CHAPTER EIGHT
Contesting the “Great Transformation”:
Local Struggles with the Market in South India

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Anomalies and Puzzles: Interpreting Polanyi

Much social science discourse, implicitly or explicitly, is about the search for central tendencies and structured simplifications: the mean, the generalizable, the patterned. Exceptions to central tendencies are often dismissed as mere “cases,” “outliers,” or even “error terms.” We might learn from the practice of clinicians: anomalies also suggest puzzles.

The state of Kerala in Southwest India is sufficiently anomalous that many Indologists would prefer to ignore it. Like Sri Lanka, it is anomalous for its very high levels of life expectancy and literacy and very low infant mortality rates despite aggregate poverty. Poverty reduction, which has lagged generally in India, has proceeded significantly faster in Kerala than in other Indian states—more than 120 times the rate of Bihar, for example, or 4 times that of Rajasthan. Its agrarian organizations have historically been well developed, in contrast to most of the subcontinent and much of the poor world. Kerala elected what was arguably the first communist government in the world in 1957 and remains—contrary to the global pattern—an electoral stronghold of communism in a nation of decidedly centrist political tendencies. Its agrarian reforms have been radical, abolishing an especially oppressive rentier landlordism integrated with agrestic serfdom, in a period of Indian history dominated by inaction on the agrarian question. Agrarian labor legislation in Kerala establishes entitlements anomalous for the poor world and radical by the standards of rich nations. In a remarkable decade, 1970–80, beginning with the effective date of the land reform and ending
with the mobilization of farmers against labor reforms derisively referred to as the "factory acts" and hailed as a magna carta for labor by the government, much of Kerala's agrarian world was turned upside down.

In order to understand the political dynamics of this transformation, I find myself drawn to a reevaluation of the work of Karl Polanyi on responses to transitions to market society. This theoretical turn might itself seem puzzling and anomalous. Polanyi wrote *The Great Transformation* in 1944, when the civilization dominated by market societies seemed to have collapsed into barbarism and disintegration. He explicitly argued that both socialism and fascism were responses to the failures and disintegrative effects of the "self-regulating" market system domestically and internationally. Michael Hechter correctly noted that Polanyi's polemical and problematic tract "appeared to be the kind of book likely to attract hostile notices from nearly all quarters. In fact, it has become something of a classic... and interest in Polanyi, if anything, continues to build." Douglass North suggests an explanation: "The stubborn fact of the matter is that Polanyi is correct in his major contention that the nineteenth century was a unique era in which markets played a more important role than at any other time in history. Polanyi not only argued convincingly that economic historians have overplayed the role of markets in ancient economies, but argued with equal force that the market was a declining 'transactional mode' of the twentieth century as well. Even more embarrassing is the failure of economic historians to explain a major phenomenon of the past century—the shift away from the market as the key decision-making unit of economic systems."4

Polanyi had a simple answer: market society—a society organized by markets as a central principle—was inherently unstable, always moving away from its putative equilibrium point. At about the time North made this observation, a counterreaction had become observable: a global shift away from non-market allocative devices and toward markets.5 Polanyi sets this problematic as the core of the modern dilemma: the dialectic of setting the boundary between market and society, between what markets can and should control and what they should not.

Polanyi's conceptualization of the "great transformation" to market society begins with the statement "What we call land is an element of nature inextricably interwoven with man's institutions. To isolate it and form a market out of it was perhaps the weirdest of all undertakings of our ancestors."6 Simultaneously, market society required the extraction of one element of human existence—the capacity to work—in order to create the complementary commodity of labor. In Polanyi's formulation, pre-market economic relations, norms, and outcomes were "embedded" or "submerged" in social relations generally. The extraction and elevation of market-driven outcomes from their social moorings produce significant social conflicts and centrally involve the state. The creation of commodity markets for land and labor has been accompanied at various times by resistance, coercion, rebellions, imprisonment, and social disorganization of extreme forms; at a minimum, new systems of meaning must emerge in consequence. Forging a new normative order such that bizarre relations (from the perspective of a pre-capitalist normative structure) become normal and legitimate is itself a major social transformation. From Polanyi's perspective, this process was "weird" in the sense of unnatural, and fundamentally wrong in a normative sense.

From the perspective of the late twentieth century, established market society seems far more natural, and the normative complaints less compelling; market society has been more vigorously naturalized through the collapse of its antinomy of state socialism. But the making of market society, Polanyi argues, inevitably produces contestation that shapes and changes not only allocative institutions but also moral economy.

Polanyi's contribution to positive theory is difficult to tease out. He insists on what Block and Somers call "holistic social science" in the study of social change.7 The standard critique is that he thereby is guilty of reifying "society." But Polanyi in practice illuminates market dynamics as these dynamics affect whole human beings, reembedded analytically in their social moorings. His analysis of class is thus more Weberian than economicist, and it resonates with the thick theory of rationality rather than the thin (which presupposes the universality of the *homo oeconomicus* he deplores). As an institutionalist, he argues that individuals will indeed behave as the interest maximizers of neoclassical economics in market society, but doing so results either in efforts to defeat the market or in social disintegration.

The implication for economic theory is that real markets function through institutions established through political processes reflecting interests, particularly interests in security. The "self-regulating" market society is utopian and ephemeral. Instead, society "protects itself" from the insecurity of "exposure" to the disintegrative effects of atomistic pursuit of material interests; thus, "regulation and market grew up together." Polanyi saw the horror of his time, fascism, as the reunification of polity and market; unbearable tension created by the artificial separation of the two spheres of human existence produced disequilibrating social pressures.8

In less apocalyptic terms, public policies and social movements may be usefully analyzed in dialectical relation to market forces. In contrast to invisible-hand notions of integration from individualism, Polanyi argues that disruptions of society from markets produce, inevitably, counterreactions to hem in, bound, and constrain the market. These constraints do not defeat the market but rather
produce new dynamics resulting in institutional change. As societies and their institutional bases differ, so will the forms of market regulation, but convergence is to be expected from the very logic of market-society tensions. Whereas powerful nations and individuals may find their interests served by a laissez-faire regime, the periphery of nations and classes contests market dynamics. Stephen Krasner analyzed the international expressions of these interests by poor nations in his book *Structural Conflict* (1985), significantly subtitled *The Third World against Global Liberalism*. Peasant studies deals with social groupings at the periphery of societies; the "defensive-reaction" and "moral-economy" school of peasant studies is deeply indebted to Polanyi's perspective.

