CHAPTER IV

THE CPI LED COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN KERALA

The CPI's approaches to coalition governments have been the result of its analysis of the present stage of the Communist revolution i.e., the struggle between the contending class forces. It holds the present stage of the revolutions in India as a transition to socialism. Accordingly, the classes that can be united at this stage of the revolution are the working class, the peasantry, urban petty bourgeoisie and the non-monopoly strata of the Indian bourgeoisie. The main driving forces of revolution would be the working class, the toiling peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie.

The aftermath of the Communist split was visible mainly in the distinctive differentiation of the tactical line of the CPI and the CPI (M). Nationally the CPI's line was the United Front from above and its slogan the establishment of a National Democratic Front. In 1964 itself, the party had agreed that "no National Democratic Front would be real unless the vast mass following of the Congress and the progressive sections of the Congress at various levels take their place in it".

1. Programme of the CPI, Patna, February 1968.
In 1969, on the eve of the formation of a Mini-Front Ministry, the CPI was of the view that the right reactionary parties and forces which were trying to consolidate their ranks were the main enemies against whom the main blow has to be directed. According to the CPI, the United Front should prove to be a real alternative to the discredited Congress rule in the sense that the administration should be clean, more alive to the grievances and needs of the people, more efficient and quick in the redress of such grievances, more democratic and responsive to the demands and representation made by various sections of the populations, in short, a real contrast to the Congress. They also agreed that the powers and resources of the State Government's functioning under the constitution of India were limited but that within all these limitations some relief, a better administration than the Congress had to be given to the people. Only in this way can the United Front Government act as a political instrument of power, in the hands of the people.

The United Front Government must have a common minimum programme for action and implementation. It is through the implementation of programme that the United Front must

3. Ibid.
consolidate itself and individual constituents should increase their strength.

The Patna Congress of the CPI (1968) also agreed to allow the state units flexibility in interpreting the party line in the light of their objective possibilities. In Kerala the party maximised the possibilities of peaceful transition. The decision to form a Mini Front in 1969 was approved by the national leadership. Thus, Kerala offered the first opportunity to experiment with national democracy without a formal commitment of sharing power with the Congress. Here, the CPI discarded non-congressism for the sake of necessity and for retaining power. The ideological differences among the coalescing parties did not at all pause any problem for the formation of the Mini Front.

On 2nd November, 1969 Achuta Menon was sworn in as Chief Minister of the Mini Front Government. The Front consisting of the CPI, the Muslim League, the ISP and the Kerala Congress (KC) had a combined strength of only 54 members in the Assembly of 134. Obviously a ministry without external support was just out of the question. Finally, the Ministry got the support of the Congress and the RSP. The same policies and programmes of the CPI (M) led coalition were the basis of the Mini Front, which was to be continuation of the same ministry.
It was quite discernable that the CPI was chosen to lead the government as the other coalescing parties had no interest to head the government. The Congress had only nine members, and so its heading the government was out of the question. The next alternative of the Congress was to give support to a party which was nearer to its ideologies. It was the CPI, a rival to the CPI (M) which was the next dominant party in the State. Thus the CPI was entrusted with the task of leading the government. The Ministry consisted of two CPI members, two Muslim League members, two ISP members and one representative from the Kerala Congress.4

In fact, the Mini Front was the continuation of the CPI (M) led coalition Government as the Front leaders accepted its "minimum programmes" as target. The Ministry was also implementing the programmes proclaimed by E.M.S. Namboodiripad in 19675. The CPI (M) a section of the SSP, KSP and KTP left the Mini Front. The bulk of the United Front parties had clearly come over to the new Front.

Achievements

Despite the contentions of the CPI (M), the Front had major achievements to its credit. Soon after the assumption

4. The portfolios of each Minister are given in Appendix.
of office, the Government gave permanent ownership rights (Pattayam) to Kudikidappukars with a limit of 10 cents in villages and 5 cents at the district head quarters\(^6\).

It also undertook distribution of title deeds (Pattayam) to two lakhs poor settlers, and granted ownership right to 1 lakh hutment-dwellers\(^7\). Till 1967, 4 lakhs acres of land were under the ownership of foreign planters. Out of these 76,000 acres of waste land were under the control of the biggest plantation industrialist called the Kannan Devan Company. As the state Government was not empowered to nationalise the land. It successfully persuaded the Company to part with 23,000 acres of land\(^8\).

The Government revised the minimum wages of labourers in various industries. It revised the existing rate of minimum wages payable to employees in tea and rubber plantations in the State with effect from 1 April 1970\(^9\). The Government also constituted the Minimum Wages Advisory Board with V.R. Pillai as chairman to co-ordinate the work of various committees and sub-committees constituted under the Minimum Wages Act and to advise the Government in the matter of fixing and revising the rates of minimum wages\(^10\).

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\(^6\) Ibid., 23rd February, 1970, P.403.

\(^7\) Link, 21 June, 1970.

\(^8\) Indian Express (Madurai), 16 June, 1970.

\(^9\) Indian Express (Madurai), 2 April, 1970.

\(^10\) Ibid., 19 April 1970.
The Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 1969, received President's assent on 16th December 1969. The Government successfully implemented the Bill. The Bill benefited more than a lakh of people. During its nine months rule, the Mini Front gave permanent Pattayam for two lakhs cultivators who possessed Government land. The land known as 'Sreepadam' under the possession of the Travancore Royal Family was also distributed to the landless. The Front also passed the Gratuity Bill for the distribution of gratuity to the industrial labourers. It was one of the first of its kind in the Country. The gratuity was to be paid according to individual agreements or conventions. There was no uniform scheme in this regard. There was also no law to compel the management to give gratuity to the workers. So there existed a large number of units whose workers were denied of the benefit. Under these circumstances an ordinance was promulgated on 8th December 1969 to authorise the Industrial units to give gratuity to their workers. Later, it was replaced by the Kerala Industrial Employees payment of Gratuity Bill, 1970. The Bill provided for the payment of gratuity to the employees

in factories, plantations and other establishments, with a stipulation that they should have five years of service to their credit.

The Government re-opened the Malabar Spinning Mill and the Cannanore Spinning and Weaving Mill. A corporation was set up for the healthy development of cashew industry.

The Mini-Front abolished check-posts in Palghat and Trichur districts. Awards were instituted to the Malayalam Films for the first time in Kerala. Chittis were started under the auspices of the Kerala State Financial Corporation. To make planning more effective, the Government re-organised the State Planning Board. For the development of fisheries, a master plan was prepared with an expenditure of 306 crores of rupees and was sent to the Central Government for its approval. For the development of sports a committee was constituted with V.R.Krishna Iyer as Chairman.

Interim machinery was evolved for dealing with charges of corruption against the Ministers and the representatives of the people. Anyone could send a petition to the Chief

15. Ibid.
Secretary with a deposit of Rs.500/- and the petition was to be referred to a serving or retired judge for deciding whether there was 'prima facie' case. If there was one it would be sent to an enquiry commission for a full-fledged thorough enquiry. The Chief Minister also came under the purview of such enquiry.

The teachers in the government as well as private schools who had two or more years of service were protected and confirmed in their posts. All private school teachers were given the freedom to take part in state politics. Students were given representation in the University Senate. Education was made free for the secondary stage.

