

Right Communists Play the Congress Game in Kerala*

**Statement jointly issued by A. K. Gopalan and
E. M. S. Namboodiripad at a Press Conference in
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It is with interest that we read T. V. Thomas' claims of being the champion of Kerala's struggle against the Centre and the unity of the front that is needed to lead that struggle to success. If this does not remain in words but is translated into action, there will be none happier than us, because we have always advocated and worked for a line of joint struggle by Communists and Socialists as well as all democrats against the policies of the Congress which rules at the Centre. As a part of this programme, at the time of all the elections, we had tried to form non-Congress united fronts. When we had begun to work with such a perspective T. V. Thomas and his friends had condemned us saying that we were being led by blind anti-Congressism. One has only to recall what they had said about us from 1962-63 to the Kerala elections in 1965. If they have changed the attitude which they had adopted then, if they have today begun to feel that they should take the lead in building broad unity for the struggle against the Central Congress Government, it is clearly welcome.

But we cannot but ask whether T. V. Thomas and his party have any idea of the tactics which the Congress rulers are resorting to, to break the growing unity of the people against them and whether they have the perspective of foiling these tactics. This question will serve as the best touchstone to see how far their claim conforms to the reality.

When the Communist Party was united and the conflict inside it began between the revisionists and Marxists, the Congress Government at the Centre had used all the weapons in its armoury against those Communists who were waging the struggle against revisionism. The Home Department of the Central Government then launched repressive measures on the basis that the revisionist Communist leaders were "patriots" and those who opposed them were "Chinese agents".

When in 1964, the revisionists and Marxists became two separate parties, the Central Congress Government did not hesitate to stamp the Marxists as "friends of China" and take repressive measures against them. We do not now wish to go deep into an examination of the event of that period. But we cannot but request T. V. Thomas, who has today entered the scene as the champion of "broad democratic unity" to the extent of even getting the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee to participate in the struggle against the Central Government, to examine for himself the attitude he and his friends took to the anti-Communist united front which the Central Government was knocking together in 1962-65 and its central slogan of "isolating the Chinese agents".

The "White Paper" and the Rightists

It will be good if T. V. Thomas and his friends will calmly think over a few things like the source from which the slanders contained in Nanda's "White Paper" originated, from whom the Central Government got the greatest help then, who were then the champions of broad democratic unity against the Chinese agents, etc.

We had hoped that we would be able to treat these discomfiting events as a closed chapter of our political history. We had hoped that the experience of the 1965 elections in Kerala would provide a lesson to T. V. Thomas and his friends and that they would not again become collaborators in the anti-Communist (Marxist) activities of the Central Government.

We had also thought that the development of the united

front formed to successfully conduct the mass struggles following the Kerala Bandh of 1966, the general elections of 1967, etc., would create the conditions which would relegate to the background the memory of the 1962-65 history. Unfortunately our hopes and expectations have all been belied.

Experience is that even after the seven-party United Front assumed office on March 6, 1967, the Right Communists are continuing their anti-Communist (Marxist) attitude which only helps the tactics of the Central Congress Government. One thing will be clear from an examination of what the Right Communists have been doing since the formation of the Ministry, from their propaganda and agitation, and that is that at every stage they have acted with the sole aim of isolating the Communist Party of India (Marxist). In this matter they have followed the same tactics and policy pursued by the Congress and the Kerala Congress.

Playing the Game of the Congress

For example :

1. Within a few weeks after the United Front Government assumed office, the food situation in the State became extremely acute. Even the six-ounce ration which had been given for two years became impossible, the ration quantum had to be cut to three ounces. As a natural consequence of this, prices in the open market rose inordinately.

The Congress consciously tried to channelize the helplessness and demoralization of the people into anger and discontent against the United Front Ministry. Student organizations under Congress leadership launched agitations and struggles against the Kerala Government. They also made an attempt to isolate and attack the CPI(M). Dr. Georg Thomas, Deputy leader of the Legislature Congress Group, demanded the removal of the Communist (Marxist) Food Minister.