Polanyi's polemics may appear picaresque in today's global rush toward markets, but the questions implied in his problematic remain as compelling as ever. Kerala introduces puzzles with regard to these questions because of the vigor of popular reactions to the great transformation, the unusual political expression of these responses, the anomalous character of public policy driven by mobilization, and the notably salubrious human-welfare implications of responses. In the remainder of this chapter I shall illustrate the usefulness of three elements of Polanyi's implicit positive theory: first, the defensive-reaction dynamic as an explanation for anomalous leftist organization that drove Kerala's political exceptionalism; second, on a more micro scale, institutional innovation as a residue from struggles with the market, culminating in the "factory acts" period (1970-80) in Palakkad district; and finally, the necessity of reinserting institutions into economic analysis in order to understand paddy agriculture after the reembedding of markets.

Explaining Public Moral Economies

Karl Marx wrote in the *New York Daily Tribune* of 25 June 1853:

Now, sickening as it must be to human feeling to witness those myriads of industrious patriarchal and inoffensive social organizations disorganized and dissolved into their units, thrown into a sea of woes, and whose individual members losing at the same time their ancient form of civilization and their hereditary means of subsistence, we must not forget that these idyllic village communities ... had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism ... enslave... beneath traditional rules ... contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery. England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan, was actuated only by the vilest of interests. ... But ... the question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution.

Marx was enthusiastic about the dissolution of pre-capitalist society because of the effects on material progress engendered thereby; Polanyi romanticized pre-capitalist society because of what he saw as the results of social disintegration engendered by market society. Marx saw new freedom for labor in its liberation from traditional shackles; Polanyi feared that "uprooting" laboring individuals from their "social moorings" through the commoditization of labor created dangers from "exposure." Both argued that societies would attempt to defeat domination by market, whatever the aggregate material advantages it promised. These attempts both reflect and constitute a public moral economy.

In Kerala, the decade 1970-80 compressed a remarkable span of history into a short span of years. New property rights were established, old ones extinguished; novel property-like rights and obligations were created, distributed, and then redistributed. In a sense, the transition was from remnants of an almost "feudal" agrarian system to heavily regulated market capitalism. It began with the replacement of the Left-communist-led coalition government and enforcement of its radical land reforms; it ended with the return of that coalition and the announcement that old-age pensions for agricultural laborers would be paid from general revenues, not from farmers' mandatory contributions as stipulated in a law passed only six years before. It was a decade of struggle and institutional change that incorporated into public law key elements of the pre-market moral economy. Elements of that moral economy were used, as James Scott claims they typically are, as weapons of the weak in their confrontation with the strong.

The pension for farm workers captures this dynamic. The very notions of old-age security was embedded in the ideological (and, to a far lesser extent, material) practice of pre-capitalist landowners. Public law—the Kerala Agricultural Workers Act (KAWA)—imposed on owners of land the responsibility of providing for the sustenance of the living bearer of labor power even after that labor power had ceased to have market value. Farmers mobilized in protest, on grounds of the unprofitability of agriculture under the new regime. Crafting a class compromise to keep production going forced a leftist government attempting to hold together the shards of its historic agrarian alliance to assume the farmers' burden and pay it from a severely strapped treasury. The provision of old-age security then in one decade represented a movement in public moral economy from dyadic paternalism to class redistribution to distributive routines characteristic of social democracy.

Shifts in public moral economy have an irreducibly normative component.
Politics of the Transformation

The great transformation in the northern section of contemporary Kerala—Malabar—was initiated by a colonial state in need of clearly defined property rights and local political allies. Malabar under colonial rule became in many ways the archetypal disintegrating agrarian system; one colonial officer said it attained "the unenviable reputation of being the most rack-rented place on the face of the earth." With the introduction of colonial law, particularly the imposition of a legal system based on the absolute notion of land as private property, traditional overlords were able to evict tenants and raise rents according to market logic enforced by the police powers of a colonial state. Property claims were disentangled from their broader social moorings, and thus from their functions. As courts and administrative law protected the property claims of landlords, the necessity of good patron-client relations diminished, control of assets was guaranteed by higher authority. The Collector and District Magistrate of Malabar commented on the result in 1887: "Fanaticism of this violent type flourishes only upon sterile soil. When the people are poor and discontented, it flourishes apace like other crimes of violence. The grievous insecurity to which the working ryots [peasants] are exposed by the existing system of landed tenures is undoubtedly largely to blame for the impoverished and discontented state of the peasantry."

The transformation was begun in southern Kerala by traditional rulers seeking to consolidate a state from feudal lords and introduce property relations conducive to commercial development. Under both colonial rule and commercializing rajas, slavery was abolished in law in favor of nominally free labor, although societal resistance on the ground prevented the emergence of fully commoditized labor until well into the independent period. Villagers of Padoor and Nalleppilli in Palakkad district argue that before "the rules were made" (in the mid-1970s) and especially before "the EMS [first communist] government came to power" (in 1957), the status of field laborers who are the largest class locally was something between serf and slave (adima). Buttressing landlordism with novel property rights under colonialism produced the earliest societal reactions in the form of suicidal jacqueries (the "Mappila outrages" of colonial discourse) throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Although colonial land policy changed one aspect of landlordism—the institutional meaning of landed property—with resulting economic insecurity for the politically important middle peasants, the socially oppressive character of landlordism was left in place, perhaps strengthened. Evictions could be enforced through courts; lands could be bought and sold with no regard for
subsidiary traditional claims. Mortgages of smallholders could be and were foreclosed (an especially important phenomenon in the Great Depression, accentuated by Kerala’s early and extensive integration into global commerce). The colonial state’s revenue demands put additional pressure on lower orders just as its police thana became in a real sense the auxiliary arm of landlordism. Simultaneously, severe social degradation along traditional lines remained in force.

Though dramatic, the great transformation was incomplete in one politically important way: land was thoroughly commoditized, but labor remained tied to its social moorings of humiliation and subordination, laying the basis for both moral outrage and militant organization. On a grand scale, these mobilizations created a leftist coalition that was able to attain power by forming governments; these governments legislated away the traditional agrarian system. On a more local scale, consider the history of Padoor, in Alathur Taluk, Palakkad District. Padoor approaches the stereotypical view of rural Kerala: agrarian unions and the communist party are strong on the ground; class conflict has been extensive.

Participants in the agrarian movements in Padoor explain the origins of mobilization as follows. Both tenants and laborers were “slaves” in those days, subjugated thoroughly by landed power of the Brahmin (Namboodiri) and aristocratic Nair communities. Hours of work for the laborers were in principle fixed by their demands of their superiors. The local struggle that precipitated militant organization came in 1948. The issue was primarily one of sexual exploitation of working women, particularly Harijans (“untouchables”), but the conflict spread quickly into other dimensions of inequality and dignity, taking the form of wage and labor struggles, reaching a high point in 1952.