With the aim of developing agriculture, particularly in the villages, the work of the agencies of Agro Industries Corporation, District Co-operative Bank and Co-operative Units was co-ordinated. An agreement was reached for Rs.18 lakhs share participation with the Thoshiba Lamb Factory to establish a dry cell factory16. So the Mini-Front could claim that it undertook a number of measures giving relief to the working people and gave an impression that they know how to rule the state.

Break up of Mini-Front

ISP Split:— The Government faced a strong crisis within months, when the State Parliamentary Committee of the ISP, decided to withdraw its Finance Minister, N.K. Seshan from the Cabinet. Seshan and his supporters walked out of the ISP State Committee and it resulted in a split in ISP. With this split the Ministry would find it difficult to survive another Assembly Session. Following the split the larger faction of the party threatened to withdraw its support to the Government unless the Finance Minister, who belonged to the other faction was dropped. To save his Government the Chief Minister Achutamenon persuaded the Minister to resign, though that did not solve the problem.

Then the ISP dissident faction, including Mr. Seshan merged itself with PSP and the PSP unit thus formed, began to press the Mini Front to admit it into the Government or at least into the co-ordination committee of the Front. The demand was opposed by ISP which told the Chief Minister that it would leave the Government and withdraw support to it if the Front had anything to do with the PSP. With this slender majority he could not afford the loss of the support of either faction of ISP.

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In the meantime, the Congress (O) had moved from a neutral position to one of the active opposition to the Government. At its two day session in Cochin, the party appealed to all political forces in the State to join hands to oust the Ministry. The odds weighed heavily against the Government. The Ministry surviving the next session of the Assembly was doubtful. If Congress (O) voted with the opposition the majority of the Government would be reduced to 4 dozen.

This was the background of the dissolution of the Assembly on June 26, 1970. But Achutamenon claimed that he advised the Governor to dissolve the House and order fresh elections because he wanted a large majority so as to carry through more confidently his Government's progressive policies. Yet, this was the first time in the history of the State that a Ministry which had a majority in the Assembly opted for the dissolution and a fresh mandate.

Though the Mini-Front headed by C. Achutamenon was formed after considerable hesitation, it was not in a strong

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19. The parties actually represented in the Government had only 46 members in the 133 member Assembly.
position. The CPI was not very happy to have the Kerala Congress in the Mini Front but without their support, the new government would not have been possible. Since there was no alternative, the CPI and the Kerala Congress came into the fold of the Mini Front.

The real power behind the curtain was the Muslim League. The League had persuaded the CPI (M) to give it the Muslim majority Malappuram district, but it fell out with them over the land reforms which would have reduced its influences in many part of the State. It was difficult to imagine a conservative party like Muslim League and professed revolutionaries working together for long because the Muslim League had only one interest to secure, that was their communal interest.

Since the original Communist Party split, the controversial question had been as to whether the CPI or the CPI (M) was the real Communist Party. Under these circumstances cordial relation between the two Communist parties was impossible. The CPI had developed the feeling that if the CPI (M) was not checked, it would even swallow the CPI. Though the Mini-Front mainly operated on the 'Minimum Programme' that the CPI (M) dominated coalition, the CPI (M) opposed its continuance in office.
Mutual conflict in coalitions is inevitable and success rests upon the process of reconciliation and adjustments among the coalition partners. Adjustments could be possible within the ambit of the coalition cabinet. But if they go out of control the Ministry falls. Both the parties and the coalition partners have mutually to contribute to its existence. Nothing can be done when a particular party splits. This was what happened when a split arose in the ISP which culminated in the breakup of the Mini Front.

The II CPI led Coalition Government (1970-1977)

In the eve of the 1970 elections the Congress High Command insisted that the need to defeat CPI (M) and to demonstrate the parties progressive character in the first Assembly elections after the Congress split outweighed all other considerations. The new Congress, therefore, agreed to back the CPI led Mini-Front.

The final party line up in the elections consisted of twenty two parties loosely arranged into three fronts-The CPI led Mini Front composed of CPI, Muslim League, PSP and RSP backed by the Congress (Congress R). The CPI (M) led People's Democratic Front (PDF) made up of CPI (M), SSP, ISP, KSP, and KTP and the Right wing, Democratic Front (DF) comprising Congress (O), Kerala Congress, Jana Sangh and
Swathantra party. The confusion was worse confounded when
the PDF and the DF agreed to avoid victory for the
Mini-Front. It was also interesting to note the coming
together of the former enemies—the CPI, the Congress and the
Muslim League.

Among the 22 parties that contested the only ones that
really counted were the CPI (M) and the Congress (R). The
Mini Front had 36 of the 113 seats—the CPI 16, the Muslim
League 11, RSP 6 and PSP 3. The CPI (M) led PDF got 41, the
CPI (M) alone secured 28 seats, SSP 6, KPS, ISP 3 and
KTP 2. The DF won 15, the Kerala Congress alone secured 12
and Congress (O) 3.

The Congress (R) confirmed that it was the dominant
wing of Congress in Kerala. It had contested 56 seats and
won 32 and so formed the biggest group in the new Assembly.
Their impressive victory was fundamentally the product of
Front tactics. The other 14 parties failed to win even a
single seat.

Yet the Congress (R) victory was not a triumph over the
CPI (M). The CPI (M) was reduced from 49 to 28 seats but

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22. For detailed election results see appendix.
retained the 23.4% of the vote that it had captured in 1967. In the Malabar region the CPI (M) suffered severe losses at the hands of the Congress (R). The Congress (R) with an understanding with the Muslim League tipped the balance against the CPI (M). Palghat remained the greatest locus of CPI (M), strength, giving 41.1% of the vote. The CPI (M) confronted serious dissensions in the wake of the Congress (R) victory. Despite the fact that the CPI (M) had repeatedly called for fresh elections after the Mini Front Government took power, the CPI (M) was unprepared for the mid-term election.

The Formation of the Government

Achutamenon's second ministry consisting of 4 CPI ministers, two each from the Muslim League and the RSP and one from PSP took office on 4th October 1970. In tune with CPI's policy of National Democracy 4 Congress (R) representatives were included in the nine member co-ordinatin committee. The Congress (R) decided on 24th September 1970 to support but not to enter the CPI led

25. The nine members were C.Achuta Menon, N.E.Balaram, P.S.Sreenivasan and P.K.Raghavan of the CPI, T.K.Divakaran and Baby John of the RSP, C.H.Mohammad Koya and Naha of Muslim League and N.K.Balakrishnan of PSP.
The legislative wing of the Congress (R) held the view that it should share power in the Government, while the KPCC and the Youth Congress argued that the Congress should wait and watch before joining the Government. The leader of the legislature party, K. Karunakaran, took the view that to face a well-organised CPI (M), the Congress should be a part of the broad-based coalition with the CPI. On the other hand, the KPCC leaders maintained that the Congress could take on the CPI (M) single handed and that in this kind of direct confrontation, the supporters of numerous small parties, including the CPI, would mostly back the Congress. But in Kerala such a clear polarisation would not materialise as the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress have communal and political strongholds. But the basic fight in Kerala had been always between the Congress and the CPI (M).

