Chapter 5

Movement against the Communist Government

The organized anti-communist movement developed in reaction to the rise of Communism, especially after the October Revolution which brought the Communists to power in Russia, in November 1917. However, it didn’t become significant until the beginning of the Cold War. After the Second World War the two ideologies ‘Communism and Capitalism’ spread very fast and it divided the World into two power blocks. The new ideologies spread not only in Europe but also in Asia. China became a Communist country in 1949 and it checked the capitalistic influence in Asian continent. But India after independence followed the policy of Non-Alignment mainly to solve the problems created by the Colonial masters. When the Communist party came to power in Kerala, the ideological conflicts became very strong in the world. The Communist victory was really a headache to the Capitalist, Landlords and all type of exploitators. From this date onwards, the Communal organizations and the major non-Communist parties like the Indian National Congress, the Praja Socialist Party and the Muslim League jointly organized anti-Communist struggle and which resulted in the dismissal of an elected government and in the imposition of Presidential Rule in Kerala on 31st July 1959.

The agitations may be precipitated by any section of the society; the political groups of both the Right and the Left, the workers, the peasants, the students, the professionals or any other groups.\(^1\) Eager to win the support of the masses, the political parties, especially those in the opposition took up popular issues and instigated the masses to resort to agitations. Mostly the agitations in Kerala were
launched by political parties as pressure tactics, for mobilizing the masses to widen their mass base and pressurise the authorities to concede to their demands. In 1959, the opposition parties and the Communal organisations went to the extent of launching a ‘Liberation struggle’ against the Communist Ministry led by E.M.S.Namboodiripad. Actually the liberation struggle was organized by the Land owners, Janmies, the Catholic Managements and the Congress party against the Progressive policies and Acts of the Communist government.

Within a month of the formation of the Communist government in Kerala, the Christian community began to watch sharply the policies initiated by the government. They consisted of two specific identities, but both of them had their anti-Communist ideology in common. The first group belonged mainly to the Syrian Christians, Marthomites and Jacobites, the rising groups in all economic and administrative spheres. They led business as well as farming community, dominated tea rubber and coffee plantations and were alarmed by the actions and intentions of the Communist government in the economic field. The other group consisted mainly of “economically backward Latin Catholics for whom religion was nothing but the reflection in men’s minds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces.” The evil terrestrial force they meant was the rising communism. Among Latin Catholics only a small section of the Clergy and the educated and rich laymen could make their followers believe that evil communism was launching the attack on the good supernatural forces.

1 N.Jose chander (Ed), Dynamics of State Politics- Kerala, Bangalore, 1986, p.135.
The Catholic community was very much concerned over the government’s proposed reforms in the sphere of education, while the Nair community became agitated over the anticipated land reforms. The *Deepika*, the Catholic daily served a severe warning to the government against any attempt to touch the delicate field of education.\(^4\) Then onwards the Catholic daily was making a gradual but concerted attempt to create a strong public opinion against any possible innovations by the government in the field of education. The *Episcopal conference* also issued a joint statement in which the church leaders served a warning to the government that if it embarked upon its proposed project for curtailing the rights of the school managements, the church has no choice but to resist such moves tooth and nail and the government would have to suffer the consequences.\(^5\)

Regarding the attitude of the Catholic community, an observation made by the Education Minister *Joseph Mundassery* that, “a section of people in Travancore-Cochin wanted to monopolize the fundamental rights in the field of education even by challenging the constitution. This is a disease found generally among private School Managers but it is the church leaders who have taken the monopoly of retaining that disease”.\(^6\) The State Secretary of the Communist party *M.N.Govindan Nair* declared at Trichur that, “the trouble in the State was deliberate creation and the result of a conspiracy of the Imperialists, Congress and the Catholic Church, to sabotage the progressive government of the working class”.\(^7\)

\(^4\) *Deepika* dated 17\(^{th}\) April, 1957.
\(^5\) *Deepika* dated 25\(^{th}\) April, 1957.
\(^6\) *Deepika* dated 25\(^{th}\) April, 1957.
\(^7\) The *New Age dated 6\(^{th}\) August, 1958*, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi.
By December 1958 all the anti-Communist forces in Kerala had come out openly with a determination to topple the Ministry through direct action. The Congress party started the anti-Communist struggle in Kerala on Friday the 12th June 1959, the second day when the Kerala Legislature passed the Agrarian Relation Bill. The liberation struggle was mainly organized by the Church, with the full support of the Nair community. The Catholics considered that Communism was a common threat to all traditional and conservative interests of their community. These two dominant communities formed a united front against the Communist regime mainly because of the government’s policy especially towards education and agricultural sectors. The attempts of the government in the sphere of education scared the Catholics in two ways – on the one hand they were afraid that their material vested interests would be affected and the other that their younger generation might be brainwashed as unbelievers by the Communists.

The *Education Bill* received Presidential assent on 19th February 1959 and became law. This was the time when all the opposition forces rallied together, with a clear plan to start direct action against the government. On 5th March 1959 the Private School Managers Association met at Kottayam and decided to start agitation to force the government to withdraw the Education Act.\(^8\) On 8th March 1959 a meeting of over 200 prominent Nair Community leaders held at Perunna in Kottayam district has decided to launch a movement against the ministry. In his speech at the meeting, Mannath Padmanabhan declared that the time had come to put an end to the Communist rule.\(^9\) In March a Conference of the Kerala Catholic Bishops was held at Ernakulam and adopted a resolution, which stated, “Under these circumstances we

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\(^8\) *Deepika* dated 6th March, 1959.

\(^9\) *Deepika* dated 9th March, 1959.
call upon our people to take all necessary action joining hands with other communities to change the harmful clauses of the Kerala Education Act”. 10 Mannam in his open letter of 25th March 1959 addressed to the Chief Minister said, “I make the demand to replace the education Act with a new legislation in accordance with the wishes of the Managements. I want to inform you that in case it is not possible for you to withdraw it, we will be resorting to direct action”. 11 The Indian Express through its editorial attacked the educational policy of the government. It also drew up a comparison between the Communist policy in Kerala and the educational policy of the Communists in the People’s Republic of China. 12 This kind of propaganda helped opponents to fight against the government.