2. The Right Communists and their Press took up positions which helped this anti-Communist (Marxist) agitation organized by the Congress and other opposition parties.

The same demand which Dr George Thomas raised in the Assembly—the demand for the removal of the Food Minister—was raised from outside the Assembly by the State Council of the Right Communist Party. When the Food Minister was ill and bed-ridden and the Chief Minister was temporarily looking after the food portfolio, the Right Communist leader, C. Achutha Menon, expressed his glee at a Press Conference saying whatever be the reasons, the Food Department was not being handled by the Food Minister.

What the Right Communists have been propagating since then is only a repetition of what the Congress says. Contrary to what had been clearly stated in the Policy Statement adopted by the United Front and placed before the people before the general elections, the Right Communists conducted their campaign screening the responsibility of the Centre in the matter of rice allotment. They went to the extent of issuing statements saying that the six ounce ration could not be given even during the Onam festival not because the Centre had not given what it had promised, but because the State Government had not done what it should have.

Covering up the difficulties created by the Centre in the matter of taking over the management of rice mills under private ownership and giving powers to popular committees, they spread the blatant lie that the Kerala Government had failed on both these issues. Later they themselves had to admit in the Coordination Committee of the United Front that their charge was baseless. The Coordination Committee, with the assent of the Right Communists, also unanimously stated that the rice crisis in the State was due to the Centre's failure and discrimination against the State. Yet they did not have the decency to express regret for the lie they had spread.

3. Not only on the question of rice, but on many other issues, the Rightists carried on continuous propaganda to blacken the CPI(M) in general and its Ministers in particular. It was some of these slanders by them that were later repeated by RSP leader Sreekantan Nair in a letter. The

Coordination Committee was asked to enquire into them. The Sub-Committee appointed by the Coordination Committee for the inquiry has been satisfied that all that had been said against our Party and our Ministers are baseless. In this matter also, the Rightists have not had the decency to express regrets for having spread blatant lies.

4. The slanderous charges made against us by the Right Communists and certain other conflicts inside the United Front became the subject-matter of discussion in the Coordination Committee's meeting in November. After the discussions, it was unanimously decided that such open charges and conflicts should not be repeated. We hoped that a new chapter would begin after that. But the Right Communists have continued in their old way.

Their Broad Unity

More vehemently than ever before the Rightists began naming individually and attacking CPI(M) Ministers. They took up issues connected with the departments handled by CPI(M) Ministers and organized agitations and sought support for these agitations from opposition parties including the Congress. In an organized fashion they tried to build "broad democratic unity" in these anti-Communist (Marxist) agitations.

5. The culmination of all this was what happened in the budget session of the State Assembly. In this session, the Right Communists not only made charges against CPI(M) Ministers; on the basis of these charges they also sought to rally the Congress-Kerala Congress opposition behind them. It is worth mentioning that members of the Congress and Kerala Congress on more than one occasion said that they supported the entire speeches of the Right Communists except for one sentence where they had said that they supported the budget.

6. We are not forgetting that on many occasions other constituent parties of the United Front have participated in these attacks against us. But the initiative for this had always

been taken by the Right Communists. After the Congress and the Kerala Congress, no other party had the impudence of the Right Communists to spread so many lies so shamelessly against us.

7. When all this was going on, the Congress and the Kerala Congress were raising the slogan of isolating the CPI(M) inside the United Front. Kerala Congress leader K. M. George in more than one speech endorsed the agitations of the Right Communists against the CPI(M) and stressed the need for forming a Ministry excluding the Marxists. As for the Congress, the resolution of its Kottayam Conference evolved tactics for a struggle to isolate the CPI(M) and an appeal was made to the other constituents of the United Front to work towards this.