If the party had joined the Ministry, the Legislature Party faction would have gained enormously, and through their control of important government departments, its leaders would have been able to strengthen their position within the party. Yet there were corruption charges also against CPI Government. The charges were fully proved by

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the enquiry Commission in one case. It related to the appointment of relatives of the Chief Minister in the government owned Travancore-Cochin Chemicals. In another case, the acquisition of 1,000 acres of a rubber estate for the Agricultural University at Trichur at a grossly inflated price allegedly in consideration of a large donation to the CPI was also found to be irregular. The Assembly reports of the two cases had been used by the KPCC in support of its argument of not joining the Government. If so it would tarnish the image of the party, it argued.

The Congress (R) had another benefit if it did not join the Government. When it joined the coalition it would have to share both the responsibility and authority; when it only supported the Government from outside, without participating in it, it could enjoy power without responsibility.

Finally, the joint meeting of the Congress MLAs and KPCC agreed to give the party's High Command the freedom to decide upon the right time of joining the Mini Front Government. Getting the green signal from the Congress High Command the KPCC, met at Ernakulam on 3 July 1971 and decided to join the Government ending the controversy.27.

The CPI's role as the head of such a coalition deserves to be studied. It is easy to see why parties like Muslim League and the Kerala Congress were happy to have their role in it. Firstly, it effectively split the Communist votes and confused a considerable section of committed Communist voters. Secondly, it gave a progressive outlook to the coalition in a state with a large leftist vote. Finally, if the main enemy CPI (M) was to be crushed it was an advantage for others under the protective umbrella of the CPI Chief Minister. This was what Home Minister Mohammed Koya of the Muslim League found to his satisfaction during the term of the Achutamenon Ministry. As for the CPI, it had no choice, but to accept this role as its primary aim was to maintain the Government.

At the same time, it could not hope to organise a viable front against the CPI (M) in Kerala without the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress. The logic of Kerala politics had convinced the CPI leaders that they had to accept the dominance of junior anti-leftist parties in the coalition. This was the price they had to pay for its survival. The Muslim League members frankly stood for the interest of their community. In this connection it is worth

remembering the claim of Congress (R) leaders, including Indira Gandhi that it was CPI which had accepted the Congress (R) programme and not vice versa.

Among the supporters of the coalition certain other parties also created difficulties for the CPI. Some of these parties had not given even verbal alliance to any programme. Their sole concern was with factional politics. The previous ministry of Achutamenon did not face a similar problem because it did not introduce any new legislation. It only tried to implement the laws passed by the United Front Government.

In Kerala the Congress (R) members might well feel disinclined to act in accordance with the CPI Chief Minister's directive because they knew that CPI's strength in the Assembly was only half of theirs. But in 1969 Achutamenon tried his best to avoid any conflict by not displeasing the bosses of other parties.

With the inclusion of Congress (R) in the Government, the Cabinet was expanded from 9 to 13. The Congress had been given five Ministers with the Home portfolio\(^\text{29}\). For

\[^{29}\] They were K. Karunakaran, K.T. George, K.G. Adiyodi, Vella Echaran and Vakkom Purushothaman.
the first time in the history of state politics, the Congress shared power with the CPI and the Muslim League. The Congress justified the communal nature of the Muslim League by saying that while in the rest of the Country the party was communal and reactionary, in Kerala it was not so.

Political Issues

The important socio-political issues that the coalition Government had tackled during 1971-77 were the private college teachers' agitation, the communal riots in the north and southern parts of Kerala, the NGO strike in 1973, the KSEB employees strike, the promulgation of the maintenance of Internal Security Act order, amendment of the minority rights, the split of the Muslim League, the entry of the Kerala Congress in the Government and its split etc. These were all of a serious and grave nature.

All the parties of the coalition admitted that there were differences of opinion among them on many matters. In the same breath, they claimed that there was a firm understanding among them to implement a time-bound minimum programme. As Chief Minister, Achutamenon should be

directing the Government but in practice it was doubtful whether he could decide on even the agenda for a Cabinet meeting without getting clearances from the Liaison Committee consisting of nominees of the allied parties. The Committee had become a sort of super-cabinet and was dominated by the Youth Congress. The allied parties were not unaware of this. But it was the only alternative for sustaining the Government.

The ruling front faced some opposition when the issue of the nationalisation of education by amending Article 30 (1) of the constitution. The Muslim League and the Kerala Congress opposed the amendment. The Christian Bishops, the NSS and the SNDP formed a strong opposition. In the field of education there was great disparity between the government-run educational institutions and those run by the private managements. Corruption and bribery continued in the admission of students, selection of teachers etc. At last in 1974, the Government passed the Kerala University Act which curtailed the powers of the private managements in favour of private college teachers.

On 10th January, 1973, the pro-marxist non-gezettered

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officers union started a strike demanding the checking rising prices of essential commodities. It also demanded the appointment of a pay-commission and for getting interim relief to government employees. The Government opposed the strike. Negotiation failed and at last the NGO union withdrew their strike on 5th March 1973 unconditionally.

The non-detailed text book Bharatha Retnam for the 7th standard created much problem in the coalition as well as in the relation between the Muslim League and the Congress (R). The pro-Muslim League, Muslim Student's Federation (MSF) demanded the repeal of certain portions of the book, alleging that it contained certain derogatory remarks on the Muslim League's role in the partition of the Country. The edition of 1973 carefully avoided such portions. Meanwhile the MSF demanded the withdrawal of the book itself. Soon the Youth Congress and the KSU came to the scene and decided to oppose the withdrawal of the book. Mediation began for the settlement of the crisis. The Liaison Committee was convened to settle the issue. At the

33. The book was a 76 pages bibliographical sketch of Jawaharlal Nehru, written by G. Govinda Pillai, which explain the vast life of Nehru during the freedom struggle.
meeting of the Committee held on 12 July, 1973 a compromise was arrived at. It was decided that both the earlier and the later editions of the book, the former carrying the passages objected to by the Muslim League and the latter without them should be in circulation. Thus the crisis ended without affecting the stability of the Government.

The CPI (M) led opposition called for a Kerala Bendh on 2nd August 1973 to highlight the crucial problem of food shortage and soaring prices of essential commodities. In September, 1974, the KSRTC employees agitated demanding higher wages and better living conditions. The government resorted to its earlier policy of 'no work no pay' (dies-non) and the agitation was suppressed.

A charge of bribery against K.G. Adiyodi, the Congress Minister, rocked the politics for sometime. Finally the Government appointed an Enquiry Commission headed by Justice Eradi. The Commission found that the allegations were false and misleading.

The introduction of Kerala University Act in 1974 brought new developments in the state politics. It was under the strong pressure of Congress (R) that the Kerala University Bill was brought before the Assembly. The Muslim League opposed the clauses 68 and 69 of the Bill. It was
debated in the Legislature and outside. Finally, the Government succeeded in persuading the private management to accept the governmental nominee and a University nominee beside the college and staff nominee in the committee for the selection of teachers. In the case of admission to the students the Government put forward some rules to prevent corruption, which were also accepted by the managements.

Split in the Muslim League

There had been differences of opinion within the Muslim League in its attitude towards Congress since 1973. By the middle of 1974, the President of India by an Ordinance declared the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). Many of the Bafaky group leaders who were engaged in smuggling were arrested. C.H. Mohammed Koya appreciated the action of the Central Government against the anti-social elements. The Bafaky group State Council of the Muslim League met in Calicut on 9th March 1975. They attacked the policies of the Home Minister, the attitude of the police and the misuse of MISA by the State Government. Six dissident MLAs of the League boycotted the Kerala Assembly. They withdrew their support to the Government and were

35. Ibid., 3 April, 1975.
suspended from the party. Thus a new party was formed, the opposition Muslim League, which was later known as the All India Muslim League (AIML). But it did not in any way affect the stability of the Government.

