KERALA: YENAN OF INDIA
To
E. and K.
in true friendship
INTRODUCTION

This study is a continuation of an earlier book, which had analysed the evolution of the main policy line of the Communist Party of India (CPI) from 1947 to 1959.* That book explained how the general line of the CPI had evolved from a strategy of armed uprising in 1948 to a policy known as peaceful transition which believed that India could be communized through the exploitation of democratic institutions and processes and in a peaceful manner. By analysing the evolution of the main policy line of the CPI over a decade, the book dealt with theoretical concepts as well as international and national setting and thus provided the necessary background for the present study.

While the first volume had laid out the general conceptual framework of the Theory of Peaceful Transition to Communism, the present volume attempts to describe how that theory, known in India as the Amritsar Thesis, has been applied in one of 16 states of the Indian Union, in Kerala, which has some 15 million people living on 15,000 square miles. In this sense the second volume is a case study, which by drawing upon a wealth of empirical data demonstrates the application of the general theory to a specific socio-political setting and the interaction of that theory with, and modification by, the complicated caste and community structure, religious beliefs and indigenous institutions and value system obtaining in Kerala. In fact, in Kerala the local leadership of the Communist Party had pioneered and applied some aspects of this concept long before it was formally announced to the world at the XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956.

This treatment of the theoretical framework and its functional connection with the International Communist Movement in one volume, and the discussion of its application to and modification by a traditional society in another volume, is breaking fresh

grounds in our methodological approaches to the study of the Communist Movements in Asia. The reason is that the studies which fail to make this methodological distinction too frequently overemphasize the international ramifications of these movements and underplay the significance of their interaction on the grass-root level, or *vice versa*. Thus we get grossly distorted pictures which portray the Communist Movements in Asia either as obedient local agencies of Moscow or Peking devoid of any nationalistic roots and sentiments on the one end of the spectrum, or as having been "emasculated", "nationalized", "Indianized", "Indonesianized", or as the case may be on the other end of the spectrum, through a prolonged interaction with the traditional settings in which, it is argued, the chain of loyalties leading to the international centres of the Communist Movement has been substantially weakened if not altogether lost.

In view of our methodological approach which separates the treatment of the macro-level from the micro-phenomena, the second volume focuses upon the political process at the grass-root level. It begins with tracing the Communist Movement in Kerala to its origins way back to 1937, discusses its functioning when it had been a part of the Congress Party, as its left wing, and then deals with its separation over the strategy of the freedom movement resulting in the establishment of the Communist Party in Kerala in 1940. A large part of the study is devoted to the analysis of reason for the erosion of influence, and a spectacular decline, of the Congress Party in Kerala during the first decade of independence between 1947 and 1957, and of the factors which propelled the Communist Party to power in the Second General Election in 1957 in that state, brilliantly confirming the general validity of the *Theory of Peaceful Transition* and its application in India.

An analysis of the electoral returns revealed, however, that there had existed no significant correlation between the great poverty of the people on the one hand and the electoral victory of the Communists on the other, and that the victory had been mainly due to a shift in the communal balance of forces in favour of the Communists, and then due to their exploitation of a latent sub-nationalism evident in Kerala at that time. In view of this finding a great deal of attention is paid to the role which the communal factor and the latent sub-nationalism have been
playing in the political process in Kerala, and how these have been harnessed by the Communist Party for the promotion of its objectives.

The study then explores the theoretical and organizational innovations introduced in Kerala between 1957 and 1959 by this first Communist Government in the world ever placed in power through the ballot box, for which functioning there were no precedents in the long and rich experience of the entire International Communist Movement. The reason for this pioneering work and the “constructive development of Marxism-Leninism” was that the Communist regime in Trivandrum, capital of Kerala, controlled only the apparatus of a state government and had to function within a federal set-up, in which the overriding powers rested in the hands of the Congress Party controlling the federal government in New Delhi. To obviate this difficulty a device was invented called the Neutralization of the Police, which was to prevent the state apparatus from intervening in a vast process of structural changes in property rights, to be forced through the direct actions of the masses. A too rapid pace of transition imposed upon the society by these mass actions had, however, generated such a strong opposition among the people that the government was brought down by a veritable liberation movement in July 1959.