By the end of April 1959, the Mannam’s idea about the aim of direct action against the act had already taken a different form; no action for changes in the Kerala Education Act or in the Agrarian Relations Bill, but for the removal of the Communist government. 13 He warned that, “It would be better for the Communist Ministers to quit voluntarily without giving room for unrest and bloodshed. He gives the warning that if they try to stick on to the ministerial chairs, the consequences will be terrible. If the people wrest power from these ministers and subject them to trial, their ears and noses will have to be chopped off or they will have to be whipped in public.” 14 The language used was far from unusual. In a speech the NSS leader of the Vimochana Samaram told his followers; “All Communists should be hated like lepers.

11 Mannam’s letter to the Chief Minister dated 25th March 1959, KSA, Trivandrum.
12 The Indian Express dated 12th June, 1959, KSA Trivandrum.
and not a single Communist can be admitted to any house...There is no way other than dragging them by their legs and hurling them on the ground."\textsuperscript{15}

In 6\textsuperscript{th} June 1959 S.K.Pattil, the Transport Minister in the Union Cabinet declared in Bombay that, "the people should not take revolt as a method to solve a problem, the people’s talents were to be fully used for the welfare of the State and the national unity was highly necessary to solve serious problems like food scarcity and unemployment".\textsuperscript{16} The Communist rule of twenty eight months and the frequent confrontations it had with the Church and its interests and the controversial liberation struggle made clear the active role of the Church in the politics of the State. For the liberation struggle the Christian Church supplied men and money for the ouster of the First Elected Communist government. The progressive attitude and the bills on land reforms and the education system shocked the vested interests in the State. The Marxist party could learn from that experience a number of lessons regarding the character of State power and consequently chalk out its future strategy.\textsuperscript{17}

The Kerala polity was at a boiling point with the strikes and protest marches organized by the Private School Managers and Catholic Bishops, division in the trade union movement and marches and demonstrations by the N.S.S, S.N.D.P and Muslim Organizations. Father Vadakkan, Mathai Manjooran, Mannam and R.Sanker were the leaders of the Liberation struggle. In the post-independence era, Mathai Manjooran was the leader of the Kerala Socialist Party (KSP) and directed his energy

\textsuperscript{14} Report on the Vernacular News papers (\textit{Malayalee}) examined by the Government of Madras, dated 28\textsuperscript{th} April 1959, TNSA, Chennai
\textsuperscript{15} Report on the Vernacular News papers (\textit{Kerala Janatha}) examined by the Government of Madras, dated 30\textsuperscript{th} May 1959, TNSA, Chennai
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Times of India} dated 6\textsuperscript{th} June 1959, NMML, New Delhi.
mostly against the Communist government through the Vimochana Samaram. The two leading figures, Father Vadakkan and Mannath Padmanabhan, the N.S.S leader emerged on the scene.

The Anti-Communist Front had started functioning in Kerala even in 1952 when the Communist party won a few seats in the elections. The Anti-Communist Front was waged a war of the Holy Cross against Communists under the leadership of Father Vadakkan. He was a great organizer and orator who had no faith on “Class War” and “Bloody Revolution”. In his autobiography he had stated that when democratic methods failed to achieve economic independence, one should go for revolution using force. He was running a controversial newspaper called “Thozhilali”. He organized study classes and summer camps for his followers as part of the anti-communist programmes. By 1954 Father Vadakkan had set up about 1700 regional units of Anti-Communist Front and formed a regiment of yellow caps. He being the main organizer of the struggle revealed later that money flowed freely from planters, churches and even from other agencies from abroad which were used to feed, lodge and pay the volunteers who were drawn from the poorest sections of the Christian community exclusively. In a statement he said, those who refused to co-operate with this volunteer organization today as non-communists, they would be the traitors of tomorrow. He also announced the eight point programmes for his volunteer organization which included collecting particulars including photos of those engaged in ‘Communist activities’ use when the time came and making truthful and

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19 Father Vadakkan, Ente Kuthippum kithappum (Mal), Kottayam, 1974, p.135.
20 New Age dated 7th September, 1958, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi, p.7.
clear reports of ‘Communist atrocities’ to be sent to the Central government.\textsuperscript{21} After this announcement Fr. Vadakkan started a hunger strike in his office to get his plan accepted by the ‘democratic parties’ in the State. He gave up his fast on July 31\textsuperscript{st} after the Trichur District Congress Committee president Sri. Karur Neelankantan Namboodiripad and other Congress and PSP leaders gave him an assurance that steps had already been taken to organize 5000 volunteers.\textsuperscript{22} Even in the heat of the struggle they remained a force separate from the middle classes in the movement. The other leader Mannam also undertook a State wide tour addressing public meetings and created sentiments against the government.

The Deepika, organ of the Catholic Church on 14\textsuperscript{th} August 1958 published long editorial entitled ‘Painful Lesson’.\textsuperscript{23} The painful lesson drawn is nothing else than open call for violence against the Communist led government. According to the report published on 13\textsuperscript{th} August 1958, in Dinamani, a Malayalam daily from Quilon edited by a prominent Congress leader Sri. R. Sanker, said, “Non Communist parties have decided to face the challenge of the Communists. So they intended to organize a 5000 volunteer corps to protect the people from Government induced violence. They will train the people in self-defence.”\textsuperscript{24}

The strong feelings of the Christian Volunteers were whipped up by the Church leaders in the name of “religion in danger.” In a pastoral letter issued on 7\textsuperscript{th} May 1959, 16 Catholic Bishops jointly declared; “Let us try our best in this grave juncture to defend our precious faith, taking refuge in God the merciful. We will have

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Deepika dated 14\textsuperscript{th} August, 1958.
\item \textsuperscript{24} New Age dated 7\textsuperscript{th} September 1958, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi, p.7.
\end{itemize}
to suffer difficulties, discomforts and torture. Let us be inspired by the words of the
‘Divine blessed are they are tortured in the name of justice, for them is the Kingdom
of God.’ O God Almighty! Give everyone of us plenty of blessings to face this crisis
with courage and self-sacrificing zeal.25

In the midst of the struggle an attempt was made by the anti-
Communists to buy Kattakkada Balakrishna Pillai, the MLA from Aryanad to their
side. In this political game a major role was played by Kulathinkkal Pothen, a former
communist sympathizer and Secretary of Thiruvananthapuram Taluk Committee of
the CPI. Balakrishna Pillai was a veteran who led single handedly a struggle against
the malpractices in the Kattakkada market and he was in poor economic
circumstances. Because of his popularity as a fighter for justice, he had won the
elections in Aryanad.