The category of field laborer was essentially covariant with caste status of Irawas and Cherumas. The Cherumar were subjected to especially humiliating social practices from which the Irawas had incrementally freed themselves. Cherumars were prohibited from coming within a half furlong of the temple. They were allowed to wear any cloth above the waist or below the knees; wrapping the turban around the head for protection from the sun was forbidden as well. Special language had to be employed by and about Cherumars. They were not to use the first person in addressing superiors but were to construct sentences in the third person (such as “your serf [adiyan] seeks permission from the master [thamburu] to drink water”). Their food was referred to as karikad (from charcoal, connoting black, hence inferior, and a mixture of bran and water [kadi] usually fed to buffaloes, connoting animal food), in opposition to the food of superiors generically referred to as ari (hulled rice). Their money was preceded by the implicitly derogatory chempu (copper) to distinguish it from superiors’ money.

Cherumars were to scrupulously separate themselves from contact with superiors; if a bunch of plantains from their compound was to be delivered to the owner, it had to be left at the gate. The custom that was instrumental in the 1948 strike was a common perversion of the separation injunction: laborers were forced to bring their new brides to the home of the owner for the right of the first night, as it was beneath the dignity of higher castes to go to the hut of the laborer. “Seeing the bride” was an especially galling instance of the general sexual access to lower-caste women claimed by high-caste men and figured prominently in the strike.

The structural fusion of caste and class—of standing and life chances—produced a congruence of aims in the early leftist mobilization. Labor’s very embeddedness (in Polanyi’s terms) was a source of moral outrage and political action. Polanyi insisted that a material reductionist explanation of behavior was flawed, that individuals in pre-market societies act primarily to “safeguard” their “social standing . . . social aims . . . social assets.” All allocative systems are inescapably embedded in a moral order of some sort. During the mobilization to abolish landlordism, there was no contradiction between asserting social standing and material gain. Commoditization of human beings as units of labor is alienating in one sense, as stressed in Marxian analysis, but liberating in another, as the embedding of labor in social relations traditionally produced claims on the person that were unacceptable to the living bearers of labor power. Over time and through local struggles, the only claim of farmers on workers became the specific hours of labor purchased, regulated by law.

Slogans of mobilization in this period were explicitly anti-landlord, but that objective was expressed locally as a necessary condition for wage increases. Poverty exacerbated humiliation that was socially organized against both laborers and tenants. Tenants who hired laborers were to be too strapped by rental obligations to pay more, hence the potential for unity between classes with opposite material interests through a promise to share out the rent fund when the landlords were defeated. Major strikes in 1957 coterminous with the first communist ministerial government escalated to demands for radical land reform, not merely increased wages. As in Kerala generally, mobilization increased after the dismissal of the communist ministry by Delhi, reaching a second high-water mark in 1961. During the 1960s, there was episodically virtual famine in the village; prices for local goods escalated beyond the reach of laborers. Farmers refused to pay wages in kind as rice prices rose; as a result, workers were unable to afford rice for extended periods. Were it not for ration shops (which worked imperfectly because of the state’s difficulty in procuring and distributing grain), laborers believe, many would have starved. The union stood for dignity and wages; ration shops stood between hunger and subsistence. Both were communist projects.
The small numbers, parasitism, and decadence of rentier landlords made them vulnerable symbolic targets in political and normative terms; their claims to feudal simple ownership rights devoid of obligation were as insulting as their continued claim to deference and privilege.25 The tactic of targeting particularly oppressive and dissolve landlords for local protests associated with the institution of landlordism. In Kerala generally, as in Padoor, powerful movements for poverty alleviation and removal of caste indignities were fusing under a left leadership that understood the integrated character of multiple strands of landed domination and tailored their programs accordingly.26 Their political analysis was reminiscent more of Polanyi than of the mature Marx, playing on the peculiar form of embedded production relations and their manifestation in severe caste indignities. Their effective political strategies birthed a peculiar form of regulatory agrarian capitalism.

Local Origins of the Factory Acts

Polanyi’s analysis of a great transformation to market society offers a normative perspective on political mobilization at the bottom, and a positive theoretical for understanding the politics. Likewise, there are lessons for a positive theoretical of economics. “Institutionalists” and “substantivists” among economists have stressed a crucial point stressed by Polanyi: the historical origins and institutional structures of any particular economy are vital components of its working logic. In Kerala, these institutions were, somewhat ironically, forged in the struggle against a particular capitalist formation almost “feudal” in character as it changed in response to the market forces: the local variety of landlordism as a social system. The vector of those conflicts imposed a public moral economy as boundaries within which the market can work, recognizing the moral claims of the tenants and their permanent laborers to the extent politically and fiscally practicable. The resulting regulated capitalism cannot be understood without reference to these traditions and institutions.

Like the land reforms, the factory acts were born in struggle; that struggle itself a continuation of the mobilization for land reforms. New institutions established in the struggle drew on traditional rights reinterpreted and new demands drawn from the political promise of sharing the rent fund.

The payoff for the laborers for supporting land-to-the-tiller was to be shared the spoils. Rental exactions on almost half the nonplantation arable in the district ended on 1 January 1970. The United Front government led by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPIM, 1967–69) had formulated an ordinance that took effect after the fall of the ministry: the Kerala Agricultural Workers Paya-
atential was unjust, both season and off-season gender ratios were better than the aggregate ratio in the United States.

Settling on a wage rate defused one set of conflicts but did not assure implementation. Real power lay with individual farmers; the burden of redress was on unions. Another major conference was held in December 1971 to discuss demands by unions that farmers actually pay the agreed rate. At the same time, the police were brought into taluk-level meetings with representatives of land and labor to formulate means of ensuring enforcement and to create local dispute resolution mechanisms. The DKS sought to minimize harvest conflict by changing the traditional harvest share system (newly fixed at 1/7, previously 1/12) to one in which a gender-differentiated flat rate would be paid. Such a change would allow farmers to capture more of the benefits of technological change; as yields rose, laborers would not share in the increment unless struggles to increase the harvest wage were conducted each season. Moreover, the DKS proposal would have disadvantaged women, who traditionally received the same harvest share as men. The KSKTU flatly rejected the proposal and threatened intensified strikes if any change in the status quo was attempted. Labor's strategy was to defend, selectively, traditional rights while simultaneously enhancing its share of total product.

