

Anti-Communist Gang-up in Kerala: Betrayers of U.F. Set up Anti-People Government*

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The Right Communist leader of Kerala, T. V. Thomas, concluded his speech in the Kerala Legislative Assembly on October 21, explaining why he tendered resignation from the Ministry, with the following revealing words:

"If it took twenty years of hard effort to fight and defeat the Congress, I do not think even a period of five years would be too much to defeat the Marxists who are incessantly following anti-people policies."

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

A Peep into The Past

This is nothing new for the Right Communist Party. Ever since the present leaders of the CPI(M) initiated their struggle against revisionism within the old united CPI, those who constitute the present leadership of the Right Communist Party have shown no scruple in trying to malign, discredit and destroy those who carried on the struggle against revisionism. One cannot but recall in this connection the campaign of slanders and lies unleashed by

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the present Right Communist leadership on the issue of the India-China conflict—a campaign which was on all fours with the campaign of the Home Ministry headed by the infamous Nanda and such notorious chauvinists as the Jana Sangh. That was why it was very easy for Nanda and his Home Ministry to try to "prove" their charges against us by extensive quotations from the material produced by the revisionists.

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

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

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

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

We were of course conscious that there were serious ideological-political differences between the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress on the one hand and the democratic opposition on the other. We, therefore, could not think of having any electoral united front with them; we and they would have to fight each other in a large number of constituencies.

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

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

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

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

"Respectable" Company Now

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

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

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

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

As if to atone for the "sin" of considering the "reactionary communal organisations" as "untouchable" in the electoral battle at the time of the mid-term election in Kerala, they swung to the other extreme after the fourth general elections by joining ministries dominated by the Jana Sangh, Swatantra and the Akalis

in Bihar, U.P., and Punjab. They thus shifted from their original anti-communal reactionary stand to the subsequent anti-Congress stand.

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

The 31-odd months during which that Ministry functioned showed how they continued to pursue within the U.F. and the Ministry the same tactics of trying to "discredit and isolate" the CPI(M) among the people. The toppling of that Ministry in October 1969, the subsequent formation of the present mini-front-Kerala Congress Ministry and the scarcely concealed intention of further strengthening the Ministry by including the Indira group of the Congress Legislature Party in it are the culmination of these tactics.

Spearheading the Anti-Marxist Camp

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Food Problem—Whose Responsibility?

Seen against this background, the significance of the assault against the CPI(M) Ministers, launched by the Right Communists within the first month of the formation of the Ministry, will

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

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

It should be mentioned in this connection that the Statement of Policy adopted by the seven-party United Front before the fourth general elections—a statement signed among others by the then State Secretary and present Chief Minister, Achutha Menon, himself, had made it clear that the food problem of Kerala could not be tackled by any Government in Kerala except with the solid support of the Central Government. We quote from that Policy Statement:

"A difficult problem which any Government in Kerala has to face is the food problem. That it has become so serious is due to the wrong policies pursued by the Centre. Though this state is deficit in food production it earns foreign exchange so sorely needed by the country and as such it is the responsibility of the Centre to see that its people are not made to starve but enough foodgrains are provided to meet the needs of the state.

"The Government will demand of the Centre to provide in time all the rice requirements of the state's people at prices within the capacity of the poor people of Kerala and will seek the co-operation of the people to exert the necessary pressure on the Centre. It is our opinion that to solve the food problem,

substantial changes have to be made in the policies at present pursued by the Central Government. For instance, it is necessary to bring wholesale trade in foodgrains into the state sector, ensuring that small traders and co-operative societies are not adversely affected, guarantee fair prices to the cultivating peasants while at the same time organising distribution in such a way as to make food available to the consumers at low prices. All this cannot be done by a State Government alone, specially the Government in a deficit state like Kerala. What the Kerala Government will do is to exert pressure on the Centre to concede the demand that Kerala should get the rice it needs at low prices."

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

This campaign of the Party was so convincing that the very first session of the legislature adopted a unanimous resolution demanding of the Centre that it honour its commitments. The State Food Advisory Committee also endorsed the demand. As for the United Front, it sent a delegation to meet the Prime Minister to protest against the Centre's callousness toward Kerala's needs and buttressed it by organising a one-day Kerala bandh on September 11, 1967.