In the midst of all these struggles the Communist government had to
face a bye-election in Devikulam constituency in May 1958. The League supported
the Congress candidates Shri.B.K.Nayar, against Smt.Rosamma Punnoose, the
Communist candidate as it was felt that, the Communist ministry was against the
interests of the Muslim community in general. The League leaders spent days and
nights in election work, but when the result was declared it was found that
Smt.Rosamma had won. This victory added strength to the Communist government’s
progressive reforms in the State. The labourers and peasants of Devikulam have
reaffirmed their faith in the Communist government of Kerala. It has shown to the
world that people particularly the working class and peasantry are behind the

25 Government of Kerala, Opposition Preparations for Violent Overthrow of the Government,
KSA, Trivandrum, 1959, p.10.
Government no matter what others may say.\textsuperscript{26} It was also a severe blow to the prestige of the Congress party and other Communal organizations in the State.

The first trumpet of the Liberation Struggle was blown on 15\textsuperscript{th} December 1958, when a meeting of private school managers at Kottayam Mammen Mappila Hall and presided over by Mannath Padmanabhan passed an unanimous Resolution registering strong protest against the passage of the Education Act. Soon the Anti-Communist Front expanded to include various elements and groups like Private School Managers, Bishops, Priests and Nuns, N.S.S, S.N.D.P, Newspapers like Malayala Manorama, Deepika, Deenabandhu, Desabandhu and the weekly Kerala. On 1\textsuperscript{st} May 1959 a conference of all the community organizations was held at Changanacherry and a ‘\textit{Vimochana Samara Samiti}’ was constituted under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan against the Communist government.\textsuperscript{27} The conference appealed the people of the State to come forward in support of the Private School Managers Agitation and turn it into a mass movement against the Government.

Under the auspices of the \textit{Vimochana Samara Samiti} mass rallies were held all over the State. During the six weeks agitation by the Samiti more than 1,50,000 were arrested some 1000 were jailed and 15 people were shot dead in police firing.\textsuperscript{28} Inaugurating the rally, Mannam declared that the aim of the movement was to remove the Communists from power. Jawaharlal Nehru described the agitation was a “Mass Up surge” against the communist regime.\textsuperscript{29} The ‘mass upsurge’ could be described in two ways. On the one hand there were the mass demonstrations

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  \item \textsuperscript{26} The New Age Editorial dated 25\textsuperscript{th} May 1958, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} The Deepika dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} May, 1959.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} The Malayala Manorama Year Book 1980, Kottayam, p.701.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} K.C.John, The Melting Pot Kerala 1950’s-1970’s, Trivandrum, 1975, p.65.
\end{itemize}
composed of Catholics and Nairs under the leadership of Mannam. The feudal reactionary ideology of the movement was perfectly symbolized through the struggle. His meetings were like traditional temple festival, organized with great pomp and splendor. The processions were imitations of a deity marching into the battlefield in a chariot, installed on a peacock throne, with ceremonial umbrella overhead. The volunteers marched in a military style with swords unsheathed in their hands on both sides of Mannam. On the other hand, the organization of pickets in front of schools, buses, offices and public buildings could be sustained without massive backing of the people. A political observer remarked that, “it will be too much to expect the Communists to remain calm when these exponents of Gandhism and non-violence make all sorts of unscrupulous alliances with Catholic reaction and the Muslim League…”

The Communist party of India projects *Vimochana Samaram* as a conspiracy. Some of the key criticisms were that it was an Anti-Democratic, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) funded communal movement aimed to shatter the first democratically elected communist ministry. It is further accused that the Indian National Congress had joined hands in public with anti democratic splinters and communal forces to have the down fall of a democratically elected government of the people. Nehru being a Socialist and a friend of E.M.S.Namboodiripad, he disapproved the unlawful actions of the opposition. He made it clear that, ‘our political work and agitations must be on a peaceful and decent level, whatever the party concerned might be. Certainly he didn’t want the Congress party to do such thing. It seems to Nehru that if any party permits or resorted to violent methods, this would injure greatly the

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public life and would not serve any good cause.’\textsuperscript{31} He also informed the Chief Minister that he had asked Dhebar, the president of the Congress, to restrain his party men in Kerala and call off demonstrations; and Dhebar added his assurance that the local Congress would function as a responsible and constructive opposition.\textsuperscript{32} But probably due to the pressure from fellow Congress Party men he could not act freely according to his conscience.

The ideological differences between the Congress and Communists were also hastened the dismissal of the Communist government. The Chief Minister wrote twelve months after assuming office, regarded as their main achievement not any radical orientation or policy but the evidence which they had provided to non-Communists that the Kerala government was national, democratic and Socialist.\textsuperscript{33} They were breaking the prejudices which assumed that Communism was alien to Indian traditions and values and that a Communist government would endanger religion, marked the beginning of the end of the nation and would not respect the Constitution.\textsuperscript{34} In the same channel, the Law Minister of Kerala wrote to the Vice-President a few months later that India was not political but philosophic, and not Marxist but vadantic.\textsuperscript{35} Now Nehru also gave his earlier sympathetic attitude and neutrality towards the Communist government and he prepared for a public expression of his disapproval. He even hinted, in interviews to foreign journalists, that

\textsuperscript{31} S.Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography, Vol.III, New Delhi, 1984, p.57.
\textsuperscript{32} Congress President, Dhebar’s letter to E.M.S.Namboodiribad, dated 11\textsuperscript{th} December 1957, NMML, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{33} Jitendra Singh, Communist Rule in Kerala, Delhi, 1959, p.88.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} V.R.Krishan Iyer’s Letter to S.Radhakrishnan dated 6\textsuperscript{th} September 1958, NMML, New Delhi.
he felt that the days of the Communist government were numbered.\textsuperscript{36} But the Chief Minister’s reply was very soft and he reminded his speeches of Kerala in 1936 that he urged the need for national unity and freedom, his call for a joint front against the British.

