

Chapter X

TOWARDS A UNITED PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC KERALA

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While the national question was, along with the agrarian question, the most powerful force behind the post-war revolutionary upsurge swaying millions of people throughout India, it was this same national question that was diverted into reactionary and disruptive channels by imperialism. The religious twist given to the national question by imperialism gave birth to the cry of Pakistan, led to the most gigantic carnage known to human history and ended up in the creation of two weak States—the Indian Union and Pakistan—both forced to remain satellites of imperialism.

The same effort to use the national question against the democratic movement was made in 1946-47 by the Government of Travancore. Those were the years, as we have seen, in which a mighty mass movement with the two slogans of "Down with the American Model" and "End the Dewan Rule" was shaking the autocratic rule to its foundations. One of the weapons which the Government used against this movement was the national sentiment of the Tamilian people of South Travancore. The holy anger of the common people of Tamilnad against their oppressors, the ruling family of Travancore and its feudal satellites, was successfully diverted into hatred for the nationality of these oppressors. "Down with the Malayees" was the slogan through which the Tamilian people of South Travancore were rallied against the democratic movement. On this basis was built what was known as the "Independent Travancore" movement, the movement "demanding" that Travancore should not join the Indian Union, a movement which was obviously directed against the unity of the Indian democratic movement. Though it was a movement which was formally an "all-Travancore" movement, it was only

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among the Tamilians in South Travancore that it had some mass basis.

While the Government of Travancore was thus utilising the national aspirations of the TAMILIAN people of South Travancore, the Government of Cochin was doing the same in respect of the national aspirations of the Malayalees. The first half year of 1946 saw in Cochin the same democratic upsurge as was then being witnessed in Travancore; the demand for Responsible Government was rallying behind it all sections of the people, as a result of which even the 1942 gulf between the Communists and the rest of the democratic camp was being bridged. Joint rallies, demonstrations, etc., were being organised to voice this united demand and it was precisely on the day fixed for an all-Cochin demonstration—July 29, 1946—a day on which a General Strike of the working class and a Hartal of the merchants were to be organised throughout the State—that the Maharaja of Cochin came out with an announcement that (1) he was in perfect sympathy with the people's demand for Responsible Government and was taking steps to introduce it, and that (2) it was his cherished desire to work towards merging Cochin in a United Kerala province. The Maharaja's announcement, however, significantly added that in introducing Responsible Government and in establishing a United Kerala, all the hereditary honours and privileges of the ruling families should be preserved.

This was hailed as an "inspiring lead" by the bourgeois leadership of the national movement not only in Cochin but throughout Kerala. The K.P.C.C., the Cochin Praja Mandalam and the Travancore State Congress declared in one voice that they were going to work towards the realisation of the objective set before them by the magnanimous Maharaja. They, in consultation with several other organisations, set up a United Kerala Committee and began preparations for a United Kerala Convention which was actually held in April 1947 under the chairmanship of the President of the K.P.C.C. It was naturally inaugurated by the Maharaja of Cochin who became the patron of the United Kerala movement.

Having thus successfully won over the goodwill of the bourgeois leadership of the national movement, the Government of Cochin started an offensive against the democratic movement—first of all, of course, against its vanguard but gradually against the entire movement. This has already been referred to in the last chapter. It need only be mentioned

here that it was because of the cunning manoeuvres of the authorities in Cochin on the issue of Responsible Government and United Kerala that, even when such an offensive was started, a big section of the democrats remained loyal to the Maharaja. Even when the Praja Mandalam ministers were thrown out of office, it was explained as being due to the machinations of the people surrounding the Maharaja and not of the Maharaja himself. Thus was the anti-feudal democratic edge of the movement blunted.

Furthermore, the very interpretation given by the United Kerala Movement under the patronage of the Maharaja was as disruptive of the unity of the Indian democratic movement as the "Down with the Malayalees" movement in South Travancore. For, what the bourgeois leadership of the United Kerala Movement wanted was not the unification of the contiguous areas of Madras, Cochin and Travancore wherein the Malayalam-speaking people form the majority, but the carving out of a multilingual province on the West Coast. In this "United Kerala" should be included, they demanded, not only the Tamil areas of South Travancore but other non-Malayalee areas like the northern, Tulu-and-Canarese-majority parts of South Kanara, Coorg and Tamil and tribal areas of the Nilgiris. This naturally roused intense indignation among the Tamilians, Kannadigas and the people of Coorg.