Rigging a rural labor market necessitates surveillance and intervention. New disputes arose over farmers' refusal to comply with a government notification that registers of laborers and records of wage payments must be maintained and wage receipts must be issued. The government saw this as the only means of assuring compliance; farmers saw it as an unacceptable imposition, pleading illiteracy and inexperience with record keeping. Peasants hired accountants. Police, Labour, and Revenue officials finally obtained farmers' consent by agreeing to establish dispute resolution machinery at the firka level, thus bringing conciliation closer to the farmers' fields. These registers became central in the ensuing conflicts over permanency rights for individual workers.

As mediation continued, more unions began to appear at meetings; all were nominally independent, but almost all could be easily associated with some political party by looking at their leadership. Most had minimal representation on the ground, where the Left-communist KSKTU dominated, but every major party made symbolic commitments to the most oppressed (and numerous) class in Palakkad by sponsoring unions. It is not clear that proliferation of unions helped labor's cause, because infighting resulted, but farmers became convinced that the entire active political spectrum was deployed against them. Some tried to convert their lands to less labor-intensive crops (such as coconut); others exited agriculture, while still others continued the political struggle. Investment declined.

In spite of the impressive coordination of government departments and representatives of class organizations orchestrated by the Collector, it should not be assumed that the local state was any more unified than the national state. The tehsildar of Mannarkkad, for example, had consistently refused to call the land-labor conferences ordered by the Collector. When responding to a reprimanding communiqué marked “urgent,” the tehsildar responded that any move to convene a meeting would only strain the existing cordial relations between land and labor; political parties and vested interests would take advantage of the situation to foment trouble (L.Ds. 7316/71). As local organization was uneven, so, too, were protest and implementation of pacts.

Petitions and letters to the Collector and MLAs proliferated as regional meetings continued to demonstrate that enforcement and local dispute resolution were uneven. The density of organizations was extraordinary. The Malabar Regional Harijan Samajam petitioned the Collector that outcaste laborers in Chittur Taluk were being forced to work excessive hours and were not paid the minimum wage. The Assistant Labour Officer responded that the absence of militant trade unions did mean that the prescribed wage was not being paid “in some areas” of his domain; the state's own machinery on the ground was deemed “inadequate.” One small farmer who worked in his own fields wrote to the Collector that Palakkad's wages were already the highest in India; even in Thanjavur (an area of labor militancy in Tamilnadu state) the harvest share was only 1/9, and the local rate had been 1/14 just ten years back. He couldn't pay 1/7 and survive as a farmer. His solution was cottage industries, rather than robbing the farmers. This opinion was widespread.

Divergent moral economies of land and labor emerged quite clearly at a high-level meeting at the labor office in Palakkad town during harvest conflicts of 1972. Farmers' representatives unanimously rejected enforcement of the new minimum wage. Their complaints centered on shrinking profits caused by failure of the monsoon, levy procurement, fertilizer costs, manure shortage, and so on. Agriculture is not amenable to regulation, they contended; “a paddy field is not a factory.” The proposal for a twenty-five paisa (one-fourth of a rupee) raise was rejected outright; farmers said they were not able to pay even the existing minimum. Their solution was to conduct a study on the costs of cultivation; they presented data for a typical 6.5-acre farm demonstrating that there was no profit in agriculture. Their analysis was supported by officials of the Agriculture Department but opposed by those of the Labour Department. Officials of the two departments consistently represented the views of their respective constituencies.

Union representatives, by contrast, rejected the very idea of a cost-of-cultivation study. The issue to them was not whether farmers could make profit but...
whether laborers could survive on existing wages. The meeting ended in anmosity and no recommendation for the Collector.

Conflicts surrounding harvesting became so severe that the state government eventually invoked the Defense of India Rules to intervene. Writing to the Ministers of Agriculture and Labour on 11 September 1972, the Collector described the harvest conflicts as potentially dangerous and destructive. Combined unions of the CPI and CPI-M had escalated their demand to 1/6 harvest share. He requested the Labour Minister's intervention, fearing violence if the issue were not settled before the union's 15 September deadline. The Labour Minister flew to Palakkad on 14 September. The Labour Department in Thiruvananthapuram immediately promulgated a notification (MS 82/72/LBR) that paddy harvesting in Palakkad (which supplies more than a quarter of all rice in Kerala) was so essential to the community that the Defense of India Rules would be invoked to set the harvest share at 1/7.

Losing control of labor on the ground, farmers went to court. A petition to the High Court by thirteen Palakkad cultivators (associated with the DKS) requested police protection to harvest their crops. The government pleader argued that protection could be given only if the posted wage were paid and laborers engaged in the previous season were allowed to harvest, with which the High Court agreed. This position began the formal recognition of the institution of permanency, which later infuriated farmers. Landowners were at the time attempting to employ additional workers to finish the harvest more quickly, depriving traditionally attached laborers of harvest share. Laborers militantly opposed allowing any but attached laborers from participating in the harvest, when wages were double the season rate. The assistant superintendent of police wrote that his practice was then to allow cultivators to employ extra labor only after the tehsildar assessed the labor requirements on the spot. Production decisions were drifting out of the hands of farmers and into those of ministries and police. Sporadic violence occurred as attached laborers refused to let additional laborers enter the fields.

All agricultural work ceased in some areas in 1972. The governor assented to inclusion of paddy-harvesting regulations under the Defense of India Rules (DIR) as an essential service. The DIR inclusion, though originally welcomed by the farmers and sought by the Collector and Labour Department as a means of obtaining legal backing for enforcing agreements, proved to be grounds for court intervention in removing traditional farmer managerial prerogatives from their control.

Conflict shifted to another of the traditional rights of labor the following season. Cultivators led by Ambat Shekera Menon, president of the DKS, refused to pay wages in kind in Chittur Taluk. Union leaders now said they would not press for cash wage increases if in-kind payment could be guaranteed at the posted minimum. Prices of paddy were steadily rising in this period, but the DKS refused on the grounds that the low levy price imposed by the government was making cultivation unprofitable. Additionally, the DKS claimed that laborers were doing such poor work that yields were falling; no one could be disciplined or fired. Cultivators offered higher wages in cash, which was rejected, most adamantly by the KSNU. Women in particular demanded wages in kind, to assure that the family would always have something to cook, unaffected by the fickle cash nexus. The compromise was half in cash and half in kind until the transplanting season ended, after which another conference would be convened. Confidential reports from tehsildars indicated that 45 percent of the area in Chittur Taluk was affected by strikes; in Alathur, 15-20 percent; in Palakkad, 15 percent. By harvest of 1973, the percentage for Alathur had increased to 50 percent, and for Chittur to 30 percent.