The internal fighting tarnished the image of the Congress. The split in the Muslim League affected the unity of the Congress also. The KPCC and the Youth Congress demanded the resignation of the coalition Government. Meanwhile the President of India issued a proclamation under 352 (1) of the constitution declaring that a grave state emergency existed whereby the security of India was threatened by internal disturbances. A number of preventive arrests were made by the Central and State Government. The Centre had directed the State to use the emergency powers for the maintenance of law and order. The MISA was implemented. The KPCC which met soon after the emergency decided to sink their differences and to stand united. Law and order was maintained. There was a keen silence in all fields of industry and academic life. Elections were postponed. No threat to security actually existed in Kerala. Yet hundreds of party activists from the CPI (M) and Socialist Party were detained. For the Chief Minister the emergency offered the opportunity to go

36. Ibid., 27 June, 1975.
ahead with constructive measures. But the real danger was that the senior Congress Minister, K.Karunakaran, in charge of the Home portfolio, was becoming the de facto, Chief Minister.

On 26 December 1975, the Kerala Congress also joined the Ministry, though factionalism within Kerala Congress caused continuing difficulties. Yet it gained two ministries, Finance from the Congress (R) and Transport from the CPI. The Kerala Government Completed its full tenure and more in office. 73 months in office was a new record in the history of the State.

Achievements

The CPI's programme of National Democracy and the progressive policies of the Congress (R) tied them solidly in a coalition government. So the Front had a record of constructive legislation in social, economic, educational, industrial and political fields.

The Kerala Agricultural Workers Act of 1975 was considered a 'Magna Carta' of the agricultural workers and was praised by the International Labour Organisation. The

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Act prescribed the maximum hours of work, establishment of provident fund scheme, prescribed wages for labourers, security of work, creation of permanent machinery to settle agricultural disputes etc.\(^{39}\).

In the industrial sector, four wholly owned government companies and 3 partly owned government companies were added to the existing twelve. The Industrial Development Corporation gave financial assistance to 34 companies to establish new projects - twenty nine to begin production and 13 other to expand. It also set up twelve state sector companies.

The Government started the first batch of mini industries programme during the financial year 1975 - '76. The programme envisaged the establishment of 10,000 small scale industrial units within 5 years. The Industries Minister T.V. Thomas announced that average investment in each unit would be Rs.1 lakh and each unit would employ 10 to 15 persons.\(^{40}\). The Government also arranged training programmes for the new entrepreneurs under the above 10,000 small industries programme.

\(^{39}\) Kerala Agricultural Workers Act, 1975, Section IX Sub Section 2 and 16.

\(^{40}\) Indian Express, July 7, 1975.
In the field of agriculture steps were taken to improve the production of all food crops and cash crops in the State. Supply and service facilities such as distribution of improved varieties of seeds and seedling, planting materials and plant protection chemicals were extended to the farmers. The Intensive Paddy Development Scheme made a significant impact on the production of paddy. The Government secured the approval of the Union Government for a scheme of Rs.16.5 lakh for the spices development programme of Kerala. The scheme included large scale multiplication of high-yielding varieties of ginger and raising quality seedlings of clove and nutmeg.

Kerala is producing 96% of pepper in India, but the average yield is remarkably low, about two quintals per hectare. The reasons are attributed to the attack of pests and diseases, cultivation of low yielding varieties, overage and poor plantation management. The yield can be easily doubled by adopting scientific methods of cultivation and plant protection. With this object, the Government

42. Mathrubhumi (Cochin), July 4, 1975.
43. Indian Express, July 4, 1975.
sanctioned the package programme with a financial outlay of Rs.8.9 lakhs for the intensive cultivation of pepper in an area of 10,000 hectares during 1975-76 in Kerala.

There were rapid changes in the field of education. The Kerala University Act, the Calicut University Act etc improved the educational opportunities of students and service conditions of teachers. Introduction of direct payment of salaries to the teaching staff of the private colleges, improvement of examination models, starting of sports schools etc. were impressive achievements. The students were given representation in the syndicate and a student council was provided for in the University Act.

The Government decided on October 10 to abolish the system of separate pass minimum for all subjects in the SSLC examination and introduced a group system from March 1976 onwards. Under the new system languages would form one group and subject another. The language group would carry a total of 250 marks out of which 90 would be required for a pass. The subjects group would carry 350 marks and the pass minimum would be 120.

Equalisation of fees in government and private colleges was another important measure. The demand was mooted by the
Youth Congress. In 1971-'72 of the 117 colleges in the State 105 were under private management and a good number of them were managed by the minority communities. The Government, it was estimated, was spending Rs.650 a year per student in government colleges while the grant in aid given to private colleges was only 200 per student. To make it possible for the private management to pay the college teachers the scales of pay prescribed by the University, the Kerala University has been allowing the private colleges to charge higher tuition fees than those charged by the government colleges.

The Youth Congress demand was based on the assumption that private college managements had the resources to bring down the tuition fees to the levels prevailing in government colleges. The private college managements challenged this assumption. They were even prepared to collect the fees and to hand over the collections to the Government if it would take the responsibility for payment of salaries to the teachers. 68 private colleges under Christian missions and the NSS did not re-open in June after summer vacation. They began to strike. It was thus clear that, the

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45. Ibid., p. 2182.
46. Ibid.
Government would have to ensure the responsibility of paying teachers directly, if the tuition fee was to be equalised. Finally, the Government decided to give direct payment of salary from public exchequer and equalised the tuition fees with those in government colleges.

The question then, was what control the government should have on managements in the matters of admission of students and recruitment of teachers. The private management contended that if government insisted on appointing its representatives in appointment committee it would be a violation of the minority rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Finally, a settlement was reached. There would be a managing committee of five members all of whom would be appointed by the private management. One of the five members would be appointed from a panel of government officers of the rank of District Collectors and Secretaries. The University would suggest an expert member with the option of the management to ask for another. Everybody agreed to this scheme. Thus an important item of the minimum programme was thus implemented.

The carrying out of the agrarian laws by the Government threw upon the flood-gates of emancipation for the tillers of the soil, the poor peasantry and the farm labour. About
25 lakh tenant cultivators became owners of the land they were toiling upon for generation for others. Over five lakh hutment dwellers, who were virtually bonded labourers, were liberated from their old fetters giving them the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

The State Government decided to handover for the purpose of cultivation 1,600 acres of surplus Kayal lands of Kuttanad to 1,600 agricultural workers forming themselves into three co-operative societies. The surplus lands which were in three blocks originally belonged to Murikkan. They were taken over by the government following the enactment of the Land Ceiling Statute.

Another significant development was the taming of the landlords of Kuttanad. Faced with the demand of the agricultural workers for a wage increase they threatened to leave large areas uncultivated. The Government immediately responded that they would take over all uncultivated land under the Defence of India Rules. The result was that in the first week of the month, a meeting decided that the existing agricultural labour wage rates would be revised upwards on the basis of the rise of the cost of living index between July 1970 and June 1972. This is the first

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time that in fixing the wages of the rural workers the rise in the cost of living index had been taken into account.