From Free Trade to Rigorous Control

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

Communists demanded that control on the movement of food-grains within the state should be withdrawn.

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

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

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

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

Shielding The Centre

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

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

The base treachery indulged in by the Right Communists was clear on September 11, 1967 the day on which, as has been already mentioned, the U.F. had called for the observance of a Kerala bandh. This was in protest against the failure of the Central Government in fulfilling its promise to maintain its supplies—a failure which led to the totally inadequate supplies of just three ounces of rice in a week during which fell the national festival of Onam.

On that very day, which was being observed throughout the state as a day of protest against the Central Government’s failure to fulfil its promise to supply rice, the Right Communist organ, *Janayugam*, came out with an editorial accusing the Food

Minister of failure to discharge her responsibility due to which, it said, the people in Kerala were going without adequate food on the day of the national festival! No wonder they got unstinted support from the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition and its press for this “frank and forthright criticism” of the Marxists.

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

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

They, therefore, joined the chorus led by the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition that the CPI(M) was doing a disservice to the people of Kerala by trying to use the Government as an “instrument of struggle against the Central Government”.

In the early months of the existence of the U.F. Government, as has already been pointed out, the other constituents of the U.F., including the Right Communists, had to join the rallies, demonstrations and the September 11 Kerala bandh in order to express the Kerala people’s protest against the Central Government’s neglect in the matter of food supplies for Kerala.

On a few other occasions, too, they had to join the protest against the anti-people policies of the Central Government.

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

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

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

Industrial Policy

This was not surprising because the Industries Minister, T.V. Thomas, and the Agriculture and Electricity Minister, Govindan Nair, handled their portfolios exactly the same way in which the landlord, the rich capitalist farmer and the private industrialist desired these departments to be administered.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With Socialist Countries or Foreign Monopolies?

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

enter into agreements with public sector corporations in the socialist countries through which technical and even financial assistance can be obtained from these socialist countries.

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

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

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

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

Much was made of the "negotiations" between the visiting Minister and leaders of big business houses in Japan such as Mitsubishi, Toshiba and so on. The agitators and propagandists of the Right Communist Party started telling the people that the "great mission" with which their leader had gone to Japan would

herald “an era of industrialisation of the state”, opening the possibility of tens of thousands of our young men and women getting employed in these industries. The unemployed engineering and other graduates were made to shout such slogans as “it does not matter whether it is Japan or even Satan, what we want is that somebody should give us employment.”

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

Base Slander of Socialist Countries

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

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

The most concrete proposals came from the Romanians who gave a blue-print of the way in which co-operation between their country and the Government of Kerala could start. If the proposals made by the Romanians were in the opinion of the Right Communist Minister defective, the point or points could have been discussed with them and ways found to overcome the defects. But, far from taking this straight and honest course, he denounced the Romanians as people who are interested in keeping Kerala as a backward semi-colonial region which should be made to do nothing but export raw material—the very thing in which the Japanese private monopolists were interested. Blinded by prejudice and hatred for the CPI(M), he went to the extent of accusing the Marxist Chief Minister of “conspiring” with the “anti-Soviet” Romanians to keep Kerala backward!

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

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

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

A Kulak-Landlord Policy

The Right Communist Minister for Agriculture pursued in his department the same basic class policy as his colleague did in the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This demand naturally was not opposed by the rich peasants and landlords who are opposed only to such demands of the agricultural labourers as increasing rates of wages, human conditions of work, right to organise and fight for their demands, and above all, for assured employment which are directed against their employers. It was for these latter that the agricultural labourers' organisations led by the CPI(M) were fighting. In this fight against the employers of agricultural labour, the Agriculture Minister and his party ranged themselves on the side of the employers in the name of "avoiding any threat to increasing production".

New Friends

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

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

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

It is to this stratum of the rapidly-growing rural gentry—a gentry that is growing at the expense of the tax-payer on the one hand and of the exploited rural poor on the other—that the Kerala

Congress appeals and it is this stratum that rallies itself behind that organisation.

It is necessary to recall that those who constitute the leadership of the Kerala Congress were the organisers and perpetrators of the most barbarous attacks on the harijan agricultural labourers in central Travancore during and immediately after the "liberation struggle" of 1959-60. Hundreds of harijans were beaten up and otherwise persecuted and several were killed in cold blood for no other reason than that, both as harijans belonging to an oppressed caste and as agricultural labourers, they dared organise themselves under the Red Flag and fought for their legitimate demands.