This chauvinistic interpretation of United Kerala was based on the falsified "history" of Kerala according to which the ancient Empire of Kerala stretched from Cape Comorin in the South to Gokarnam in the North. It is significant that the Maharaja of Cochin's announcement on United Kerala spoke of that ancient Empire of Kerala whose restoration in all its glory was set before the people as the grand objective to be attained. It is also significant that the United Kerala Convention held in April 1947 paid tribute, by the erection of a statue before the Convention pandal, to the mythological hero, Parasurama, the traditional creator of Kerala from the Cape to Gokarnam. We have seen in earlier chapters how false are the theories of history based on Parasurama's creation of Kerala and how these theories have their origin in the feudal-militarist ruling classes of mediaeval Kerala. That it was on this false theory of history that the bourgeois organisers of the United Kerala movement based themselves shows the utterly reactionary character of their leadership over the movement.

Despite this, however, the movement rallied the democratic elements of Kerala. Although resenting the domination of the feudal element headed by the Maharaja of Cochin, democratic sections of the people enthusiastically participated in the United Kerala Convention. The United Kerala Committee set up to continue the work of the Convention also became the rallying centre of a large number of democratic organisations and groups. Never before in the history of Kerala had the slogan of United Kerala assumed such wide mass support. It seemed as if everybody was for United Kerala.

Behind this apparent unity for a United Kerala, however, appeared very serious rifts which became more and more wide as days passed. The ruling family of Travancore and its satellites were opposed to United Kerala since it would lead to an undermining of their authority, at least to some extent; they were also determined that the Tamilians of South Travancore should not be allowed to join their brethren in the Madras part of Tamilnad. The bourgeoisie of Travancore was also anxious to keep the Tamilnad part of Travancore inside United Kerala but they would not give up their demand for United Kerala if, in realising it, they had to relinquish the Tamil areas. The bourgeoisie of Cochin and Malabar were anxious to see Kerala united but were at the same time afraid that United Kerala would be dominated by the economically stronger and politically better organised bourgeoisie of Travancore. It was these conflicts among the ruling classes of Kerala as well as the conflicts between the ruling classes of Kerala on the one hand and of the neighbouring nationalities on the other, that were fully utilised by the Government of India and its States Ministry to bring the States of Cochin and Travancore fully under its control and to smash the demand for United Kerala.

When the Government of India and the States Ministry initiated their policy of integration and merger of Indian States, Travancore and Cochin were among those few States excluded from this process on the ground that they were "viable" States, like Mysore, Kashmir and Hyderabad. But, as integration and merger of "non-viable" States were well on the point of being successfully ended, the question arose of bringing them also under the full control of the States Ministry. This was an important question for the additional reason that the democratic movement had already raised the slogan of uniting these two States with Malabar to form United Kerala. The States

Ministry therefore conceived the plan of uniting these two States to form a new State, the Travancore-Cochin State.

This was boosted before the champions of United Kerala as "the first step" in the direction of realising their goal; it was under this false plea that a section of the democratic people in Cochin and Travancore was made to accept it. As a matter of fact, however, it was a step, not in the direction of, but away from, the realisation of United Kerala. For, not only did it continue the multilingual character of the new State of Travancore-Cochin, not only did it continue the division of the Tamilian and Malayalee peoples into those living in the State of Madras and in the new State of Travancore-Cochin; it at the same time perpetuated the rule of the Maharaja of Travancore as the Rajpramukh of the new State and provided for the payment of nearly Rupees 40 lakhs per year as allowances to the two ruling families of Travancore and Cochin. The Covenant which was drawn up as the basis for the formation of the new State and which was made part of the new Constitution of India made Travancore-Cochin a Part B State in whose affairs the Government of India has extensive powers of interference and control.