One of the most remarkable mass movements in India's post-independence history was taking place in the State. That was the movement to provide one lakh houses for the homeless agricultural proletariat—half of the number being reserved for Harijans. Land acquisition had been completed in most cases by October 2. If any member of the public felt that the site was bad or that the price was high, he had the option to suggest a better site at a lower price. Along with the fixing of sites, applications were called for from eligible persons and the list of these persons was made available to the public for scrutiny. A Chief Minister's 'Housing Fund' was created for collecting money to purchase construction materials. Block level committees were formed to co-ordinate the activities of the panchayats of each block. The responsibility of the contract work was entrusted to the works committees formed at the panchayat level. The construction of houses was begun by the panchayats in October 1972 and the first batch of houses were distributed to allottees in Ernakulam district in January, 1973.

The actual construction work was to be the

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48. Ibid., P. 2226.
responsibility of the special committees set up in each panchayat. The district collector had the responsibility of arranging for the supply of cement, tiles and timber to the panchayats falling within their jurisdiction while at the state level the scheme was put under overall charge of a special secretary reporting to the Housing Minister.

The Public Accounts Committee of Kerala Legislative Assembly observed that the scheme was a unique one and was an example of how major problems in developmental schemes could be solved by the active participation of the people.49

On April 2, 1972, Kerala started a collective farm—the first of its kind in India. The farm is at Illithode in Ernakulam district. In an area of about 200 acres, 250 families of landless agricultural labourers, half of them Harijans were settled. Every family had two adult workers—husband and wife. They owned the land allotted to them. But they had no right to alienate the property. The management of the farm was vested with an electoral committee of farmers. A co-operative society was also registered under the co-operative societies Act to look

after the credit need of the farm. The land would be cultivated collectively, each member of the farm performing duties assigned to him by the management committee. Every worker would get Rs.25 per week in advance which would be later adjusted against wages calculated at the rates prevailing in the locality. The net profit at the end of the year would be divided among the members equally. A two member family might thus get Rs.8000 to Rs. 10,000 a year.

But unfortunately it proved that this type of farming was not suited to Kerala. Only a true socialist state can provide such a kind. This experiment might help to create an illusion in the beginning but they would end in disillusionment.

The Menon Government passed some major social welfare legislations and it was unique in the case of any other state government. The most important legislation among them was the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 1975. The bonded labour system represents the vestiges of feudalism prevailing till recently in the interior parts of Malabar. Under this system the land owner used to secure the personal services of a person and his family for a specific period by advancing money. The poor members of the scheduled tribes were often the victims. They would not get wages apart from the money advanced. If at all they got wages they would be
The illiteracy, ignorance and penury of the downtrodden hilly tribes were thus mercilessly exploited and they were kept in perpetual bondage by the land owners. The Bill abolishes the obligation of a debtor to perform labour or personal service arising from any receipt of cash or any other payment under the bonded labour system. Thus the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act was enacted to put an end to this most unwholesome practice.

A new department of Tribal welfare started functioning in the state from July 1, 1975 to deal exclusively with the welfare activities for tribals. The special officer for Tribal Welfare would be the head of the new department and also the ex-officio special secretary. Nearly, 1.26% of Kerala population consisted of Scheduled Tribes. The formation of a new department followed the greater stress laid in the Vth plan on tribal welfare activities. Special steps were needed to ensure the tribals really benefited from activities intended for their welfare.

The Kerala Harijan Development Corporation evolved a scheme to construct 2,200 houses for Harijans and tribals in the State. The Corporation got Rs.116.60 lakh from the

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50. *Indian Express* (Cochin), June 23, 1975.
51. Ibid., July 9, 1975.
Housing and Urban Development Corporation, New Delhi. Rs.98 lakh was sanctioned by the State Government for this purpose. Besides this the State Government had sanctioned Rs.54.15 lakh for the implementation of the various schemes envisaged by the Corporation to ensure a better life for the Harijans and tribals.

The Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Funds and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act 1975 was another piece of legislation intended to save the Scheduled Tribes from exploitation. The extent of land which had been under the traditional occupation of the Scheduled Tribes in the State was steadily on the decrease due to alienation, lease, mortgage and mostly due to unauthorised occupation by other people. In tribal areas, the unsophisticated tribals were duped into transactions which resulted in the loss of their traditional lands. The law permitted transfer of traditional land only between scheduled tribes. Any other transactions would be invalid. The transactions made from January 1960 to the date of effect of the Act are also invalid.

Joint Hindu Family System (Abolition) Act 1975 etc. The Guruvayoor Devaswom Act was enacted to make provisions for the proper administration of the Guruvayoor Devaswom. Before this enactment, the Guruvayoor Sree Krishna Temple was managed by two hereditary trustees viz, the Zamorin Raja of Kozhikode and the Mallissery Namboodiri. There had been persistent complaints of mismanagement of the temple and its properties by the trustees. So the administration, management and control of the Devaswom were vested in the Guruvayoor Devaswom Managing Committee by the Act. The Koodalmanickam Devaswom Act was passed for the purpose of reducing the administrative expenditure of the Devaswom.

The 26th Amendment Act 1971 of the Constitution of India abolished the status of rulers of the princely states; consequently the powers of the former rulers of Travancore and Cochin States to nominate a member each to the respective Devaswom Boards had to be taken away. The 1974 amendment Act of the Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institution was passed to transfer this power to the Hindu members of the Council of Ministers. The second amendment

was passed to enable the two Devaswom Boards to raise loans for the establishment and maintenance of religious or educational institutions and for the implementation of schemes undertaken by them.

The Kerala Joint Hindu Family System (Abolition) Act, 1975 was the result of Kerala Law Commission's recommendation to unify the personal laws of Hindus in Kerala. The Ezhava, Nair and other section of Hindus were covered by the Marumakkathayam System. The Bill abolished the system and according to it each member of a family with a Tharavad property will have the right to dispose of his share of the property.

The Kerala Assembly also passed an amendment to the Hindu Marriage Act. It made divorce more difficult. There were different customs prevailed among the various sections of Hindus on securing dissolution of marriage. The Ezhavas who could obtain a divorce by a mere declaration of intention followed by a nominal compensation are said to have the easiest wayout of a marriage. Under the amending bill mutual consent of the partners was made obligatory for

53. Indian Express, August 1, 1975.
54. Ibid., August 2, 1975.
all these sections as well. Now they have to present a joint petition to a court. They have to wait for a minimum of 2 years after they make up their mind before getting a divorce.

The Government enacted the Children Act in 1972 governing the care, protection, maintenance, welfare, training, education, and rehabilitation of neglected or delinquent children and the trial of delinquent children in the State. 55

The Kerala State Housing Board Act, 1971 contains provisions for organised direction and planning in the preparation and execution of housing and for the establishment of a board called "The Kerala State Housing Board". 56 The Board is empowered to undertake the execution of any housing or improvement schemes which the government may transfer to it. Similarly, the Board may take over for execution any housing or improvement scheme undertaken by the local authority on mutual agreement. The Board can grant loans and advances to private parties, local bodies

55. The Kerala Children Act 1972 was applicable to the whole State which replaced the Travancore Children Act, 1120, The Cochin Children Act 1111, and the Malabar Children Act 1920.

etc for housing purposes. The Board had its own fund. The Government may make subscriptions or advance loans to the board. The Board can borrow money from the public or from any corporation owned or controlled by the State Government.