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

Characteristic Incident

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

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

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

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

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

Anti-Marxist Partner of Right Communists

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

On the other hand, in the Cochin-Travancore region, where the Kerala Congress is more powerful, but where there were three-cornered contest because of the Kerala Congress refusal to have electoral understandings with the CPI(M), the Congress was able

to win 35 seats; this could very well have been considerably reduced if the Kerala Congress were prepared to have the same electoral understanding for which the Muslim League was prepared.

The reason for this difference between the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress was that, being a more class-conscious representative of the rural gentry and more indoctrinated by anti-Communism, the Kerala Congress was not prepared to touch the CPI(M) even with a pair of tongs. The leader of the Kerala Congress did in fact make the fantastic proposal that, while his party could not have any understanding with the CPI(M), the latter should support his candidates in a few constituencies "in the interest of preventing Congress victory".

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

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

We leave it to the reader to judge whether such a coalition between "an avowed anti-Marxist" and "an avowed Marxist-Leninist" party has been brought about because the former's hostility to Marxism or the latter's allegiance to it is false. In either case, it seems to be obvious that there is a common antipathy for the practical activities of a party which is genuinely

committed to Marxism-Leninism and is therefore, active in organising those classes and strata of society against which the vested interests entrenched in the Kerala Congress are fighting a determined battle.

Common Outlook

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

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

The Kerala Congress and the parties which subsequently constituted the “mini-front” find common ground with the Right Communists also on the basic question of state power which, as is well-known, is the point of departure between Marxism-Leninism and revisionism. Making a concrete analysis of the essence of state power obtaining in India, the Central Committee of the CPI(M) had stated in the political resolution adopted by it after the fourth general election: “The essence of state power, we know, lies in the army, police, bureaucracy, judiciary and jails, and all this machinery belongs to the bourgeois-landlord state. In class outlook, composition and in several other respects it is not an instrument that is suitable even for the implementation of a consistently democratic administration, let alone any class policies decisively directed against the vested interests. A good

and essential part of state power resides in the union centre and the Congress Central Government and whatever small share of power the State Governments possess, under the provisions of the country's Constitution, will have to be exercised within the confines of this overall central power. Naturally, under these circumstances, to speak of real political power for the State Governments, that, too, of non-Congress Governments comprising of different opposition parties, is unreal and devoid of substance." (*New Situation and Party's Tasks*, Pages 62-63).

The Right Communists however rejected the implications of this Marxist-Leninist analysis of state power. They shared the common illusion of the people that, by winning majorities in the legislatures and forming ministries, parties of the democratic opposition can bring about such changes in the socio-economic set-up in the country that, though not fully satisfying the aspirations of the people, much can be achieved by way of improving the living and working conditions of the people. The much-talked of "structural reforms" within the landlord-bourgeois state system were placed before the democratic movement as the possible objective.

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

It was therefore natural that there should be an ideological confrontation between the Marxist-Leninist outlook of the CPI(M) and the revisionist outlook of the Right Communist Party. It was also natural that the Right Communist stand should

conform to the outlook of not only the Congress and Kerala Congress in the opposition but also of the Muslim League and the ISP.

“Mini-Front”—Ideological Basis

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

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

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

They were, however, unhappy, and a little embarrassed that, in return for these political gains, they became participants in a

political-administrative set-up to which from a fundamental socio-economic point of view, they were stoutly opposed. The leadership of the Muslim League therefore proved to be a fertile soil on which the seed of hostility to the CPI(M) could sprout and grow fast.

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

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

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

Beginnings of Confrontation

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

As has already been pointed out, the first shot against the CPI(M) was fired by the Right Communists on Food Minister Gowri's handling of the food portfolio. The demand for the lifting of control on movement of foodgrains was the initial attack launched by the Right Communists. This, however, was not a solitary attack launched by the Right Communists but, as has already been mentioned, was the combined attack joined by the Muslim League and the ISP as well. It became the starting point of a statewide campaign run by the "non-Marxist" parties within the UF as well as the Congress and Kerala Congress opposition. While the ideological-political leadership for this combined attack was furnished by the Right Communist Party, it enjoyed the "able" and powerful support of all those within and outside the state who were interested in discrediting, isolating and if possible throwing the CPI(M) out of the leading position it occupied within the UF and its Ministry.