With this ended one phase of the struggle for United Kerala, the phase in which there was some hope that, if the people remained united, they could make the Government of India itself implement the slogan of United Kerala. It should be borne in mind that that was the time when the All-India leadership of the Congress had to resort to various stratagems like the appointment of the Dhar Commission, the publication of its Report, its further examination by the J. V. P. Committee, etc. to sidetrack the people from the formation of linguistic states. The inauguration of the new Constitution of India in 1950, followed as it was by the unification of Travancore and Cochin into one State, put new obstacles in the way of United Kerala. The modification of the Covenant of unification of Travancore and Cochin, the transformation of the new Travancore-Cochin from the status of a Part B State to that of a Part A State, the agreement of the Indian Parliament as well as the Legislatures of Madras and Travancore-Cochin States—these extremely difficult processes had to be gone through if a United Kerala State was to be formed. The United Kerala movement under bourgeois leadership therefore died a natural death; the United Kerala Committee which functioned for a couple of years was liquidated.

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Though the United Kerala movement under bourgeois leadership was thus disrupted, the democratic upsurge out of which that movement arose did not cease. It, on the other hand, grew stronger and stronger as years passed.

It was in the midst of the biggest wave of mass actions going to their highest forms in Punnapra-Vayalar and North Malabar that the K.P.C.C.-sponsored United Kerala Movement grew. The brutal terror that was unleashed to suppress the common people who participated in these actions was ineffective. For, though for a time it succeeded in establishing a deathly calm in Ambalapuzha-Sherthala Taluks and in North Malabar, it ultimately ended up in releasing a far bigger wave of mass actions. In less than a year after the sanguinary massacre of Vayalar, tens of thousands of throats shouted: "Vayalar blood is our blood", "Release the heroes of Punnapra-Vayalar", "Try, and punish the police officers who murdered at Vayalar", etc. Not only Communists, but Socialists, Congressmen, all democrats, took the cause of Punnapra-Vayalar as their own. So too did Karivellore and Kavumpayi in North Malabar (the two places where peasants were shot dead in Chirakkal Taluk) become symbolic of the new phase of the struggle for land and democracy. The prestige and popularity of the Communist Party, the leader and organiser of these revolutionary actions, grew as never before.

The first elections to the Legislatures of Travancore and Cochin which took place in February and September, 1948 respectively showed that the left and democratic forces were uniting against the Congress. The Communist Party and the newly formed Kerala Socialist Party (a Party composed of the majority of the Congress Socialists in Kerala recruited in the years after 1942) formed a united front in Travancore to fight the Congress. They also united in boycotting the elections in Cochin. There was also an internal agreement between these two parties on the one hand and the Travancore Tamilnad Congress in South Travancore.

Though the candidates of the Communist and K.S.P. United Front in Travancore did not secure a single seat, their joint campaign served to educate the people in the task of fighting for real democracy. Furthermore, the fact that they secured over 2 lakh out of a total of over 20 lakh votes polled, added to the fact that out of the balance, over 5 lakh were

polled by the Travancore Tamilnad Congress, showed that there was a solid mass basis for the struggle against the Congress.

Similarly in Cochin, though the boycott of the elections was comparatively ineffective, the campaign that the two parties together carried on against the Praja Mandalam and the People's Congress (an organisation of the stooges of the Palace) served to show that a new force was arising to fight reactionaries of all hues. Far more effective, of course, it would have been if, as in Travancore, the two parties together had jointly fought the election and consolidated the democratic forces. But the fact that they pursued the same policy in fighting reaction was a significant development since it indicated, as did the joint participation in the Travancore election, the emergence of a united revolutionary opposition.

Meanwhile, extra-parliamentary struggles were also breaking out on a big scale. Special mention should be made of two of these struggles.

First, the *Paliyam Satyagraha* to assert the right of untouchables to walk along certain roads that were prohibited to them. This was significant in two respects. Firstly, it was directed against the biggest landlord in Cochin and, therefore, struck as sympathetic a chord among the touchable peasants as among the untouchables; it was in fact the first big mass action of the peasantry against feudal landlords, though it was not fought on a directly agrarian issue. Secondly, being directed against the most decadent, the most barbarous form of caste separatism, it rallied the progressives of all castes: among the satyagrahis who braved the lathis of the police were boys and girls of the highest castes, including members of the ruling families of the State. It had the support of all the caste organisations, all the political parties (including local committees of the Congress) and several individuals. It is significant that a Communist leader of the harbour workers of Cochin, Com. A. G. Velayudhan, died at the hands of the police while leading a squad of working-class volunteers to the scene of Satyagraha. Here was therefore that combination of the struggle for social equality, the struggle against landlordism, the mobilisation of all democrats and progressives and the leadership in action of the working class, which is the essence of the struggle for a United Democratic Kerala.