8. This is the occasion when, not only in Kerala but all over India, reactionaries are raising the slogan of isolating the Communist Party of India (Marxist). It is under cover of this slogan that they began their first attempts to overthrow the Ajoy Mukherjee Ministry in West Bengal.

The Truth Behind this Slogan

It is under cover of this same slogan that they are trying to sabotage the united front that is now taking shape in West Bengal. Anyone can see the attempts that are being made on the all-India level itself to exclude the Communist Party of India (Marxist), rally all the other non-Congress parties against the CPI(M) and thus disrupt the non-Congress united fronts.

A Congress member of Parliament even moved a non-official resolution demanding a ban on the CPI(M). The Speaker refused permission to the motion only on the technical ground that instead of mentioning the Communist Party of India (Marxist), it had referred to the Left Communist Party.

It is a part of this all-India effort to evolve tactics to isolate the CPI(M) that the Kottayam Conference of the Congress, in the presence of Congress President Nijalingappa and Central Minister Panampilly Govinda Menon, adopted

the political resolution which worked out the tactics for isolating the CPI(M).

9. In this situation, what should the Rightists have done if their claim of being champions of anti-Centre struggle and mass struggles have any basis? What they should have done was to tell the people the game behind this slogan of isolating the CPI(M), openly state that this was the first step to disrupt the growing unity of the people against the Congress and the anti-people policies it has been pursuing, and appeal to each of the constituent parties of the United Front and to the entire people of Kerala to be vigilant.

10. But what did the Right Communists actually do? What they did was to even more vehemently repeat their slanderous allegations against the Ministers of the CPI(M), raise even imaginary issues connected with their departments and launch agitations and struggles, even issue statements publicly that a CPI(M) Minister was accessory to a murder—in short, what they did was to pursue against the CPI(M) the same tactics of struggle the Congress had evolved in another form.

11. Crowning all this came a statement by T. V. Thomas that the CPI(M) was getting isolated because of its own mistakes. T. V. Thomas is happy about the self-isolation, for whatever reasons, of the Party which the Congress and Kerala Congress are openly trying to isolate. What can be said about a person who with the same tongue speaks about the anti-Centre struggle and claims to be champion of popular unity for that struggle!

Let us remind T. V. Thomas and his friends that even if our Party has to face temporary isolation for popularizing a policy which we think is correct, we are not afraid of such a situation. We had proved this in 1962 and 1965. Everyone including T. V. Thomas' party had then shouted that we were Chinese agents, that we are Pakistani agents. Is it not because you thought that we were totally isolated that you created an electoral front against us in 1965? You know what its outcome was and if you still want to pursue the

same tactics, we cannot stop you from doing it. As for us, we are not following any policy which can result in self-isolation. The policy we have adopted is one which will facilitate the mobilization of the largest number of people in the struggle against the Central Congress Government.

If, for any reason, the policy we pursue is not for the time being acceptable to all sections of the people we will not stop popularizing and implementing that policy for fear of the temporary isolation that is likely to result. Hence, we will use this occasion to once again state what our policy is.

As made clear in the joint statement adopted at the time of the formation of seven-party United Front before the elections, the Central Congress Government's anti-people policies are responsible for food scarcity, unemployment and all the other ills from which Kerala is suffering. Hence any effort to defend the interests of the people of Kerala can only be through struggle against the Central Congress Government and the anti-people policies it pursues.

The majorities in legislatures which non-Congress parties secure in Kerala or any other State and the Ministries that are formed on the basis of such majorities have to be utilized for the struggle to shorten the life of Congress rule at the Centre.

It is possible that such a line would not be completely acceptable to the Right Communists or other parties. They perhaps think that they should somehow maintain good relations with the Central Congress Government and run the State administration without creating any big conflicts. That this is a myth, that the existence of the non-Congress Governments itself depends on the struggle against the Central Congress Government has already been proved by the experience of West Bengal and other non-Congress States.

Experience of Kerala

What has been the experience of Kerala itself?