The Government also constituted a Rural Development Board. Many essential activities of rural development like schemes for providing drinking water, drainage system, construction of bus stands, markets, shopping centres etc in panchayat areas could not be taken up due to scarcity of funds. To provide these essential requirements the Kerala State Rural Development Board was constituted. The Board was empowered to raise loans or borrow money from any banks or other financial institutions approved by the government.

The Kerala Debtors (Temporary Relief) Act 1975 was another Social Welfare legislation. The indebtedness of the Indian peasantry is said to be a curse befallen on them, the effect from which they will never be able to recover. The Kerala Agriculturists Debt Relief Act, 1970 which extended the relief in respect of debts incurred before 14th July 1970. The Kerala Debters Act 1975 extended relief from the burden of debts incurred till that date. The Act widened the range of beneficiaries entitled to relief by including other sections of the community like artisans and landless labourers. The Act bars suits and other proceedings in
respect of debts for a period of one year from the commencement of the Act in October 14, 1975.

On 4th August, the Kerala Legislative Assembly passed a bill for creating a welfare fund for the workers\(^57\). The fund was constituted with a contribution by every employee and the employer with which various welfare measures were to be provided for the workers. All factories, commercial establishments and plantations were covered by the legislation\(^58\).

The Kerala Agricultural Workers Act, 1974 was a Magna Carta of Agricultural labourers in the State. By their determined struggle and strong organisation, built up by decades of sacrifice, the agricultural labourers of Kerala pioneered in this sphere. The leadership of this vital process came from the communists of Kerala mainly the CPI (M)\(^59\). In the agricultural sector uncertainty of wages and insecurity of job prevailed; the Act brought security of employment, higher fixed wages and definite hours of work and rest. The law also provided for a welfare fund for agricultural labourers. Thus the agricultural workers became the wage-labourers in the true sense of the word.

\(^{57}\) Indian Express, August 2, 1975.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., August 3, 1975.

Section 7 of the Act, which offers security of job, is an important provision of the law. The land owner is bound to give preference in the matter of employment to those who worked in his land during the previous agricultural season. In effect, the workers are attached to the land. Though the ownership of the land may change, the workers remain unchanged unless they desire otherwise. However, the landowner is not bound to employ those who do not offer themselves for employment, the overaged (above 60 and 65) the incapacitated and those who intentionally cause loss to the land owners.

The Act also provides for the formation of the Agricultural Workers Provident Fund Scheme. Besides, the Act contains provisions for keeping registers of agricultural workers by local authorities and the land owners, recovery of damages for default of payment of contribution to the provident fund, penalties for breach of the provisions of the Act etc.

The Kerala Cashew Factories Acquisition Act, 1974, was enacted mainly to save the cashew workers from unemployment and to enforce labour laws in cashew factories. The cashew factories in the state depend much on imported raw

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cashewnuts for their existence. In many cases, the imported raw-cashew nuts allotted to factories in Kerala were smuggled out of the state for processing thereby rendering a large number of workers unemployed. In several cases, the labour laws were also thrown overboard by the factory management. Consequently such factories lost their allotment of raw cashew nuts. In such cases, it was found necessary to acquire the cashew factories in order to save the workers from unemployment.

There has been severe public criticism against the method of recruitment to public undertakings and quasi-government institutions like Kerala Khadi and Village Industries Board etc. The Kerala Public Service Commission (KPSC) (Additional Functions as Respects of Certain Corporations and Companies) Act 1970 was passed to bring the recruitments to these institutions under the purview of the KPSC. Similarly, the KPSC (Additional Functions) Act, 1973 brought the recruitment to the service under the local bodies under the purview of the KPSC.

Inter-Party Relations

Though the coalition government completed its full tenure and had a record of progressive legislations to its credit, there were also some instances of inter-party
differences. The Congress branded Muslim League as communal and the Youth Congress demanded severance of relations with the Muslim League even if it might mean the collapse of the coalition. In 1974 there was an occasion for the Muslim League and the Congress to come to a clash. The Muslim League held that the clauses 68 and 69 of the Kerala University Act, 1974, invalidates some of the rights of the minority community. So they wanted to delete both the clauses of the Act. The Congress at first opposed the demand. But finally it yielded to the demand of the League and the issue settled. The Laison Committee of the ruling parties on 24th January 1974 decided to drop clause 69 of the Act.

It might be noted that the CPI, the most vocal in the CPI (M) led Ministry of 1967, behaved like a sleeping partner and virtually played a second fiddle to the Congress. For instance, the CPI agreed to the amendments in the Land Reform Bill, including legalisation of land transactions between 1957-1963, thereby diluting the content of the Bill to take over plantations, and the reversal of United Front's police policy by the Congress by asking the police to treat strikes as law and order problem.

61. These clauses empowered the State Government to take over the mismanaged private colleges for a fixed period.

Misunderstanding at ministerial level and brawls at rank and file level culminated in December 1971 in the worst outbreak of communalism seen in Kerala since 1971-72.

During July and August of 1973 rice was not available at any price and the coastal areas of Travancore were officially designated famine zones. By the autumn the Ministry was under siege from its own supporters as well as from the CPI (M) and the Kerala Congress. The CPI also decided to start an agitation against the Central Government. The CPI was asked not to intensity the struggle which was a part of the all India agitation especially in view of the coalition set up in the state. the CPI in its part soft-peddled its agitations and the Central Government raised a small quantity of food supply.

Advance forecaste of Kerala's food situation in 1974 was as bleak as the economic prognosis and on 6th January five opposition parties--the CPI (M), the Kerala Congress, the Socialist Party the KSP and the KTP--formally met at Cochin to organise virulent and far-reaching agitation on food, prices and another postponement of panchayat elections. Their first public action was mass picketing of government offices on 28th January. Three days later,

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Indian Express, January 7, 1974.
the CPI (M) pressed matters further by an attempted gherao of the Governor as he tried to open the budget session of the Assembly. On October 14, 1974 the CPI (M) led a march on the Assembly to demand the investigation of allegations that the police had beaten up two CPI (M) and Socialist Party MLAs and the newspaper reports of Minister's corruption. E.M.S. Namboodiripad announced that five party opposition front would boycott the Assembly since no self-respecting person could take part in the proceedings when four ministers charged with corruption sat on the treasury benches.

CPI (M) in Opposition

The Government had to face serious opposition from the CPI (M) from within and outside the Legislature. During the first session of the IV Kerala Legislative Assembly (KLA) a CPI (M) member alleged corruption and nepotism in some of the appointments in the Handicrafts Development Corporation. Industries Minister N.E. Balaram denied the allegation as entirely unsound.

During the 9th session of the KLA, police lathi charge and firing on the Kerala Bandh day was a big issue. In her

64. Hindu, October 15, 1974.
65. Indian Express, October 17, 1974.
question K.R.Gowri (CPI (M)) enquired whether the Pandalam Sub-Inspector Das received any injuries in the Bandh day incident. The Home Minister, K.Karunakaran stated that an enquiry was ordered into Pandalam firing.

