

# E. M. S. NAMBOODIRIPAD ON KERALA GOVERNMENT'S ACHIEVEMENTS

"Congress alone can provide a stable Government in Kerala. So vote for the Congress," was one of the slogans heard at Congress election meetings in early 1957. No less a person than the Prime Minister had advanced this argument during his electioneering tour in Kerala.

FIRST the State of Travancore, and then the State of Travancore-Cochin had a succession of Ministries one following the other (seven Ministries in nine years, excluding the caretaker Government in 1953-54 and President's rule in 1956-57). People had become fed up with this state of affairs. Congressmen thought that they could trace it all to the insufficient majority for the Congress in the Legislature and called for a comfortable majority in the new State of Kerala as the only way to avoid the repetition of this story.

The people, however, knew the baselessness of the Congress claim. They knew that ministerial instability started in the Travancore and Travancore-Cochin States at a time when the Congress had virtually cent per cent majority in the legislature: barring one independent who was elected to the Travancore Legislature in 1948, a few non-Congress members elected in the former Cochin State and one or two independents who got in during by-elections after the Travancore-Cochin State was constituted—this was all the non-Congress representation in the Travancore-Cochin Legislature till 1952. And yet the first Ministry of the newly formed Travancore-Cochin State could function only for a year-and-a-half; as for the former Travancore State, its first Ministry, consisting of what was considered to be the "big three" of the Travancore State Congress, fell in the matter of six or seven months.

## Unacceptable Claim

People, therefore, were not prepared to accept the claim of the Congress that it was the insufficient majority of the Congress in the Legislature that made the Ministries unstable. They, on the other hand, thought that, for the very purpose of providing a stable Government in the State of Kerala, the Congress should be reduced to a minority. It was this feeling of the people of Kerala that brought the present Communist-led Government into office.

Many were sceptical, at that time, as to what would happen to the new Communist-led Government. For, after all, this Government was voted into office on a minority of votes and had only a bare two-vote majority in the Legislature. Anything may happen to upset the slender majority of two; once again, the State may be brought back to the instability that has been its lot ever since the days when responsible Government was established in the former States of Travancore and Cochin. Many political prophets made the forecast that the Ministry would not last for more than a few months; it was this hope of somehow upsetting the Ministry that

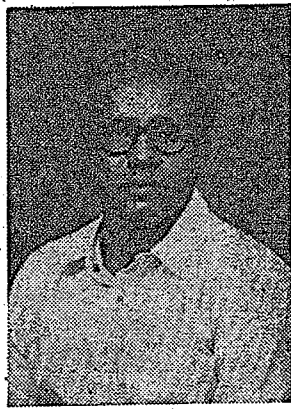
sustained the successive campaigns of the opposition, such as against the Education Bill, or the Law and Order question, etc., etc.

But, to the dismay of all such prophets, the Ministry is now completing its second year. It has beaten the record of every single Ministry that has functioned so far, except the Ministry headed by Sri T. K. Narayana Pillai. That Ministry, however, stands on a different footing, because Sri Pillai was the head of the last Ministry in the State of Travancore and the first Ministry in Travancore-Cochin. Hence, though he continued as Chief Minister for nearly 28 months, his Chief Ministership itself should be divided into two Ministries (one of about nine months and the other of a year-and-a-half). It should be further noted that the life of the present Ministry is now approaching that of the combined life of the two Ministries headed by Sri Pillai.

This record of our Government stands in contrast to the records of Congress Governments, not only in the former Travancore and Travancore-Cochin States, but in several other States as well. Ministerial instability which, according to Congressmen, is the result of the emergence of Opposition parties, none of which is strong enough to replace the Congress Government, has actually become the characteristic feature of State Governments under the leadership of the Congress. The Congress, therefore, cannot claim ability to provide stable Governments. The Communist Party, on the other hand, has been able, even under the most difficult conditions, to provide stable Government in a State which has been particularly notorious for Governmental instability.

## Relief To People

This, in itself, may be considered a big achievement of the two-year rule of our Government. But far more important than this is the fact that our Government has been able, during the short period of two years in which it has functioned in this State, to undertake such programmes of giving relief to the common people as have never been undertaken by Congress Governments in this and other States. Several measures of economic and political transformations, which the people of India had expected the Congress to undertake but which were not really undertaken by the Congress during the first decade of Independence, have been undertaken by us and are now in various stages of implementation. As a matter of fact, it is these measures of economic and political changes desired by the nation and undertaken by us that enabled us



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to continue in office for two years with a slender two-vote majority in the Legislature.

Our party has always attached great importance to the agrarian problem. Without a radical solution to this problem, it is impossible in our opinion, for our country to advance in any direction: industrialisation, improvement of agriculture, dissemination of modern scientific knowledge, etc.—all this requires the elimination of feudal domination in the countryside as its prerequisite. It was to this end that the Party had advanced the slogan of "abolition of landlordism without compensation" and "land to the tiller".