The second part of the volume abandons the narrow confines of the inquiry into the nature of political process in Kerala and broadens the field of investigation, focusing upon the all-India scene to restore the perspective on the macro-level, which had undergone a profound transformation in the meantime.

Discussing the operations of the Communist Movement in India in a broader context, the study deals with the crisis of the Amritsar Thesis, the split of the Communist Party (CPI) under the impact of the Sino-Soviet schism and Sino-Indian war of 1962, and the establishment of a rival Marxist Party, CPI(M), in 1964. A detailed analysis is made of the interaction of these two rivals between 1964 and 1967, which evolved three distinct patterns of relations.

The first, and most advanced, pattern was evolved in Kerala, where both rivals co-operated on the establishment of a left united front, which propelled to power a Communist-led coalition government in the Fourth General Election in 1967. The
role played by the Muslim League in this process is highlighted.

The second, and a far more complicated pattern, was evolved in West Bengal. Here both parties went to the election of 1967 at the helm of two rival united fronts, but after the election composed their differences and formed a coalition government, bringing thus the second state of India under the control of the Communists. In this connection the discussion centres upon the onset of the general crisis of the Congress Party, its split and the formation of the Bangla Congress in 1966, co-operation of the latter with the two Communist Parties in West Bengal on the defeat of the Congress Party during the 1967 elections, and the role of the Bangla Congress in the formation of the Communist-led government in that State.

The third pattern, evolved in Andhra Pradesh, was marked by an unmitigated fratricidal war waged by the two rivals almost to the point of mutual extermination, which inflicted serious losses upon their fortunes during the 1967 electoral contest.

The discussion of the developments in Kerala and West Bengal elucidates the nature of the minimum programmes, and the organizational devices, particularly the "bandhs" of 1966, upon which basis the left united fronts had forged and new alignments formed. A statistical analysis of the electoral returns is made to demonstrate the efficiency of the united front strategy in transforming a modest following into significant electoral gains, which had a direct bearing upon the emergence of the two coalition governments, initiating thus an era of coalition politics in India. Undoubtedly, these devices, which have a general applicability, will be resorted to also by other political parties in their calculations to maximize their power during the forthcoming Fifth General Election in 1972.

While the formation of the Communist-led coalition governments in Kerala and West Bengal represented a significant triumph of the strategy of the united front, it triggered off a violent opposition against this "parliamentarianism" within the left wing of the Marxist Party with the result that by the summer of 1967 the radicals mounted an armed uprising known as the Naxalite Movement, and formed a third Communist Party of India, called Marxist-Leninist, in May 1969. In view of this development, the last section of the study surveys the origins of the Naxalite Movement, its ideological orientation upon Peking,
and the exploitation of the agrarian unrest and tribal sentiments for the promotion of its militant strategy.

Thus by 1970 a crop of three Communist Parties functioned in India. The first party, CPI, remains loyal to Moscow and upholds the Amritsar Thesis. It believes that the National Democratic Fronts, consisting of left and democratic parties, including the Congress Party (R) or its left wing or leaning upon their support, would lead to electoral victories of left or democratic coalitions in several states of India, and that the road to power at the centre in New Delhi lies in the projection of these regional combinations and alignments into the federal organs of state power, leading to the formation first of a Transitional Government, and then of a grand national coalition, the National Democratic Government, before a Government of People's Democracy would be reached.

The second party, CPI (M), owes no particular ideological allegiance either to Moscow or Peking, criticizes the "reformist tendencies" of the former and "left adventurism" of the latter, and upholds a modified version of the Amritsar Thesis. It believes that the People's Fronts, consisting of left and democratic parties, including "progressive elements of the Congress Party", would lead to electoral victories of these left coalitions in several states of India, and that the road to power at the centre lies in a militant attack from these bases upon the central organs of state power, when these had been sufficiently eroded.

The third party, CPI (M-L), takes its ideological aspiration from Peking, rejects the strategies of both sister parties as "parliamentary cretenism", ardently believes in the Maoist dictum that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun, and to that end foments an agrarian uprising.