In this process of mediation through virtually every channel of authority, traditional claims of attached laborers were becoming de facto policy, reinforced by High Court rulings. Substitution of nonlocal labor for attached laborers provoked the most violent confrontations. Petitions to the High Court by farmers seeking permission to replace laborers who were on strike (and police protection to do so) were denied; this case law then determined the Collector's practice. The DKS submitted a memorandum to the Collector during the harvest of 1973 calling for official action to break strikes because the production of paddy had been officially declared an essential service under the DIR; leveraging the essential-services logic, they threatened to cease paddy production if no action were taken.

Through resolution of numerous conflicts in various forums, the right of laborers to permanent employment in the field to which they were traditionally attached was becoming policy. Farmers responded by refusing to hire new workers, fearing their eventual claim of tenure. Permanency became the core of conflict around the factory acts; it struck at the heart of the prerogatives of ownership and stood at the center of insecurity fears of labor. But in 1973, the Labour Department published a notification that presaged one of the most radical clauses of the Kerala Agricultural Workers Act: "In cases where the workers are in receipt of higher wages than the minimum wage fixed, they shall continue to get the benefit of the higher wage." Wages could only go up, never down. Facing fluctuating yields and fluctuating output prices, and now saddled with a workforce they could not discipline or replace, farmers were frightened by the ratchet of ever-increasing minimum wages.

But what was the minimum wage? Procurement levies on rice complicated the moral economy of paddy values. Farmers complained that after meeting the levy,
they had to buy grain in the market in order to pay wages in kind. More gain-
ing, they lacked ration cards, unlike the laborers, and had to buy back their own rice at market prices. One compromise suggested by the Collector in a letter to the Food Department on 14 September 1973 was to relax procurement requirements. The procurement levy on farms larger than ten acres then was 9 quintals if the average yield were 120 paras, as claimed by the DKS, then the entire surplus would legally be required for sale to the government at a below-market price. Although official estimates of yields on Class A land were then higher than those of farmers (by about 50 percent), the Collector believed, based on his own calculations, that the farmers had a point and recommended levy exemptions for Palakkad rice farmers.

Nothing in the short run could be done about the levy, but the very existence of an administered levy price was appropriated by the DKS as the basis for new tactics. Farmers began to demand conversion of rice to rupees for wages at the levy rate rather than the market rate. The district superintendent of police tele-
phoned the Labour Ministry on 22 September 1973 for help with his confu-
drum. High Court orders required payment of the minimum wage before police protection of harvesting could be provided, but what was the minimum wage? The Labour Department’s official regulation interpreting the minimum wage act said explicitly that a higher prevailing wage superseded the minimum wage; existing wages in much of Palakkad in edangazhi (750-gram measures) were higher than the posted wage in rupees at existing market price conversions. At what rate were the police to convert measures to rupees to determine compliance? The DKS requested legal advice. Officials in the state capital interpreted clause E of the notification to mean that conversion had to be at market prices; it was up to police officials to determine whether minimum wages were being paid, based on the local market price, and to decide on protection of harvesting accordingly.

Requests for police protection overwhelmed the Collector. He ordered the district police (D3-22105V73) to give protection to farmers only if laborers traditionally attached to the field were being employed, 1/7 harvest share was being given, and wages were being paid at 7 and 6, 6 and 5 edangazhi (season and off-season rates for men and women, respectively) or the market equivalent in cash. If these conditions were met and the workers still refused to work, the farmers could employ other workers. Protection of strikebreakers could be done only after consulting with the striking workers and unions. This resolution placed a large burden on local police; protection of strikebreakers was certain to lead to violence.

Attempts at conciliation by the MLAs, political parties, the Labour Minister, and relevant departments failed. The great strike of 1973 began on 25 September. The tehsildar reported that 90 percent of the laborers were on strike in Alathum, where Padoor is located. The labor crisis totally absorbed district administration, but there were pockets where nothing happened. Proliferation of demands made conciliation at any but the very local level impossible. Disputes in Ootappalam Taluk, for example, varied by union; demand differentiation became a means of capturing membership at a time of high mobilization. The Congress INTUC union led the fight for rehiring of retrenched workers; the CPI-M union led protests for release of laborers arrested by police; the CPI union spearheaded demands for a 25 percent wage increase and uniforms for workers. Variation over time and space in demands and outcomes was remarkable. Farmers desperate to get crops harvested before the grain spoiled made separate deals with individual workers and with local units of unions. No neat curves defined this labor market.

The dominant mode of conflict in the harvest strike of 1973 was police against striking laborers who were preventing harvest on lands determined by the police to be in compliance with the High Court conditions. Other laborers attempted to harvest disputed fields forcefully, physically opposed by farmers who were determined to let the grain rot to protest the new rules. Two DKS leaders were hospital-
ized after a clash near Nemarra. Violence also occurred between Congress and communist workers. Tamil laborers from Coimbatore were brought in by truck to break the strike. When the Collector learned that labor was being imported to break strikes, he ordered the tehsildars to inform farmers that strikebreaking would not be tolerated; in essence, Malayalee fields were for Malayalees. The DKS rejected the prohibition as having no legal or logical standing (“labor is labor, Tamil or Malayalee”).

Police arrested or removed strikers in large numbers but also restrained farmers and their enforcers. Women were numerically prominent in the police reports on the strike; some local actions were carried out entirely by women. Students affiliated with the Marxists boycotted classes to show solidarity with the laborers, resulting in a counterstrike by students affiliated with Congress. Near Kollengode, a landowner shot two laborers; two others were stabbed, leading to a “calling atten-
tion” motion in the Assembly and an immediate phone call to the collectorate from the Home Secretary in Thiruvananthapuram. In early October, a district-
wide strike was called to protest police handling of the harvest strike. Although people continued to be hospitalized with injuries from the conflict, the end of the harvest season undercut labor’s ability to mobilize great numbers. The great tactical strength of labor in the Onam season results from the simultaneous occur-
rence of two peaks of labor demands: harvesting the virippu crop and preparing fields for the mundakkkan crop.32

From these details emerges a cumulative picture of a remarkably responsive political and administrative system attuned to the power of the agrarian under-

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class. The farmer-labor alliance that had carried the land reform was dissolving, although there were KSKTU agitations for removal of the land tax and for supply of fertilizer. The most fundamental structural conflict was over the meaning of ownership of land: the unions rejected farmers' claim to managerial rights to employ whomever they wanted in whatever numbers they wanted.