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

In doing this naturally, he exposed the class character of the food, industrial, agrarian and other policies pursued by the Right Communists and their allies within the U.F. While thus publicly

exposing the class essence of the policies pursued by the Right Communists and their allies within the UF he called for such a rectification of policies as would further strengthen the bonds that united the non-Congress parties in their struggle against the landlord-bourgeois policies of the Central Congress Government.

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

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

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

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

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

This was the beginning of a concerted attempt by what are called the "non-Marxist constituents of the UF" to "isolate" the CPI(M) from the people and make it eventually possible to throw it out of the Ministry. These "non-Marxist constituents" of the UF, among themselves as well as in collaboration with the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition, mounted ideological-political attacks on the positions taken by the CPI(M) and, together with it, indulged in factional manoeuvres against it. Every one of these

parties adopted different political positions but at the same time saw to it that all of them converged on the common line of opposition and hostility to the CPI(M) and its ministers. We are giving below a few instances of the way in which this was done.

Police, Judiciary and Constitution

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

The question of gherao was also brought to the forefront. The stand taken by the Government that gherao was a form of peaceful demonstration and was therefore legitimate unless it led to threat to personal life or safety was denounced as "incitement to violence"; the argument was that gherao by itself was illegal and should be unconditionally banned.

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

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

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

This was true also of the ideological-political position of the CPI(M) on the class character of the Constitution, judiciary and so on. The pronouncements of the CPI(M) leaders against the

"sacrosanct" character of the institutions of bourgeois parliamentary system, the "impartiality" of the bourgeois judiciary, etc., were attacked by the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition as indications of disloyalty to the democratic Constitution of independent India. The leaders of these opposition parties went to the extent of declaring that members of a party having such a disloyal attitude to the Constitution of India had no right to become ministers in the state and should therefore be dismissed.

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

The Right Communists and the RSP, being "Marxist-Leninists" could not go even so far as the Muslim League and the ISP did; they had to pay lip-service to the theory that the state, including the judiciary, is an instrument of class oppression. They, however, demarcated themselves from the CPI(M) by saying that the Marxists were ignoring the possibilities of using the parliamentary democratic system in order to bring about substantial changes in socio-economic relations. Adhering as they did to the concept of "structural reforms within the bourgeois parliamentary set-up", the Right Communists called for a "constructive" approach to the working of the Ministry.

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

Slander Campaign, "Charge-Sheet"

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

The stories that thus appeared in the opposition bourgeois press as well as in the Right Communist and other "non-Marxist" press were then taken up within the Coordination Committee for discussion. Once again, the proceedings of the Coordination Committee were leaked out to the bourgeois press making it appear that the CPI(M) was thoroughly "isolated" within the UF and that its "atrocities" and "misdeeds" were taken serious note of by the other constituents of the UF. It was in this manner that what came to be known as "Srikantan Nair's charge-sheet" got formulated, given wide publicity to and made the starting point of a concerted attack on the CPI(M).

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

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

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

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

It is not possible or necessary for us to give a large number of instances in which the constituents of what came to be the "mini-front" made vicious attacks on the CPI(M). It is, however, necessary for us to mention that, as early as in September 1967, the then ISP Finance Minister made a public statement that he was ashamed to be in the Ministry, since according to him, the Ministry was guilty of several "misdeeds".

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

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

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

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

The Revelations

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

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

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

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

These revelations were sufficiently damaging. Though nobody connected T.V. Thomas with initiating and leading the discussions, everybody except the Right Communists admitted the fact that things did happen which could not but be considered as an attempt at replacement of the Marxist by a non-Marxist Chief Minister. Exposure of this fact to the public would, according to the majority of the constituents of the U.F., do irreparable damage to the continuance of the U.F. They therefore suggested that the whole question should be considered as a closed chapter.

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

agreed, in the end, to consider the incident as a closed chapter as was suggested by its colleagues of the Coordination Committee.

Closed Chapter?