While the full play is given to the discussion of the strategies, hopes and aspiration of the three parties, the approach of the study is descriptive and in vital sections analytical and, in view of this, no hard and fast projections and predictions are attempted about the future developments, keeping all options open, except for identifying some tentative trends as they appeared likely at the time of writing.

Finally, an explanation is in place in the Introduction regarding the title of this book. This study leads to the conclusion that Kerala represents a base of the Communist Movement in India. Although
parallels are frequently misleading this base is similar, at least in one sense, i.e., functionally, to another base which had been established by Mao Tse-tung in Shensi Province of China in 1934, with its capital Yenan. Hence the title of the book.

It was in Yenan that the Chinese Communists had experimented with and developed a modern type of the party apparatus, reorganized their army, established new organs of state power, and consolidated their party ideologically. It was also in Yenan that the strategy of united front had been developed and then applied in the formation of a coalition government with the Kuomintang. And, finally it was from Yenan that, after the consolidation of the power base, military operations were initiated against the Kuomintang in 1945 in order to defeat it on the battle field and seize power at the centre.

Kerala, as a base of the Communist Movement in India, is similar to Yenan only in the sense that it was in this state that the first Communist government in that country had been installed in power in 1957 but, unlike in Yenan, as a result of democratic election. Moreover, in Kerala the Communist Movement has developed the strategy of united front and the technique of coalition politics which has led its united front to an electoral victory in 1967. Finally, new theories and concepts have been formulated there about the functioning of a Communist-led government within a constitutional framework of a federal state, which in themselves are important innovations. The Kerala strategy of the united front and the technique of coalition politics have been further improved and applied in West Bengal with a singular success which resulted in the establishment of a second Communist-led government in India in 1967 and then in 1969.

There is every possibility that similar Communist-led coalitions would assume power in other states of India through the application of the Kerala model. Thus Kerala with its 16 million people, and West Bengal with 35 million inhabitants, function as two bases and laboratories of new techniques—including both the parliamentary as well as militant and revolutionary strategies—and thus have a vital bearing not only upon the future of the Communist Movement of India but upon the very fate and survival of India's democratic institutions and processes.

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VICTOR M. FIG

Singapore
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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Land and People

One Sanskrit text maintains that Paraśurama reclaimed Kerala from the sea by his axe and offered it to the Brahmins, who came from the north, as their new homeland. Perhaps the other gods, who resented the theft, punished that land by endowing it with an unusual measure of adversities which make the life of its people most difficult. Arthur Keith, the great British anthropologist, thinks that Kerala is an anthropological paradise in the sense that its races, religions, castes, customs and inter-mingling civilizations present any social scientist with exciting challenges. Because the traditional patterns exhibited in the ancient past persist until today, and because it was in this setting that communism in India scored significant successes, Kerala represents a case study of the interaction of the new with the old, which is eminently relevant to the entire country.

The indigenous population inhabiting Kerala before Paraśurama had reclaimed it from the sea and presented it to the Brahmins, which signified the Aryan conquest of the land, were the hill tribes of two main racial stocks, the Ezhavas and the Nairs. The occupation of Kerala by the Aryans—these were the Brahmins called Namboodiris and E. M. S. Namboodiripad traces his family tree to these conquerors—introduced from the north a notion of colour, or varna, with the result that the society started to stratify itself into numerous castes and sub-castes. The census taken in Travancore in 1931 still listed 77 main castes and 423 sub-castes.

Much later Christianity came to Kerala. One theory maintains that St. Thomas landed in Kerala in A.D. 52, converted many Hindus and established seven churches. The second theory holds that Christianity was introduced into Kerala from West Asia in the 4th century by Thomas of Cana. The third theory attributes Christianity in Kerala to the Nestorian missionaries, who
allegedly arrived there from Persia in the 5th century. The Christian community later split into the Syrian Catholics, Roman Catholics, Jacobites, Mar Thomites, Protestants and other denominations.

Islam followed Christianity. Commercial contacts of Kerala with the countries of the Middle East are very old, and go back to the times long before the Prophet began his crusade in the 7th century. Islam itself was introduced in the 8th or 9th century.

