full was perhaps first suggested by Raman Pillai in Sri Mulam Popular Assembly on 11th March, 1922. He suggested that a Council of Ministers should be formed to advise the Maharaja in administration. The Diwan might preside over the Council which should have more than two Members, to be elected by the non-official Members of the Legislative Council and to be removable from office on their losing confidence of that body. He was supported by another member of the House, K.P.Narayana Pillai. However no follow up action could be taken in this direction in the State in the absence of a strong political party which could take up the issue.

communal or caste differences. The agitation assumed wide proportions and people belonging to different communities and social organisations united under the Travancore State Congress in their struggle against the autocratic system of administration. Whatever it is, the Government of Travancore also succeeded in gaining support of a few section of the society particularly certain communal and religious groups. This along with the attitude and policy of the Indian National Congress naturally delayed the attainment of responsible government in the state of Travancore.

However, we cannot overlook the fact that the democratic movement in India in general and Travancore in particular met with obstacles at every point. While one can understand these obstacles at the level of confrontation with the administration in the state which was threatened directly by this movement and at the level of paramount power's policy whose interests on a continuation of their regime lent a natural support to the autocratic rule of the princes, what is inexplicable or needs an elucidation is the lack of sympathy or active support as promised earlier by the Indian National Congress High Command. Its policy was one of obstruction and not active support. This was an anomaly which the states people were quick to point out.

The Democratic movement in the State of Travancore was indigenous and grew on its own roots. The 'foreign Diwan' issue initiated this movement in the State which was of course inspired by the parallel movements in British India. However, this movement was independent of the movements in British India, and the people of

Travancore were more importantly preoccupied with this than even the parallel movements on the wider arena. The participation of Travancore in the non-co-operation movement of 1921 or that of 1931 was nominal, while it hardly concerned itself with the Quit India Movement of 1942.

The movement in Travancore though independent of the wider movement in British India, was nevertheless not fought in isolation. The state people's movement, was not only fought simultaneously on both points but was more affected by the Indian National Congress' policies and attitudes towards it.

In this, while the states people were even ready to align themselves with the Indian National Congress on their struggle and to promote their motives, the Indian National Congress refused to involve itself in the states with the democratic struggle fully, at any time. The post Haripura involvement of the Congress leadership in the states people movement in Travancore state, obscured the issues and have led to wrong conclusions that the Indian National Congress' leadership was sympathetic to the agitation for Responsible Government. However, the desires and intentions of British Indian nationalists are made more than clear in their treatment of the movement in Travancore where this peoples movement was indigenous and had acquired enough thrust to carry out their programme on their own without help from the Indian National Congress. What was required of the Indian National Congress in Travancore was not the active help to its agitations as was made out by the Calcutta resolution, but the moral blessings to it to carry out their programme. It was here that the British Indian

leadership showed their antagonism and sought to manipulate by acting as intermediaries. The Indian National Congress High Command's treatment of this state, more than its involvement with those of the northern ones shows the real measure of its policy towards a democratic movement in an Indian state.

The Indian National Congress had to enter the states arena due to machinations of British Policy. It was the British administrators effort at counterpoising the princes against the nationalists. Their policy created an invidious boundary between the states and the neighbouring provinces. These efforts were to insulate the princes from the influences of a democratic government in the provinces, (projected in the Government of India Act of 1919). This really necessitated the Congress entry to the states for creating spheres of Congress influence in the state and pursue a programme of integration. To understand Congress obstructionist attitude towards the movement in the Princely States we have to analyse how their interests on integration could have run counter to the aspirations of the states people for a democratic administration. From the very beginning of its entry into the Princely States the Congress High Command, though it obscured its interest in the states under a guise of a constructive programme, was not consistent throughout of making it clear that the aim of Congress intervention was to assist the State's people's programme of securing Responsible Government.

Was this reluctance merely the result of a belief in the legal position of the princes as the supreme authority in the states (which it candidly and to the cost of the

states people recognised in its All Parties Constitution). Or was it the result of a realisation that the states peoples struggle was in vain and a wasted effort and unnecessary till the withdrawal of British from India was assured? or was it because of a realisation that the states people's achievement of success – even partially so, could itself encourage regionalism and prove a possible danger to their own aspirations on integration? or was it because of the fear that the achievement of Responsible Government by the States Peoples before independence will create a negative impression about the Indian National Congress and thereby alienate it from the people at large in British India or even the fear that the attainment of Responsible Government before independence by Princely State would lead to emergence of a large number of independent democratic entities in India along with British India and such a political situation making the accession of those states to the Indian Union unpractical and a hazardous task? The Congress probably feared that any move, after the attainment of Responsible Government, towards any direction whether for integration with Union with or without force, may naturally lead to resistance from the people and therefore a tactics to delay the grant of Responsible Government was followed by the Indian National Congress. The Indian National Congress might have also feared that creation of a different democratic entity in place of the princely states will weaken the political agitations in British India, as the British India cause will loose the support and sympathy from the 'reborn' new democratic states, and for that reason freedom from British rule for British India may be delayed. Moreover the

progressive administration in the new born democratic states (in the place of Princely States) may lead to a negative approach by the people towards the Indian National Congress compelled them to take this stand.

If the states people were left free to take a course of action of their own, without intervention from the Indian National Congress, some states perhaps including Travancore might have become independent of the Princely Order before 1947, due to the pressure of popular agitations. But the Indian National Congress never gave them a chance and often interfered in their political agitations at a time when the movement gathered momentum. This intervention, though may with good intentions, had a very strong negative result. People withdrew from the agitations became democratised and the political party was weakened.

In the case of Travancore the whole programmes of agitations were completely controlled by the Indian National Congress since most of its leaders had a high esteem about Gandhian ideals.

If the Indian National Congress was not involved or taken part in the agitations in Princely States the reason for their interference also cannot be justified. A political party need interfere in a State only when it is involved in it. But in Travancore the Indian National Congress interfered without involvement.

In the initial stages the recognition of the legal position of the princes in the States by the Indian National Congress and the statements of Butler Committee with

regard to non recognition of the States People – in allotting no position to them even in an enquiry *vis-a-vis* the states – confirm the position of the Indian National Congress regarding the legal position of the Princes. While up to 1938 this position of the Indian National Congress did seem a valid excuse, the leadership's approach to the Princely States in the post 1938 period, is not reasonable especially in the context of personally spearheading such movements in the State. This would indicate a change of policy towards the Princely States in their agitations and showed that when its own interests on federation and integration demanded it, the State People movement was discouraged in the interest of the Princes.

Gandhi's own assertions was that British paramountcy was the ultimate contender and that till the withdrawal of the British the movement could gain nothing but to pervert affairs in the States. Gandhi defending his own case, in refuting charges apropos of Rajkot² that but for his 'bad handling' of the situation, the people of Rajkot

2. In Rajkot, the appointment of a retired civilian, Patrick Caddl as Diwan was strongly resented by the Thakora Saheb who with strong support from his ex-Diwan Virawala, entered into an agreement with Sardar Patel, by which it was agreed that in the event of the Diwan's ouster he would be amenable to reforms in the State. By this agreement of December 26, 1938, seven members of the Sardar's choice were to be appointed in the Reforms Committee of 10. The Thakore Saheb's resiling from his promise resulted in an agitation against the Durban in which Vallabhai Patel, Kasthurba Gandhi and Gandhi himself took an active part. As a result of Gandhi's fast the Viceroy intervened and Maurice Gwayer was nominated as arbitrator to go into the clause of the agreement and finally the decision was given in favour of Sardar Patel. But the State administration with active collaboration of the Paramount Power staged a communal problem by formulating trouble between the Hindu, Muslims and the Bhayyats. But when Jinnah and Ambedkar entered the fray, Gandhi acknowledged his failure to solve the problem and withdrew in April 1939. For details see Devaprasad Ghosh, "Rajkot Fiasco" in *India Tomorrow*, 30th April 1939. File No.G-12/1937-38, AICC Papers, NMML. Also see *Harijan*, April 1939,

would have got what they wanted, pointed out that it would be most misleading to think that before his entry and 'mishandling' "the princes were so trembling in their shoes that they were about to abdicate their powers."³ What they were doing, he asserted, was conferring among themselves on ways and means of countering the menace – as they thought it to be. As a result of the confabulations, he pointed out, they planned to arraign the forces of communalism to their aide. As such the problem resolved itself into the necessity of Congress or satyagraha gaining control over these forces before they could take the agitation to the climax.

Taking this argument to Travancore one can find that with little communal rancour in Travancore after 1936, this contention falls through. In Travancore no doubt that C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar was, in accordance with the strategy of the Diwan, using the card of communalism in the State to antagonise the Nairs and the Ezhavas. Had the movement been allowed to run its course there was the possibility that these antagonisms would have been aggravated and in addition entrenched the State Congress in its communal bias, and served to add to charges of hooliganism. It was in this sense that Gandhi was 'callous' of the State Congress fears of Ezhava dissociation from the movement which he felt would leave the body of this communal faction. However, his solution hardly helped as their withdrawal helped little in allaying the

Vol. 7 (1939-40), p.104, 6 May 1939, p.113, 24th June 1939, p.169. Also see for details the Memorandum by the Secretary of State of Cabinet, 9th February 1939, Cabinet Papers, 44(39), Vol. 25, Roll 9, Zetland Collection, NMML.

3. Editorial by Gandhi, 'How Far', 24 June 1939, *Harijan*, Vol. 7 (1939-40), p. 169.

forces of communalism, but in turn served to weaken the organisation and made way for its replacement by a different ideology which seemed to be favourable to its cause, [the extremists].

This brings one to a related aspect of the problem i.e., the attitude of the Paramount Power towards the agitations for Responsible Government and of reforms for all Responsible Government granted by states administration even without agitations. The policy of the Paramount Power as enunciated in its parliamentary answers, pronouncements of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State⁴ avowedly proclaimed that while the Paramount Power would not object introduction of reforms and changes in the form of governments in the states, the nature of these changes was a matter for the Rulers themselves, and that in case of pressures from popular agitations, while the Rulers were required to remedy misgovernment, they would be given protection to which they were entitled under their treaties against violence and disorders.⁵ However, in practice it was otherwise.

Zetland himself confessed in a letter to Linlithgow, apropos of Rajkot that the “apparent *Volte Face* in connection with the personnel of the committee”,⁶ to which

4. The major pronouncements were – Wintertons’ Answer in House of Commons, 21 Feb. 1938, Zetlands speech 27 May 1938, Colonel Muirheads answer in House of Commons, 16 December 1938, Viceroy’s speech at Calcutta on 19th December 1938 and the Viceroy’s speech to the princes at an informal meeting at the Viceroy’s House, 13 March 1939.

5. See Memo to the Cabinet from the Secretary of State 9 Feb. 1939. Cabinet Papers 44(89), Zetland Collection, Vol. 258, Roll 9, NMML.

6. Letter from Zetland to Linlithgow, Vol. 11, p. 36, Roll, 3, Zetland Collection, NMML.

the Rajkot Durbar had agreed to it in their negotiations with Patel, was due to pressures from the British administrators and that he was not certain that in this particular case he “*could say conscientiously*”⁷ that they had not attempted to stand in the way of the decisions of the rulers to take steps to liberalise the form of government in the state. In Rajkot the intervention of the British administration could have been to a certain extent the result of two things: 1) because it was a British political officer against whom the movement worked in its initial stages and 2) because it was their main antagonists, the British Indian nationalists, who had entered the fray. But examining the question a little further in the context of Travancore we find that even if the nationalists had withheld themselves from any involvement in Travancore and allowed the state’s people to have had a straight fight, the evidence shows that the state’s peoples position would not have been very promising. British policy in the matter of intervention in the State, due to pressures to reform, subjected themselves to only one exception which was to the favour of the State’s People. They stipulated that while supporting the Maharaja “they were to secure the abolition of abuses and raise the standard of administration.”⁸ In Travancore which was considered as an enlightened administration, it is doubtful if the British administrators would have allowed the state’s people to have had a free hand. At best had the hands of the state’s administration been forced, there would have been efforts at playing at reforms

7. Letter from Zetland to Linlithgow, 12 February 1939, Vol. 11, p. 36, Roll. 3, Zetland Collection, NMML.

8. *Ibid.*

without giving the substance, as was done by C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar in his American Model Constitution in 1946 (which had in any case been prepared by him as early as 1939 for just such an eventuality).

Thus the movement in the state would have been infructuous in the end, resulting in the meantime, quite possibly in shooting incidents without achieving their objective; as long as the State had the protection of the Paramount Power and the backing of the States Protection Against Disaffection Act there was little chance of the people obtaining their objective in the State. The abortive nature of any agitation till the withdrawal of the British was proved even more clearly in the violence exhibited by the Diwan in suppressing the communists uprising in 1946 in Travancore.

While this was the attitude of the Paramount Power on pressures towards reforms, their attitude to reforms granted without pressures, and they would not stand in the way of such reforms,⁹ was really antagonistic. Even when a small state like Oudh did grant Responsible Government, the Maharaj Kumar of Oudh was warned by the British against the move of the Ruler.¹⁰

The real fight in respect of constitutional and democratic reforms in the states was not between the people and the state administration alone – but between the

9. *The Hindu*, 4th February, 1938. See for details its Editorial on “State Reforms and Paramount Power.”