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

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

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

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

Reopening The Chapter

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

It became clear that sharp differences would break out among the all-India leaders of the Congress party. One section looks up to the Jana Sangh and Swatantra, while the other depends on the support of the other, so-called "Left-oriented" non-Congress parties, including the Right Communist Party but excluding and hostile to militant parties of the working class and peasantry including the CPI(M). Such a development would obviously be to the liking of the Right Communists and the RSP who had originally preferred the whole Congress to "reactionary communal" parties like the Jana Sangh and Swatantra.

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

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

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

Corruption—Wild Charges

It is necessary, in this connection, to mention that, as early as in March 1967 when the first session of the legislature met after the fourth general election, the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition charged the CPI(M) and its ministers as corrupt. The "evidence" tendered at that time was that some of the persons appointed in the personal staff of the ministers were from outside the Government services, many of them being personal friends or party colleagues of the ministers concerned. Such appointments are quite common by ministers and had been resorted to by even the Congress ministers. But, when resorted to by the CPI(M) ministers, it became an act of corruption—such was the logic of the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition.

Ever since then, the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition has been accusing the CPI(M) ministers of corruption because many of those against whom discriminatory treatment on political

grounds had been meted out by the previous Congress ministry were rehabilitated. The very act of ending the system of police verification into the political antecedents of recruits to Government service (a practice which had been deliberately used by the Congress Ministries against the communist movement) was also mentioned as an instance of corruption. The Congress-Kerala Congress press also invented stories of "irregularity" and "corruption" indulged in by the CPI(M) ministers. It was to this opposition campaign of lies and slanders that the Right Communist press and the notorious Srikantan Nair's "charge-sheet" gave ammunition.

Principled Stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another Slander Campaign

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

"widespread reports" unless there was some material evidence to substantiate the allegation, the detractors of the Chief Minister accused him of partiality towards the ministers belonging to or supporting his party.

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

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

Reasonable Proposals

This was precisely what was proposed by the CPI(M). We made the following alternative proposals : scrutiny by a sub-committee of the Coordination Committee; examination by a Committee of the Cabinet; or leaving it to a person qualified to be a High Court Judge and elected by the legislature. If the finding arrived at by any of the agencies was that the case required further probe, it should, of course, be handed over to an enquiry under the Commission of Enquiries Act.

If the "mini-front" parties were genuinely interested in tracking down and bringing to book those who are really guilty of corruption, they would have readily accepted this proposal. They, however, refused to accept it. Their demand was that, while no such machinery should be set up to examine the material

evidence given to substantiate the allegations against other ministers, the allegations levelled against the KTP Minister should be handed over to a judicial enquiry even without a preliminary examination of the material and even without finding that a prima facie case existed.

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

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

This made it obligatory for the Government, through the Chief Minister who was in charge of the department, to order an enquiry into the allegations against this particular minister, even though the Government had not satisfied itself on the nature of the evidence warranting a detailed enquiry. The Chief Minister therefore thought it only fair that the allegations against other ministers were also subjected to a similar enquiry if the allegations were as serious as in the case of this particular minister. He therefore simultaneously ordered enquiries into the allegations against this one minister and three others.

The Voting

This action of the Chief Minister so infuriated the "mini-front" that, once again with the support of the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition, they got the legislature to approve a motion demanding enquiry into the allegations against all other ministers

excepting the Chief Minister. Since this was a motion which amounted to an expression of no-confidence in the Chief Minister, he immediately tendered the resignation of his Ministry.

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

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

In reply to this clear statement of the Chief Minister, the Right Communist leader, T. V. Thomas, asked: "Why should a dead man be killed again?", meaning that it was not necessary to have a formal voting but the Chief Minister should resign, since it was already clear that the majority was against him. The majority, as was noted above, was composed of fiftythree United Front MLAs plus sixteen Congress-Kerala Congress MLAs, as opposed to sixty UF MLAs.

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

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

Bluff Called

This bluff however was called first by the Deputy Leader and then by the Leader of the Congress Legislature Party who ridiculed the claim of the non-Marxist Ministry carrying on without Congress support. The Leader of the Congress Legislature Party revealed, "We have been asking the non-Marxist constituents of the UF how they could tolerate rule by the CPI(M). Their answer was they would withdraw support to the CPI(M) the moment they found that the opposition was prepared to support them in forming a non-Marxist Ministry. We, therefore, told them that we would be ready to support a purely non-Marxist Ministry. On no account, however, would we support a Ministry which keeps the door open for the Marxists to come later."