In response to strikes and violence, the Legislative Assembly passed the Kerala Agricultural Workers Act in 1974. The Industrial Relations Committee legally became the locus of district-level coordination of land and labor, reflecting reality on the ground. But the DKS representative boycotted the first meeting of the IRC in 1974 in protest against permanency and passage of the factory acts. The Collector ordered that all laborers except those against whom a police case was pending had to be employed. The DKS resisted and continued to petition the High Court under section 113(l) of the DIR. The Collector had by then concluded that the DKS leadership was unscrupulous and unreliable, yet they retained the power to disrupt agricultural operations. After their refusal to meet with labor and government, the police intervened in a major conflict in 1974 and arrested 490 activists of the DKS who were preventing permanent workers in Chittur Taluk from entering the fields.

The symbolic end of the period of large-scale conflict was the Olasherri firing. During the harvest of virippu in October 1974, the DKS made a last stand on the estate of Janardhanan, one of the most recalcitrant of the large farmers. He refused to allow permanent laborers to harvest; the KSKTU mobilized a force estimated by police to be five thousand to harvest forcibly on Janardhanan's land. The police set up camp near Kodumba village. The district magistrate granted their request for an order under the Kerala Police Act prohibiting collective action. On October 15, six hundred farmers and two thousand laborers affiliated with the DKS assembled on Janardhanan's land, attempting forcible harvest against resistance of five thousand KSKTU workers. In the ensuing clash, one local laborer was killed and a large number were hospitalized.

The Olasherri firing marked the end of large-scale local opposition to changes in land-labor relations in the half-decade of conflict after the land reform. New strands were later added to labor's share in the bundle of rights: most important, a significant solatium paid to permanent laborers when land was sold or partitioned. Strikes continued, and DKS resistance took other forms, but from Olasherri on, it was clear to the farmers that outright resistance was futile; they would have to live with the factory acts. Labor, too, understood the limits of militant confrontation after the 1974 strike; the CPI-M was beginning to retreat from militance because of splintering of its agrarian coalition, and the laborers were too weak economically and organizationally to contest on their own. The following year, the national Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi quashed labor militance.

In place of multifaceted conflict on the land, the KWA established a corporatist structure for mediating the conflicting interests of land, labor, and the local state. This stalemate class conflict in paddy agriculture has not been conducive to growth, but it has produced some peace. Response of communists to the resultant dilemma of undercompensated land and destitute labor in Kerala has been twofold: first, attempts have been made to create structures of local corporatism to prevent this contradiction from leading to unmanageable class warfare, and second, there have been efforts to displace the conflict into the distributive and federal arenas—sectoral politics against the market through higher output prices and subsidized costs of production. Rigging the terms of trade in favor of agriculture could blunt the class contradiction between agrarian capital and labor. The model is social democracy: a marriage of regulated capitalism and welfarism mediated through politics. The critical departure from the European model is the size of the sector that needs subsidization in proportion to the aggregate financial resources available. In this period, almost 10 percent of the total population remained on the live employment registers; real unemployment was much higher. About 4.5 million individuals held ration cards for use in "fair-price" shops. Conditions of the laborers were bleak; under- and unemployment continued to rise. Demands for "remunerative prices" for farmers established agrarian scissors politics in the federal arena, in parallel to what Paige calls "commodity reform movements." Simultaneously, the government asked for more state autonomy and resources from Delhi to shoulder the burden of subsistence guarantees.

Extensive market rigging in agriculture is possible, though perhaps "inefficient," in the United States, the European Community, and Japan because of the strength of their economies. Kerala is a poor and food-deficit state in a poor nation. Its locally rigged markets for labor frighten outside investors and prompt local labor-intensive industries to leave the state. Debates in the Legislative Assembly in Kerala in the 1980s frequently revolved around the dilemmas of the periphery. National policy liberalizing imports, while attractive to large Indian manufacturing houses, meant falling prices for Kerala's primary products, a sector already squeezed by high labor costs and perpetually in crisis. The resolution was always "relief" for local capital and labor and pleas to Delhi to take Kerala's plight seriously. Liberalization at the national level in the 1990s deepened this dilemma; states increasingly competed with each other for foreign and domestic capital. Peripheral states lack the levers to control markets because markets extend over a space more extensive than their political authority; exerting authority scares away capital.
As the structural niche for leftist mobilization disappeared with the land reforms, reasons for affiliation with class politics became less compelling. It is not quite true, as the Rudolphs argue, that "no national party, right or left, pursues the politics of class" in India; rather, the CPI-M pursues a politics of class coalition torn between appeals to interests of objectively opposed classes. On the ground, class identifications remain strong in Palakkad, and the class politics of production relations continues to engender conflicts, damped though these are by the corporatist arrangements hammered out in the 1970s. The dilemma is that the communist party for a time fought market society and could not win; recognizing this, labor simultaneously pursues a politics of particularism and individual survival complementary to its class identification. If this means joining the union of the Congress when Congress is in power, the implication is not the absence of class politics but the absence of an alternative class project as viable political strategy.

Agricultural workers have no illusions about who has been on their side historically, but the communist party reached a strategic cul-de-sac in searching for solutions to their central dilemma. As a consequence, the party's new project became one of balancing class redistribution and a shadow of revolution with strategies for economic growth—a productivist class compromise. Patrick Heller argues that the strength of highly mobilized civil society and the institutions of class compromise augur well for the economic future of the state. The ruling CPI-M, currently in power, has staked a great deal on using the strengths of social democracy to institute a bold project for decentralized planning and resource mobilization, building up from local bodies to state managers rather than the other way around. The limits to potential success remain the vulnerability of a society embedded in much larger market systems beyond anyone's control.

There are, then, clear limits to local struggles with the market, the scale is wrong for the dynamics. In 1999 U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan appealed to the wealthiest nations to reembed global markets in a decidedly imagined global community: "The spread of markets far outpaces the ability of societies and their political systems to adjust." Without "active commitment and support" of the rich nations for market-endangered "universal values," Annan argued, "I fear we may find it increasingly difficult to make a persuasive case for the open global market." 34

Reembedded Markets and Human Welfare

The strength of the "moral-economy" model of peasant society lay in its extension of Karl Polanyi's great insight: the making of market society, elevating market outcomes above the social norms in which economic relations had been previously "embedded," produces profound dislocation and propels social forces to reestablish guarantees of economic security and morally acceptable outcomes. Reembedding the market in turn creates its own distortions.