10. See letter from Apa Pant to Jawaharlal (undated 1938) Vol. No.78, pp. 103-105, JN Correspondence, NMML.

Paramount Power and the people of the states, in which the Paramount Power was ready to resist any pressures brought to bear upon them from the leadership in the provinces. The Paramount Power considered it “a serious political crisis.”¹¹

Gandhiji was correct when he stated, it was only the conversion of rulers, through peaceful means which could bring about reforms and not by forces and agitations. With the Maharaja and the Diwan jointly stood against the movement, the administration by using the forces of communalism at their command, always characterised even peaceful and non-violent agitation as creating violence and disorder and thus to get the Paramount Power to its side. Thus Gandhiji was correct in his view of priorities. Unless the Paramount Power itself was removed, there was little chance of attaining the state peoples ideal through pressures; even otherwise the Maharaja himself should have been willing not only to divest himself of autocracy but himself spearheaded such reforms, agitations could serve little purpose.

This master-stroke in policy which Gandhiji imparted to his policy *vis-a-vis* the states did push the British administrators into a difficult corner, in that their nefarious plans to project the princes as a counterpoise to popular forces in the federal legislature was put to a tight squeeze. Again this was Gandhiji’s peculiar bombardment of the “network of friendly fortresses in debatable territory” on which British imperialism in

11. Letter from Zetland to Linlithgow, 12 February 1939, Vol. 11, p. 36, Roll. 3, Zetland Collections, NMML.

1931 had put so much trust as to assert that because of it “it would be difficult for general rebellion against the British to sweep India”¹² counterpoised as they were by the loyal native states. Thus in 1938 while the Viceroy did proclaim to the Secretary of State that he would not be a party to an endeavour which would give any understanding to the Congress that would in “practice amount to a variation from the strict interpretation”¹³ of the federation proposed, he was through Gandhiji’s policies forced into holding talks with Gandhiji in April 1938,¹⁴ when pressed by him, the British administrators had to accept “that some element of popular choice as distinct from nomination should enter into the selection of states representatives.”¹⁵

While the British administrators in a subsequent period, did, in order to allay the fears of princes “of a violent onslaught upon the state”,¹⁶ give an ambiguous ruling in December 1938,¹⁷ they could hardly give a concrete assurance to their plea for the

12. Rushbrooke Williams, quoted by J. Nehru in his speech at the Udaipur session of the AISPC, 31 December 1945, File No.104, Part II, pp. 110-119, JN Papers, NMML.

13. Letter from Linlithgow to Zetland, 16 April 1937, Vol. 13, p. 94, Roll 4, Zetland Collection, NMML.

14. Letter from Linlithgow to Zetland, 15 April 1938, Vol. 13, p. 277, Roll 5, Zetland Collection, NMML.

15. Speech by Secretary of State, 27 May 1948, Enclosures to on states, Vol. 25 B Roll 9 Cabinet Papers File (39) Zetland Collection NMML.

16. Letter from Zetland to Carl Heath, 19 December 1938, Vol. 8, pp. 177-79, Roll 5, Zetland Collection, NMML.

17. See Colonel Muirheads answer in House of Commons, *ante*, p. 311.

Viceroy's backing as against Congress.¹⁸ He had to emphasise that while they were willing to extend support to their difficulties against the Congress, he "could not undertake to put an effective fence against the march of ideas,"¹⁹ for "at root, this movement was not dependent upon federation (but was) fundamentally a part of a great upsurge of political activity which one could trace right across the face of Asia from the Nile to the Yellow River in China...directed towards a liberating of political institutions and towards the progressive recognition of the individual subjects."²⁰

The British Government on its own acknowledgement, was now due to the policies of Gandhiji, caught in a cleft stick. The princes who had been co-opted into a federation to act as a counterpoise to the popular representatives at the centre were themselves now being subjected to the same popular forces from which the British Government could hardly give them any protection. The British administrators themselves, though they realised the inadequacy of a federation to protect their interests, could not throw federation overboard for fear of ridicule from conservative quarters. It was in such a situation that Zetland confessed to their position as one "one on the horns of dilemma"²¹ and on the eve of second world War Linlithgow confessed

18. Letter from Linlithgow to Zetland, 8 November 1938, Vol. 15, p. 499, Roll 5, Zetland Collection, NMML.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Viceroy's speech to the princes at an informal meeting at the Viceroy's House, 13 March 1939, Vol. 7, p. 120, Roll 5, Zetland Collection, NMML.

21. Letter from Zetland to Carl Heath, 19 December 1938, vol. 8, pp.177-179, Roll 5, Zetland Collection, NMML.

to "a certain sneaking fondness for the idea of saying rather more definitely that [they were] putting federation into cold storage."²²

The war delivered them and the state's administration an excuse to stand against reforms. The viceroy remarking rather sanctimoniously that the princes would have bitter cause to rue their failure to seize federation when it was at their disposal,²³ made the outbreak of war the pretext for throwing overboard the inconvenient federation scheme in spite of having by then nearly "one fifth in their pocket, Baroda, Mysore and Kashmir almost in the net, Gwalior and Indore as good as caught."²⁴

When examined in this context of British difficulties on federation it is evident that even in a loose federation as proposed by the Cabinet Mission, the hands of the Congress leadership would have been strong enough, were it willing to do so, to hold the central leadership from active interference in the states on behalf of the states administration. Thus given an active movement from within the states and the States Protection Against Disaffection Act in abeyance with the independence of British India, as the British administrators did realize, the chances of a state administration holding their own as against the states people was heavily loaded against the princes.

22. Letter from Linlithgow to Zetland, 31 August 1939, Vol. 18, p. 85 Roll 6, Zetland Collection, NMML.

23. Letter from Linlithgow to Zetland, 14 December 1939, Vol. 18, p. 20, Roll 6, Zetland Collection, NMML.

24. Letter from Linlithgow to Zetland, 27 November 1939, Vol. 18, p. 258, Roll 6, Zetland Collection, NMML.

While they may not have capitulated as quickly as they did following partition in face of a unitary government, they would nevertheless have been forced to come to terms with the states people. In this the Congress leadership would have been forced to help them as a popular administration in the states returning all members to the central legislature as elected was certainly to the Congress nationalists advantage and it would have been inconceivable, that after independence, be it a federal or a unitary structure the Congress would have or even could have put a fence against the state peoples ambitions.

Granted that the Congress High Command after independence would not and could not have betrayed the states people, was it really necessary for Gandhiji in the meantime to have forced these states peoples organisation, in the period subsequent to Haripura, not only to stop the movement but to accept the humiliating conditions imposed upon it by the states administrations – which was again solely due to the embargo placed on it by Gandhiji? Left to themselves, there is little doubt, that but for Gandhiji the states people could have got, if not a full responsible government, better terms than they did.

In such a contingency could not the State Congress, strong as it was from within, have flouted the leadership from without? As it was, the states movement was pitted against two strong forces that of the princes with almost unbridled powers for repression and of a Paramount Power willing to support it through its military forces. They could not hope to get the moral support of the nationalists but this being

withdrawn there was little possibility of its thrust being effective. In Travancore Gandhiji issued an oblique warning that he would not be a party to struggle in pursuit of a personal matter to “the exclusion of the most important one of swaraj. Here though he could hardly spell out clearly whether the state’s peoples intransigence was against swaraj in their non-withdrawal of the memorandum or in a continuation of their struggle, the subsequent events clearly showed that he was not ready to countenance the state’s peoples struggle even on the platform of Responsible Government. These equivocations of the Congress High Command was due to their rather ambiguous position for while their position on integration demand a state’s peoples awareness and political consciousness to use them as levers for obtaining British Indian interest on Integration, the same political consciousness could not be misdirected to an assertion of an independent position *vis-a-vis* the Congress leadership in the provinces. Thus the assertion of Gandhiji shows that apart from a realisation of the impossibility of the state’s people achieving their goal prior to independence, one could not rule out an ulterior motive present in the actions of the British Indian nationalists *vis-a-vis* the state’s peoples movements, which may have been due to their apprehensions that the state’s peoples success, even a partial one, itself could present an eventual danger to their own aspirations on integration. Such fears could not be ruled as out of context as there is confirmation *post facto* in the postures of a Sheikh Abdullah, on an independent Kashmir following independence and the establishment of a popular government. The states organisation of Travancore

and Mysore did have modified versions of such ambitions. Mysore, which had till independence thought of a united Karnataka as a 'vital necessity' made a *volte face* following the achievement of her ambitions. The states peoples proposals on the disbandment of AISPC was that Congress organisations in the state be treated as separate provinces and not as part of Karnataka. Travancore Congress which had never made any hones on this issue even earlier, made similar demand.²⁵

Even Hanumanthaiyya's dissenting note in the 'Model Constitution Committee' of the Constituent Assembly of 1949²⁶ was for a retention of greater powers by the states – even to power vested on the states legislature for the deposition of the Maharaja, etc. which exhibited a clear adherence to the states peoples earlier stand against a transference of paramountcy. The demands of the states people was of course proved not making the centre all powerful. Thus the confrontation in the state *vis-a-vis* the Congress High Command ultimately resolved itself into the British nationalist obsessions on central control as against the states peoples desires of marking an independent path. Seen in this perspective it becomes clear that the British Indian nationalists did have an imperative need to stay the hands of the states people in their course till their own position at the centre was secured to bring the states people under their direct command. This position was explained rather obliquely by the AISPC, speaking of course not on behalf of states peoples aspirations as much as that of the

25. For details see letter from Nijalingappa on KPCC Mysore State Congress member dated 29 August 1948 on File No. P-9 (KW-d)/1946-49, AICC, Papers, NMML.

26. Shiva Rao, *op.cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 554-552.

British nationalists. It was Nehru who naively proclaimed “what is the nature of conflict today? This must be clearly understood. It varies from state to state but the demand is everywhere for full responsible government. *Yet the Conflict is not at present to enforce that demand but to establish the right of organising people for that demand* ...the freedom of the people of the states is a big enough thing, yet it is part of the larger freedom of India and till we gain that larger freedom it is a struggle for us.”²⁷

Thus at every stage the needs of integration did cross the aspirations of the states people and there could never have been a meeting of purposes till independence for British India was achieved. The states peoples struggle was at every stage in contradiction and confrontation with that of the nationalists except in so far as it promoted the nationalist’s interest on integration. As such, though the fight did seem a contradiction in terms, it was not a mere fight of priorities of democracy versus integration but in another and more important aspect an assertion of a prospective central government against possible centripetal forces. Thus to treat of the states peoples struggle as part of the wider movement, especially as in these states where the movement was more strongly on the democratic platform, would be an erroneous appreciation of the states peoples movement. Again, the AISPC contribution to Travancore agitations on their own programme of responsible government, was

27. Presidential Address of Nehru to AISPC, Ludhiana, 8 February 1939, File No. 104 Part II, subject Files, pp. 48-60, JN Papers, NMML.

minimal. In Travancore people had established a political organisation to promote their demand, and mainly motivated and worked hard for establishment of and worked hard for establishment of Responsible Government. The AISPC could hardly concern itself with this programme of 'organising people for that demand',²⁸ towards a promotion of Indian National Congress aims on integration.

Taking into consideration of Gandhiji's manoeuvrings it would suggest that the story of the integration of the states was not the mere result of a *tour de force* of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and V.P. Menon, or even the result of the naive outpourings of a Nehru as President of the AISPC but the fruit of Gandhian *real politik* whose figure alone stands out as a colossus in his clear manipulation of a states peoples movement as a force towards his main objective of integration. In this Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who with his calibre quickly understood the underlying motives of the six hundred and odd Princely States succeeded in the integration of these States."²⁹

If this integration was achieved at the price of a small dialocation in the states - as in Travancore in its deflection to communism and communalism – it was a small price. no doubt in the face of an achievement of welding together all the Princely States making a united India. The states peoples movement, is thus again a new version of the story of integration with its central theme of achieving a transfer of

28. Here it is the later states peoples organisation in the AISPC which is referred to and not the earlier ISPC.

29. Wavell visualising the states position on British withdrawal in a letter to "Amery 20 April 1944. *Transfer of Power*, Vol. V, Document 467, pp. 901-902.

paramountcy on the British withdrawal, this time not to much over the Maharaja's who were in any case a spent force, but over the popular, but regionally oriented forces in work in the states, so as to ensure a united India.

Having analysed the general trends, in the background of the national mainstream and the attitude of the Indian National Congress towards political agitations in Princely States, fears and apprehensions and treatment of British administrators towards it, it is necessary to have an estimate about Travancore politics from 1938-47. The struggle for Responsible Government began with the formation of the Travancore State Congress in 1938, before which the State witnessed a clear division of the society on communal lines backtracking the political movements. The people of Travancore held the Maharaja in high esteem and success of the administration was attributed to him while for all failures the Diwan was blamed. The king exercised his administrative authority through the agency of the Diwan, who was entrusted with vast and varied powers. There of course existed no checks and balances. Centralisation of such powers in the hands of the Diwan made him a real autocrat, taking orders from the Ruler. This made possible the Maharaja acting from behind and putting all blame on the Diwan for all actions. The people had no opportunity either to negotiate with the government or to question the policies and actions of the government. Moreover the people had other social and economic grievances as well. The less dominant communities suffered oppression and was unable to seek redress of their grievances. The spread of education and other developments elsewhere in India

helped the people of the state to be more consciousness of their rights as subjects of the state. The political agitations going on in their neighbouring territories in British India under the banner of the Indian National Congress also compelled the people of Travancore to think in political terms, Hence the struggle in Travancore.

