

CHAPTER III

KERALA

302. The formation of Kerala follows as a corollary to the proposals made in the preceding Chapter. Here also territorial adjustments have to be made around an existing homogeneous unit. The present Travancore-Cochin State is a predominantly unilingual State. Even with the Tamil-speaking taluks of the South, the Malayalam percentage is 86·3 which is higher than that of the main languages of most other States. In three of its four districts, Quilon, Trichur and Kottayam, the Malayalam-speaking population is as high as 94 per cent.

303. The main addition to the State will be the contiguous district of Malabar. Physically and culturally, Malabar district is somewhat isolated from the rest of the Madras State. Its problems are different from those of the eastern part of the peninsula. Malabar's land tenure has special features of its own characterised by a hierarchical system, from the Jenmi downwards to the verumpattomdar. Rubber, coffee, cardamom and plantation and cash crops like pepper, ginger and cashew are important in the agricultural economy of the district. Calicut on the West Coast is the collecting centre for the produce exported from the Walluvanad, Ernad and Wynaad taluks of Malabar. The district has very little by way of irrigation works. Communication lines connect it closely with the West Coast; with its long coastline it is accessible to the same maritime influences as the rest of Travancore-Cochin. Inheritance is generally matrilineal and the population is predominantly (96 per cent.) Malayalam-speaking.

304. Fort Cochin, which is administratively part of Malabar, will automatically go to Kerala. It has been argued that security considerations are important in deciding its future, because of the location of a major port in this area. But that provides no justification for creating a centrally-administered area in this region. The Government of India have adequate powers in regard to ports under the Constitution, and the transfer of Fort Cochin to the proposed Kerala State is unlikely to affect materially the interests of the port.

305. The other areas to which claims have been advanced on behalf of Kerala are the districts of South Kanara and Nilgiris, Coorg and the Amindive and Laccadive Islands.

306. There is little justification for the Kerala claim to the whole of the South Kanara district. The Dar Commission had included only

the Kasaragod taluk of South Kanara in the geographically contiguous area in which the Malayalam language is largely spoken. As a result of the resorting of census slips, the language figures for this taluk are now available. According to these figures, the Malayalam-speaking percentage is about 72. Though Kannadiga opinion in South Kanara concedes the claim of Kerala up to the Chandragiri river, administratively it will be more expedient to join the whole taluk to Kerala than to break it up purely on linguistic grounds.

307. The Kerala claim to Coorg is untenable on grounds which we shall discuss later. The Laccadive Islands already form part of the Malabar district. In our opinion, the Amindive group should also form part of the prospective Kerala State. It was an accident that the Amindives ever came to be attached to South Kanara. It would be desirable and convenient, if the future Kerala State were administratively in charge of all the islands, including the Amindive group.

308. The prospective Kerala State will thus consist of the existing State of Travancore-Cochin less the five Tamil taluks of Thovala, Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam, Vilavancode and Shenkotta plus Malabar district which includes the Fort Cochin area, the Kasaragod taluk of South Kanara district and the Amindive Islands. The State thus constituted will have an area of about 14,980 square miles and a population of about 13.6 millions. It will be linguistically homogeneous; about 94 per cent. of its population will be Malayalam-speaking and the State will be geographically compact. It will be well-served from the point of view of communications.

309. There have been some suggestions that, considering its size, the density of its population, which is the highest in India, and the menacing problem of unemployment, it would be best for the whole of the Kerala area to be united with Madras to form a South Indian State. A further argument in favour of this proposal is that Travancore-Cochin, deprived of its Tamil taluks and yoked with economically-backward Malabar, would not constitute a viable unit.

310. The proposal is attractive from many points of view, but neither the Malayalam-speaking people nor the Tamilians have welcomed it. As it is frankly said to be in the interests of Kerala, one can understand the reluctance of the Tamilians to be associated with a little more than 13 million Malayalees who not only speak a different language but (except for the population of the district of Malabar) have never been united with them before. Opinion in

Travancore-Cochin itself irrespective of party affiliations is, also generally, against this proposal.

311. Yet another proposal made before us was for the formation of a West Coast Pradesh consisting of the whole coastal area from Gokarnam in the North Kanara district to Cape Comorin. The proposal is only an ambitious variant of the plan for the formation of Kerala. It rests, however, on weak foundations in that there can be little justification for adding the whole of South Kanara and a portion of North Kanara to Kerala on the ground of so-called common economic interests.