On March 1974, P.G.Purushothaman Pillai (CPI (M)) raised a discussion regarding the shares of Travancore-Cochin Sugers Ltd. The Industries Minister T.V.Thomas on the subject maintained that the Government had defeated the attempts of Dalmia to corner the shares and pocket this company with its assets running to Rs.10 to 12 crores.

The CPI (M) alleged that the Government had paid more than the market price for the share. The market price as quoted by the officers of the government in their circular to share-holders was only Rs.7.40 for ordinary share and Rs.5.90 for the preferences. The CPM alleged that the government purchased the shares at Rs.9.85 for ordinary and Rs.6.80 for preference shares67.

In reply to this allegation, the Minister said that Dalmia, who had no share in the company till 1971 came to own 51858 shares by 1973 constituting nearly 10.75% of

total shares. It was clear that he was trying to secure the majority of shares by investing Rs.5 lakhs. The Government which had only 11% of shares wanted to prevent such acts and the cabinet decided to enter the share market and buy up the shares at face value\(^{68}\). The officers then approached those who had more than 500 shares and asked them if they would care to sell share to the government. The officers said that the market price of the shares pushed up, when the share-holders came to know that the government was interested in buying up the shares. The government brought up 74,758 shares, so the Minister said that the member should withdraw his allegation.

When the CPI (M) was in opposition during 1969-77 the Government faced three no-confidence motion. The first no-confidence motion was moved on April 6, 1971 by a CPI (M) member C.B.C Warrier\(^{69}\). The motion indicated the Menon Ministry for "institutionalising corruption". A two day debate on the motion (6th and 7th April) concentrated mainly on the reports of the two I.A.S officers, one relating to the sanction for the acquisition of a rubber estate in Trichur for the Agricultural University and the other on the

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\(^{68}\) Ibid., PP. 3014-3017.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., II Session, Vol. XXVIII, No.17, April 6, 1971, P. 1672.
appointment of some of the relatives of the Minister in the public sector concern of Travancore-Cochin Chemicals.

The Home Secretary Narayana Swami held that the appointment in Travancore-Cochin Chemicals was irregular. In his report he declared that one of the appointees secured only two and a half marks in the qualifying test. The opposition members quoted the report and tried to make out the government was corruption ridden.\(^70\)

The Revenue Board member K.K.Ramankutty, said that the sanction for the purchase of the estate at Rs.2 crores was "midsummer madness" and referred to a report in Trichur that the owner of the estate promised 15 lakhs to the CPI for the deal.\(^71\) So the opposition demanded with one voice the resignation of the Ministry.

The Achutamenon Ministry had to face the second no-confidence motion in December the same year. This time John Manjooran of KSP was selected to move the motion with the support of the CPI (M). Police repression was the key note of opposition's attack. Describing the police as "partisan" he charged that there was descrimination among the people in the matter of police protection.

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70. *Malayala Manorama* (Kottayam), April 7, 1971.
71. *Indian Express* (Madurai), April 7, 1971.
The third no-confidence motion was moved on 26th December 1972. Moving the motion E. Balanandan CPI (M) said that the state's economy was in doldrums. The people were put to great hardships because of the fall of cash crops prices and the rise in the prices of essential commodities. He also raised grave charges of corruption favouritism and nepotism against the government.\(^2\)

In reply to these allegations the respective ministers refuted all the charges and the motions were rejected with sufficient majority.

The CPI (M) also moved a number of resolutions against the government. In the third session of the Assembly a resolution was moved by E. Balanandan (CPI (M)) on July 1971 which requested the Central Government to annul the MISA.\(^3\)

The next resolution was moved by CBC Warrier (CPI (M)) requesting the government to take necessary steps to control the price rise of essential commodities.\(^4\)

In the third session, the CPI (M) launched a severe attack on the Muslim League by moving a resolution on smuggling. Moving the resolution M.V. Raghavan (CPI (M))


\(^3\) Ibid., III Session, Vol. XXIX No.5, July 16, 1971.

\(^4\) Ibid., 6th Session, Vol. XXXII, No.6, 29 September, 1972, P. 542.
remarked that during 1970-71 smuggling reached the high watermark. Those officials employed to prevent the smuggling were ruthlessly assaulted by the persons engaged in smuggling. The Home Minister denied the charges and pointed out that the government had already taken necessary steps to prevent this menace.\textsuperscript{75}

In the 9th session of the KLA K. Balanandan moved a resolution on NGO's strike and characterised the 'Dies non' policy as a blow against the fundamental rights of the collective bargaining of the workers.

The police administration was the main target of criticism in the 7th session also. The resolution moved by A.P. Kurian (CPI (M)) pointed out the incidents in the M.G. College, Trivandrum, Guruvayurappan College, Trichur, and Government Arts College, Kozhikode. He declared that these incidents proved the brutality of the police. So he urged the government to take urgent steps to pass necessary legislations prohibiting the police from entering the premises of educational institutions without the permission of the head of the institution.\textsuperscript{76} After the Home Minister's reply the resolution was put to vote and lost.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{75} Ibid., III Session, Vol. XXIX, No. 28, 20 August, 1971, P. 3396.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 7th Session, Vol. XXXII, No. 11, 23 March, 1973, PP. 978-982.
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Working of the Coalition

Senior officers of the government, on their part were critical of four aspects of ministerial conduct: corruption and nepotism, politically motivated breaches of rules and interference with orders; lack of ministerial interest in developmental plans once they had been inaugurated and a disobedient approach to discipline among the non-gazzetted officers.

It is not difficult to understand why the Chief Minister of a multi-party administration would tolerate corruption and nepotism. He did not give any support to comprehensive anti-corruption legislation in the Assembly. And a bill had been introduced in the Assembly in 1968 when the E.M.S Ministry was in office.

Achuta Menon Ministry survived in Kerala because of the blessing of the Congress administration at the Centre. The strength of the CPI coalition lies in the weakness of the coalescing parties. Till the Congress (R) joined the Government the Home portfolio had been with the Muslim League. The Congress (R) Home Minister K.Karunakaran had been a trade union leader and he was compelled to announce that his police policy would be nearer to the CPI (M). But the result was different. The police had often been not

77. Ibid., Vol.VII, No.8, February 19, 1972, p. 455.
available when it was most needed and when available it had resorted to the use of excessive force. There have been severe lathicharges on students. The police opened fire at fishermen near the rocket launching site at Thumba. All political parties admit that the lathi-charge on students in Quilon within the College premises and the three days of arson and looting in Tellicherry were "unparalleled" in Kerala during the post-independence period.

There could also be seen the elements of communalism. The decision of the Kerala High Court on a writ petition filed by an employee of the Devagiri College in Calicut was an interesting one. The minimum qualification prescribed by the government for senior superintendents was SSLC and passing the accounts test. One of the members of the non-teaching staff was a graduate and had also passed the accounts test, but the government directed the principal to appoint one Abdulla Koya Thangal who had passed neither the SSLC nor the accounts test. The court finally set aside the appointment. (The education department was under the control of Mohammad Koya).

During the emergency, everyday's newspaper came out with the news of the arrest of people under the provisions of MISA. Most of these arrests were kept secret and the newspapers had no freedom to write about it without the
sanction of the authorities. The Viswanatha Iyer Commission which enquired into the disappearance of 4 persons during the emergency came to the conclusion that two of them (Vijayan Nair and Kumaran) died in police custody as a result of torture. The Rajan Murder case proved that Rajan also was one of the cruelties of emergency.