A survey of the movement in the State from 1839-1947 would reveal that it has seven broad phases based on its main trends in the agitation. 1) The first phase was between February to August 1938 during which period the State Congress emerged as a strong political force to be reckoned with. It also began to gain for itself popular support from all sections of the society, giving the image of a mass organisation. The period witnessed strong and stringent action from the Travancore Government. 2) The second phase which began in August 1938 and lasted till March 1939 was characterised by the hectic political activities and agitations in the State under the State Congress leaders. The political situation in the State became turbulent and the resistance from the Government became more violent and stubborn. This period had its ups and downs due to this policy of the administration. The attitude of the Indian National Congress leaders also did not help the State Congress Organisation, 3) The third phase of the agitations from April 1939 to December 1946 may be characterised as a period of political inactivity or lull in the history of the Travancore State Congress, due to a variety of reasons. The period also saw the emergence and gradual growth of a radical section within the state congress fold, who later became communists. This period clearly shows a picture of the inability or failure of both the

State Congress leadership and the Government to assess the growth of the communist movement in the State in spite of the fact that the Diwan was a strong antagonist of the communist ideology. It is to be made clear that the communists succeeded in building a strong base in Travancore, though the administration of Travancore under C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer used all its resources to withstand communist activities in the state. Even the efforts of the State Congress leaders to renew the political agitations with reinforced vigour during 1939-40 and also to organise the Quit India Agitations in 1942 failed, resulting in a loss of face for the organisation among the public, and disassociation of many top ranking leaders from the Organisation. This forced the leadership of the State Congress to co-operate with the Government with constructive works such as production and distribution of essential commodities etc. This situation, no doubt, affected the image of the party especially in the economic field after the outbreak of the world War II, enabled the communist party to gain strength and consolidate its influence in the State of Travancore. They could establish a strong root among the labourers of Travancore and this situation of inaction of the State Congress and strong and calculated moves of the communists resulted in the Punnapra Vayalar uprisings of 1946, which ended in a bloody massacre of thousands of lives. 4) The fourth phase of agitations began in 1946 when the announcement of the new constitution based on American Model was made by the Diwan, and a royal proclamation to this effect was published in 1947 and the subsequent political movements in the State. 5) The fifth phase represents the move of the Diwan for an

independent Travancore and the reactions of national leaders and organisations to it and the threat of the Travancore state Congress for direct action, 6) Sixth phase of the movement was the attempt on the life of the Diwan and his final decision to vacate the chair of the Diwan and his exit from Travancore. 7) The last and seventh phase is the attainment of Responsible Government to the state on 4th September 1947, and the decision to accede to the Indian Union and formation of a popular ministry.

Both social and political issues intermingled in this agitation for Responsible Government in the State. It succeeded in securing equal rights and privileges with caste Hindus, to the backward communities, as grant of Responsible Government envisaged representation of the people in government irrespective of cast creed or colour – equal rights to all.

As a political movement it succeeded in the transfer of power from the Diwan and Maharaja to the people of the State, thus putting an end to the autocratic rule of the Royal palace. No doubt the interaction of these social and political issues resulted frequently in direct confrontations, but it never came in the way of the common cause of attainment of Responsible Government to the State. But one cannot overlook that this created, at least on certain occasions, difficulties in the progress of the agitations from which the administration took advantage. Another striking feature of the movement was that both non-violent and violent methods were adopted during the agitations by different groups, showing lack of proper coordination in agitational methods. The State Congress adhered to the non-violence of Gandhiji while the

extremists, that is, the communists resisted and took to the path of violence. Deviating from the path of Gandhian leadership the State Congress adopted the method of defiance of ban orders, organisation of meetings and demonstrations and arrest of leaders, leading to violent disturbances like burning, destruction of public property and blood shed.

The confrontation techniques of both the State Congress and the Government were also different. The State Congress adopted Legislative Processes, while the government very often adopted a negative approach. When T.M. Varghese moved a motion on Responsible Government in the state Legislature in 1938, the Diwan opposed this by raising a constitutional objection saying that the treaty relations of the state with the British Government in India does not allow this. This would suggest that the Diwan was trying to find some excuse to obstruct the democratic process in the State. Winterton's statements in the House of Commons proved contrary to this objection as unreal, though in spite of this declaration the real intention of the British was negative. This policy of negative attitude of the government resulted in violent clashes, arrests and lathi charges and assault of leaders by 'unknown persons' throughout the state. The Diwan also raised the issue of 'disloyalty to the throne to win the support of a section of the society but failed as the party leaders openly declared that their programmes of agitation was not against the person of the Maharaja but against the kind of administration of the State. Another striking feature was that both the Government and the State Congress waged a war of propaganda in which both

sides succeeded to an extent. But in spite of the whole administrative machinery and powers at the command of the Government, it failed to secure popular support against the movement. Even the attempt of the Diwan to characterise the State Congress as a Christian association did not gain support among the people. He was forced to satisfy himself with the support of the Nair Service Society, that too he lost by the year 1947. He succeeded in his policy of 'divide and rule', to a certain extent, for some time, and gained the support of Muslims, Tamil speaking population and the Latin Christians. Through the Temple Entry Proclamation the Diwan could obtain support of a section of the oppressed group like the Pulayas and Parayas of Travancore – but all this support was short lived as they also realised in course of time, the real motive of the Diwan – that his aim was to arrest the growth of popular democratic movements in the state of Travancore. To the advantage of the State Congress, they could retain support of the Syrian Catholics, and a majority section of the Ezhavas. Both in the course of the agitation these sections who backed up the administration also switched over to the part of the State Congress leaving the administration in oblivion – and no more the administration could count upon the co-operation of any major social organisation, resulting in the struggle itself transformed in to a mass movement against the administration.

As stated earlier the attitude and policies of the Indian National Congress towards the movement had direct bearing upon the course and its impact of the agitations – that the attitude of the Indian National Congress cannot be considered as

uniformly helpful. The Haripura Resolution of the Indian National Congress in 1938 regarding the policy of intervention can be considered as a move to promote self reliance in the struggle, but more a realisation of its inability to interfere or spearhead in the political agitations in the Princely States along with that of British India. Though in December 1938, the Indian National Congress changed its stand and extended support to the State Congress agitations, it (the INC) hesitated to involve itself with the agitations in Travancore, though some leaders from British Indian territories participated in the agitations only in name, like volunteers from Madras, Madurai, Malabar, Colombo and other areas. This cannot be considered as a real intervention or participation of the Indian National Congress in the movement in Travancore – but a stray coincidence – just to picturise that it was an all India agitation participating leaders from throughout India – but in reality the people of Travancore were left alone on their own to fight this movement throughout. The participation of volunteers from outside, no doubt, helped the agitators of Travancore to give the struggle a national character, but the insistence of Gandhi on the withdrawal of the personal allegations against the Diwan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer created an embarrassing situation to the state congress leadership, resulting in a strained relation between the Indian National Congress and the Travancore State Congress.

It may be noted that the State Congress, in spite of its non-communal, non-sectional character and genuine political intentions failed to gain support of all sections of people of Travancore mainly for two reasons: 1) The All out effort on the part of the

administration to characterise this political organisation as a purely communal organisation and 2) The inability of the State organisation to convince the people of Travancore through its activities and policies that it stood for the cause of the public. Whenever there was intervention from the Congress High Command the leaders of the Travancore State Congress were forced to suspend direct action, which created an impression among the public that it is an inactive, feeble party, which will not stand by its declarations.

In that sense, whatever may be arguments of the Indian National Congress Leadership for its actions, perhaps severe damage to the agitation for Responsible Government launched by the State Congress was done by the Indian National Congress, though not deliberately. Adding fuel to the fire the emergence and growth of the communist party as a very strong force, represented a reaction to the go-slow and moderate methods of the State Congress leadership. Moreover neither the Indian National Congress nor the Travancore State Congress failed to offer a remedy to the distress that the weaker sections of the society experienced. But the violent and bloody agitations of the Communists which were suppressed by the government with an iron hand, rescued to State Congress from further down fall, that non-violent agitational methods would be better than violent methods. The movement of the communists also helped to realize that their system cannot be a substitute to the pattern adopted by the State Congress.

Thus we find that various internal and external developments or factors rendered possible the attainment of responsible government in Travancore. By the year 1947, most of the political and social groups in the State united together which forced the Diwan to adopt a policy of compromise rather than to adopt the policy of 'divide and rule' followed earlier. The subsequent political developments and the exit of the Diwan C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer from Travancore politics, who remained a strong source of strength to the princely family, led to the realisation by the palace of the existing political situation in the State, and the fear of direct intervention by the Central Government against the Independent Travancore Policy, which stood against a United Indian Union. This forced the Maharaja of Travancore to issue a Royal Proclamation on 4th September 1947 to grant Responsible Government to the Princely State of Travancore, which was later integrated to the Indian Union.

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8. Kerala Patrika
9. Kerala Sanchari
10. Kerala Kaumudi, Trivandrum.

11. Malabar Mail, Ernakulam.
12. Malayala Manorama, Kottayam,
13. Malayala Rajyam, Quilon.
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2. Kaumudi, Trivandrum
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5. Kesari, Cochin
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Appendix – I

INCOMPATIBILITY OF TREATY RIGHTS WITH INDEPENDENT BRITISH INDIA – 1940-1947

The question of the states and their problems, important as it was, as Jawaharlal Nehru acknowledged in his letter to Sheikh Abdulla, had now receded into the background.¹ The tendency now was to concentrate on the ‘minority issue’ of British India almost to a total exclusion of the problem of the states. Thus, while the Reform Commissioner, H.V. Hodson complained of the very small part which the problem of the states seemed to play in the British Indian politicians ‘approach’ to the constitutional issue and of their new tendency to leave it out of the picture², the British administrators were no less guilty in their approach to these questions.

The August offer of 1940 was concerned with British India alone – this in spite of the British administrator’s sympathies for the princes who had demanded a more positive declaration, that any revision of the 1935 Act would be undertaken only in consultation with them.³ This, non-consultation of the princes or their representatives

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1. Letter of J. Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah, 7 January 1942, Vol. 48, pp. 114-115, Jawaharlal Nehru Papers (JN Papers) NMML.
 2. Note on the tour of the Reforms Commissioner, 8 November 1941 to 7 December 1941, Annex to Document 30, para 4, p. 65, *Transfer of Power (1942-47)*, Vol. I, edited by Nicholas Mansergh and E.W.R. Lumby (1970).
 3. See Aide Memoire presented by the Chamber of Princes, 25 January 1940 and also letter from Linlithgow to Zetland, 12 March 1940, Vol. 19, Reel 6, p. 78, and p. 175, Zetland Collection, IOL, available in microfilm at NMML.

had irked C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, and had even prompted him to suggest to Mirza Ismail and Hydari⁴ a joint consultation to discuss and make some representation to the Viceroy on behalf of the larger⁵ states. The request was rejected by Mirza Ismail and stated that he would not be a party to such a conference. The reason for this callous treatment of the princes was due to the growing realisation, during this period, in the minds of British administrators own minds, of the incompatibility of maintaining their treaty obligations to the princes with their promises for a self-governing British India. As Wylie rightly had remarked, “the vision”⁶ of an Indian Union was inconsistent with the maintenance of the princes treaty rights and obligations. The British administrators, in spite of all their sympathies for the princes, were caught in the “unenviable position” of reconciling their “past promises with present day realities”,⁷ especially in face of the states peoples demonstration during the period of 1938 to 1940. The ‘Transfer of Power’ volumes dealing with this period from 1942 to March 1946 show clearly the evolution of the above realisation.⁸ It is in this context that the importance of the states peoples movement to be considered.

4. They were the Diwans of Mysore and Hyderabad respectively.

5. See supplementary report of the Resident Madras States, to Political Department 7 July 1940, CRR, IOL, ACC 2, NAI.

6. See Wylie’s views on British policy towards the states as narrated by Wavell in his letter to Amery 29 December 1943. Document No.287, Para 3, p. 578, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.IV.

7. Wavell to Amery, 20 April 1944. Document No.467, pp. 901-903, Nicholas Mensergh, *op.cit.* Vol.IV.

8. Refer Nicholas Mensergh, Vol. V.

The May 1941 memorandum of Amery's to Linlithgow mainly emphasised the weakness of the small and petty states' Durbars to maintain themselves against "subversive activities" or successfully to negotiate for a firm footing in a new Indian structure without the help of Britain.⁹ As such, the main problem was of grouping the majority of these principalities to withstand these pressures, or to liquidate them by absorption in either other states or with British India. In order to keep their hands free for such a course it was increasingly necessary that the British Government refrained from any new pronouncements stressing the sanctity of rights and had to impress upon the Durbars the need to adjust themselves to their claims for their continuation being considered on their own merits. It was in this context that the Cripps proposal, though it made generous concessions to the princes,¹⁰ hurt their susceptibilities by deviating from the earlier constitutional proposals in making no mention of the treaty position of the princes vis a vis the crown.¹¹

9. Linlithgow to Amery, recapitulating Amery's Memorandum of May 1941 in his letter of 13 September 1943. Document No.111, p.237, Nicholas Mensergh, *op. Cit.* Vol. IV.