However, Nehru was not to be appeased, and developments in the Communist’s countries especially the return of ‘ideological rigidity’ had a bearing on his approach to Kerala. Nehru now believed that democracy and socialism were not ends in themselves but a means to achieve the good of the individual. Real social progress would come only when opportunity was given to the individual to develop, provided the individuals did not constitute any particular group but comprised the whole community.\textsuperscript{37} So the touchstone of any political or social theory should be how far it enables the individual to rise above his own self and think in terms of the common good. The law of life should be not competition but co-operation, the good of each contributing to the good of all. This was a new Nehru, or rather a reversion of the earlier Nehru of the 1920’s, the conventional Hindu touched as yet by rationalist ideas. In the 1930’s and 1940’s he was very loyal towards Marxism and Socialism. Now the attitude of Nehru was a curious amalgam of socialism, science and religion which he was trying to evolve at the end of 1950’s.\textsuperscript{38}

Against the attitude of Nehru, E.M.S.Namboodiripad argued that the basic loyalty of the Communist party was to the Indian working class. As for conditions in Kerala he reported, not by way of complaint but just out of desperation, that the local

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid}, p.62.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid}. 

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Congress was by no means adopting a peaceful approach as elaborated by Nehru.\textsuperscript{39} The Governor also reported that the State administration was trying to assist the Communist trade union organization to improve its position as against that of the unions supported by the Congress.\textsuperscript{40} The Chief Minister saw no scope for compromise and expected his determination to deal firmly with such opposition. Nevertheless the Congress Party in the State intensified its participation in the agitation on the ground that the Central authority of the party had not instructed them not to have any connection with the movement.\textsuperscript{41} So the Congress was speaking with three voices; the members in Kerala active in violent agitation, the Central leadership permitting such activity without approving it, and Nehru disapproving of it but taking no action to curb it.\textsuperscript{42}

The Communist government functioned within the limits of democratic conventions and also treated its opponents with consideration and even sought a measure of co-operation while the opposition particularly the Congress. The Communist Party was now in a critical stage while protecting the valuable democratic traditions on one side on the other side they faced the powerful Church, in between these two they were criticizes Nehru for not condemning the activities of the Congress in Kerala.\textsuperscript{43}

The global Moral Rearmament Agency (M.R.A) and United States Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A) supported the anti-communist movement, since

\textsuperscript{39} The \textit{New Age}, dated 23\textsuperscript{rd} July, 1958, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{40} The \textit{New Age}, dated 23\textsuperscript{rd} November, 1958, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{41} H.Austin, \textit{Anatomy of the Kerala Coup}, Delhi, 1959, p.37.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid}. 

\textsuperscript{43}
when the Communist Party coming to power through the ballot box unbelievable in a
democratic system and it contained hidden threats to capitalism and landlordism. The
nexus of CIA in toppling over the Communist government had been divulged later by
Mr. Moynihan, the then American Ambassador to India. He said, “We had twice, but
only twice, interfered in Indian politics to the extent of providing money to a
political party. Both times this was done in the face of a prospective
communist victory in state elections, once in Kerala and once in West Bengal,
where Calcutta is located. Both times the money was given to the Congress
Party which had asked for it.”

Bishop Parekkattil issued a directive to all faithful to get ready for a fight
to save the church and schools from the influence of the communists. Several
publications brought out a large number of booklets, 27 in Malayalam and 8 in
English and the authors included T.O.Bava, M.Govindan, Sukumar Azhikode,
M.K.Sanu, M.V.Devan, C.J.Thomas, Kalakkal Bhaskaran, N.J.Thankappan,
G.Gopalakrishnan, Vayalar Ravi, George Tharakan and K.K.Madhavan. The
supporters of big business opposed the Communist Government because the existence
of a Communist-led government in one part of India was a hindrance to their vision
and success. The attitude of the Congress party and the Central government was also
very clear through its policy which were followed later.

In alliance with reactionary forces, the Congress and the Praja-Socialist
Party in Kerala launched a campaign of violence and lawlessness, trying to provoke a
crisis which would justify intervention by the Central government. Reviewing these

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43 Statement of Ajoy Ghosh, General Secretary of the CPI, 8th June, New Age, dated 9th June
1959.

44 Statement of Moynihan, then American Ambassador to India, published by PRD,
and earlier developments, the National Council of the Communist Party of India which met in October 1958 stated in its resolution: “The danger and threat of the Central intervention are by no means gone. The Congress leaders knew that the Kerala government was gaining in prestige and growth every day, while their chances of returning to power in that State through elections are fast receding. With the Congress governments becoming increasingly discredited and isolated in other states, they are afraid of the success and achievements of the Kerala government.”

At this time Mannam, the leader of the struggle declared in Coimbatore that the Vimochanasamara Samiti alone spent 50 lakhs rupees for the food and travel expenses of the volunteers and the political parties like Congress, PSP, RSP and Muslim League also spent a lot of amount for the struggle. During that particular period lot of foreign money came to the State through different agencies. It’s evident through the answer given by the Union Home Minister Panth to the question of A.K.Gopalan, he said, from 1st January 1959 to 30th April 1959 alone 3 crores 70 lakhs Rupees came from foreign nations for the Christian Missionaries, out of that more than one crores came from the United States. Later Father Vadakkan in his autobiography revealed the fact that, in his name large amount of money was collected from America for anti-Communist movement in Kerala. It once again authenticated the foreign interference in the affairs of the State.