The second struggle that should be specially mentioned is the *glorious struggle of the North Malabar peasantry*. This, as is well-known, was the most determined action which the

rural poor of North Malabar resorted to against the landlord hoarders. It unleashed such an unprecedented mass force, the people who participated in it showing such a high degree of militancy and resourcefulness, that the Government had to call out the military to crush it. Korome, Payassi, Thillengeri, Onchiyam, Munayamkunnu—these became the symbols of a new phase in the history of our peasant movement, the phase in which the organised peasantry, under Communist leadership, relied on its own strength to defeat its class enemy.

These struggles were however conducted at a time when the Congress still had the halo of the biggest if not the only national organisation in the country. Congress had got full power at the Centre only a few weeks before; it was on the eve of getting power in Travancore and Cochin. A good chunk of honest democrats therefore felt that Congress should be given time and that the Communists were unnecessarily creating trouble for the Congress and its Government. This view was shared by sections of the peasantry and working class itself. It was this genuine anxiety of sections of the democratic people to give time to the Congress Government that the Congress utilised against the fighting vanguard of the people, the Communist Party.

This attitude however was an extremely short-term affair. For people began to see that Congressmen in power did not mean people's representatives in power but corrupt and greedy men trying to loot the people through their grip over the State machinery. Permits, bus routes, assignment of lands, filling of all offices with the minister's own men, creation of new jobs to give employment to the Congress stooges—these were added to the increase in the price of rice, successive breakdowns of the rationing system, squeezing of the poor peasant in the name of procurement, unrestricted blackmarket, endless repression, etc. People began to see further that the limitless greed and selfishness of Congressmen had started the process of internal squabbles among them, squabbles on the issue of dividing the loot. Group after group of Congress sympathisers got disgusted when they saw minister after minister, M.L.A. after M.L.A., intriguing against each other. Newspaper columns, trains and buses, shops and offices, every place where people had an opportunity to talk, became places for expressing extreme indignation at what was happening and hatred and contempt for the "national organisation" and its leaders.

This was naturally sought to be utilised by reactionaries

of all sorts and colours. The Catholic hierarchy in Travancore and Cochin, Hindu reaction, different factions in the Congress, all took advantage of the anti-Congress sentiment in order to pull down their adversaries from seats of power and to secure their own narrow, sectional interests. Organisations like the Hindu Mandalam, the Cochin Party etc. grew up. The large mass of the people however rejected these reactionary parties and their false slogans and rallied round the Communist Party and other democratic parties and organisations. It is remarkable that, in the first municipal elections that took place in Cochin after the Congress Ministry took office (the elections of December, 1948), the Communists secured a sizable percentage of seats. It is also remarkable that the first Communist elected to the Cochin State Legislature, early in 1949, was Com. Gopalakrishna Menon who was underground at that time. And by 1950, when a series of by-elections took place in Travancore-Cochin State, Congress had become so discredited that it lost most of the seats.

One indication of the process of disillusionment that was taking place among the people was the growth of a new generation of Socialists (in place of the 1942-45 generation, the majority of whom had left the Socialist Party to form the K.S.P. and started joint work with the Communists) as well as the origin and development of what later became the K.M.P. Party. For, it was when the genuinely democratic rank and file of the Congress began to get disgusted with their own organisation, when however they had not yet cast off their ideological and political prejudices against the Communist Party, that they started seeking out new forms of organisation for their activity. The development of these parties in the last two years is therefore an indication that, instead of the Congress succeeding in isolating the vanguard from the masses of the democratic movement, Congress is itself getting isolated from the masses.

