

# THE TRAVANCORE STRUGGLE—PEOPLE'S DEFENCE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES, NOT A "COMMUNIST REBELLION"

REVIEW BY KERALA'S COMMUNIST LEADER

"Had the Government allowed the well-organised and well-prepared class-war of the Communists to grow stronger, they would have ruthlessly killed thousands of law-abiding citizens; nor would the rebellion have been brought under control in so short a time and with such a low figure of deaths as less than 200"—says a Press Note issued by the Government of Travancore on December 2. (My translation from the Malayalam version published in Puzva Prabha of December 3—EMS).

THE President of the Travancore State Congress also made similar statements in which he accused the Government of suppression of direct responsibility for "Communist violence" because "it did not check Communist activities in time."

Statements and counter-statements were then issued by the Dewan of Travancore and the President of the State Congress. The former charging the latter with having and strengthening the Communists, and the latter returning the compliment.

Both were agreed that the Communists were mischief-makers and that all would have been well if they had not been allowed to grow.

## Not The First Time

But nobody who knows Travancore will be shocked by this. Eight years ago, in 1918, the Communist Party of Travancore was not born. Most of the present-day Communists had just been awakened to political consciousness by the slogan of Responsible Government.

Yet, in that year, armed clashes between the people and the police took place all over Travancore. Mining was resorted to in large places. Resistance to police offensive in one of these places was so strong that it took more than a month to crush it; two of its leaders were executed. For the State Congress had been formed with the aim of securing Responsible Government. The wide support it secured created panic in the Government which resorted to repression. The people resisted and kept the fire of revolt alive. Never before in its history had Travancore seen such a united people's resistance to the Government.

The President of the State Congress (who was the President even then) did not condemn these "acts of violence" then. On the other hand, he himself and his colleagues were accused by the Dewan of being responsible for them.

## Forces Of Democracy Grow

A situation similar to 1918 began to develop towards the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946. The former (1918) slogan of Responsible Government had been concretised by the triple demand of:

- "Dewan's Role should go," i.e. immediate replacement of Dewanship by a popular ministry;
  - A sovereign Constituent Assembly to decide the future constitution of Travancore;
  - Travancore should be represented on the All-India Constituent Assembly only by delegates elected on the basis of adult suffrage.
- Nothing less than these could satisfy the people. Attempts made by the Dewan to introduce his notorious "American Model" Constituent Assembly in which neither the republican form nor the principle of elected Executive of the American Constitution was present, but only the principle of "Irrevocable Executive" was favoured by the people still:

The Government, however, banned it because it was a "Communist Conference" according to the Government.

Several conferences anti-Communist in character were also called by the Government and Communist organisations. Inasmuch they found the Government's "National, Constitutional and Industrial Policy."

Strategy evolved, this was also the attitude taken by the President of the State Congress. When Communists were arrested and "banned," he did not protest because they were "unlawful persons." When such Congress leaders as Sri Kesavaiah were also arrested, he said that "Kesavaiah, by his association with the Communists, involved trouble."

## For Or Against Compromise

This was one month for the President of the State Congress who stood for a compromise with the Government. Finding no faith in the strength of the people in their struggle against the Government, afraid of the "uncontrollable" masses of the workers and peasants, fully confident

"It is not for you to choose between various models of constitution, but we will decide our own constitution."

## by E. M. S. Namboodiripad

that Nehru and Patel at the Delhi would automatically be followed by a State Congress Government in Travancore, he had consciously adopted a policy of negotiating with the Dewan on the basis of "The American Model."

The State Congress was not, however, united in pursuing this policy of compromise. The vast body of State Congress ranks had no faith in the President's policy while two of the biggest leaders (Sri C. Kesavaiah and Sri Kesavaiah Sanku Pillai) fought this policy.