The Right Communist-RSP claim that they would like the CPI(M) to take the initiative for "reconstructing and reorganising"

the old non-Congress UF was that nothing but the cover behind which they were forming a Ministry which is totally alien in character to the one that was formed in 1967. Behind the talk of the present Ministry being a continuation of the old Ministry, they were, in fact, replacing a ministry of struggle against the Congress with the active participation and leading role of the CPI(M) by another which is directed against the CPI(M) and is supported not only by the Kerala Congress but the Congress itself.

This change in the character of the Ministry was, for a time, sought to be camouflaged by the wild talk of the Ministry having secured the support of individual MLAs belonging to the SSP and the CPI(M). These have now been proved totally baseless. The Right Communists therefore have finally come in their true colours by making it clear that they are in reality depending on the support of the Indira Gandhi group within the Congress Legislature Party. If this fructifies, they hope, it will be possible for them to make the Ministry "respectable" in the eyes of the democratic opposition, since it would make them part of "the struggle against the reactionary Syndicate". That, however, would not obviate the fact that the new Ministry would be essentially anti-CPI(M) and, therefore, totally different from the UF and its Ministry which came into existence in March 1967. The rallying together of the avowedly anti-Marxist Kerala Congress and Indira Gandhi Congress [both of whom have made the struggle against the CPI(M) an article of faith] along with the constituents of the former non-Congress UF would make this Ministry a new variant of the old anti-Communist front which came into existence in the days of the liberation struggle and after. The only difference would be that as opposed to the Communist Party of India being the target then, it is the CPI(M) that is under attack now. Furthermore, as opposed to one solid anti-Communist front, there are today two anti-Marxist fronts, one composed of the Syndicate Congress and such rightist non-Congress parties as the Jana Sangh and Swatantra, while the other consists of the Indira Gandhi Congress and such other "Left-oriented" non-Congress parties as the RSP, Right Communists and so on. As in 1964-65,

the Right Communists and the RSP have, once again, joined the reactionary camp in its struggle against Marxism.

Wild And Baseless Allegations

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

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

The Right Communist leader and the present Chief Minister, Achutha Menon, therefore, resorted to the clever technique of comparing actual procurement during these two years with the "marketable surplus" that should be available for procurement as calculated by statisticians. What should have been procured,

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

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

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

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

While the preliminaries connected with the finalisation of the agreement between the state Government and the Corporation

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

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

Another allegation levelled against the CPI(M) and its Revenue Minister is regarding the inordinate delay in the adoption of the

land reforms legislation. While our Party itself would have liked a speedier enactment of this legislation, it is necessary to give here a few facts concerning the process of land reform legislation in 1967-69.

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

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

(c) Since according to the provisions of the Constitution, this Bill required sanction from the Central Government, it was sent to them on August 14, 1968. The Central Government, however, took a very long time and gave the sanction only eight months later on April 10, 1969. The Centre returned the Bill proposing certain amendments which would have defeated some of the main purposes of the Bill. The Centre did not agree to the fair rent fixed

in the new Bill and wanted the old provision to continue, it wanted plantations to be allowed to keep fallow lands without any limit, ceiling not be applied to pepper and arecanut gardens, that hutment-dwellers on plantation land not be given ownership rights and so on. The Ministry, UF Coordination Committee and the Select Committee were all informed of the Centre's stand.

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

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

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

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

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

Anybody who knows anything about the figures of agricultural production in any state or at the Centre knows the divergences in the figures supplied by the various departments. This was a fact noted at Trivandrum by the Central Food and Agriculture Minister, Jagjivan Ram, who was asked by pressmen about these different figures. (It is a fact that at the Centre, the Food Ministry, the Agriculture Ministry and the Central Statistical Organisation gave different figures.) It is also well-known that the basis of calculation by various departments is different; the Agricultural department calculates it on the basis of acreage under irrigation, under new high yielding varieties of seeds, the quantity of fertilisers consumed and other inputs used in agricultural production. The Statistical department, on the other hand, undertakes crop-cutting surveys in model plots selected at

random. It is, therefore, not surprising that the results of these different calculations are different from one another. If under these circumstances, a particular minister claims that the figures supplied by his department should be considered as authentic and on that starts denouncing other ministers, knowledgeable persons would consider such ministers as nothing but petty-minded if not worse. Such, unfortunately, was the conduct of the Right Communist Agriculture Minister in Kerala.