The factor that proved decisive in the situation however was the leading role played by the Communist Party. For, it was the Communist Party which, after an initial phase of considering the National Congress a part of the anti-imperialist movement even after the August 15 transfer of power, undertook the extensive popularisation of the slogan: "Replace the Congress Government by a People's Democratic Government". It was again the Communist Party which stood at the head of the fighting people in a series of major and minor

struggles, such as the Paliyam Satyagraha, the North Malabar Struggle, the September (1948) strike of the Travancore students, several struggles of the industrial and agricultural labourers, etc. The Party penetrated into several new areas and built up the democratic movement in spite of the tremendous difficulties it had to face in doing so. All these activities provoked unprecedented repression involving the imprisonment of over 3,000 Party members and sympathisers, the arrest and beating up of several hundreds, and other unspeakable atrocities on the part of the police. Enemies of the Party thought, as they had thought in 1940 and 1946, that the Party was completely smashed; friends of the Party and even sections of the Party membership thought that the Party had gone too far in leading struggles. It was however proved by the subsequent demonstration of popular support for the Party, the tremendous mass response when the leaders of the Party came out of jail in 1951, that, just as on earlier occasions, repression against the Party had, far from weakening, strengthened the Party.

It does not, of course, follow from this that the Party committed no mistakes in leading these struggles. Mistakes were undoubtedly committed both of a strategical and a tactical nature; the Party swung from the original mistake of overestimating the role of the bourgeoisie in colonial revolutions to the new mistake of totally denying that role; in the process of correcting the earlier mistake of underestimating the leading role of the working class, the Party committed the equally serious mistake of denying the role of the peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie, denying the crucial importance of the anti-imperialist national factor, virtually denying the fact that British imperialism still had its grip over India. Mistakes were also committed in the direction of underestimating the role of parliamentary work in further advancing the democratic movement, equating the gradual process of mass disillusionment with the Congress which was taking place with the already completed process of the isolation of the Congress from the people; advancing forms of struggle for which the masses were not yet ready etc.

In spite of these mistakes, however, it is an undisputed fact that the Party was going in the general direction of replacing the present Congress Government, by a People's Democratic Government. That is why, both in Malabar and Travancore-Cochin, the Party is today considered the most poli-

tically experienced, the most well-organised Party, the Party that is best fitted to act as the leader of a new combination of the democratic masses, the People's Democratic Front.

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The anti-Congress democratic mobilisation that Kerala witnessed in the latter half of 1951 and in the beginning of 1952 is too recent to need description in detail. It is enough to note that in having joined the people's democratic movements of the rest of South India in reducing the Congress into the position of a minority party, Kerala has paved the way not only for replacing the present Congress Government of India by a People's Democratic Government but also for replacing the now defunct movement of a bourgeois-led United Kerala movement by a new movement for United People's Democratic Kerala.

For, Kerala saw in this new upsurge two forces ranged against each other. On one side were the forces of princedom, landlordism, Christian and Hindu reaction, bureaucratic corruption etc., all covered under the white caps worn by the Congressmen. Behind them stood also the cunning imperialist enslavers of the world—Churchill, Truman & Co. who want the rich fields and valleys of our beautiful land to be looted to their hearts' content. On the other side were our common people—workers, peasants, middle classes, those sections of the bourgeoisie and feudal ruling classes who want our country to be free, happy and prosperous.

And it was the latter that won and the former that were defeated when, both in Travancore-Cochin and Malabar, the Congress, the ruling party, was declared a minority party both in regard to the percentage of votes polled and the seats secured by it. Out of a total of 33,41,767 votes pulled in Travancore-Cochin, Congress got only 11,95,943, i.e., 36.6 per cent; while in Malabar it got only 3,02,353 out of 11,37,335. As for seats, Congress got 44 out of 108 in Travancore-Cochin and 4 out of 30 in Malabar. Kerala had thus the honour of being bracketed with Andhra, Telengana, Tripura State and certain districts of Tamilnad in having dealt a powerful blow against reaction and for People's Democracy.

This anti-Congress democratic mobilisation of the people however had the very serious shortcoming that it was not

united. The Socialist Party, true to its tradition of disrupting every democratic mass movement, refused to ally with any other party and in the process handed over several seats to the Congress. A similar anti-unity stand was taken by the Muslim League in Malabar as well as several independents and some small parties in Travancore-Cochin. It was, in fact, a case of several parties, groups and individuals trying to make capital for themselves out of the prevailing anti-Congress sentiment. Most of them were, of course, ignominiously defeated, but their refusal to have a united front with other anti-Congress democratic parties caused tremendous damage to the democratic camp.