The movement against the government took a new turn when leaders from all over the State held a conference in Changanassery and formed an Action

46 The Navayugam dated 22nd August, 1959, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi.
47 Ibid.
The council consists of Mannth Padmanabhan, Kumbalath Sanku Pillai, an old Congress leader, V.O.Abraham, President of the Private School Manager’s Association, P.J.Sebastian, veteran Congress leader and a former President of the All Kerala Catholic Congress, Kalathil Velayudan Nair, Ex.Minister and a prominent N.S.S. leader, Cherian Kappen, a Congress leader and Municipal Chairman of Palai, Prof. K.M.Chandy, a former legislator and a prominent Congress leader and M.P.Chandra Sekhara Pillai, an Ex.M.L.A. Mannam was elected Chairman of the Action Council, K.M.Chandy and M.P.Chandra Sekhara Pillai, as convenors and V.O.Abraham as treasurer. But the Congress constituted a separate Action Council through R.Sankar and made it clear that the two Action Councils would work in mutual understanding and co-operation. Many foreign journalists had assembled at Trivandrum and everyone was eager to know what the agitators were shouting in Malayalam. Some slogans like ‘Ariyavede pani yevede parayu parayu Namboodiri’ (Namboodripad where is the rice and work for us as you promised in your Communist manifesto). Everyday there were processions by various parties which ended in front of the legislature gate with a meeting. It had become an everyday affair; the gate was named as ‘Samaram Gate’.  

The national leaders of the Congress party opposed the government mainly because of the fear of Communist power, strength, growth and progress in the future. There were many tactics which were adopted to prevent the Communist ministry from working at a programme. The AICC with Mrs. Gandhi at its helm entered into an unholy alliance with reactionary and opportunistic forces and parties. A disinformation campaign was launched which said that the masses wanted to oust the

Kerala government. In an editorial captioned “Mr.Nehru and Kerala “the Deepika observed that ‘…even a casual visitor to Kerala can see the gathering storm. What was the warning to Nepolean can be a warning to the Communists also. “The wind, the wind that blows, On God’s earth, It will not let you go”’.51

The Travancore – Cochin area witnessed a more enthusiastic popular participation in the Liberation struggle compared to the Malabar region. On 14th June 1959 violence broke out at Angamally in Trichur when over 2000 demonstrators stoned the police station, demanding the release of volunteers from the lock-up. Incidentally, clashes broke out between the demonstrators and the police action resulted in lathi-charges and police firings in Angamally, seven persons were killed and hundreds including several policemen were wounded.52 In Trivandrum district firing took place at Pulluvila and Vettukatt, where the Latin Catholics belonging to the fisherman community were in a majority, where the picketing turned to be violent. Three persons were killed at Vettukat and two injured in Pulluvila. In an article P.J.Antony said that, the incidents in Angamaly, Pulluvila and Vettukatt happened where the people without any proper idea or intention functioned as per the direction of the Priest and Church authorities taking arms against the government. The priests spread the message among the poor people that ‘Religion is in Danger’ and the people immediately started their protest as per the custom that had existed for a long period of time.53 The Catholic priests, just like in the time during the 14th century in Europe wrongly directed and used the poor people for their own vested interests. Panampally Govinda Menon published an open letter to the Governor in which he alleged that

52 The Deepika dated 15th June 1959.
Jallianwallabagh was being repeated at Angamally. Before the Communist party came to power in Kerala lots of arrests, picketing and firing occurred. But in all those struggles we couldn’t see the influence of the Church and Communities because the struggles were mainly for the cause of the poor people. The police firings and the clashes between the Communists and anti-Communists in Angamaly, Cherithura, Vettukad, etc. were problems created by the anti-communists and not by the police or communists.

The *Malayala Manorama* in an editorial on 12th September 1959 said, “The *Vimochanasamaram* which occurred in Kerala during the period of June and July 1959 was one of the rare mass movements which united all the anti-Communist parties and communal organizations. We can’t see such type of unity in the rest of the country.” In an editorial regarding the police firings, *Deepika* said, “The Chief Minister Namboodiripad who killed 12 persons and wounded many for the sake of maintaining his terror regime. History teaches us that if one person being alive becomes responsible for the death of many, that person has no right to live.”

The national non-Christian Congress leader’s statements instigated religious sentiments and it lead to further violence against the government. The Action Council arranged a massive demonstration in the State capital in a bid to convince the visiting Prime Minister Nehru of the real depth of popular resentment. On June 10th 1959 after his Kerala visit, he made his strong view against, “the influence of communal  

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54 The *Deepika* dated 19th June, 1959.  
56 The *Malayala Manorama* editorial dated 12th September 1959.  
57 The *Deepika* dated 19th June, 1959.  
forces in the political struggles, the school picketing and the toppling of the democratically elected government.” 59 The so-called popular "mass movement" against the Kerala government had not touched the majority of the people of the state because by that time, an agitation to protect the state government had spread throughout the nation. On June 6, E.M.S.Namboodiripad had come to Calcutta and two lakh people were there to receive him at the Maidan. The Women blew conch shells to welcome the first Communist Chief Minister of the country. It showed the mass base of the party not only in Kerala but also in other parts of India.

The Anti-Communist struggle organized by the caste organizations and the non-Communist parties were severely criticized by different leaders and presses. The Economic weekly which was published from Bombay, in its June 13th issue reported, “Democracy in Kerala was in danger and this danger did not come from the part of the Communists but from the Catholic led Communal organizations, the Congress and the PSP parties who were the followers of such organizations.” 60 In the words of Vinoba Bave, “the Kerala Government’s Education Bill was purely based on legal and Constitutional provisions; but now in Kerala the Christian Church and some others without any proper reason opposed the bill.” 61 Times of India in an editorial dated 17th June 1959 reported, “In the anti-Communist struggle, the Congress party openly supported the revolting masses to break the law and order situation in the

The Hindustan Standard in its editorial mentioned that, “the Congress party and its leaders adopted all the illegal ways to topple the Communist Government”. The Indian Express in its editorial dated 19th June said, “The Congress party always talked about the protection of the Constitutional rights but now the party supported and accepted unconstitutional struggles in Kerala.” So the dismissal of the Kerala government was an outrageous attack, in violation of the spirit of the Constitution, on the masses, on their democratic right to elect the government of their own choice and the right of that government to carry out its policies and measures consistent with the provisions of the Constitution.