Kerala's public moral economy is embodied in institutions produced by these conflicts; institutional change cumulatively altered and re-created the configuration of public authority. The state's continual reformation was driven not simply by powerful social actors but by historically specific attempts to reintegrate society following ruptures. Although Polanyi is rightly criticized for reifying society and insisting on the priority of "integration," the state as actor clearly has an interest in retaining a degree of social integration conducive to production and administration. The communist party, in particular, has been interested in repairing the ruptures of conflicts because they took place within the class coalition that enabled the Left to come to power.

Contrary to Polanyi's romanticized portrayal of pre-market society, rural Kerala was characterized by extreme subjugation and abuse, grinding poverty for the lower orders, and significant insecurity despite ideational paternalism. These very characteristics propelled communist success, producing a system of fully commoditized and largely depersonalized social relations of production, disembedded from social conditions of servitude, diffuse claims, or extra-economic domination but reembedded in new social institutions in the form of public law. As in James Scott's magisterial work on Malaysia, the ideological origins of these institutions lay in appropriation by the weak of the ideological cover of the strong, with three additions. First, comparative social learning expanded significantly the standards of what subsistence should mean. If former tenants can wear shirts of synthetic cloth and wristwatches, young laborers ask, why can't they? Second, public policy provided crucial cues about rights and social justice, which both revised expectations and were incorporated strategically into the struggle. For many laborers, the just wage became simply "the government wage." Farmers demanded that the translation of minimum cash wages into measures of paddy be done at the administered levy price, not the market price. If the levy price—a mechanism to provide social justice through ration shops—were fair, they argued, it should be the price for all transactions. Finally, the market itself was selectively appropriated ideologically—although no actors in Palakkad's paddy sector wanted exposure to the implications of a thoroughly market-run society.

At the end of the transformative decade in Kerala, the hegemonic policy prescription internationally on politics and markets was for allowing markets more allocative autonomy. This prescription overlooked the extent to which contest-
ing the great transformation had reembedded markets in society. The short-term consequences of removal of producer and consumer subsidies and labor regulations in Palakkad would be painful in human terms; the long term is irrelevant to a household scraping by on one hundred days of annual employment at administered wages. For labor, the factory acts have distinct and recognized advantages over the pre-capitalist configuration; most important is freedom from abuse and harassment, sexual exploitation, and demeaning social observances (of dress, language, movement). Permanency continues one of the few plausible benefits of the pre-capitalist order — some security of employment. The factory acts represent state-mandated agricultural involution, spreading and guaranteeing employment to those with the strongest moral claims — the attached laborers — even if the consequence is less employment per worker in the aggregate and thus a sharing of secure poverty and immobility. At this point, a public moral economy of basic human needs takes over, through subsidized food distribution, extensive social services, and, most important, a pension for agricultural workers.

The Left's struggle with the market thus produced an economic system in which institutional rules resonate with proclaimed normative features of the pre-capitalist structure. In this sense, the system is the outcome of "revolutionary" transformation, where revolution retains its etymological roots connoting turning full circle, absent the landlords. Farmers' demands for protection from the market are accepted; labor's historic claims to subsistence guaranties and old-age security are recognized in the public moral economy. But all protections are limited by the productivity of agriculture and the state's fiscal imperatives. The market itself has no legitimacy other than instrumental for political actors, yet its inescapable logic frames every choice.

Kerala's boundary on the politics-and-markets continuum is far closer to the authority pole than are the boundaries of most states of India, in part because popular responses to unusually severe dislocations were so extensive and militant. A mobilized polity expects extensive intervention of both the regulatory and distributive sorts. Competitive political democracy ensures that preferences matter. People in villages implicitly recognize limits ("the most the government can help is a thousand rupees") but have high expectations nonetheless. The most striking change in Nallepalli in 1989 was the presence of a well-staffed creche, providing nutritious meals and stimulating educational materials, which made the life of female agricultural laborers considerably easier; how can these perfectly reasonable improvements in the human condition be afforded in poor societies? As much as the "Kerala model" is praised for its accomplishments in quality of life and social justice, a nagging complaint has been that the cost has been economic stagnation, strangling the material base of its robust public moral economy.

Critics of redistributive politics and state intervention in markets reject the enabling potential of the Kerala experience. There is no conclusive answer. But in ethical terms, surely it is the case that a direct and certain means of alleviating poverty and indignity — such as the land and labor reforms — should have preference over the indirect and uncertain — the hope of higher growth rates that trickle down. To be convinced, one need only think of the historical experience of slavery and agrarian oppression in the United States. A promised land reform of "forty acres and a mule" for former slaves during Reconstruction (1865-77) was scuttled by political opposition. Despite impressive growth in aggregate wealth, the descendants of slaves remained disproportionately poor and excluded for generations. Social democracy was disabled on both fronts: economic justice and political participation.

On a small and local scale, in Palakkad district, struggling against the market gave labor more of the strands of the "bundle of rights" we call ownership in land, and public entitlements unusual for a marginal class, but nothing approaching what most told me they wanted: "a factory job." On a grander scale, societies continue to contest the "great transformation," shifting boundaries between politics and markets back and forth for reasons of legitimation and accumulation in response to mobilized social forces. Polanyi seems to argue that the exercise is ultimately futile; the genie of market society is out of the bottle, and attempts to put it back in are counterproductive. No one seems to know how much, or what, has to be sacrificed to the market to win its favor. Claiming to know is the stuff of much political practice.

Notes

The following abbreviations are used in the notes:

KLAG Kerala Legislative Assembly, Gleanings from the Question Hour
KLAS Kerala Legislative Assembly, Synopsis of the Proceedings
KLAR Kerala Legislative Assembly, Resume of the Proceedings

1. For a representative range of positive and critical commentary on the "Kerala model," see Dreze and Sen, Hunger and Public Action, pp. 221 ff and passim; Parayil, "The 'Kerala Model' "; Mencher, "Lessons and Non-Lessons"; Herring, "Abolition of Landlordism"; Jeffrey, Politics; Heller, Labor of Development, chap. 1; Tharamangalam, "Perils." The "model" has become so much a part of public discourse that Vice President Al Gore of the United States has called Kerala a "stunning success story"; it is
not common for U.S. politicians to pay attention at all to India, much less to individual states.

2. Although the percentage of poor in India's population has declined by various measures since Independence, in absolute numbers the long trajectory has been an increase in poverty, with strong regional variation: by World Bank estimates, from 164 million poor in 1951 to 312 million (about 35 percent of the population) in 1993-94. The state comparisons cover the years 1957-58 to 1993-94 (World Bank, India, v).