10. The Cripps offer vis a vis the states dealt only with the long term plan. It conceded to the princes their right to 'appoint' representatives (replacing the words 'invited to send' in the original draft). The states were given the option to adhere to the states at the federal or individual union level or not at all. Congress objections to the Cripps' proposal (apart from it being a post dated cheque) chiefly lay in the fact that these provisions struck at the very conception of Indian unity. See Draft Declaration, annex to Document No.265, pp. 357-358. Amery to Linlithgow, 1 March 1942 and 10 March 1942 Documents No. 200 and 296, p.273 and 396 respectively, and Cripps' notes on his interview with Gandhi, 27 March 1942, Document No.397, p. 498, Nicholas Mensergh, *op. cit.* Vol. 1 and AICC resolution, 2 April 1942, File No.G 26/1942 (Part III), p.167, AICC Papers NMML.

11. Apart irritation of the prince against Cripps lay in the fact that he had accorded Patabhi Sitaramayya an interview so as to give the states people a representation. For complaints of the princes on this score and the one cited in the text see Jam Saheb's complaint to

The realisation that the maintenance of the Treaty Rights and obligations by the Crown, irrespective of the size of the state, as incompatible with an independent India or even a dominion India, was realised in all its implications only later. But at this time Cripps realized the weakness of the States in the context of the non-adhering states¹² especially in the impossibility in practice either to give them necessary protection or to carry out its corollary of interference in case of misgovernment in what would in effect be an independent state.¹³ This proposition was disputed by Amery who criticised Cripps for striking a wrong note in his dealings with the princes,¹⁴ and held that it was possible to continue such a relationship on the analogy of South India. Cripps held the high ground mainly on the idealistic motive, that 'such encouragement to the formation of a separate union of Indian States would give the princes a pressure device and create in turn another Pakistan problem'.¹⁵ Even Wavell,

H.Craik, 1 June 1942, Document No.115, pp. 165-175, and Linlithgow to Amery, 25 May 1942, Document No.86, p.123, Nicholas Mensergh, *op.cit.* Vol. II.

12. The states which stood out from the federation were even given a concession to form their own union (a concession granted to them as "a bargaining point ... to teach the Congress what it would have to face if it insisted on a separation from the Empire") To discharge the Crown's obligations to these non-adhering states provisions were to be included in the agreement for 'corridor' and free passage of troops. See Amery to Linlithgow 24 April 1942 Document No.683, p. 844, Notes of Cripps on his interview with the Jan Saheb and Bikaner and second interview to the princes, 26 March 1942 and 26 March 1942, Documents No.386 and 410, p. 487 and 511 respectively, Nicholas Mensergh, *op. Cit.* Vol.I.
13. See Amery to Linlithgow for reference to Cripps letter to the Princes on this, 24 May 1942. Document No.683, p. 843, Nicholas Mensergh, *op.cit.* Vol.I
14. Amery to Linlithgow, 10 June 1942, Document No.138, p. 197, Nicholas Mensergh, *op.cit.*, Vol.II.
15. Memorandum by the Lord Privy Seal 21 September 1942, Document No.3, pp. 4-5, *Ibid.*, Vol. II.

as late as April 1944, had emphasized more or less the same point in holding it 'inconceivable' of a British Government which had granted self-government to British India to apply economic sanctions against them to carry out their obligations to the princes.¹⁶

The earlier demands of the princes emphasising their Treaty Rights had been brushed aside¹⁷ mainly on the score that it was impossible to give anything in the nature of a guarantee to the perpetuation of the innumerable small principalities. Likewise the British administrators efforts at grouping of the Western Indian states¹⁸ leading in turn to show of hysterics by the princes in their 'Chamber Crisis'¹⁹ – had been motivated by the same considerations.

16. Wavel to Amery 20 April 1944. Document No. 467, p.901, *op. cit.* Vol. IV.

17. An equivocal answer was given to the princes by the Viceroy in the Chamber, as well as in an indirect reply to a question in the House of Commons. The princes' subsequent efforts to a more clearer answer led to its reiteration in November 1944 where it was emphasised that these obligations had to be related to the 'necessity of changing times'. A short snippet of Wavell's sensitivity to criticism is provided in the controversy which raged over this reference. Wavell's draft itself contained the above allusion, which Wavell later blamed to amendment by Amery. Compare Document No. 98, para 8, p.205, with document No. 118, p.246. See also Political Department to Princes, November 1944, enclosure to Document No. 98, p.204, Nicholas Mensergh, *op. cit.*, Vol. V.

18. Two schemes for grouping was introduced during this period. The co-operative scheme sought to force the smaller states to come together on their free will, while the Attachment Scheme transferred certain police functions, hitherto exercised for them by the Political Department to larger neighbouring states. The legality of this order was questioned by a Ruler and a ruling against the Government order on 6 December 1946, necessitated the passage of the bill through the House of Commons passed on 8 February 1944.

19. The Prince's efforts at getting a clear commitment to their position from the Viceroy in September 1944 having failed, they strove to move a resolution on this in the Chamber of Princes. The Viceroy's disapproval to the discussion of 'So delicate a topic' in the Chamber, led to the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes resigning. Wavell's

It was only on the eve of the Cabinet Mission Plan when Comfield as spokesman of the princes demanded a clear indication of the British position vis-à-vis the treaties,²⁰ and the real implications of British Indian independence on the position of the states irrespective of their size, and willingness of the British administrators to give such a promise was spelt out.

In this context it was clearly acknowledged, at least at the Cabinet meetings, that paramountcy itself *was essentially derived from the fact that they were paramount in British India* – which in fact of British Indian independence would “clearly no longer admit it of being discharged.”²¹ The accent on paramountcy in British India was of particular importance in carrying out of British obligations to the states. For while the other paramountcy obligations – on personal and dynastic affairs, on economic and fiscal provisions, and even against external aggression could be contrived at, there could be no guarantee “in respect of the ruler against insurrection of

refusal to be pressurised by these tactics led ultimately to the withdrawal of these resignations. See Bhopal’s letter to princes 14th December 1944 and enclosure to Document No. 157, pp. 320-24, Bhopal to Wylie as reported to Wavell, Wavell’s letter to Amery 4 December 1944, Document No.131, pp. 265-266, Griffin to Bhopal, 26 November 1944, Document No.112, pp. 235-236, draft letter by Wavell to princes, which was, however, withdrawn on 21 January 1945, Document No. 221, p. 437, and Bhopal to Wavell 9 February 1945, Document No. 225, p. 532, Bhopal to Wavell 15 July, 1945, Document No. 617, 1255, Nicholas Mensergh, *op. cit.*, Vol. V.

20. See Galville to Wavell, 2 September 1945, Document No. 36 Para 6, p.119, Nicholas Mensergh, *op.cit.* Vol. VI.

21.Cabinet discussions by India-Burma Committee 1 September 1945 and 11 September 1945. Document No. 101 and 105, p. 239 and p. 253, Nicholas Mensergh, *Ibid.*

his own subjects or incursions from neighbouring Indian territories.”²² Hitherto, the Crown had carried out these obligations by the use of troops in control of the Governor General (through section 286 of the 1935 Act) and by the use of the special responsibility of the Governors in the provinces for the protection of the rights. Under an independent British India these provision could naturally not be brought into operation. This brought into question the possibility of having British troops under their control²³ and of free passage for them through British India to these non-adhering states and a guarantee by provincial governors to restrain its people from incursions into neighbouring non-adhering states – the obvious uses of the Protection of States Against Disaffection Act as hitherto exercised. The Viceroy had to state that the demands of the princes were out of question – which ultimately boiled down to an abandoning of their position on obligations regarding treaties.

Such an acknowledgement led to a realisation that there was “no secure future in isolation for even the minor powers much less for the Leichensteins and Monaccos with which India was garnished.”²⁴ The requiem was thus sung on the small states and

22. Proposed redefinition of His Majesty’s Government’s obligations to the Indian Princes, Memorandum by Secretary of State of India, 9 October 1945. Document No. 137, pp. 326-329, Nicholas Mensergh, *Ibid.*

23. In this connection there was one interesting point raised by Sir William Barton. The question was who was to finance it? The princes for their part would contend that they had assigned territory to meet the cost of the military guarantee - a territory now included in the provinces. It was hardly conceivable that the new dominion would agree to finance those states which stood out from it – unless the defence system of the whole of India were to remain in the hands of a commonwealth. See “Princes in Politics in India,” by Sir William Barton, in the *American Review*, Vol. 141, pp 359-360.

24. Amery to Wavell, 26 October 1944. Document No.72, pp. 155-156, Nicholas Mensergh, *op. cit.*, Vol. V.

the danger to even the big states realized in the absence of the props of British military power, it was not surprising that the princes, in the 1946 Cabinet Mission confabulations, were consigned to the ante-chamber.

VAGUENESS OF CABINET MISSION PROVISIONS *VIS-A-VIS* THE STATES

However, the British administrators endeavour to soft pedal the issue and to let down the princes rather gently, again penalised, in its immediate implications, the states peoples' cause. The Cabinet Mission Plan of 16 May 1946, as the resolution of the working committee of the Indian National Congress criticising it did point out, left its provisions regarding the states rather 'vague'²⁵ It was purposely made 'vague' not only to satisfy the Blimps of India Office who deprecated against "the adoption of a more menacing tone,"²⁶ suggested by Shiva Rao – so as to disabuse the princes of the idea that they could survive in splendid isolation²⁷ as having 'little moral justification', but also because the Mission hoped that such vagueness would secure their other

25. Resolution of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress, 24 May 1946. See *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution (1921-47)* Vol. 2, p. 593, edited by Sir Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai. This vagueness it must be admitted in fairness, also penalised the princes. As sir Evan Jenkins, the private Secretary to the Viceroy, pointed out, representation to these states had been granted without indicating their subsequent rights as units. Memorandum and Minutes by E. Jenkind and Wavell, 22-28 august 1945. Document No.53, p. 123-24, Nicholas Mensergh, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI.

26. See Gibson's and Patrick's note on Shiva Rao's proposal, 25 August 1945 and 27 August, 1945, Document No. 56, pp. 135-136, *Ibid.*

27. Shiva Rao advocated that the new proposal coming as from a "purely labour government" should encourage democratic and socially progressive forces in India, and while encouraging small states to merge in British India should ask the bigger states to send elected representatives to the proposal Constituent Assembly. See Shiva Rao's note on India, 20 August 1945, Document No. 46, pp. 100-105, *Ibid.*

objective – to give the Rulers a chance at a fair and just arrangement with the leaders of British India as to their future relationships.²⁸ It was this hope which after long confabulations on the drafting of a warning note to the princes, frankly pointing out the definite limits in honouring of treaty obligations,²⁹ made them withdraw from such a position and scrap the very idea of a warning.³⁰

It was this vagueness which contributed much to a sense of insecurity of not only the rulers but also of the states people. The Cabinet Mission while stipulating that paramountcy would neither be retained nor transferred, left the 'precise form' in which their co-operation was to take with the British India, to negotiations and the princes discretion and suggested that the void created by the cessation of paramountcy be filled either by the states entering into a federal relationship,³¹ with successor government or governments, or into 'particular relationship, with it or them. Thus the states confabulations with British India was to be at two levels, one for entry into the

28. In the instructions to the Governor General in the instrument of Instruction laid out by British policy, such a specification was included though it was not indicated in what way it could be brought about. See *Mission with Mount Batten* by Alan Campbell Johnson, 16 March 1947, p. 51.

29. Wavell advocated such a warning being issued and even drafted a note on it. See Cabinet discussions on the necessity for drafting of such a note and the drafts document No.105 and 197, p. 254, and pp. 458-460 respectively, Nicholas Mansergh, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI.

30. As Paethick Lawrence pointed out while it was time to show the princes the 'red light' such a warning would "thoroughly unsettle them ...(and) weaken their tactical position when the discussions were open." See Pathick Lawrence to Wavell 21 December, 1945, Document No.306, p. 670, *Ibid.*

31. Statement by the Cabinet Mission to India, 16 May 1946. Command Papers 6821, Maurice Gwyer and Appadorai, *op. cit.*, p.530.

Constituent Assembly involving discussions on the number and mode of selection to the same, and secondly on relationship with British India – Federal or otherwise. The British provisions regarding both were vague except in suggesting that it be taken up by negotiating committees of both parties. Here the British administrators did not specify whether talks on both these proposals were to precede and take place outside the Constituent Assembly or otherwise, or to be carried on collectively by the Maharajas or individually.

In the negotiating committees confabulations itself the princes sought to widen the talks to an inclusion of discussions and acceptance of their ‘fundamental points’, guaranteeing their position as sole authorities in the states and in the selection of representatives with right to withdraw from the confabulations if the decisions in the Constituent Assembly did not meet their approval.³² On B.N. Rau’s suggestion³³ the Congress leadership leaving the fundamental points – to a discussion at a full forum,

32. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar was the main instigator on this issue. The States Peoples Negotiating Committee convened by Pattabhi Sitaramayya disputed the rights of representation of the princes of the Chamber or Princes itself and thus in its turn the states Negotiating Committee’s proposals. See copies of notes prepared by Consambly, 8 January 1947. The Constituent Assembly’s Negotiating Committee’s views on it see File No.29/1947, p. 17 and 18/1947, pp. 407-507, AICC Papers, NMML and *Shiva Rao*, Vol.I, for states Peoples Negotiating Committee’s Views, p. 613. See also Ramaswami Aiyar’s Interview to the API, 12 January 1947, File No.18/1947, p. 267, AICC Papers, NMML.