312. We have considered very carefully the arguments which have been or can be advanced against the formation of the proposed Kerala State from the financial and economic point of view. We shall first deal with Malabar. Malabar, it has been argued, is an under-developed district. The gap between revenue and expenditure in this area is already very large, but is bound to become larger, as the level of economic development is brought up to that of the rest of Kerala. The land revenue system which prevails in Malabar is, moreover, different from that of the existing Travancore-Cochin State, where the tax is or will soon be levied at a flat rate. It has been further contended that if this concession of a flat rate of tax were extended to Malabar, the financial deficit will be increased. When Malabar's deficit in food supplies is taken into account, and when allowance is made for the facts that tenancy laws in this district are different from the rest of Kerala, and that a further round of integration of services on account of the merger of Malabar will involve a great deal of time and labour, and perhaps also much additional expenditure, the transfer of Malabar to the proposed Kerala State, it is argued, will be inadvisable on financial as well as administrative grounds.

313. *Prima facie*, these arguments are not without substance. But a detailed examination indicates that there is less in these objections than may at first be thought. The financial deficit of the Malabar district, for example, seems to have been exaggerated. The Madras Government has tried to estimate this deficit during the three years ended March, 1953, and has arrived at the conclusion that the gap between revenue and expenditure cannot be in excess of Rs. 55 lakhs on an average. If some allowance is made for the facts that interest charges on account of irrigation and power projects located in this district are not considerable, the deficit, on the basis of information supplied by the Madras Government, will not be very heavy.

314. There is also reason to believe that Malabar's revenue will improve to some extent in the near future, for the existing state of Madras has since introduced an agricultural income-tax the yield of which in this district will have to be taken into consideration. Malabar's prospective financial position cannot, therefore, be described as unsatisfactory. The other objections are also not of such importance as to influence our decision regarding the future of this district.

315. It has been claimed that South Travancore or Nanjil Nad is the main rice-producing area in the State, and that the food deficit of the prospective Kerala State will be greatly increased, if this area is separated. When the substantial contribution from the Tamil taluks, and particularly from Thovala, Devikulam and Peermede, to the revenues of the existing State of Travancore-Cochin (largely because of the agricultural income-tax) is also taken into account, the argument that the transfer of these Tamil taluks might impair the economy of the State would appear to be reinforced.

316. Here again, there are reasons to believe that the financial position or economy of the Kerala State will not be adversely affected. Under the arrangements which have been proposed, the fairly heavy revenue from Devikulam and Peermede will be retained by the prospective Kerala State; and the rice production in Neyyattinkara taluk will belong to the State. Incidentally, arguments based on the assumption that Nanjil Nad is the granary of Travancore-Cochin State seem to lack substance. Estimates of food production in Nanjil Nad vary considerably. But even if the most liberal estimates, namely, those of the Travancore-Cochin Government were accepted, Nanjil Nad will not be self-sufficient in food. The result is that neither the existing State of Travancore-Cochin nor the prospective Kerala State will actually be losing a food surplus area if Nanjil Nad is transferred to Madras.

317. The power potential which is available in Devikulam and Peermede taluks will continue to be utilised by Travancore-Cochin or Kerala according to our proposals. Besides, no material changes in the Devikulam colonisation scheme of the present Travancore-Cochin Government will be necessary.

318. We should like to refer in conclusion to certain recent trends and decisions which, in our opinion, materially affect or alter the financial picture of the prospective Kerala State as it has been presented to us. An important development is that food administration

has now ceased to be the responsibility of the State Government. The effect of this is to relieve the revenue budget of the existing Travancore-Cochin State of a considerable burden (from 1943 to 1954 the total cost of subsidies has been estimated at a little less than Rs. 17 crores, of which a little more than Rs. 8 crores was met by the State). Another fact which is relevant to the present discussion is that pay-scales in Travancore-Cochin have recently been raised. This meets to some extent the objection that pay-scales in Travancore-Cochin and Madras vary so greatly that readjustment of boundaries in this area is bound to create problems. Reference has also been made already to the importance of agricultural income-tax, which has now become leviable in Malabar district. The net result of these recent developments is that the financial picture is no longer as gloomy as it was generally believed to be. Any argument, therefore, which assumed that the financial position of the future Kerala State will necessarily be worse than that of the existing State of Travancore-Cochin does not appear to be valid, and cannot, in any case, out-weigh the obvious advantages of the formation of the proposed Kerala State.