In ancient times, Kerala was a large state which stretched from coast to coast. Under its most illustrious dynasties, the Perumalas and Cheras, it attained fame and influence. The area which the Indian Union inherited from the British in 1947, and which later formed the United Kerala, was reduced to 14,937 square miles. Today, Kerala is the smallest of all states of the Indian Union, having only 1.2 per cent of its total area. What Kerala lacked in area was amply compensated for in population. In 1958, the people inhabiting Kerala numbered over 14 million; this accounted for a density of over 1,000 people per square mile, against the all India average of 312. In some areas of Kerala the density came to 1,700 people per square mile. Also in the rate of population increase, Kerala led all states of the Indian Union. While the all India increase amounted to 13.4 per cent between 1941 and 1951, in Malabar it was 21.1 per cent and Travancore-Cochin 22.8 per cent during the same period.

The key problem of Kerala was agriculture. Table I shows the magnitude of the agricultural problem as surveyed by Namboodiripad's Ministry in 1958. It classified the land into various categories of usage in 1956. Out of the total area of 9,412,000 acres, 4,477,000 acres, which is 47.6 per cent, were under cultivation. The possibility for further expansion of this area was very limited because, as the table shows, only a small acreage of waste and fallow lands could be brought under cultivation. Given this acreage of the land under cultivation and the total population of the state, the per capita acreage of arable land amounted to only one third of an acre in 1958; in 1921 it had been 53 per cent of an acre.

This extreme pressure on land resulted in an excessive fragmentation of the land holdings, as Table II indicates. In 1956, out of the total of 2,670,000 holdings in Kerala, 1,484,000, or
55.56 per cent, were less than one acre in size; 88.0 per cent were less than 5 acres; and only 1.4 per cent were larger than 25 acres. All those who held less than one acre (55.6 per cent) tilled only 8.1 per cent of the total area under cultivation, while the 1.4 per cent of the holdings larger than 25 acres tilled 31.8 per cent of arable land.

The per capita yearly income in agriculture in Kerala was estimated at Rs. 120. The low income was further depreciated by the fact that out of every 100 persons only 28 were self-supporting, 6 earning-dependents and 66 non-earning. This reduced the per family yearly income to less than Rs. 600, which was less than Rs. 50 per month. The disparity between the job opportunities and the enormous population resulted in large and oppressive unemployment. In 1951 only 36 per cent of the population earned a living, and close to 2 million were unemployed.

On the credit side, the population of Kerala was highly educated in 1958. Nearly 41 per cent of the people were literate, the all India average was 12 per cent; about 90 per cent of children and students went to over 10,517 schools and 56 colleges. There were over 30 newspapers published daily in Kerala. However, the limited job opportunities turned this highest literacy rate into the highest educated unemployment in all India.

The soil and climate are very favourable to a number of agricultural industries, which provide the basic source of cash income to the people and revenues to the government. Table III shows the principal cash crops grown in 1955-56, area under cultivation, yield per acre, production in tons and their gross value.

The total value of agricultural production in 1955-56 was estimated at Rs. 180 crores, which gave Rs. 120 per capita income per year from agriculture. Paddy and coconut, which accounted for 56 per cent of the total crop area, contributed 50 per cent of the total value of production, while the plantation crops, with 6.8 per cent of the area, contributed 7.9 per cent of the value. An important aspect of these cash and commercial crops was that the total value of their yearly exports represented about 25 per cent of India's total foreign exchange earnings in 1958.

Kerala had also a large acreage under forest, about 26 per cent of the entire area. Forest yielded rich revenues, and timber industry was one of the largest in the state. Fishing industry was
also a significant contributor to the income of the people and
government revenues. The annual catch was about 250,000 tons,
which amounted to 25 per cent of the entire tonnage of fish
catch in all India.