33. B.N. Rau’s Note regarding Negotiations between States Committee and the Corresponding Committee of the Princes, 8 February, 1947. *Shiva Rao*, op. cit., p. 618. See also note prepared by Shiva Rao, 28 January, 1947, File No. 29/1947, pp. 29-36, AICC Papers, NMML.

insisted that preliminary talks by the negotiating committees to be confined only to the other two basic points of distribution and mode of selection to the Consambly.

The princes counter demand to make the acceptance of their 'fundamental points' a pre-condition to their entry into the Constituent Assembly³⁴ failed with Bikaner, Patiala and Baroda breaking up the common front and deciding to join the proceedings, independent of the decisions of the princes chamber.

The States People Again Ignored

What was more pertinent in this to the states people in this regard that they could find no place on the British Indian side of the Negotiating Committee, as it was drawn from members of the Constituent Assembly to which they had as yet no entry. It was also inconceivable that the states negotiating committee of the princes would ever agree to an inclusion of states peoples representatives on their side. Thus in these talks, as in earlier cases, the states people were once again left out, with the dubious championship of the British Indian leaders talking on their behalf. With two issues before them, viz. co-operation in the Union and the other of enforcing democratic principles in selection of members to the Constituent Assembly, the question was not only that of their position in the Constituent Assembly but how far were their demands on responsible government likely to be looked after in the larger context of British Indian Interests.

34. See File No.29/1947, p. 17 and No.18/1947, pp. 407-507, AICC Papers, NMML, New Delhi..

The fears of the states people were particularly relevant at the time when no final decision had been taken on partition, and the princes were therefore, in a strong bargaining position in the event of loose federal structure being set up. The States people on this issue thus had their own doubts and D.V. Gundappa of Mysore who once again expressed their misgivings. thus:

As to the Congress, the feeling among many of the workers for the peoples cause in the states, is frankly that the sympathy of the bulk of the Congress leaders for the cause is of a passive variety; they are no doubt willing to help; but when the critical occasion comes, they are apt to say to themselves -- 'British India First'- and make compromises to readily over states questions. Of course, they protest, that freedom cannot be halved and that real freedom must be for all. If the congress high command had been actively interested in the cause, they could well have made it a condition of their accepting the Cabinet Missions Plan . . . conditional on the inclusion of a good majority of the states representative being returned from the states people and that the representatives (were) enabled to join the Assembly at its inception."³⁵

35. Memorandum by D.V. Gundappa on the Constituent Assembly and the states given to the AICC and the Constituent Assembly, 5 December 1946. File No. 18/1047, pp. 377-403, AICC Papers, NMML.

REPUDIATION OF THE STATES PEOPLES CAUSE BY THE INDIAN NATIONAL
CONGRESS ON THE EVE OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

However, the problem of British Indian leaders, bent on their vision of a united India, was not so much on making conditions for the entry of the states into the Constituent Assembly as much as enticing them from within. What was required as Bikaner adumbrated was “goodwill, confidence and trust on both sides,” which meant in his term repudiation of “credence attached by leaders outside to the malicious allegations made by . . . few disgruntled persons”³⁶ from within the states. In the face of such a declaration, even the speech of Nehru, the champion of the states peoples cause, speaking on behalf of the AISPC on the eve of the Cabinet Mission, was necessarily constrained and vague. While deprecating that the states problem had not been taken into consideration – as “other problems were supposed to have priority”,³⁷ and could only be considered in the context of an independent India – he touched rather lightly on the necessity of adoption of democratic principles in the representation to the Constituent Assembly and recognition of a democratic structure in the states while emphasising mainly the civil liberties issue in the states.³⁸ Thus it is not surprising that the British Indian leadership, again expressing itself through the voice of Nehru, in order to safeguard its main interest on some form of union, made it

36. Bikaner’s appeal to the AICC and AISPC, “the Indian Constitution and the States” Address delivered at Bikaner, 12 February 1946, *Asiatic Review*, Vol. 143, pp. 161-162.

37. Statement issued by Jawaharlal Nehru on major changes and Praja Mandals, 19 March 1946, File No.SPI/1945/48, pp. 104-105, AICC Papers NMML.

38. *ibid.* See Nehru’s speech moving the report of the States Committee in the Constituent Assembly, 28 April 1947, Shiva Rao, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 738.

clear that the Constituent Assembly discussions were to be confined to only union matters; he asserted that the discussions would not include the “question of monarchical form of government in the states,” nor would be the Assembly wish to interfere in the internal arrangements of the states.³⁹ The AISPC (to which the State Congress of our study had become affiliated only in December 1945)⁴⁰ taking its cue no doubt from the British Indian leaders, while disputing the ‘princes fundamental points of 29 January 1947, on the question dear to the states peoples heart, - on details of internal administration, wished not ‘to express any opinions at this stage.’⁴¹

The same interest of British Indian leadership on union, foisted on the AISPC meeting at its Gwalior Conference in April 1947. They advocated a policy of promoting tranquillity and forbidding active movements against state authority on the eve of the transfer of power to Indian hands by Britain.⁴² They feared that their

39. In the Nehru’s incidental reference that it was for the people to decide on internal administration of the states led to protests by C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar individually and the Chamber of Princes collectively. The Karnatka PCC in turn entered a note on it protesting the 500 odd rulers and their henchmen could never represent the states. See note by K.P.C.C. undated presumably April-May 1947, File No.SPI/1945-48, p. 95-97, AICC Papers, NMML.

40. In this connection the paper prepared by Kachru on the possible role of the states peoples movement on integration is rather interesting. See AISPC – *A Brief History*, 1947, File No. 17/1947, pp. 7. AICC Papers, NMML, Resolution passed by South ISPC, Trichur, 23 December 1945, File No.G.1942-45, pp. 311-312. AICC papers, NMML. See also resolutions paased at the Jaipur session of AISPC, 23 October 1945. File No.24/1946-47, p. 105, AICC Papers NMML.

41. For States Peoples Negotiating Committee’s views see File No.18/1947, pp. 497-507, AICC papers, NMML and States Peoples Negotiating Committee resolutions Shiva Rao, op. cit., p. 612.

42. Statement by Pattabhi Sitaramayya, President, AISPC, 13 January 1948, File No.SPI/1945-48, AICC Papers, NMML. See also the Travancore Government’s Police

chances of enticing the princes into the Constituent Assembly will be jeopardised by advocating cause of the Princely States. Thus even Rajendra Prasad who visited Travancore on the eve of the Declaration of Independence by Travancore, in reply to a question put by Pattom A. Thanu Pillai regarding the support of the Indian National Congress to their movement, prevaricated on the issue. Without answering in any way the question of Pattom A. Thanu Pillai he dealt mainly on his belief that it was not possible “at any time for Travancore to think of a separate existence of its own.”⁴³ – thus dealing only with the issues that predominated in British India or those in the minds of Indian leaders relating to the Union of India.

However, the dilatory tactics adopted by the Princely State of Travancore in spite of these assurances in joining the Constituent Assembly and the Indian Union, and its stand on ‘Independent of Travancore’⁴⁴ forced the British Indian leadership to champion the cause of the people. It was in this context that Mahatma Gandhi declared that the states “belonged to their people,”⁴⁵ and that if the rulers had the right to exist as they were only as trustees and servants of the people. Again, while emphasising that the union was not inimical to the princes, he declared that his erstwhile policy “to

Reports on the Gwalior Conference, 10 May 1947, File No. 205/1947/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, Kerala Secretariat.

43. See Police Report of Pattom Thanu Pillai’s question and Rajendra Prasad’s answer to the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress, 10 May 1947, File No.224/1947, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

44. See *Post*, p. 414-16.

45. S.N.’s Summary of Gandhi’s post prayer speeches, 15 June 1947, *Harijan*, 22 June 1947, Vol. XI, p.197.

leave the states alone,”⁴⁶ had now changed with the reins of the government passing into the hands of the peoples – He asserted that the people of the states were with the British Indians, as “If the princes were allowed to become independent, it would only be at the cost of the freedom of the people of the states.”⁴⁷ Thus the states people were once again called to work on the British Indian programme so as to serve their own interest. It was then that the AICC taking its tone from Mahatma Gandhi declared at its meeting on 14 June 1947 that it was of vital importance that progress leading to responsible government take place rapidly in the states.⁴⁸ Yet this did not mean in any way a support to the states peoples programme as how was one to reconcile this with Vallabhai Patel’s politic assurances to the princes⁴⁹ and to Hari Singh, the Maharaja of Kashmir, ending in a note of rhetoric “is it necessary to assure you that in your domestic affairs the Congress has no intention whatever of intervening?”⁵⁰

Thus while British Indian interests were always ready, at least outwardly, to repudiate the states peoples cause, the states people were once again made to serve the British Indian interest on union, though this time it was emphasised that it would serve

46. Gandhi at the AICC meeting, 14 June 1947, *Harijan*, 22 June 1947, Vol. XI, p.197.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Resolution moved by Pattabhi Sitarammayya on the states, AICC meeting on 14 June 1947.

49. Statement by Sardar Vallabhai Patel on Indian States, 5 July 1947. Refer Maurice Gwyer and A. Appaorai, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 770-772.

50. Leter from Sardar Patel to Hari Singh, 3 July 1947, *Sardar Patel's Correspondence* (1945-59). Vol. I, p. 33.

their interest in the process. It is to be noted that the contradictions which were apparent were only of British Indian leaders making and not of the states people. However, the constant repudiation of the states people cause in their reiteration that they were not going to interfere in the states, served, as Sarat Chandra Bose pointed out, to sabotage to some extent the demand of the states people.⁵¹ It was this factor which prolonged the issue of the states peoples demand – especially in Mysore – even after the Maharja's conceding on the 'Union' issue.

It is not suggested here that the British Indian leadership was entirely oblivious of the interests of the states people. Ultimately they did help unobtrusively, and did declare on 16 November 1947 that whatever "the legal implications of accession and lapse of British paramountcy, the moral result of independence of India was undoubtedly the establishment and recognition of the power of the people as distinguished from that of the princes and feudal or other interests hostile to natural popular aspiration."⁵² But this declaration came after the State had achieved its ends and in the process of achieving it, passed through not only fears and doubts about Indian National Congress' motives towards it, but in order to serve the larger interests, suffered a loss – especially in Travancore – of popularity due to the divergence and consequential gap due to policy instructions from above and the forces from below.

51. Sarat Chandra Bose opening the proceedings of the Madras DCC, 15 September 1947 *The Hindu*, 16 September, 1947.

52. Resolution passed by the AICC, Delhi, 16 November 1947, File No. 13, Group I, AISPC papers, NMML.

Again the declaration was motivated not so much for the promotion of the states peoples cause, as it was merely the next step to achieve the British Indian objective on integration so as to bring the Indian states, whether under the princes or under democratic regimes, under central control of the All India leadership.

The final stamp on the inevitability of complete cooperation and the rubbing out of any distinctions between these units – as from British India and from the states – was given when, in order to ensure uniformity of responsible government in all the states, contrary to its earlier promises not to discuss on internal administrations – even this question was taken up by the Constituent Assembly in March 1949 in giving the states a uniform model constitution.⁵³ This constitution more importantly left the recognition, deposition, etc of the rulers not in the hands of the states legislatures but in the hands of the central government,⁵⁴ thus providing for the supremacy of central leadership in all matters. Thus in fact, British India became the inheritors of British paramountcy, whether willed by the British or not. As put so aptly by the *Round Table* a “Transmigration of Paramountcy”⁵⁵ had taken place and for this achievement of the British Indian leadership the help of the states people was more considerable than that

53. See Shiva Rao, *op. cit.* Vol. IV, pp. 547-564.

54. For dissenting note of Hanumathaiya on this issue that this para be vested with the states legislature see, Report of the Committee for the drafting of Model Constitution for the Indian States, 22 March 1949, paragraphs 5, 7, 9, 11, 14 and 18, Shiva Rao, Vol. IV, *op.cit.*, pp.552-553

55. “A Revolution of the Indian States – A transmigration of paramountcy” *Round Table* (1948-49), Vol. 39, pp. 36-45.

of the British Indian leaders to their cause. But this was inevitable with the British Indian leaders holding the whip had vis-a-vis the states, especially so after Haripura.

Thus the British policy towards the states and of the policy of British Indian leadership of the Congress, clearly indicate that the Praja Mandals and State Congress lost their earlier glory in their respective states – except as a threat for possible insurrections and dangers to the state's administrations and that too mainly to promote the programme of the Congress High Command on Union and Integration. The movement of the states peoples during the period 1938-1947, however, falls mainly in the nature of an epilogue.