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

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

As for the Industries department, even this claim is not being made. It is realised that the perspective of large-scale

industrialisation in the private sector with the help and collaboration of foreign monopolists has not materialised. The Central Government, the monopoly capitalists in India and abroad, have not been so "co-operative" in setting up new large-scale industries in Kerala as the Right Communists had expected them to be. Students of the economics and politics of monopoly capital in India will not be surprised at this gap between their expectation and the reality. The Right Communists, however, want to throw the responsibility for the failure of their policy to the "obstruction" placed before them by the CPI(M) and its Chief Minister.

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

Real Face Of "Achievements"

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

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

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

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

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

Still another "achievement" of the present Ministry is the issue of several ordinances showing its claim that unlike the former Marxist-led Ministry, the present Ministry is energetic, getting things done quickly, without waiting for bureaucratic red-tape. The fact of the matter, however, is that almost every one of these ordinances was before the legislature in the form of Bills. The Debt Relief Bill, for instance, had been introduced in the legislature at its October setting. It would have been finally passed in October itself, had it not been for the fact that some members wanted more time to consider the Bill and in the meantime, the Ministry was toppled. This applies also to the gratuity and other labour legislations. The former Labour Minister, Mathai Manjooran, had prepared these Bills. They could have been adopted by the legislature if only the Right Communists and their mini-front partners had not toppled the Ministry. The present Ministry did, in fact, prorogue the Assembly which was to have met on November 17, thus actually delaying the adoption of these Bills by the Legislature.

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

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

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

The Party, therefore, proposed that appointments to all Corporations should be handed over to the PSC. The writer of these lines had, in fact, given directives to have the necessary preparations made to implement this objective. A statement to this effect had also been made on the floor of the legislature on October 17. If the Ministry had continued, therefore, a Bill would have eventually been introduced in the legislature bringing all appointments to the Corporations within the purview of the PSC. The mini-front-Kerala Congress Government, however, is not interested in bringing all Corporations under the purview of the Bill. They wanted to make an exception of the Transport Corporation.

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

Together with the Chairman, several employees of the Corporation are also being dismissed. The reason given is that they were irregularly appointed. The fact is that, as in the case

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

The present Transport Minister does not propose to follow this principle which had been accepted on the demand of all trade unions; and some of the very trade unions (including the INTUC and the Right Communist unions) had taken that stand then but have now agreed with the present Kerala Congress Transport Minister. The only reason is that the appointments were made when the Communist (Marxist) Transport Minister was in charge; furthermore, since nobody was barred on political grounds from appointments as was the case in previous appointments, many members and sympathisers of the CPI(M) also got appointments. This, it may be seen, is a reversion to the old practice of screening of candidates for appointment with a view to eliminating all those who are politically "dangerous" to the landlord-bourgeois regime, the practice that has become notorious as "police verification". The restoration of this practice and the unleashing of unprecedented police and goonda terror are the big "achievements" of the reactionary ruling class from the coup d'etat of October 24.

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

Police-Goonda Terror

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

Four MPs, headed by Comrade A.K. Gopalan, went round some of the areas of such incidents and told the people what they had seen. Three MLAs headed by Comrade Gowri visited another place and they, too, brought before the people what they saw. These statements of responsible leaders of the people were, however, dismissed with contempt by the Right Communist Chief Minister and the Muslim League Home Minister who repeated the time-worn justification of "organised violence and subversion" on the part of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). It became thus clear that, like all earlier bourgeois Governments, the new "Communist"-led Government considers it to be its foremost duty to keep the working people (particularly the rural working people) under the thumb of the landlords and their rural bullies to suppress their rising movement.