Till March 1967 the Centre supplied enough rice to maintain a six-ounce ration. From April 1967, this was suddenly stopped.

As a result the ration had to be reduced to three ounces. Even after the first harvest of what has been called an unprecedentedly bumper crop, the Centre is not allotting enough rice to the State to give a six-ounce ration. To add to the problem the Centre has also given the directive to raise the price of even the three-ounce ration.

Congress leaders of Kerala go around saying that there is no political discrimination in all this, that it is because of difficulties in procuring enough rice, etc. In reply to this we had said that if the Centre was so helpless, the State Government was ready to take the responsibility of purchasing the rice needed by the State and distributing it. All that the Centre had to do was to give the necessary powers to the State Government and the facilities needed to buy rice from any of the States of India or from any country outside.

The Centre did not concede this legitimate demand. According to them, this would break the unity of India! Then, if we say that to maintain that unity, the Centre should buy rice from wherever it is available and supply it to the State, the Central Government is not prepared to do that either. At the same time, Congress leaders in the State start agitations against the State Government for not getting adequate rice.

Thus on the one side there is the ration-cut, on another side ration price-increase and on the third side, agitations by local Congressmen against the State Government. For quite some time now it has been clear that the Kerala people will have to powerfully oppose the Congress policies responsible for all this. We had said that the people of Kerala should fight as one against this cruel policy of the Centre and that the Coordination Committee of the United Front should give the lead for such a struggle.

In pursuance of this the Coordination Committee had called for the Kerala Bandh on September 11. After that, we had again raised in the Coordination Committee the question of organizing the agitation and struggle against the Centre. The Coordination Committee had, in fact, appointed a sub-committee to plan out this agitation and struggle.

But we had to bring before the people the issue of this struggle against the Centre when it became clear that instead of going forward on the path decided on, Right Communists were trying to divert the attention of the people against the CPI(M), and some other constituent parties of the United Front were also knowingly or unknowingly involved in this Rightist game. This should expose the hollowness of their cry that we are bypassing the United Front and organizing the struggle alone.

When the Rightists began postponing the struggle on one pretext or another and at the same time continued the slander campaign against the CPI(M), we had to declare categorically that even if we were alone we would fight this inhuman policy of the Centre. Even when we declared this we were confident that once all the facts were placed before the people, the other parties including the Right Communists will have to come to the path of the anti-Centre struggle.

Our decision was the forerunner to strengthening the anti-Centre struggle on the basis of the broadest unity of the people. And on that basis, we had begun our work. We are happy that this is at least partially understood now, it is also welcome that even the Right Communists have now begun making speeches and issuing statements in support of the anti-Centre struggle and the popular unity needed for it.

It is also good that they have now begun demanding that the United Front should discuss and take decisions about when the struggle against the Centre should begin, what forms it should take, etc. We will gladly participate in such discussions. But we want to state that if these discussions are to become fruitful, the Right Communists should abandon their attitude of singling out the CPI(M) and attacking it.

Before closing this statement, we would like to bring up another point. Apart from speeches and statements in the Press, other efforts have also been going on to isolate us. It had even reached the stage of a proposal to form a Ministry excluding us and with the support of the Congress and Kerala Congress. Our information is that T. V. Thomas and some

other Right Communist leaders were active participants in these efforts. It was when this conspiracy was being hatched that T. V. Thomas made his notorious Ponnani and Trichur speeches. It is not much use the Right Communists now concealing all this and coming out as the champions of unity.

We are not very happy that we have to openly speak of the wrong attitude of the Right Communists. It is our wish that this should be avoided as far as possible. But we were convinced that even to build the popular unity about which the Right Communists are speaking so much now, it was necessary to bring before the people the misdeeds they have committed so far. We hope that they will give some thought to all this and correct their policy. We also hope that the popular unity manifested in the 1966 Kerala Bandh and the 1967 General Elections will get further strengthened and Kerala's struggle against the Centre will be crowned with success.