3. The argument for centrism is made by Rudolph and Rudolph (In Pursuit of Lakshmi). My characterization in this chapter does not imply the unimportance of class politics, as the Rudolphs' does, nor does it deny the existence of powerful mobilization on the Right and Left. I mean to say only that national political dynamics present a vector sum of politics that is centrist. On Kerala's politics in comparative terms, see Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala: Nossiter, Marxist State Governments.*


7. Block and Somers, "Beyond the Economistic Fallacy."


11. Herring, "Dilemmas."

12. *Here redistributive and distributive have the meanings of Livi (The End of Liberalism), not Polanyi. For a clarifying discussion of Polanyi's classification of allocative systems, see Hechter, "Karl Polanyi's Social Theory."*

13. Herring, "Dilemmas."


17. *Adima* has the same ambiguity in ordinary usage in Malayalam as the English word "slave," as in "wage slave" or "slave to her husband," containing some of the core meaning. Real slaves that could be bought and sold have not been known in the area under discussion since Independence (1947). In interview material I found that the dominant meaning of *adima* locally was restriction on labor opportunities: "you couldn't go out without permission." On slavery in Kerala more generally, see Saradamoni, *Emergence of a Slave Class; Radhakrishnan, Peasant Struggles; and Nair, Slavery in Kerala.*

18. The concept of "middle peasant" is hard to operationalize. Perhaps the closest equivalent is *kanmukkur,* etymologically related to sight, hence overseer in the traditional land tenure system. *Kanmukkar* were mistaken for "tenants" by colonial revenue authorities. Of relatively high social status and economic autonomy, *kanmukkur* met most criteria for middle peasant status. The best source for this period is Panikkar, "Peasant Revolt," see also Oommen, *From Mobilization to Institutionalization; Karat, Agrarian Relations;* Karat, *Peasant Movement;* Karat, *Organized Struggles.* On the Mappila rebellions, see Arnold, "Islam." For a very different perspective on the dislocation of the nineteenth century, see Dale, *Islamic Society.*

19. For a summary of this long and complex process, see Herring, "Stealing Congress's Thunder"; Kannan, *Of Rural Proletarian Struggles; Panikkar, Against Lord and State; Nossiter, Communism in Kerala.*


21. One older laborer corrected this formulation of the union secretary by saying that the land did not belong to Brahmans but "to god," with obvious sarcasm. Temple trusts were an important mechanism for land control.

22. The *toru* is a thin wrap somewhere between a towel and a handkerchief, which serves both functions, worn loosely across the shoulder or wrapped around the head. The refusal to remove the *toru* in the presence of social superiors is still a cause of anger among some farmers, as it connotes disrespect (and is meant that way).

23. This theme is central to one of the great novels in the powerful movement for "socialist realism" in literature in Kerala, *Two Measures of Rice [Rende Edangazhi]" by Takazhi Shivasanakan Pillai.*


25. At the time of the first communist agrarian reforms in the mid-1950s, pure rentiers constituted 1 percent of agricultural households in Travancore, 2 percent in Cochin, and 2 percent in Malabar (Varghese, *Agrarian Change*, p. 201).


27. This account is based on interviews with local officials of the Labour and Revenue Departments, union leaders, representatives to the IRC, local activists and leadership of the National Farmers' Association (DKS), and political operatives of various parties, agricultural workers, and farmers. Written sources include local press reports, memoranda from tehsildars to the Collector, memoranda from the Collector to department heads in the capital, police files, Labour Department records, transcriptions of telephone conversations, minutes of meetings of the IRC, Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, and Reports of the Government of Kerala.

28. The DKS proposal is curious in the context of its complaints about the declining interest of laborers in cultivation. The harvest share system gives labor an incentive to maximize production. What the DKS feared was a ratchet effect in which laborers became essentially sharecroppers who would over time increase their share of the crop. Because many farmers had historically been tenants, they well understood the importance of their own precedent.

29. This is clear from the actual implementation of High Court orders by police officials, with the backing of the Collector, as indicated by police reports (for example, DI-3602673-P, dated 31 August 1973). One of the conditions for the High Court's granting police protection to farmers was compliance with resolution of permanency claims as established by labor officers or tehsildars (memorandum from the government pleader to the Collector, O.P. No. 29 84-73). Police files are especially telling as evidence for the vector sum of intra-state conflicts; what the police adopt as policy is far more important than disembodied policy pronouncements from other branches of the local state.


31. The Collector made estimates of union strength as of the 1973 strike. The KSKTU dwarfed all other unions, with six times the number of workers of the CPI union, which
was closely followed by the Congress. The Socialist Party, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, and Muslim League also had local branches involved in the strike, but in very small numbers. A small number of organizations on strike were affiliated with no party. The aggregate number of strikers given by the Collector was 157,869, but if ever there were an example of pseudo-precision, this is it.

32. This advantage is declining; high-yielding varieties are spreading peaks in labor demand (as farmers employ different varieties), and many farmers are abandoning labor-intensive crops. For details, see Herring, "Dilemmas of Agrarian Communism."

33. Specifically prohibited were public displays of weapons, corpses, or effigies, processions or public assemblies (exempting marriages and agricultural operations), and public songs, slogans, or music (again exempting wedding processions). Order of District Magistrate, D3 26242/74 under the Kerala Police Act (V of 1961). One hundred and eighty volunteers from the dks side were removed by police for violation of the magistrate's order the following day.


36. For example, the dilemma of loss of jobs from pressures in the global economy was raised in KLAG (14 March 1985); the proposal for a regional minimum wage for all of South India to staunch the loss of jobs was initiated in KLAG (14 March 1989). The effect of Delhi's import liberalization laws on employment and profits in the rubber sector was debated in KLAG (26 March 1985); import policy and the coconut and rubber industries were addressed forcefully by the Kerala Congress in particular, reflecting its political base (KLAG, 25 June 1986). The connection between unprofitability of paddy agriculture and unemployment was made in the government's response to a member's question in the assembly in KLAG (30 April 1985 and 9 July 1986), relying heavily on enumeration of the various subsidies provided to paddy cultivators. In the debate on paddy profitability and unemployment in the second session of 1987 (KLAG, 31 July 1987), the government acknowledged the connection but pleaded poverty with a long list of projections of aggregate costs of extending subsidies.


40. Tornquist and Tharakan, "Democratization."

41. Swardson, "Conference."

42. For a sophisticated framework for understanding reformist projects on the fine line between state-centric and overly society-driven models, see Jonathan Fox's treatment of Mexico (The Politics of Food, pp. 31–40).

43. Scott, Weapons of the Weak.

44. See Glade, State Shrinking.

45. Gulati, "Agricultural Workers' Pension."

46. Lindblom, "The Market as Prison."

47. Tharamangalam, "Perils."

References