During this period a racket developed for the promotion and transfer of officers at all level. Politicians and their agents operated as brokers in this much to the dismay of the officers.

They could not hold the Panchayat elections. The last elections were held in 1963 and the panchayats had lost their representative character. Further, the existing panchayat system gave little scope for the involvement of the people in the formulation and implementation of development plans.

At the ideological level of communism also the CPI Government was criticised. The CPI, instead of organising the working class in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, appealed the working class to collaborate with the bourgeoisie.

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78. Indian Express, August 2, 1978.
The true revolutionary unit of the working class can only be achieved by holding aloft the banner of Marxism-Leninism and its principles. The unity achieved by sacrificing principles and by collaborating with opportunists is not working class unity. On the contrary, "it is the alliance of a small section of a privileged workers with their national bourgeoisie against the working class masses."

Political Development 1977 to 1979

Internal emergency was relaxed on the eve of the 6th General Elections and opposition leaders were released. At the national level the major opposition parties merged together to face the Congress and formed the new Janata Party (merging Congress (O), Jana Sangh and the BLD).

In Kerala the ruling coalition was extended to accommodate the NDP. The Kerala Congress (Pillai) (KC (P)) and the AIML entered into an electoral understanding with the Janata Party and the CPI (M). The contest was straight between the two fronts. The ruling coalition consisted of Congress CPI, RSP, PSP NDP, Muslim League and the Kerala Congress. The opposition which stood united with a common programme consisted of the CPI (M), Janata, KC (P) the AIML

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and the KSP. The election to the 140 Assembly seats and 20 Parliament seats was conducted on 19th March, 1977.

The Kerala State renewed their strong support to the Congress and the partners enabling them to win 111 seats out of 140 and all the 20 Parliamentary seats. The strength of the CPI (M) was reduced to 17 from 28, while the Congress increased its strength from 32 to 38 seats. The Muslim League, the Kerala Congress, the CPI and the RSP also improved their position considerably compared to the previous polls. The newly formed NDP got 5 seats out of the 8 seats contested.

On March 25, 1977, the leader of the anti-Marxist Front K. Karunakaran (Congress), who was Home Minister in the Achuta Menon's Ministry was sworn in as Chief Minister. There were 15 members in the cabinet. The Congress had 5 Ministers, the CPI 3, the Kerala Congress 3, the Muslim League 2 and RSP 2. The Muslim League got the speakership and the CPI deputy speakership. The NDP and the PSP was not offered any berth in the Government.

On the 33rd day since the Congress led Government assumed office, the Chief Minister resigned following a public uproar over his alleged role in the torture and death of an engineering student P. Rajan during emergency and the verdict of Kerala High Court in the Rajan Case.
A.K. Antony, then KPCC President, who was a non-member of the Assembly was sworn in as the Chief Minister. On 22 October 1978, he was elected to the Assembly from Kazhakoottam constituency.

On 1 January 1978, the INC was subjected to a great split and the grouping took place in the name of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Brahmananda Reddy, the then party President. In Kerala K. Karunakaran became the leader of the Congress (I) in the Legislature and sat in the opposition while the Congress (Reddy) (Congress (R)) under the leadership of A.K. Antony remained in the Government. Meanwhile A.K. Antony resigned the Chief Ministership in protest against the Congress (R) Parliamentary Board’s decision to support Mrs. Gandhi in the Chikamangalur bye-election. This marked the Chief Ministership slipping away from the Congress to the CPI and P.K. Vasudevan Nair was elected as the new Chief Minister. The Congress representatives in the Ministry comprised KPCC Chief S. Varadarajan Nair, M.K. Raghavan A.L. Jacob and Damodaran Kallassery. The Ministers of the other coalescing parties, the Muslim League, RSP and the Kerala Congress continued to retain their earlier portfolios.

During this period the CPI (M) was trying to form a leftist Front which included the CPI, RSP and other groups
and parties who wished to come together as a front against the Congress (I). The CPI initiated a step in this attempt and P.K. Vasudevan Nair resigned on October 7, 1979.

On October 11, C.H. Mohammed Koya, leader of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) formed a three member cabinet. He had the support of Congress (I), Congress (U)\(^{82}\), KC (M) and KC (J). The Congress (U) though they expressed their commitment to the leftist alternative to eliminate the Congress (I) and defeat the rightist forces, decided to join hand with Congress (I) to support the Minority government of the IUML. This was the first government headed by the Muslim League in the Country. He resigned on December 1, 1979 and advised the dissolution of the Kerala Assembly when the KC (M) withheld its support and the Congress (U) followed suit and both parties aligned themselves with the CPI (M). The State came under President's rule on December 5, 1979. The mid-term election to the Legislative Assembly was ordered to take place on 20 January 1980.

**Policy Implementation-1977-'79**

The period of 1977 to '79 was the worst period of governmental instability and Kerala witnessed the rise and

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82. Known since the election of Divaraj Urs as the Congress (R) President.
fall of 4 Ministries. Yet, the period can claim certain legislations that have an impact on Kerala society. The Government raised the upper age limit for recruitment of government jobs in Kerala from 30 to 35. A long term agreement on revision of pay scales, dearness allowances, staff pattern and work norms in the KSEB was finalised by the Electricity Minister P.K. Vasudevan Nair.

The agriculturists who lost their crop in the floods were given short term loans of Rs.400 per acre. The Government issued an ordinance to ensure the production and preservation of forests when the Silent Valley Hydro-Electric project would be taken up. The Government launched Rs.20 crore scheme to develop tourism in the State. It decided to sanction 306 new schools. This included 95 high schools, 91 upper primary schools and 116 lower primary schools.

For the democratization of grass-root level administration, the Assembly unanimously passed the District Administration Bill. It provided for a decentralised system of administration at the district level by constituting district council.

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83. Indian Express (Cochin), August 10, 1978.
84. Ibid., September 18, 1978.
86. Mathrubhumi (Cochin), March 8, 1979.
A number of concessions were allowed under a package of measures for the promotion of industries in the State. These included subsidies for capital investments, procurement of Cashew, development and modernisation of industries, concession on electricity tariff, sales-tax relief and help for acquisition and development of land.

The Government introduced shift system in 62 colleges to accommodate more students in these colleges. 500 'Kerala Stores' spread over 278 Panchayats in 15 Taluks were set up. It was to ensure the availability of essential commodities at fair prices but also provided avenues of self-employment to educated unemployed youth.

The Cabinet approved a Rs.93 lakh scheme for the cultivation of cashew on an area of 1,470 hectares at Cannoor district. The Government announced a number of special benefits to personnel in police, jail, fire force and excise departments. As a step to implement the provisions of the Kerala Agricultural Workers Act the Government constituted the Provident Fund Scheme for the agricultural workers.

The Government faced the strikes of college and school teachers, state government employees, strikes of policemen and CRP. Yet, the Government could not attain its objects in
its real effects. The Government was steadily yielding to the influential pressure groups, mostly with communal overtones. A number of policies of the Government once acclaimed as progressive, had to be diluted. These included vital issues like validation of gift deeds, de-nationalisation of the liquor policy, and the distribution of surplus land to the landless.