Moreover, there were acute differences on fundamental and tactical questions among such parties as agreed to unite for the purpose of defeating the Congress at the polls. The K.S.P. and R.S.P., for example, insisted that the United Front should be confined to *left* parties, parties that accepted Socialism. They violently objected to bringing in the K.M.P. Party and other bourgeois nationalists into united front, because, they said, the struggle today is for Socialism and against the bourgeoisie as a class. In this, they are in perfect agreement with the Socialists who claim too that they stand for the immediate introduction of Socialism, though they do not agree with the Socialists in rejecting a united front with the Communists. Furthermore, the K.S.P. insists that the programme on which a united front has to be built should be one for an Independent Kerala, i.e., a Kerala which is independent of the rest of India. The K.M.P. Party for its part has serious differences with the Communists, K.S.P. and R.S.P., since they owe allegiance to Sarvodaya and cannot therefore countenance the revolutionary programme of these parties owing allegiance to Marxism.

In spite of not seeing eye to eye with the K.S.P., R.S.P. and K.M.P.P. on these issues, the Communist Party did its best to come to a working arrangement with them. Popularising its own fundamental programme as laid down by the Central Committee as well as its own Election Manifestos (central and provincial), the Party started negotiations with the K.M.P.P. to work out an agreed minimum programme and ultimately succeeded in its efforts. A similar effort in relation to the K.S.P. and R.S.P. proved futile because these parties insisted on their fundamental programme of Socialism being made the basis of *any* United Front. This difference

on the issue of a minimum programme is bound to lead to serious conflicts in the future, as it has already done on the issue of the formation of a non-Congress ministry in Travancore-Cochin. The K.S.P. and R.S.P. are opposed to the formation of a non-Congress ministry unless it can be done by a combination of "left" parties getting a majority in the Legislature while the Communists want a ministry of all those who accept a minimum programme.

It will be a hard task for the Communist Party in these circumstances to so develop the United Front already built up as to draw all anti-imperialist, anti-feudal classes, parties, organisations, groups and individuals into it. The Party will have to carry on a simultaneous struggle against right reformism and left sectarianism in its own ranks; to combine a firm ideological struggle against alien trends as represented by the K.S.P., R.S.P. and K.M.P.P. with the practical day-to-day work based on a united front in action with them; to carry on a firm, consistent struggle against the disruptive leaderships of other parties like the Muslim League, Socialist Party, Travancore Tamilnad Congress etc. so as to draw their ranks towards the United Front; to develop a systematic campaign among rank and file Congressmen themselves so as to further isolate the reactionary Congress leadership, etc. For, the results of the elections have made it amply clear that, though the Congress received a serious blow at the hands of the electorate, it is still powerful enough to be able to prevent the formation of a democratic non-Congress Government.

The *Programme and Statement of Policy* of the Communist Party which the Political Bureau and later the Central Committee and the All-India Party Conference adopted as well as the *Election Manifesto* of the Central Committee are powerful weapons in the hands of Communists in carrying out these tasks. And the encouraging results of the elections are a clear pointer to them that they can win greater successes in the direction of rallying all genuine anti-imperialist, anti-feudal elements around a programme of People's Democracy if they persist in carrying on their work as energetically as till now. It is only this that will enable them to take a leading role in building a United Democratic Kerala.

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One of the indications of the irresistible force of the movement for a United People's Democratic Kerala is the great cultural upsurge sweeping over our entire people—men, women and children of all classes and walks of life.

The years after the end of the Second World War have seen the emergence of hundreds of new poets, short story-writers, literary critics, actors, singers, etc. A considerable number of these new men and women of culture are drawn from among the workers and peasants while a good number of their creations are devoted to various themes connected with the struggle for social reform, national independence, political democracy, and improvement in the standard of living of the people.