With regard to the production of foodstuffs, Kerala could not
feed her population. Even though nearly 70 per cent of the total
cultivated area of the state was under the food crops, predo-
minantly rice, the average yearly production of rice was 824,000
tons between 1952 and 1957. The population of the state, re-
duced to 'the adult equivalent', was 12,500,000. Thus the supply
of rice produced locally, per adult per day, averaged only 6.5
ounces. True, Kerala grew other cereals, like jowar and ragi;
but the acreage was very limited and production did not fill to
any appreciable extent the gap between the food required and
produced. Tapioca, though widely used, is deficient in nutritive
values and cannot be considered as a substitute for rice. Hence,
taking the 12 ounces of rice per adult per day as a minimum
requirement, Kerala should have produced 1,650,000 tons of rice
annually to feed her population. With production amounting
to only 824,000 tons, she had to import annually 50 per cent of
the rice she consumed.

In spite of the highly lucrative industrial cash crops, the
agriculture in Kerala suffered from several acute problems in
1958 which originated from: (a) lack of land which could in-
crease the cultivated area; (b) extensive sub-division and frag-
mentation of the land; (c) enormous deficit in food production;
(d) great imbalance between production of food crops and cash
industrial crops; (e) very low agricultural income; and (f) irre-
gularity of this income.

Natural Resources

Kerala is rich in minerals and other natural resources. In this
respect she stands second only to Bihar. She has deposits of
copper, tin, lead, mica, lignite, graphite, ilmenite, high quality
clay and limestone, zircon, rulite, sillimanite, and monazite; the
latter is used for the extraction of thorium and uranium. She
has no coal and iron. This should not hamper her industrial
development, for she has an enormous hydroelectric power
potential in her innumerable waterfalls. These could provide
the motive and thermal power for industries processing the
abundant minerals. The Second Five Year Plan estimated that Kerala could produce 157,000 kilowatts of electricity.

Yet, having all these abundant minerals and raw materials, Kerala was sadly underdeveloped industrially in 1956. Lack of capital was the main cause. In fact, except for the agricultural industry processing tea, rubber, pepper, coffee, cardamom, cashewnut, coconut and arecanut, other industrial enterprises were insignificant. Kerala had 1,349 factories registered under the Factory Act in 1956, which processed textiles, clay, rare earths, minerals, timber and fish. Their scope and share in the national output and income can best be assessed from the fact that they employed merely 121,742 workers. Cotton textile manufacturing establishments, totalling 195, the most numerous, employed 93 workers per establishment. Cashewnut industry came next with 164 factories, which employed 254 workers per establishment. Table IV gives the number of factories and workers in each type of industry.

In spite of the large deposits of minerals, rich forest, extensive possibilities for fishing, good water transportation facilities, electric power resources and a large labour reserve, Kerala is a state, as the above statistics indicate, which in industrialization lagged far behind even the poor level of industrialization in other states of India. While Kerala had no big industry, small-scale home industry in coir and handloom occupied an important place in her economy in 1957. Coir employed nearly one million people, and the 125,000 handlooms working in the state provided a source of income for another half a million. But these, by the very nature of home industry, proved wholly inadequate to cope with the unemployment problem.

Community and Caste

In order to understand the forces which placed the government in Kerala in the hands of the Communist Party in 1957, an inquiry must be made into the work of the communal organizations. The reason is that the political dynamism there was rooted in communal aspirations, which imbued it with the attributes of communal and caste politics par excellence. The Communist Party soon realized this, cast aside the traditional emphasis upon and the belief in economic forces as the inexorable propellants
to communism, and began to direct its attention to the harnessing of the communal forces to the promotion of its aims.

The major communities in Kerala were distributed as follows in 1957: the Nairs accounted for 12.5 per cent of the population; Ezhavas 26.4 per cent; Christians 21.3 per cent; and Muslims 17.7 per cent. Thus the principal communities in Kerala—the Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims—were approximately balanced. (For details, see Table X.)

Among the Hindus the Brahmins, called the Namboodiris, were at the top of social scale. They were priests and rich landowners, exercising enormous influence, both religious and political. Next among the Hindus were the Nairs, traditionally the martial class of Kerala. A special feature of this caste is its matriarchal family system, which persists until today. The next position on the caste scale was occupied by the Ezhavas and Thiyyas, who were agricultural labourers.