## Weakening Landlordism

The full implementation of the Party's programme in this direction is, of course, impossible within the framework of a Constitution which enjoins the payment of compensation even to the biggest landlords. However, it is possible to take certain important steps which substantially weaken landlordism. A programme for doing this has been accepted even by the Congress organisation though it has failed to implement it. Our Government, therefore, took upon itself the task of implementing this programme.

The Agrarian Relations Bill which we have prepared has already been examined by a Select Committee of the Legislature and is now to be considered by the Legislature clause by clause. Eight months for the preparation of the Bill, four months for its circulation among the people for eliciting their opinion, and less than one year for the Select Committee to complete its work of issuing a questionnaire, going from district to district to record evidence, come to conclusions on the various questions posed by the public and then to amend the Bill clause by clause—this may appear a rather unduly long time for the progress of the Bill. But, considering the strong feelings and passion roused by the Bill and the differences of approach and emphasis even among the supporters of the Bill, one can take legitimate pride in the fact that all this was done at least in this time.

I cannot, in this connection, help referring to a

Article By The Chief Minister On Two Years Of The Communist-Led Ministry

statement recently made by the President of the Kerala Congress Committee who accused the Government of Kerala of unduly delaying passage of the Bill. He is reported to have assured the people that the Congress would never allow the Communist Government to continue in its delaying tactics. Brave words indeed! One would, however, wish that the KPCC had shown this awareness of the urgency for Agrarian Legislation before 1957 when its representatives were ruling this State. Even today, it would be more useful if the KPCC President were to use his good offices with his own comrades in the other States who, after all, had to be pulled up by the All-India Congress itself (in its Nagpur Session) for their failure to bring about agrarian reforms. Let the President of the KPCC remember that, while Congress Governments in many States are yet to prepare their Land Reform Bills, the Select Committee on the Kerala Bill had almost completed its labours before the Nagpur Session of the Congress was held.

Agrarian reform, however, is only one of the most important planks in the democratic programme which our Government is carrying out. Equally important is the reorientation to be given to the work of planned development of our resources.

It is important in this connection to note that though India as a whole had very important projects of development during the First and Second Five-Year Plans, precious little of that has come to Kerala. The huge hydro-electric projects, steel and other heavy industries, the great construction projects connected with industries and other economic activities—none of this has come to Kerala. We know that this is not the particular misfortune of Kerala. This has been the lot of, say, States like Assam also.

Even among those States which have been more fortunate

than us, there are some who had far greater share of India's development than others. We, therefore, have placed before the people of Kerala, and of other States of India too, a programme of integrated, all-round development of the whole country which would require a conscious plan of taking backward areas forward. It was this that was underlined by our Finance Minister, Sri Achutha Menon, in his budget speech this year in the following words:

"Kerala does not have even a single scheme under heavy industries in the public sector in which the Union Government have directly invested. The people of Kerala hope that a different approach will be perceptible at least in the Third Plan. In my view, the people of Kerala would consider the issue of the second ship-building yard as the touchstone of the Centre's earnestness in this line. May I avail myself of this opportunity to declare that every day of delay to announce that it would be located in Cochin, serves only to strengthen the misgivings of the people of Kerala."

## Backward Areas

"Let alone the mammoth schemes implemented by the Centre with their direct investment, Kerala has not been lucky to get even a single industrial undertaking in the private sector also. When such things are pointed out, the excuses put forward generally are that a particular industry is started in a particular State in consideration of the facilities available there and that things in the private sector are governed by the wishes of the private investor concerned. These things have surely to be considered. Nobody disputes them, especially the one mentioned first, viz., the conveniences for starting the industry, the availability of raw

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materials and other conveniences; but invariable compliance with the whims of the private investor is not an indispensable criterion. Government must be prepared to suggest the location for the industry at the time of granting the licence. A deliberate and conscious attempt to bring up the industrially backward areas to the level of other areas is possible only this way.

"For instance, the finest clay in India is obtained in Kerala. But the Government of India, when granting the licence to start a factory for making high tension electrical goods do not stipulate where that factory should be located. Nor have they accepted the principle of such a stipulation. Consequently what the industrialist, who gets the licence, does is to start the factory anywhere he likes and to take from Kerala the raw material he wants. This is a practice which pains the people of Kerala very much. What amenity is it that Kerala lacks for starting any such factory? Nothing. So there is no unfairness in suggesting at the time of the granting of licence that such a factory should be located in Kerala.

"I was only mentioning an example. No particular con-

cern is referred to in this statement. I am raising a general principle. I believe this principle will be accepted by all the under-developed States of the Union. The reaction which the people of Assam had when the Government of India decided against the setting up of an oil refinery in Assam, an area which produced oil in abundance, will be felt by the people of other States too under similar circumstances. Special care has to be taken in connection with the Third Five-Year Plan to eliminate to the maximum extent regional imbalances and to provide adequate chances for all regions for the utmost development according to their genius.