This, however, was not all. The new Government made it clear that it would not tolerate demonstrations against the new Ministry or its individual Ministers. It should be mentioned that every Ministry that has come into being in Kerala has had to face hostile demonstrations with black flags. The police, too, have acquired the necessary training to keep the demonstrators at sufficient distance, so that, while the demonstrators have full freedom to

express their feelings, the minister against whom the demonstration is organised is protected from any physical attack. Such hostile demonstrations with black flags have been held even before the Prime Minister of the country. The new ministers, however, are so "democratic" that they would not tolerate this. At Kozhikode and at Malappuram, those who waved black flags against ISP Minister Koran were beaten up by the police. At Nilambur, the demonstrators were attacked not by the police but by a gang of Muslim League goondas who had come in special vehicles "to protect" the League Home Minister. The attack was so violent that one of the demonstrators, Poulouse by name, was killed.

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

The police-goonda raj has become even more intense since January 1—the day on which the peasants and agricultural workers of the state began assuming the rights conferred on them by the Land Reforms Amendment Act on the basis of their organised strength in response to the historic declaration of the Alleppey convention to prevent the landlords from robbing them of the benefits of the Act. The Right Communists who have given a call at the national level for occupation of land, who in West Bengal have joined other parties to occupy illegally-held land are, in Kerala, using the Central Reserve Police to inhumanly beat up

the peasants and agricultural workers for doing the same. That is the extent of their servility to the rural vested interests and their party, the Kerala Congress.

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

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

Today, however, it is a 'Communist'-led Government whose head (Dange's own colleague in the Central Secretariat of his party) is justifying the firings and lathi-charges in the same language in which the British rulers, the Dewans of princely states and Congress ministers were justifying firings. Dange and his colleagues should know that firings and lathi-charges are resorted to in this state for nothing other than to suppress the struggles of the working people, as well as to attack the rights of the democratic parties to organise protest demonstrations against the

Government collectively and against ministers individually. A Ministry which does not hesitate to resort to these methods and justifies all these in the same way as the earlier British Governments is nothing but an ordinary bourgeois Ministry with an outer coating of bogus 'communism'. This is a fact which the people have begun to realise.

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

Appendix

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

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

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

Kutty, a forty-five-year old woman agricultural worker, of Melpadu in Kuttanad in Alleppey district;

Ahthony Rajan, a cardamom estate worker in Vandi-periyar;

Poulose of Nilambur killed by Muslim League goondas in the presence of the Muslim League Home Minister Mohammad Koya for showing black flags to the Minister;

Sreedharan, agricultural worker of Ward 2 of Kavalam Panchayat in Kuttanad in Alleppey district;

Balan Pillai, a Branch Secretary of the CPI(M), in Trivandrum district;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

earlier in cases for participating in protest demonstrations and movements.

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

Students protesting against the High Court judgement invalidating certain clauses of the University Act were brutally lathi-charged in Tellicherry on November 1; school boys fighting for cancellation of examination fees were lathi-charged in Kannapuram, and Socialist Youth Federation volunteers picketing Government offices demanding jobs or unemployment relief were lathi-charged on January 5. The police made a wanton and indiscriminate lathi-charge on striking workers of Premier Tyres in Kalamassery during the course of which they entered a near by *madhassa* and beat up small Muslim girls; they used their lathis on the heads of transport workers who were picketing Transport Corporation offices in protest against unjust dismissals.

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

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

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

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

Handing over of wholesale distribution of foodgrains to the Food Corporation of India: The decision to do this had been taken in principle in the latter half of 1967 by the UF Government. It was the FCI which wanted time to set up its machinery and the Corporation took an inordinately long time to settle its terms with the State Government. Even when the agreement was ready, the FCI did not want to take the entire distribution, but only in one taluk in each district. Meanwhile, the UF Government had taken the most essential step of serving notices to wholesalers that their services would be dispensed with when the FCI took over. They challenged the Government decision in the High Court. By the time, the High Court dismissed the petition, the UF Government had been toppled. All that the present Government has done is to sign the agreement which the CPI(M) Food Minister had approved and for the signing of which the ground had been cleared by the CPI(M) Ministers.

Distribution of pattas (title-deeds): Despite various difficulties that the Government had to face, the distribution of pattas had been done in 1968 and 1969 under the UF Government, their total number coming to about 50,000. Arrangements were also made for distribution of more pattas. Forest land had been cleared and these lands had been transferred from the Forest to the Revenue

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department and the preparation by the Revenue department to distribute the pattas on November 1 had been made. The UF Government was toppled on October 24 and all that the present Government is doing is to distribute the pattas already prepared.

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