A rough calculation made by the present writer, on the basis of the number of poems and short stories that appeared in some of the leftist weeklies in the course of 1951 alone, makes it possible to say that, together with the poems and stories printed in other weeklies and monthlies and with those that are published in booklet form, no less than 2,000 poems and 200 short stories have been published in 1951 dealing with the various aspects of the struggle for a United People's Democratic Kerala as their theme. This is exclusive of the hundreds of poems and songs which were composed and sung during the election campaign, of which it is difficult to estimate the number even approximately. Every village, in fact, had its own poets who composed, its own singers who sang these poems and songs. At no period in the history of our people have so many poems and songs been composed by so many people, that too by the toiling people, including factory workers, agricultural labourers and members of the scheduled castes.

This is also true with regard to other fields of culture, like the drama and other allied arts, of which there is in fact a regular flood all over Kerala. Dozens of local squads have been organised, hundreds of actors have been selected and performances attended by tens of thousands of people have been staged in every nook and corner of Kerala. An overwhelming majority of these squads and performances is connected with the trade unions, kisan sabhas and other mass organisations or with the democratic political parties, and it is the awakened working class and peasantry that have been drawn into these cultural performances.

The circle of literary criticism and the study of the various branches of science have also grown far wider than ever before. As a matter of fact one can find today that factory and agricultural workers have started taking an interest in all those fields of knowledge which till a generation ago were the close preserve of intellectuals drawn from, or closely allied with, the ruling classes. The result is that periodicals and magazines dedicated to these subjects and having a progressive democratic outlook to guide them have come to secure a far larger circulation than similar publications with no progressive democratic outlook.

As in the other spheres of the People's Democratic Movement, it is the Communist Party that leads this cultural upsurge. It was in fact the Party, which at that time was in the process of evolution within the framework of the Congress Socialist Party, that in 1937, for the first time, resolutely opposed the ruling class slogan of "Art for art's sake" with the slogan of "Art for the people". It was in 1937 that Communist authors produced various dramas and Communist actors staged them, the most celebrated of these being *Arrears of Rent* depicting agrarian struggles and *Drinking of Blood*, depicting working class struggles. This was taken to a higher level in 1942-45 when hundreds of songs, poems, dramas etc. were composed on the theme of the anti-fascist war, national liberation, the fight against famine, etc. This was also the time when it was shown in practice that various forms of folk culture (like the Kummi, Kolatam, Ottamthullal, Purakkali, etc.) can be given a progressive democratic content and made the vehicles of popular enlightenment and entertainment. It is again the Communist Party that, in the post-war years, took the lead in making the various forms of culture serve the cause of people's struggle, so that Communist writers, singers, actors, literary critics, writers of serious scientific works, etc. have come to occupy a well-established position in the world of Kerala's culture.

It would, however, be wrong to equate the new cultural upsurge with the cultural activities of the Communist Party. For, apart from other Left and democratic parties there are also Congressmen, Right Socialists and other avowedly anti-Communist people who are using culture in order to advance their own cause. As a matter of fact, every political party, every social or other organisation, is today using culture in its own respective interests. Thus has arisen, and is arising, a

large section of men and women of culture who are using culture for what they think is the best interests of the people. It is, therefore, natural that, as the process of disillusionment embraces greater and greater sections of the people, as more and more Leftists and Democrats give up their illusions and come to take the Communist stand, as more and more Socialists, Congressmen, etc. give up their present line and accept the policy of the United Democratic Front, the circle of men and women of People's Democratic Culture will also get wider.

It would be equally wrong to consider that all the cultural activities of the Communist Party are such as will help the development of a People's Democratic Culture. For, just as in the other fields of activity, so in the field of culture, the Party has committed, and is likely to commit, mistakes of an opportunist or a sectarian character. It has, therefore, to be extremely vigilant on the one hand, against the tendency to underestimate the role of the working class and peasantry as the builders of People's Democratic Culture, and on the other hand, against the tendency to ignore the role of the intelligentsia as allies of the working class and peasantry in developing Democratic Culture. These two tendencies have already expressed, and are even today expressing, themselves in the form of either kow-towing to the bourgeois "experts" of culture or of treating the progressive sections among them as enemies. Only by steering itself clear of these twin dangers can the Party play its leading role of developing a broad People's Democratic Culture, basing itself primarily on the cultural activities of, and among, the working class and the peasantry. Such a correct leadership of the Party in the cultural field will be a powerful weapon in the struggle for a United People's Democratic Kerala.

THE END