### Due Share Of Development

"In short, the substance of what is urged is, that so far as Kerala is concerned the Union Government and the Planning Commission should adopt an enabling policy under which such industries as related to rubber, bamboo, forests, mineral sands, etc., should be located and developed here. Another industry

worth mention is the manufacture of drugs. It was informed that three projects for drugs manufacture in the public sector were contemplated by the Centre to be started with Russian aid. It is the considered view of this Government that Kerala is most suited for locating the phytochemical plant amongst these. This fact has already been intimated to the Central Government." (Emphasis added)

While thus emphasising the importance of Kerala and other States getting their due share of India's development, our Government also emphasises the need for a reorientation in the outlook of our own people in the matter of development.

Our State being highly deficit in food, it is of the utmost importance that increased food production is given the place of pride in our developmental activities. An important place should be assigned also to the organisation of such small and medium industries as would increase employment opportunities. These two needs of development should make us reorientate ourselves on productive activities rather than on social service activities. For, however import-

ant, social service would not add to our material wealth or help in the solution of such acute problems as food deficit and unemployment.

We have unfortunately inherited a tradition of more or less equating development with education, medical and public health, communications and other social services, to the exclusion of agricultural and industrial development. This is an inheritance that should be given up if we are to implement a programme of real development.

Another important direction in which we should reorientate ourselves in development is greater and greater reliance in the utilisation of our own internal resources, which are vast but remain to be tapped. While it is undoubtedly correct for us to demand of the Central Government that our legitimate share of India's development should come to us, we should realise that there is a lot of work which we ourselves can do without any help from the Centre, or at best with resources that exist in our State.

Similarly, while it is the bounden duty of the State Government to help all districts with the necessary technical and financial assistance required for their development, the people in the districts and lower units should remember that they can themselves do a lot if only they pool their own material and human resources. The prevalent tendency to look upon the Central and State Governments as the agencies to spoon-feed all the districts and villages of our State should be put an end to and the people made to depend on themselves to the utmost possible extent.

This idea is sought to be worked out in actual practice when our Government calls for shramdan in furtherance of its developmental activities. This was recently carried out in an organised way during the Minor Irrigation Campaign organised in January when dozens of local projects, which have been investigated and approved, but have not yet been taken up for execution were brought under the scheme of shramdan. Hundreds of people belonging to various walks of life offered themselves to do this work and thus to make possible what has so far been considered impossible.

This is as yet only a small beginning. It, however, is a beginning. If this is carried forward, improved upon on the basis of experience and applied to every department of developmental activity, it will be possible for us to work out a programme of development which is vaster in scope and easier of fulfilment than many of us imagine today.

### Administrative Set-Up

Such an approach to developmental activities requires a radical reorientation in the administrative structure. For, the vast unutilised material and human resources of the people cannot be fully exploited for the benefit of development if the labouring people are not given a place of honour in the economic and administrative set-up of the country. This is impossible with the present system of administration.

The administrator and the

technical expert have, of course, to play a very important role in organising and coordinating the activities of the people. But their efficiency and usefulness as administrators and experts consists in the degree to which they are able to inspire confidence among the labouring people. Such a feeling of people's confidence in the administrator and the expert can be generated only if the administrative set-up is democratised and decentralised. To this end, the Administrative Reforms Committee set up by our Government has recommended—and the Government has accepted these recommendations—to the effect that elected organs of administration should be set up at the panchayat and district levels.

No more will the Collector of the district be the all powerful administrator and agent of the Government in the district. Parallel with him will be the elected head of the elected District Council which will be responsible for the activities of the Government in the district (except the departments of Revenue and Law and Order). The present over-centralised Secretariat of the State capital will be deprived of several of its functions which will be transferred to the District Council and to the District Collector. Many of the functions which are performed today by the District Collector will, in their turn, be transferred to the panchayats as well. The village administration which is today conducted by permanent officials, directly responsible to the taluk and district authorities, will become part and parcel of the elected village panchayat.

This is the broad outline of the reorganisation of the administration envisaged by our Government; it is to this end that a Panchayat Bill and a District Councils Bill have been drafted by us. (The former has already been introduced in the Legislature and referred to the Select Committee, while the latter is shortly to be introduced.)

These are some of the measures of economic and political transformations that we have undertaken during the last two years. There are, of course, several others which have been left out here. But even this brief discussion is enough to show that, as opposed to the previous Governments in this State and most Congress Governments in other States, we are trying our level best to carry out the programme of democratic transformations to which all the democratic elements in the country are pledged.

We would have been able to do far more if the Opposition in this State (which happens to be the ruling party in the rest of the country) were a little more cooperative in implementing a programme which is jointly accepted by them and us. It is, however, unfortunate that they do not take such a constructive attitude, but try to create difficulties for us. We, on our part, are confident that with the increasing support that we are receiving from the people of Kerala and of the rest of the country, we will be able to face this opposition and carry out the programme to which we are pledged.

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