At the same time on June 12th, 1959 the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee under R.Sankar observed Black Day and submitted its charge sheet against the Communist government. The wide publicity was given to the alleged breakdown of law and order in the State, police atrocities and loss of life and property of anti-communists. On June 29th 1959 the Central Congress Parliamentary Party discussed the charge sheet prepared by the KPCC and expressed grave concern on the Kerala situation.

Simultaneously lots of movements started in and around the State to protect the democratically elected Communist government in the State. The workers

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64 Public Opinion on the Direct Action in Kerala, Indian Express, dated 19th June 1959, Madurai, PRD, Trivandrum.
opposed *Vimochanasamaram*, because the Kerala government alone among all the other State governments including Central government had accepted the workers right to strike, workers co-operatives in unorganized and sweated industries such as coir, toddy tapping, beedi, cashew, road construction etc. had put an end to the much hated system of middlemen and contractors.\(^{67}\)

On July 15, 1959 Triguna Sen, journalist Vivekananda Mukherjee, Dr Paresh Chandra Sen, Satyajit Ray, Susobhan Sarkar, Hemanta Mukherjee, Gopal Chandra Halder, Sambhu Mitra. Mihir Sen, Binoy Ghosh, Asitbaran, Suchitra Mitra, Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak and other intellectuals like Nandagopal Sengupta appealed to the President and the Prime Minister in which they said, "*Those who are unified to oust the Kerala government by unholy means are working to strike at the roots of Indian democracy. We request that such efforts be stopped immediately.*"\(^{68}\) A separate appeal entitled "*Intervention shall not be allowed in Kerala*" was sent to the President by playwright Bijan Bhattacharya, actor Bhanu Banerjee and scientist B.D. Nagchowdhury. On July 15, 1959, a letter signed by 17,336 residents of Calcutta was sent to the President carrying the same message.

The leaders of the Kerala Samara Samiti, Mannath Padmanabhan, Pattom Thanupillai of the PSP and C.H.Mohammad Koya of Muslim League among others argued more than usually violent languages for Central Intervention in Kerala. The League had picketed government offices along with volunteers of other parties. The League leaders now claimed that the League was not a ‘dead horse’ as Nehru had


\(^{67}\) The *New Age* dated 12\(^{th}\) July 1959, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi, p.4.

\(^{68}\) *Letter to the Indian President dated 15\(^{th}\) July 1959*, P.C.Joshi Library, JNU, New Delhi.
once described but a living force very much alive and kicking. For first time a meeting was organized in New Delhi at the Constitution Club by the ‘Delhi Citizens Committee for Kerala Affairs’ on Sunday 19th July 1959. Mannam says, ‘I am one who opposes Communist ideals, philosophy and their government. I and my wife were the only two people who voted for Congress in the last general elections in my home.’ About the Communists he said, ‘they have no faith in caste, dharma or truth. Sister, wife and mother are all equal for them. They are out castes and should be classified as lepers’.

The Prime Minister in June 1959 warned the leaders of the caste organizations as well as the Governor that the State government had the right to suppress the agitations and if necessary the Central government will come to their assistance. He also advised the local Congress not to associate itself with the activities of the caste organization and the abandonment of the party’s principles as well as the democratic practices which would cause adverse reactions in both Kerala and elsewhere in India. “To pushing out the elected government was to encourage civil conflict and it would challenge the Constitution. The Government of India was responsible for the final analysis regarding the law and order in the State.” These statements and principles of Nehru gave some hope to the State government. But the attitude of the Congress party hardened in the course of the struggle and it not only attacked the policies of the government but began to raise grave charges against the government. The party wanted the resignation of the Communist government on the

70 The New Age dated 26th July 1959, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi, p.8.
72 Nehru’s letter to R.Sankar dated 15th June, 1959, S.Gopal(Ed), Nehru, A Biography, New Delhi, 1984, p.67.
ground that it had disrupted the rule of law in the State.\textsuperscript{73} The Congress party charged that there was active party interference with the day to day administration of the State.\textsuperscript{74} The government was charged with misusing public money for promoting the party interests. The opposition parties in one voice raised the cry that law and order had broken down in the State and there was no safety and security to the life and property of the non-Communists.

The Congress party sought to take advantage of the anti-Communist movement sponsored by the major communal organizations. Then Congress President Smt. Indira Gandhi advised her party men that ‘while the party could not fail to take note of the deep feeling behind the agitation against the Kerala Education Bill, the organization should not associate itself with the proposed agitation for closing down of privately run schools in the State.\textsuperscript{75} Thus the Congressmen were given the freedom to act without dragging the organization into the anti-government movement. In reality, the Congress organization played a leading role in embracing the government and finally throwing it out. Gradually all the Major communities including the Muslim League and all the non-Communist parties, trade unions and news papers threw their weight behind the movement.

The Congress President Smt. Indira Gandhi told the AICC members that “the Communist government in Kerala was trying to promote its party interests in every possible way. Even when implementing progressive reforms such as the Agrarian Relations Bill, the Communist Party aimed at strengthening its hold and

\textsuperscript{73} K.S. Nayar, \textit{Congress and Kerala Politics}, Trivandrum, 1984, p.234.

\textsuperscript{74} Memorandum submitted to the President of Indian Republic, 1959, P.C. Joshi Library, JNU, New Delhi, p.22.
practice discrimination against its political opponents.” The Congress party on 10th July 1959 submitted an memorandum to the President of India stating that, “the Kerala government has subverted democracy, they have consistently adopted policies denying the peoples fundamental rights granted under the Constitution, they have rendered the civil service and police impotent and created conditions in which they have to carry on the principles that government and the party are one and the same, they have institutionalized corruption, security of life and property not guaranteed to all except the Communists, Government according to the Constitution has disappeared and large majority of the people have turned against it on account of its policies and misdeeds.” The Memorandum further stated that the Kerala government has demonstrably outlived its mandate and must face the people without further delay. This memorandum was released to the press on 20th July 1959.