COCHIN from 1941 to 1947

The movement in Cochin was carried out mainly in the legislature and centered round demands for further reforms, transfer of more departments to the popular ministers and on the extension of franchise.⁵⁶ These demands met with fluctuating reception at the hands of successive Maharajas and Diwans. The Government though regretting its inability to oblige was particularly sympathetic to these demands in the earlier phase during Shanmugham Chetty's period. However in later years these were not considered in the same manner, especially under the European Diwan. It was only

56. See the Residents reports for first half of February 1941, August, October and December 1941, August 1943, December 1945, and second half of July AND November 1942, March 1943, January and March 1945, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, 135 and 136, NAI. Also see *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings* for the respective periods.

after another change in the regime in a new accession in January 1946, and the imminence of constitutional changes in British India that the demands received some favourable considerations.⁵⁷

FACTIONAL WRANGLES WITHIN THE LEGISLATURE

The course of the movement, even within the legislature witnessed petty factional wrangles leading to splits, formation of coalitions and of new parties.⁵⁸ All these parties claimed an allegiance to the Indian National Congress and its policies and programmes, but there was no clear cut distinctions between their party programmes. Even the Cochin Congress and the Cochin State Congress which differed on communal issues openly agreed that their “ideals did not differ from those of the other parties.”⁵⁹ Reduced to mundane terms it was the mere jockeying of rival factions to capture power on vague charges and counter charges of non-fulfilment of expectations.

57. Dixon was Diwan of Cochin from June 1941 to November 1943 and Sir George Boag till March 1947, when C.P. Karunakara Menon, a native of Cochin took over charge as the new Diwan in March 1947.

58. The splinter groups from the original two parties, the Cochin Congress and the Cochin State Congress, coalesced to form a third party in a New Progressive Party. A no confidence motion tabled by the Cochin State Congress against its rival, the Cochin Congress, was defeated in April 1940 by this party abstaining from voting (See Resident's report, April 1940 CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI). In 1942 yet another party was forged when the Cochin State Congress formed a coalition with the New Progressive Party to form a Unionist Party with the rather mundane aim to confine their coalition “to the present working of the transferred subjects,” and to an immediate defeat of the party in power – the Cochin Congress. See Residents Report, 28 February 1942, CRR, IOL, ACC, 134, NAI.

59. See K.T. Bhashyam presiding at the Cochin Congress convention in May 1940 and the Raja of Nilambur presiding at the Cochin State Congress in June 1940. See also Residents report from May and June 1940, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, NAI

Their *bona fides* were all the more suspect in their efforts at prolonging the life of the legislature when in power within.⁶⁰ As the Raja of Cochin rightly remarked, these 'bewildering changes of party labels by members of the council showed a lack of political education and laxity of principles, which augured ill for the future.'⁶¹

THE COCHIN STATE PRAJAMANDAL

Disgusted with these antics within the legislature, a new party, claiming a closer association with the aims of the Indian National Congress, was formed in 1942 in the Cochin State Praja Mandal, with a definite programme of remaining outside the legislature "to build up an organisational background among the masses."⁶² But as a more radical group it had to face opposition from and confrontation with the government from its very inception. On its affiliation with Cochin Karshaka Sabha, a peasant organisation, its annual meeting scheduled to be held on 10 and 11 January was banned and its leaders arrested.⁶³

60. See the Residents report for March 1941, December 1941 and February 1944. CRR, IOL, ACC 133, and 136, NAI.

61. The message of His Highness the Raja of Cochin to the Legislative Council 29 July 1946. File No. 39, p. 66, AISPC Papers, 2nd Instalment, NMML.

62. For details see manifesto issued by the Cochin Praja Mandal on "Why the Cochin Praja Mandal", 23 February 1942, File no. 39, pp. 92-99, AISPC Papers, 2nd instalment, NMML.

63. See Resident's report for second half of January 1942, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, NAI. See also resolution passed by the working committee of the Cochin State Praja Mandal, 25 May 1942, File No.5, p. 123, Group I, AISPC Papers, Private Collection, NMML.

The Quit India Movement of 1942 found its adherence in the Cochin State Praja Mandal Party. They showed more 'inflamed' in organising protest meetings and taking out processions, defying Government ban on it.⁶⁴ Innumerable meetings in different parts were held in of Cochin state like Ernakulam, Mattancheri and Trichur.⁶⁵ Meetings were often disrupted by lathi charges or other kinds of intervention of Government. At Trichur the meeting held on 15th August 1942 was disbursed by the police using force and it was demanded to conduct an inquiry on the police action. The State Minister for Rural Development (the leader of the coalition of Cochin State Congress and the New Progressive Party, in the Unionist Party) was asked to dissociate himself from the government. It did seem an anomaly and surprise that a party which claimed allegiance to the Indian National Congress supported and helped the State Government in its activities against the Indian National Congress. While the party in opposition, the Cochin Congress, resigned both from the legislature and the Trichur Municipality, the Cochin State Congress found few to obey the Praja Mandal's behests.⁶⁶

64. Resident's report for 15 August 1942, 31 August 1942, 10 September 1942, 15 September 1942, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, NAI.

65. Resident's report 28 August 1942, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, NAI.

66. There were totally 8 resignations in the legislature on this score. Six from the Cochin Congress, one from the Cochin State Congress and one independent member. The Trichur Municipality resigned enmasse. For details see Resident's report September 1942, and October 1942, CRR, IOL, ACC, 134, NAI.

The Government of Cochin ordered on 31st August, 1942 an indefinite blanket ban on all meetings.⁶⁷ Thus while the Cochin State Praja Mandal in the period subsequent concentrated on improving its organisation, without defying the ban or coming into any open confrontation with the government, the movement reverted back to the legislature in its incipient demands for further reforms. The growth of Communist activities in Malabar and Travancore during this period, had its natural repercussions of Cochin. The Cochin District Karshaka Sangha, which published handbills urging agricultural labourers to organise themselves and the Athikad Toddy Tappers Union drew particular attention of the Government, and were subsequently banned in April 1944.⁶⁸

The resignation of the Cochin Congress members from the Legislature in sympathy with the State Praja Party in 1942, led to the Union of these two organisations in later years in political activities of the State of Cochin.

In the general elections held in June 1945 to the state legislature, the Cochin State Praja Mandal secured 12 out of 38 seats open for election and became the largest popular party. However, the party declined to accept office and remained as an opposition from within.⁶⁹

67. Resident's reports, September 1942, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, NAI.

68. The same period saw strikes organised at the Tata Oil Mills, Burmah Shell, Sitaram Spinning and Weaving Mills etc. See Resident's reports for December 1943, 30 April 1944, and July 1944, CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

69. Resident's report, 15 June 1945, CRR, IOL, ACC, 133, NAI.

The Cochin State Praja Mandal Party was closely associated even more with the State Congress agitations of Travancore. Its annual session in July 1945 was presided over by Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, President of the Travancore State Congress.⁷⁰ In September 1945 annual session, in common with the Mysore State Congress and the Travancore State Congress it demanded for election of popular representatives to the Constituent Assembly.⁷¹ The relation of the Party, in contrast, to affairs in Travancore and Mysore, with the government of Cochin during this period was cordial. It was not surprising that a combined conference of the South Indian States Peoples, with the participation of the Mysore Congress, the Travancore State Congress and the Pudukkottai State Congress was held at Trichur in December 1945.⁷²

The close association of the Cochin Praja Mandal with the movements in other states had its repercussion within. In March 1946, a black flag demonstration by students of Ernakulam against C.P. Ramawwami Iyer, who had been invited to open a primary school flare up into a riot and police action.⁷³ The governments action in placing M. Mathew Varkey, the editor of *Malabar Mail* and his associate and chief

70. Resident's report, 31 July 1945, CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

71. Resolution passed by the Cochin State Praja Mandal, 30 September 1945, File No. G-20/1942-45, pp. 311-312, AICC Papers, NMML.

72. Resolutions at this conference demanded for closer affiliation with the Indian National Congress and elected representatives to the Constituent Assembly, See SISPC resolutions, 22 and 23 December 1945. File No.G-20/1942-45, pp. 53-55, AICC papers, NMML.

73. See Cochin Government Press Note 12 March 1946 File No.39, pp. 72-87, AISPC Papers, 2nd instalment, NMML. For Travancore Governments unpopular education policy see *Post*, p.

representative of the paper, Cheriyan Manjuran, a labour leader, under restrictive detention, as the chief instigator in their criticism of the Travancore Diwan's education policy,⁷⁴ led in turn to a demand for an enquiry on it. The subsequent adjournment motion pressed in the legislative council by P. Govinda Menon, the leader of the Cochin State Praja Mandal Party on it proved the prelude to a successful manoeuvring of a no-confidence motion against the party in power and capturing of power by the Praja Mandals as a coalition government.⁷⁵ However, even the Cochin State Praja Mandals career in this legislature due to its involvement with the outside movements was not without its embarrassments. A students' demonstration in support of the Travancore movement had to be suppressed on the complaints of the Travancore Diwan.⁷⁶ The government, with the acquiescence of the party in power was forced into issuing a statement that even though in sympathy with Travancore movement it could not acquiesce in such demonstrations.

Cochin Government's action clearly proved that as long as the British Government remained as guardians of the princes powers, even popular ministries were to be ultimately governed by central policy - proving clearly the hollowness of a democratic government in the prevailing imperialistic structure.

74. Government Order against N.M. Varkey, Cheriyan Manjuran, etc 6 April, 1946. See File No. 39, AISPC Papers, NMML.

75. Statement issued by the Cochin State Praja Mandal 9 September 1946, File No. 39, p. 68, AISPC papers, NMML.

76. For details on it see *Post*, p. 414.

COCHIN ACCESSION WITH INDIA

The passage of Cochin State into an Indian Union was one of the smoothest. The appointment of a Franchise Committee in January 1946,⁷⁷ and the further reforms in the extension of powers in transferring all departments, barring finance to popular control and relationship with the crown to popular control and the appointment of an additional minister with powers of joint collaboration with the Diwan,⁷⁸ allowed the ministry to evolve into a future cabinet. But more important than these was His Highness announcement of his agreement to a merge of his state into the linguistic province of Kerala in order to allow it to function as a separate and cohesive unit in the greater federation of India.⁷⁹ Towards a realization of this he even proposed talks with Madras and Travancore to give shape to the peoples aspiration,⁸⁰ which as Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out, was in complete contrast to that of the other states.⁸¹ Again in the State peoples other demand for popularly elected representation to the Constituent Assembly Cochin was the first state to declare that selection to the Consambly would entirely be by election by the Legislative Council with official members abstaining

77. Residents report, December 1945, CRR, IOL, ACC, 133, NAI.

78. Cochin Government's Gazette Extraordinary, 31 January 1946, CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

79. Cochin Government Gazette Extraordinary, 21 March 1946, File No. 39, AIPC Papers, NMML.

80. The message of His Highness the Maharaja of Cochin to the Legislative Council, 29 July 1946, File No.39, AISPC papers, NMML.

81. Statement to the Press, issued by J. Nehru, 17 August 1946, File No. 39, p. 59, AISPC papers, NMML.

from voting.⁸² She was among the first to sign her entry to the Constituent Assembly and on accession to an Indian Union.

In March 1947 a native Diwan Karunakara Menon, was appointed replacing Sir George Boag. The Franchise Committee Report recommending adult franchise was published in October 1946⁸³ and the Constitutional Committee recommendations⁸⁴ were promulgated in the Government of Cochin Act bringing a fully Responsible Government with the transference of all administrative control to a council of elected ministers into effect from 29 August 1947 with Panampilli Govinda Menon as its first premier.

COCHIN'S PART IN TRAVANCORE MOVEMENT

C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar who had complained about Shanmugham Chetty even earlier⁸⁵ now accused him of active involvement in giving help to what C.P.

82. On this score, and on score of having 1.48 million as its population, the Cochin administration asked for two seats to the Consambly but was refused. See telegram from the Maharaja of Cochin to the President of the Constituent Assembly Negotiating Committee, 18th February 1947. See Shiva Rao, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 625.

83. See the *Indian Review*, 1947, p. 38.

84. On the presentation of a Joint Memorial in the Legislature, a Constitutional Committee had been appointed by the Maharaja in September 1946 consisting of a majority of elected members, letter from President, Cochin State Praja Mandal to President, AISPC, 15 September 1946 and Proceedings on the appointment of a Constitutional Advisory Committee, 23 September 1946. File No. 39, AISPC Papers, NMML, and *Indian Review*, 1947, p. 559.

85. See File No.444/1940/C.S./Political, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

characterised as a “dozen malcontents ...some of whom were avowed communists.”⁸⁶ He also complained that Ernakulam had become the centre in rendering financial assistance to the agitators in Travancore giving encouragement to the organisation and march of *Jathas* into Travancore from British India and Cochin State,⁸⁷ allowing newspapers within the state to devote more space to Travancore affairs than to Cochin news, and thus providing a “vantage ground for agitation against Travancore.”⁸⁸ There was no gain saying the fact that press statement of the Travancore State congress agitators were often published in Cochin State newspapers before their ceremonial courting of arrest.⁸⁹ Shanmugham Chetty’s prevaricating replies – that he could discover no communist cell in the state,⁹⁰ his resentment against police officers of Travancore carrying on their activities in Cochin State without giving information to the Cochin police authorities,⁹¹ his proclamation that there was no law in the state

86. Among these ‘mal-contents’ were T.M. Varghese and G. Ramachandran, who worked mainly under the direction of Gandhi. See letter from C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar to Glancy, 23 March 1940 Police Intelligence Reports, for 5 April, 18 May 1940, and Residents report of 2 April 1940, File No.1135-P(SEG)/940, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, NAI.

87. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar’s letter to Glancy, 1 May 1940 and enclosed police reports, File No.11/35-P (SEC)/1940, CRR,IOL,ACC, 134, NAI. See also police reports 27 April 1940, File No.639/1946, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

88. Letter from Glancy to Resident (undated, presumably March 1940) CRR,IOL, Acc, 134, NAI.

89. See Residents Report, 5 April 1940, CRR, IOL,ACC 134, NAI.

90. Letter from Shanmugham Chetty to Resident, 8 June 1940, File No.11/35-P(SEG)/1940, CRR, IOL,ACC, 134, NAI.

91. Letter from Shanmugham Chetty to Resident, 6 July 1940, File No.11/35-P(SEG)/1940, CRR, IOL, ACC, 134, NAI.

under which the Travancore agitators could be expelled unless shown that they were acting against Cochin State itself, that Travancore had no case against those persons under which they could demand the handing over of these agitators, and that he was ready to oblige with the Paramount Power's wishes on clear directive⁹² from them, proclaiming himself even ready to resign on the score⁹³ - only made the political department realise that the allegations and counter allegations were politically motivated and there was no need for their intervention.⁹⁴ It was mainly this realisation and this open championing of the political movement of Cochin and British India which in a measure was responsible for the forced resignation of Shanmugham Chetty in 1941.

Shanmugham Chetty's intransigence served little purpose; C.P. Ramawami Aiyer, with the political department applying its pressure on him, was able to smoke

92. Resident report of his interview with Shanmugham chetty, 13 July 1940, File No. 11/35-P(SEC)/1940, CRR 134, NAI

93. Letter from Shanmugham Chetty to Resident, 6 July 1940. File No. 11/35-P (SEC)/1940, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, NAI. On 3 May 1940 he even had the 'audacity' to publish a press communique stating that the newspaper reports that Travancore State Congressites were ordered by the Police Commissioner of Cochin to leave the State was absolutely unfounded. See Resident's report to the Political Department, 20 August 1940, CRR, IOL, ACC, 134, NAI. The Travancore State Congress activists were allowed to continue their work in Cochin. From 1940 onwards, with intervals, they worked from Ernakulam when the Congress activities were banned in Travancore. See for details of State Congress activities in Cochin *The Hindu*, 16th December 1940. Also see File No. D.Dis/114/1940/C.S. Cellar Records, KGS, TVM (Letter from the Resident to the Diwan).

94. Shanmugham Chetty was a candidate for the post of Diwan of Travancore when C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer was appointed. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer accused Shanmugham Chetty's actions as promoted by "feelings of jealousies" See letter from Resident to Glancy, 10 April 1940, CRR, IOL, ACC, 134, NAI.

out the Travancore State Congress from its burrow in Cochin. In October 1940 the Travancore State Congress centre at Ernakulam was wound up and the volunteers ordered to return to Travancore. It forced them to give up their political programme and concentrate on the working of the constructive programme and alleviation of economic distress prevailing in the state.⁹⁵ Gandhi's decision, at this time, to suspend the movement in Travancore was to some extent the result of events in British Malabar.⁹⁶ However in doing so, Gandhi replying to the usual claims put up by C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar on the incompatibility of Responsible Government with the treaty position of the Indian states, warned that these "extravagant claims"⁹⁷ on the position of the Indian States would "have no validity" nor make the slightest difference when the British were ready or compelled by events to recognise India's independence – a

95. Travancore State Congress Resolution in the meeting at Ernakulam, Resident's report for second half of October 1940, CRR, IOL, ACC, 134, NAI.

96. The account on the alleviation of "economic ills" in the resolution of Travancore State Congress showed clearly the connection between this and Morazha riots of British Malabar. At Morazha, near Cannanore, the convening of a peasant conference on 15 September 1940, the 'protest day' scheduled by Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee to protest against the rise in prices and economic depression, proved the signal for a lathi charge and a riot. K.P.R. Gopalan the President of the North Malabar Youth League, the executive of the All Kerala Karshaka Sangam and members of the Kerala Congress Socialist Party were, as a result, sentenced to death and seven others to transportation by the Madras government. See Subbarayan Report on the growth of communism in Kerala, File No.11/1942-46, p. 155, AICC Papers, NMML.

97. The 'extravagant claims' put up by C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar in the Legislative assembly was mainly to impress Sir Francis Wylie, the Political Adviser, on a visit in Travancore. This proclamation not only brought on a frank statement by Wylie that the "paramountcy plea was in fact the merest excuse and the real reason ...because he did not believe in it on quite other grounds", also brought on a rejoinder from K.N. Katju and of unequivocal support from Gandhi. See notes by Sir Francis Wylie on his visit to Mysore, Travancore and Cochin, 1941. File No. 267-P 41 (SEC), CRR, IOL,ACC, 135, NAI. See also Resident's report August 1940, CRR, IOL,ACC, 134, NAI.

guarantee to the states people that Indian independence would see their objective also realized.⁹⁸

PATTABHI SITARAMAYYA'S INTERMEDIATION AND TRAVANCORE -- THE TRAVANCORE CONGRESS' CAPITULATION

In January 1941, a rapprochement between the Travancore Government and Travancore State Congress was brought about through the intermediation of Pattabhi Sitaramayya which favoured on the whole, the position of Diwan. The Diwan while allowing the State Congress to reopen its offices in Travancore, releasing the political prisoners and withdrawing his charges against G. Ramachandran, made it clear that he would under no circumstances tolerate a recrudescence of civil disobedience, or subversive activity against the Government. In this he asserted that "it was the decided policy of the State Government not to grant Responsible Government nor to create ministries in the sense of an Executive removal by or on the instance of the Legislature."⁹⁹

98. This was the only time a clear warning was given to the states on their position *Vis-a-vis* a future British India. At a slightly later date asked to give a 'plain declaration' on it he equivocated by saying that such a declaration was contrary to the spirit of non-violence. Gandhi's reply to Sir C.P. on his statement on the position of the states, 30 July 1940. *Harijan*, 4 August 1940, Vol.7, p. 233, and also see *Harijan*, 14 June 1942 p. 189, and 2 August 1942, p. 249.

99. *The Hindu*, 23 January 1941 and 28 January 1941. See also the Residents report, January 1941. File No. 5(7)/P-41(SEC)/1041, CRR, IOL, ACC 136, NAI.

After such a capitulation it was a mere face-saving statement that Pattom Thanu Pillai issued stating that the State Congress' objective was to work peacefully and constructively towards the goal of Responsible Government.¹⁰⁰

The Gandhian wing of the Travancore State Congress after this did not take up any political agitation, barring participation in the general elections of 1944, till the eve of British Indian constitutional changes and independence. Activities in support of British India was made taboo by the Diwan, and even the traditional observance of 26 January as the Day of Independence was banned.¹⁰¹

By August 1941 the police reports proclaimed that the speeches of the State Congress were "restrained in tone",¹⁰² and that there was no passage in the speech that could be taken exception to. The same reports gleefully reported the State Congressites as "disheartened and disillusioned",¹⁰³ as contrary to expectations of a dissolution of the legislatures and new elections, the Diwan announced the extension of the present legislature to June 1942.¹⁰⁴

100. See Residents report 1 February 1941. File No. 5(7)-P 41(SEC)/1941, CRR, IOL, ACC, 136, NAI.

101. Government Order, 24 January 1941, File No. 786/1941, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

102. Police Report on Pattom Thanu Pillai's speech, 19 August 1941. File No. 365/1941, Callar Records, KGS. TVM.

103. Police Report, 21 October 1941, File No. 3185/1944, Cellar Records, KGS. TVM.

104. Resident's Report, 15 September 1941, CRR, IOL, ACC 136, NAI.

GROWTH IN LABOUR MOVEMENT

It is to be noted that parallel to this disappointment and severe restrictions and bans imposed by the Travancore administration even on very legitimate and limited activities of the Travancore State Congress, one could see the hectic work among labour organisations, which proved prominent in Travancore politics. The centre of this radical movement, which became very active from April 1940 onwards converged round Alleppey, the convenient centre to the excitation of discontented labour, for which leaders of Alleppey played a prominent part.¹⁰⁵ The leaders of the Trade Union movement were asked to maintain secrecy, move incognito and organise volunteers to face any eventuality.¹⁰⁶ In December 1941 the President of the Conference of the Shertallai Coir Workers Union, K. Janardhanan Nair declared that the labour movement could not any longer keep away from politics and exhorted the Travancore State Congress to intensify its campaign for Responsible Government.¹⁰⁷ At the annual session of the Quilon Workers Union, resolutions were passed (which showed the growing divergence between the Gandhian leadership and the State Congress) requesting to adopt a more comprehensive scheme than the individual satyagraha of

105. Several labour meetings were held at Alleppey, Quilon and Shertallai during the period 30 April 1940 to December 1940 under labour leaders like K. Kunchu Pillai, Srikantan Nair, Pothan Joseph, K.S. Joseph, T.V. Thomas, S. Narayana Pillai, E.V. Kesavan, R.N. Krishna Pillai etc. For information in these meetings see File No.2025/1944, 2076/1944 to 2033/1944, Cellar records, KGS. TVM.

106. See Police report sent as enclosures, to C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar's letter to Resident, 28 March 1940, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, NAI. See also Intelligence Report regarding Madras States, 2 April 1940, File No. 11/35-P (SEC)/1940, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, NAI.

107. Resident's report, 1 December 1941, CRR, IOL, ACC 136, NAI.

Gandhi for the attainment of India's freedom. It had promised support to any political organisation in the state which advocated responsible government.¹⁰⁸ Efforts were made at this meeting for coalescing of all Trade Unions in an All Travancore Labour Federation and in January 1942 the body was inaugurated with participation of the major prominent unions in Travancore¹⁰⁹ with N. Srikantan Nair, the labour leader as its President.¹¹⁰ This Federation reiterated its view that the establishment of Responsible Government was an "urgent necessity."¹¹¹

The work and subsequent activities including passing of resolutions in the meetings precipitated the Diwan and he issued warning on the "dangers of mixing up political issues with problems arising out of the relations between capital and labour. (in) endeavouring to convert them into political bodies with political programmes."¹¹² He deprecated the move which sought to remedy the grievances possible in a particular industry by strikes and demonstrations in totally unconnected industries and

108. See Resident's report for November 1941 and January 1942, CRR, IOL, ACC, 134, NAI.

109. The original members of this federation were (a) Navika Thozhilali Sangam (b) Coir Factory Workers Association, Shertallai, (c) Mineral Workers Union, Travancore, (d) Punalur Paper Mills Union, (e) Professional Motor Worker Union, (f) All Travancore Estate Workers Union, (g) Quilon Factory Workers Union, (h) Travancore Cashew nuts Workers Union, (i) Alleppey Karitta Workers Union, etc. showing the wide nature of the body. See File No.469/1944 Cellar Records, Kerala Secretariat.

110. Srikantan Nair and Janadhanan Nair were labour leaders, having connections with the Travancore State Congress. They were and were members of the Travancore State Congress Parliamentary Board.

111. See Police Report, File No.539/1944, Cellar Records, KGS. TVM.

112. Press communique issued by C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar on 27 February 1942, File No. 469/1944, Cellar Records, KGS. TVM.

he took strong exception to the unions expressing solidarity and support to the “practically defunct Travancore State Congress”¹¹³ achieving their aims. He issued orders under the Defence of Travancore Act restraining Srikantan Nair, K.P. Janardhanan Nair, and T.V. Thomas from participating in any meeting including labour meetings. In April 1942, Pattom A. Thanu Pillai and G. Ramachandran were arrested for their participation in the All India State’s Peoples Day on 19 April 1942.¹¹⁴

In spite of all these restraining orders and stringent measures taken by the Travancore administration the Cellar Records of the Kerala Government Secretariat, Trivandrum furnish overwhelming evidence of an active labour movement taking place in Travancore during this period especially in organising strikes,¹¹⁵ protest meetings and demonstrations¹¹⁶ which elicited from the Government another warning against persons engaging in “reprehensible activities and trying to undermine the

113. *Ibid.*

114. See Resident’s report 2nd half of April 1942, CRR, IOL, ACC, 134, NAI.

115. The Strike sights chosen for demonstration were quite often companies under British nationalists management or government management. For accounts of strikes in Harrison & Crossfield, William Goodacre and Thomas Stephen & Company, etc. See File No.424/1944, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. For strike at Kundara Ceramic Factory, Goodacre and Company, Empire Coir Works, Punja Cultivation Labour Strikes (in which Ezhava Women workers with broomsticks as weapons obtained their demands on enhancement of their rates). See File No.443/1944 and the report of the Inspector-General of Police on Labour and Residents report for April 1942, CRRC 134, NAI.

116. Right up to 13 August 1942 we see several meetings staged at Alleppey, Shertallai, Quilon, Chavara, Karunagappally and Punalur. For records of these meetings under T.M. Varghese, K.K. Warrior, Suganthan, B.K. Nair, P.N. Nair, T.V. Thomas and K.P. Janrdhanan Nair, See File No.2401, 2404, 2410, 2416, 2422-35, 2427, 2431, 2433, 2434, 2445 and 2586/1944, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

morale of the people.”¹¹⁷ On the eve of his resignation as Diwan in June 1942 (following his acceptance of the offer as Member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council), which of course he resigned due to pressure from Travancore Royal Family, to rejoin as Diwan on 8th August 1942¹¹⁸ he issued a strict warning to the Travancore State Congress against organising any kind of mass agitation for constitutional changes at this juncture, though he graciously declared that the Government had no objection if it were confined to constitutional means and redressal on specific issues and for immediate grievance. The Travancore State Congress was allowed to hold its annual conference in August, 1942.