There was, besides, an organised Socialist group led by Sri Kesavaiah and Jeyarajalingam Pillai, which fought for a policy of struggle. The Communists too played their part in this anti-compromise struggle. It was they who raised the slogan of "Dewan's Role Should Go" and "Constituent Assembly For Travancore" by organising a General Strike on Independence Day of 1946. Intimidated meetings were held by them to renege the "American Model" Constitution and to popularise the demand for Constituent Assembly.

They a move or less united Left began to emerge, composed of the Communists, the Socialists and Left Congressmen. Not only did it oppose the "American Model" Constitution, but asked the State Congress to launch a struggle. Against it stood the main body of the State Congress leadership headed by the President.

## Blow Against Left

It was against the Left that Sir C.P. struck his first blow. He issued prohibitory orders against all those who sought the compromising policy of the President.

Many were arrested. Ministers no discrimination between the Communists, the Socialists and Left Congressmen, whom all were a result of arresting and banning, he took particular care to distinguish the Communists by calling all his victims "Communists." For instance, Madhus in South Travancore organised a Muslim Conference to voice their opposition to the "American Model" Constitution.

This Conference was to have been presided over by the Madras Muslim League leader, Mr. Abdul Hamid Khan (who by no stretch of imagination, can be called a Communist sympathiser).

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## Civil Liberties Suppressed

In this situation, the Dewan found that he had to crush the Left if he was to settle with the Right. Every day that passed with the Left free to carry on its propaganda, his "American Model" and the compromising policy of the Right-wing Congress would be further exposed.

A new regulation was, therefore, enforced, called the Emergency Powers Regulation. This went a step further than the war-time Defence Rules and prevented any act of sedition by all those who were, in the eyes of the Government, "dangerous" and "subversive."

The State Congress Working Committee itself protested against this, but the Government replied that its provisions will not be used against the State Congress.

Even before this Regulation was enforced, the Government had started its offensive. Many Communists, Socialists and State Congressmen were already in jail; meetings in support of strikes were prohibited.

With the enactment of this Regulation, the offensive was further intensified. The main fire was, of course, directed against the working-class. Military was posted in all industrial centres—Alleppey, Kollam, Shoranur, Alwayar, etc. The Secretary of the All-Travancore Trade Union Congress was arrested; workers were kept on strike almost all important Trade Union leaders (making no distinction between Communists, Socialists and others). These Socialists—who were left had to work underground.

The TUC's Call It was under these circumstances that the Trade Union Congress held two meetings (one of the All-India—Committee and another of the representatives of all the Unions in Travancore) and formulated its demands for: • The workers' right to carry on agitation for Responsible Government; • The withdrawal of military from working-class centres; • Withdrawal of all restrictions on workers' freedom of all political prisoners, etc.

While making these demands and while appealing to the State Congress to fight for them, the Trade Union Congress also called upon the workers to defend their civil liberties as best as they could. To this end, the TUC appointed a Committee of Action.

## Workers Defend Their Rights

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and Socialist leaders who were the target of the Government's attack. They organised a "National, Constitutional and Industrial Policy" and trained workers and proved its value to the masses against police and military repression.

They organised demonstrations and strikes in defiance of laws to protest against the Government's repression and to demand civil liberties.

The callous brutality of the police and the military led to a new law which would only provide, in what shape the British-ruled Empire administered it in the hands of the common working people, their inalienable right of expression and leadership provided against their freedom of expression and their freedom of assembly and their freedom of association.

Over and over again, the workers demonstrated in defiance of police and military repression and their freedom of expression and their freedom of assembly and their freedom of association.

These were, of course, the last days of the British-ruled Empire. The Government's repression was the last of its kind.

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## People Are Not Crushed

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# The Princes' World

## Race Horses And The Cackwur

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It is felt by many that the system of monarchy, under proper administration, is not enough to the genius of the Indian people and to their progress, where it exists and is a

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## TEERI-GARHWAL

On November 24, the Teeri, India, was the scene of a magnificent race of horses to be seen in the State.

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