The Government of Kerala issued a reply to the above memorandum on 28th July 1959. It tried to show that the charges against the Communist government were incorrect and false. It said that there had been no breakdown of law and order in the State, that the governments police policy has been impartial, that the Government had done a lot to better the common people and that no charge of corruption against the government could be upheld. The government was also ready to discussing the controversial clauses of the Education Act again. However, the efforts

75 Congress General Secretary in an interview with the Pressmen, Hindu dated 22nd May 1959, P.C.Joshi Library, JNU, New Delhi.
77 KPCC Memorandum to the President of India, dated 10th July, 1959, NMML, New Delhi, p.23.
78 Ibid.
of the Chief Minister to implement the suggestions of Nehru when visited Trivandrum from 22nd to 25th June 1959, did not make any positive response from the leaders of Opposition parties, the NSS and the Churches. The only solution acceptable to them was the dismissal of the ministry and the holding of fresh elections.

Now the Central government under Nehru was in a critical position to solve the Kerala situation - the opposition front demanded the dismissal of the State government and the ruling front countered the attack through different viewpoints. Nehru thought that if the government was dismissed by the Centre it would create a feeling of discrimination on the part of the Central government towards the non-Congress government. So he requested the Chief Minister to resign and hold mid-term elections under his care-taker government. With the result of the Devikulam bye-election in mind, E.M.S.Namboodiripad was now willing to accept the suggestions of Nehru. But the CPI’s Central Executive Committee and the National Council which met at Trivandrum in July 1959 concluded that the call for fresh elections was “nothing but giving a democratic garb to a discriminatory demand which the opposition parties sought to enforce through illegal means.”

The Congress leadership seemed to be divided on the issue of the Kerala State. The Congress Parliamentary Board was recommending for mid-term polls. Smt.Gandhi, the AICC President and the KPCC demanded the dismissal of the Communist government and implementation of President’s rule in the State. At the Coimbatore AICC session Mrs.Gandhi was the first person who made a strong plea for Central action against the Kerala government. She met the President of India on 25th July and on the same day she also addressed a public meeting in New Delhi and

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said that, “The Constitution is for the people and not the people for the Constitution. And if the Constitution stands in the way of meeting the people’s grievances in Kerala, the Government of Kerala should be changed.”82 At last by the compulsion of the State Congress Committee, the AICC also decided to recommend the implementation of President’s rule in the State.

Finally on July 31, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Indian Union, on the advice of the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, issued a proclamation, dismissing the government of Kerala, dissolving the elected State Legislature, suspending even the limited autonomy of the State and imposing President’s rule on the State in accordance with Article 356 of the Indian Constitution.83 Thus it brought to an end of the first Communist-led government in an Indian State. The Communist government in Kerala had been in power for two years, three months and twenty six days. For the first time in the history of the Indian Republic, an elected State Ministry found itself dismissed at a time when it enjoyed the support of the majority in the State Legislature.

The President had not mentioned even a single word in the Proclamation of July 31st 1959, regarding the violation of Indian Constitution by the Communist government. No charges were leveled against the Kerala government, not a word was said as to how the Kerala government had violated the provisions of the Constitution or what the ‘situation’ was and who created it.84 The very silence was eloquently indicative of the guilty conscience of those who are responsible for the President’s

81 B.N.Mullick, My Years with Nehru 1948-1964, NMML, New Delhi, 1874, p.348.
83 Proclamation of the President of India 1959, PHL, New Delhi, p.2
84 Ibid.
Proclamation and of their unwillingness to come before the people with their real reasons. On the formation of the First Communist government Dr.Rajendra Prasad at a public meeting held at the new police stadium in Trivandrum on 14th August, 1957 said, “I am happy that this great experiment, which is being made in your state, is going to serve as a great lesson not only to other states but to the country as a whole as an example of co-existence, of living and working together, in spite of differences, for the good of all…”\(^8^5\) So it’s very clear that the action of the President in 1959, was done only by the compulsion of the Central government.

E.M.S.Namboodiripad spoke at a reception in Trivandrum on 1\(^{st}\) August 1959 “We worked during the last 28 months for the welfare of the workers, the peasants and other poor and middles classes, to solve their problems and to seek redressal of this we are today going out with the satisfaction that during the short time we have done our utmost for the good of the workers, peasants and toiling masses.”\(^8^6\)

M.N.Govindan Nair told the Minister of State for Home Affairs B.N.Datar, “before dismissing the government on the basis of the charge sheet they should have the courtesy of asking for an explanation from the government before its dismissal.” He also quoted that without giving the government a chance to refute the charges, the Governor decided that the charges were substantially true.\(^8^7\) In the Lok sabha also several adjournment motions regarding the assaults against the

\(^8^5\) President Dr.Rajendra Prasad”s address in a public meeting held at Trivandrum on 14\(^{th}\) August, 1957, NMML, New Delhi.

\(^8^6\) The New Age dated 9\(^{th}\) August, 1959, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi.

\(^8^7\) Rajya Sabha Debates dated 24\(^{th}\) August 1959, PHL, New Delhi, p1598.
Communists, especially towards women and agricultural labourers were revealed by CPI members A.K.Gopalan, V.P.Nayar and Renu Chakravarthy were disallowed.⁸⁸

The *Free Press Journal* said, “the Congress party was not ready to conduct elections in Orissa but it was surprised that the party took initiative to conduct elections in Kerala….it was better to accept the Kerala Chief Minister’s statement that all the opponents were to wait up to the month of August, when the Panchayat elections were going to be held. The voters would get the chance to cast their opinions through the elections.” ⁸⁹

The Prime Minister Nehru did not favor the dismissal of the Kerala government but once the decision had been taken, he became a staunch defender of it. In an article The ‘Basic Approach’ he stressed strongly that violence could under no circumstances secure a progressive socialist future, and communism had definitely allied itself to the approach of violence.⁹⁰ He again said that it is not by some magic adoption of socialist methods that poverty suddenly heads to riches. The only way was through hard work and increasing the productivity of the nation and organizing an equitable distribution of its products. The Communist approach in this respect was “wholly unscientific, unreasonable and uncivilized.”⁹¹Nehru, indeed, confronted the rising strength of the Communist movement and the growing political consciousness of the suppressed and exploited masses and exchanged his largely uncommitted progressive image for reactionary ideologies.