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN TRAVANCORE AND BAN ON ALL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE STATE

The Quit India Resolution on 8 August 1942 exhorting all the state’s people to stand along with the British India and “carry out the directions issued by Mahatma Gandhi in so far as they were applicable to them”,¹¹⁹ proved the signal for the Travancore Government to clamp down on all political activities in the State, including those of the Trade Unions.¹²⁰ Except a few “mild”¹²¹ demonstrations by the

117. Residents Report first half of July 1942, CRR, IOL,ACC 134, NAI.

118. For the acceptance of this offer and reasons for resignation see Document No.158 and 591, Nicholas Mensergh, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 230, and 761 respectively.

119. See resolution passed by the Working Committee of the AISPC dated 8th August 1942, Sub file No.7, Part IV, Correspondence relating to AISPC, N Papers, NMML.

120. On 9 August 1942 the Travancore Government while declaring the INC, the AICC, the KPCC and other such allied bodies as unlawful organisations imposed on the Travancore State Congress a ban on holding meetings, which was extended from time to time till

student community and cases of individual defiance of the ban after a ceremonial notice by leaders of the State Congress there was no large scale demonstration organised and staged in the State during the Quit India Movement.¹²²

THE BAN LIFTED

The ban on the activities of the Travancore State Congress was lifted in June 1943¹²³ on a clear understanding that they would co-operate with the government in the economic crisis over food shortage. The State Congress agreed mainly because they expected fresh elections in the imminence of a dissolution of the legislature in March 1944.

The lifting of the ban helped the Communists to renew labour activities in Travancore¹²⁴ and of communist classes were conducted at the Coir Factory Workers Union at Alleppey where Communist workers from British India, like E.M.S.

June 1943. Resident's report for July and September 1942, January, March and June 1943, CRR, IOL, ACC 135, NAI

121. Resident's letter to Polindia, 28 August 1942, File No.12 (12)-P /1942, CRR, IOL, ACC 134, NAI.

122. The First to inaugurate this satyagraha was E. John Philopose, following which leading members of the Travancore State Congress, numbering over 20 were arrested. See the Resident's report for 3rd and 18th September 1942, CRR, IOL, ACC, 134, NAI.

123. See the Residents report for January, May, June, July and August 1943. CFRR, IOL, ACC 135, NAI. Also see report of the Inspector-General of Police Interview with Pattom Thanu Pillai in Jail on 4 August 1943. For details see File No. 290/1944 and File No. 513/1944, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

124. See File Nos. 300/1944, 418/1944, 321/1944, 3571/1944 for meetings and detailed deliberations at Alleppey, Quilon, Shertallai, and Trivandrum during the period 1943-44, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Namboodiripad, K.K. Warriar, and K.C. George attended.¹²⁵ The Diwan issued strict warning against subversive activities by “propagandists who style themselves communists.”¹²⁶

THE DIWAN’S PERFECTION OF DIVIDE AND RULE

This was of special significance in that there was a growing difference of opinion between the socialist and the Gandhian wings within the KPCC in British Malabar. This came to the open only in August 1945 when a resolution was passed by the KPCC that the ‘left wingers’ be expelled from the Congress. They thought that the continuance of left wingers in the Congress will affect organisational unity.¹²⁷ The Diwan perfected his intrigue to utilise these difference of opinion to his particular use in Travancore. While cautioning the Travancore State Congress that he would reject nomination slips of Communists entered on Travancore State Congress tickets,¹²⁸ he warned the Trade Union Leaders like T.V. Thomas and Janardhanan Nair (as

125. See Police reports on the meeting of the Travancore Coir Workers Union under the presidentship of T.V. Thomas, on 28 November 1943, and of a communist class being opened at the same union in which E.M.S. Namboodiripad was to give instructions for 3 days from 22 November 1943, File No.260/1944 and 238/1944, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

126. Resident’s report November 1943, CRR, IOL, ACC, 135, NAI.

127. Resolution passed by the KPCC on 31 August 1945. File No.P.11/1942-46, p. 69. AICC papers, NMML. For earlier disputes between these wings see Nandakeoliar – Subbarayan efforts at enquiry on KPCC dispute. File No. P-11 1942-46, AICC, Papers, NMLL

128. Press communiqué issued by the Travancore Government, 24 March 1944. File No. 636/1944, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM. See also Resident’s report, second half of March 1944, CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

President and members of the Executive of the All Travancore Trade Union Congress) that their requests for nominated seats – two seats in the Legislative Assembly and one in the Legislative Council – would not be entertained if they collaborated or helped the Congress in the elections as their body would be treated not as one working for the benefit of labour but as political partisans and no concessions as to labour would be granted them.¹²⁹ As a result of these manoeuvres the Parliamentary Board of the Travancore State Congress¹³⁰ meeting in March 1944 expressed itself as unwilling to include communist or ‘Trade Union’ candidates among its nominations. The communist wing of the State Congress while agreeing to step out, expressed their willingness to cooperate without contesting the seats.¹³¹ Leaders of the State Congress and the Communists met on 10th June 1944 and issued a statement declaring that the Travancore State Congress and the Communist Party were two independent organisations, unconnected with each other.¹³² Thus the Diwan by his intrigue was

129. See letter from T.V. Thomas to Chief Secretary 1 April 1944, letter from Chief Secretary to C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, 7 June 1944, Inspector General of Police to T.V. Thomas, 14 June 1944 and letter from Chief Secretary to T.V. Thomas 16 June 1944. File No. 1621/1944, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

130. The Parliamentary Board consisted of T.M. Varghese, Pattom Thanu Pillai, C. Kesavan, Sivan Pillai and A.J. John.

131. This decision was taken at a secret meeting of the Travancore State Congress in March 1944. See Police Report, File No. 1991/1945 and report of the secret meeting of the Travancore State Congress, 24 March 1944. File no. 539/1944, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

132. Police report of the Travancore State Congress meeting of 10 June 1944, dated 11 June 1944, File No. 1456/1944, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

able to effect the first breach on the solidarity of right and left wings of Travancore State Congress.

However, in a body which till now contained both the 'left wingers' as well as the 'right wingers' with quite often the shades of grey being indistinguishable from both, there was always a difficulty in making out, who was what. The Travancore Government utilised this as the pretext to reject a number of Travancore state congress nominations (including that of Pattom Thanu Pillai) on the score of being communists and on the ground that they had been convicted before criminal courts and had not sought condonation of the government.¹³³ Again utilised the same pretext, after elections, to declare that the Trade Unionists had rendered help to the State Congress and thus had forfeited their claims to the nominated seats.¹³⁴ Apart from these tactics, to stop the Congress from obtaining any hold at the elections, he made the mourning for the death of the infant heir presumptive, the pretext for prohibiting any meetings during the 3 months preceding the elections.¹³⁵ It was not surprising that under these disabilities the Travancore State Congress, at the elections fared not too well and gained a mere 11 seats in a legislative assembly of 72, though by its presence it did add some liveliness to the hitherto dull proceedings.¹³⁶

133. See Residents report of 30 April 1944, CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

134. See Police Report Rile No.3257/1944, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

135. See Residents report of 15 April 1944, CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

136. Residents report 15 September 1944, CRR, IOL, ACC 135, NAI. In this connection it would not be out of place to refer to Sir Francis Wylie's impression of C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar's handling of the legislative Assembly in 1941. See *ante*, p. 146.

THE STATE CONGRESS IN THE LEGISLATURE

The Working Committee of the Parliamentary Board of the State Congress had decided not to make any show or demonstration within the legislatures but to present their contentions with force.¹³⁷ In keeping with this decision at their first meeting in the assembly they complained of interference in elections and demanded an impartial enquiry. The Diwan while referring them to lay their complaints through election petitions warned them against aligning themselves with communists or with subversive activities or bringing complaints against individual officers which he threatened would be considered as an attack on the government.¹³⁸ The Travancore State Congress in a weak position in the legislature, its presence was of little significance. For its good behaviour it was regarded by an allowance to hold its annual conference in January 1943¹³⁹ and Quilon on 16 October 1945. At these conferences, among other resolutions on Responsible Government a demand was made for the introduction of adult franchise (as in the existing system only 17% of the adult population in the Legislative Assembly and 1.8% in the Legislative Council possessed voting franchise. Other resolutions criticised the Diwan's policy regarding the

137. Police report, 26 July 1944 and 29 July 1944. File No. 2593/1944 and 2252/1944 Cellar Records, Kerala Secretariat.

138. Even earlier correspondence between Pattom Thanu Pillai and C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar was carried on this matter. See notice of resolution passed by joint meeting of the Congress committee and Parliamentary Board, July 1944 and correspondence on it, File No.47, pp.168-171, AISPC Papers, 2nd Instalment, NMML. See also Residents report 31 July 1944 and 31 August 1944, CRR, IOL, ACC 135, NAI

139. Though K.T. Bhashyam from Mysore who was invited to open this meeting was banned entry.

introduction of compulsory primary education and complete government control and monopoly over all primary educational institutions which was aimed at the Christian interests. It was felt in the Congress circles that an otherwise laudable move was being used to create “sectional agitation and communal disorders.”¹⁴⁰

140. See Travancore State Congress Resolution, File No. 47, pp. 148-153, AISPC Papers, NMML. See also Residents Report, 31st January 1945, CRR, IOL, ACC 133, NAI.

Appendix – II

Table Showing Different Associations

| Name of Society or Sabha | Where to Ideated | When established and its constitution | Objects | Name, status etc. of promoters, office holders and patrons. |
|---|-------------------------|---|---|--|
| 1) Travancore and Cochin Christian Conference (Formerly known as Travancore & Cochin Christian Association) | Kottayam Town | Established in 1915. The Managing is the chief feature of its constitution | Social, material and political amelioration of Christians in Travancore and Cochin | President: E.J. John Secretaries: 1) C.P. Thomas 2) K.K. Thomas 3) T.J. Poonan. |
| 2) Sree Narayana Trivandrum Dharma Paripalana Yogam | Trivandrum Town | Started originally in 1897 and established on a proper basis on the 15 th May, 1903. Registered as a Joint Stock Company | Educational, Religious, social, and industrial advancement of the Ezhava or Thiyya community. | President: Nanu Asan alias Narayan Guru Swami, the acknowledged religious Head of that community. Secretary: N.Kumaran. |
| 3) Kerala Nayar Samajam. | Trivandrum Town | 1903. The Society embraces all denominations of Nairs. | Industrial, commercial, social and economic advancement of the community | President: M. Krishna Pillai, Retd. District Judge. Secretaries: 1) P.K. Kesava Pillai, 2) A. Narayana Pillai |
| 4) The Nayar Samajam Federation | Trivandrum Town | Constituted at Changanachery in May 1916, with office at Trivandrum | Social educational and Economic advancement of the Nairs | President: Changanachery K. Parameswaran Pillai. Secretaries: 1) Kayyalam.K Parameswaran Pillai 2) A. Thanu Pillai. |
| 5) The Travancore Poura Sabha or the Travancore Citizens Association | Trivandrum Town | Established in June, 1913. | To protect the advancement of political rights of the country by making necessary representation to the authorities | President: E.J. John. Secretaries: 1) G.Raman Menon 2) P. Sivaraman 3) M. Varkey Ittycheria 4) Pathrose Mathai. |
| 6) Indian National Congress Committee | Kottayam | 1921. This had practically no influence in the state | Enrolment of members in the Congress | This was purely a political body A.K. Pillai was the organiser of this Committee |
| 7) Keraleeya Nadar Samajam | Kottugal, Neyyattinkara | 1915 | Promotion of education and securing political rights to the community | Ponnaiha Nadar of Kottugal. |

This table is prepared out of the material available in the Cellar Records.

See File No.167/1924/Political Section dated 25th June, 1924, Cellar Records, KGS, TVM.

Appendix – III

TABLE PRESENTED BY JOSEPH KUNJU IN THE MEETING OF THE BACKWARD CHRISTIANS -- REPORT IN MALAYALA RAJYAM DATED MAY 25TH 1935

| Community | Population | Literate | English educated | Govt. Employees drawing below Rs. 100 per month | |
|---------------------|------------|----------|------------------|---|------------|
| | | | | No. | Percentage |
| Foreign Brahmins | 54141 | 26431 | 8226 | 2510 | 4.64 |
| Nairs | 868411 | 308223 | 18606 | 13181 | 1.52 |
| Vellalars | 60627 | 23606 | 2919 | 1028 | 1.70 |
| Ezhavas | 899863 | 185047 | 5201 | 894 | 0.10 |
| Muslims | 353274 | 41801 | 1607 | 601 | 0.17 |
| Yacobites | 337872 | 122897 | 8241 | 1301 | 0.39 |
| Marthomites | 142486 | 64585 | 6358 | 899 | 0.63 |
| Anglicans | 85261 | 21926 | 3422 | 122 | 0.14 |
| Protestants | 208725 | 43564 | 3991 | 595 | 0.29 |
| Latin Christians | 360217 | 62372 | 7335 | 469 | 0.13 |
| Suriyani Christians | 449173 | 155661 | 7897 | 416 | 0.09 |

Note: This table suggests that the Marthomites secured only 0.63% in 1935 as against 6.73% as indicated by the Government in 1921 (See p. 40 in Chapter IV).