The ousting of the Kerala government was followed by spontaneous strikes and demonstrations in Kerala and in many parts of the country. In a resolution the

⁸⁸ Lok sabha Debates dated 3rd August 1959, Vol.33, PHL, New Delhi, p.3340.
Kerala State Committee of the CPI said, “It’s now clearer than ever before that this action was the culmination of a great conspiracy to overthrow a ministry that still continues to enjoy the confidence of the majority of the elected legislature for the only reason that it’s a non-Congress government. In this conspiracy the committee wishes to empathetically state with full responsibility that the AICC leadership including Central ministers had an active role from the very beginning.”  

For the first time in the history of the Bombay city over 5000 Keralites, many with their ‘mundus’ marched through the streets of Bombay on 12th July 1959, drenched fully in rains and dancing with joy to express their full and unconditional support to the E.M.S.Namboodiripad government. The National Council of the Communist Party of India, which met at Trivandrum on 15th and 16th July 1959, and already called for meetings and demonstrations all over the country on August 3, in defense of Kerala. After the dismissal of the government, August 3 became a day of countrywide protest against Central intervention. At least 30,000 people marched to the Parliament in Delhi, condemning the Central government’s intervention, denouncing it as an attack on the working people and on democracy and praising the achievements of the Kerala Ministry. The demonstrations were not confined to Delhi and it was also held in most of the State capitals.

Calcutta, the biggest city in India saw something unprecedented. An avalanche of humanity descended on the streets, forming a mighty stream stretching over five miles. This was the biggest procession in the city’s history since independence—about 100,000 took part in it. Earlier, a rally of 200,000 had been held, addressed by Jyoti Basu, the Secretary of the West Bengal State Committee of

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91 Ibid.
92 The New Age dated 9th August 1959, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi, p.1
the Communist Party of India, and Indrajit Gupta, the working-class leader. Commenting on the demonstration in Calcutta, the Statesman wrote on 4th August 1959: ‘If number is any index, the procession organized by the Communist Party in Calcutta was a massive demonstration of the Party’s strength’. 94 The participants in all these protest demonstrations, which included a large number of women, workers, peasants, office employees, teachers, students and others.

On the eve of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the First Communist government in an interview Justice V.R.Krishna Iyer said, “No one could deny the fact that the E.M.S. Government had achieved great progress in educational and agricultural fields. Nevertheless communal forces, capitalists and landlords got united against us. They had the support of the Congress party and the racial and religious forces. When their agitations ended in failure, the Nehru Government dissolved the E.M.S. Ministry, misusing the Article 356 of the Indian constitution. The right wing headed by the congress has not yet shown the integrity to confess the guilt and admit the wrong done 50 years ago by the Nehru Government.” 95

The political rivals of the government were initially surprised at the magnitude of change initiated by the government, later it decided to start a political move against the government. The Congress leadership, therefore, mobilized smaller parties and splinter groups and even the Muslim League which its leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, once described as a 'dead horse', and launched the infamous 'Liberation' Struggle’ against the government. The political combination by itself was not

93 The New Age dated 19th July 1959, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi, p.15
formidable, but when they joined hands with communal forces like Christian Church and NSS, it proved deadly. It was a social, political and communal combination—all the three in one. The connection of CIA in easing out the Communist government has been a subject of great controversy ever since 1959. A section of the common people participated in the agitation, due to ignorance and fear, and due to caste and communal pressure. The Christians as the Church considered participation in the agitation as a Christian virtue and read pastoral letters in the churches. That a section of the people who had participated in the agitation later represented their action itself is a proof of both the fear that gripped them and ignorance they had on the issue. Even a stalwart of the agitation, Fr. Vadakkan, testified to this when he conferred later that the 'Liberation' struggle 'represented a confluence of vested interests'. All these showed the extent to which Kerala society was communalized, and also the presence of a critical gap in politicizing it.

The attack on the Kerala government was spearheaded by the forces of extreme reaction—they wanted to destroy what the democratic movement had achieved during the last years and take the country backward. There can be no doubt that, emboldened by the successes that they had won, they would intensify their attack on the toiling masses, on democratic rights and civil liberties, on parliamentary institutions, and even would try to reverse foreign policy. Ahead lies a critical period, a period of acute conflicts and sharp changes which would demand utmost vigilance. At the same time the conclusion would be entirely defeatist and unwarranted that the triumph of reaction was inevitable. The Kerala crisis had revealed not merely the length to which certain bourgeois circles would go in their attack on the people but also the tremendous volume of democratic opinion that exists in our country, the forces that are there which, if mobilized and united, can defeat reaction and frustrate
its designs. Hence the Communist Party has reiterated its decision, that it will continue its policy of peaceful methods, defend parliamentary institutions and democratic rights with all its might, and strive to unite for this purpose all the patriotic and progressive forces in the country, including the vast number of democrats in the Congress.

However the measures adopted by the Ministry really led to the socio-economic reconstruction of the State. But unfortunately the attitude of the non-Communist parties and the Communal forces struck the reforms initiated by the government including land reforms, honest administration and implementation of the rights given under the Constitution. The Liberation Struggle against the First Communist Ministry strengthened Communal forces and their organizations by making them actively involved in the politics of the State. Through the Liberation Struggle the Christian Church and the Communal organizations like the Nair Service Society (NSS), Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) and the Muslim League began to emerge as major pressure groups in the State politics.