The community and the caste composition of the people in 1957 was reflected in a number of community organizations. To protect their interests, the Ezhavas were organized in the Shri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam Society (S.N.D.P.); the Nairs in the Nair Service Society (N.S.S.); the Catholics in the All-Kerala Catholic Congress; and the Muslims had their Muslim League. These community organizations functioned as highly disciplined pressure groups taking care of the political, educational, economic and other interests of their members; they even published their own newspapers and magazines. In fact, they were the very pillars of politics in Kerala, and the slightest shift in their voting pattern greatly influenced the fortunes of political parties.

The major political parties in the state, the Congress Party and the Communist Party of Kerala, were deeply rooted in communal organizations. The Christians were the backbone of the Congress Party, while the Communist Party’s strength was in the Ezhava community and partially among the Scheduled Castes. While the almost equal voting potential of these two major communities kept their political parties nearly balanced, it was the shift in the voting pattern of the Nair community in favour of the latter which gave the victory to the communists in 1957. As has been mentioned, politics in Kerala was merely a projection of the aspirations and strength of the communal organizations.
into the political arena, and therefore it failed to reflect the class affiliation of voters. Apart from a small number in plantation, factory and agricultural establishments, workers and poor landless peasants showed little of class-consciousness in 1957. As a rule, they voted for their community and the political party into which this projected itself. Naturally, there were dissidents in every community who refused to vote in the established way. It was their vote which had an enormous effect upon the fortunes of political parties in the state.

It was into this exotic soil and complex economic and social setting that the seed of Marxism fell in the late thirties, grew and nurtured on the native tradition, became an organized political party in 1940 and, within a short span of 17 years, replaced the Congress Party at the helm of the state.

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CHAPTER II

COMMUNISM IN KERALA
AN INDIGENOUS GROWTH

The outstanding feature of the communist movement in Kerala is its indigenous and popular character. The founders, many of whom occupied leading positions in 1957, had a proud record of participating in and leading the national liberation struggle against the British; moreover, many of them had been prominent members of the Congress Party at one time. In fact, the story of communism in Kerala, until the establishment of an independent communist party in 1940, is the history of the Congress Party and its struggle against foreign domination and for the introduction of political, economic and social reforms.

Another reason which endowed communism in Kerala with an indigenous character was its physical and ideological aloofness from the problems which had been rocking the central leadership of the Communist Party in New Delhi from its very beginning in the early twenties. These problems had their origin in the ideological and tactical twists and turns of the Moscow leadership, the dictates of the Third International, and the factional struggle within that highest body of world communism. All those factors had a profound effect upon the ideological and tactical orientation of the Communist Party of India and the fate of the people who led it at that time.

While the instructions of the Third International had driven the leaders in New Delhi into battles which frequently ran counter to the interests and aspirations of the Indian people and inevitably isolated them from the mainstream of national life, the aloofness of the communist leaders in Kerala spared them this ordeal. Moreover, the relative isolation enabled them to graft their movement on the national movement, and nurture it within the Congress Party, which represented all the aspirations, dreams and ambitions of the Indian people at that time. Thus while the international affiliations of the all-India Com-
communist Party made its central leadership fight foreign battles, the communist leaders in Kerala worked loyally within the fold of the Congress Party on national tasks. It was not until 1941, at the time of the entry of the Soviet Union into the war on the side of the Allies, that the leaders in Kerala placed the interests of international communism above the interests of their motherland and lined up behind the leadership in New Delhi in its opposition to the Quit India Movement and in support of British war efforts. By that time, however, they had been so well established among the workers, peasants and intellectuals in Kerala that this 'swimming against the main stream of national sentiments', as remarked by A. K. Gopalan, resulted in a very small loss to their prestige, organization and membership.

A special and highly interesting feature of communism in Kerala is the fact that its leaders had occupied important places within the Congress hierarchy in the pre-independence days and were communists only in name. They merely represented the radical wing within the Congress, which disagreed with its national leadership over the extent of political, economic and social reforms to be introduced in Kerala, and the tactical approaches to the struggle against British rule.

It was precisely over such policies that these radicals separated themselves from the All-India Congress, and set upon a road which gradually led them away from the sentiments of the Indian people. In the first phase, during the first half of the thirties, these men merely represented the radical and progressive wing of the Congress, to which Nehru belonged. In the second phase, they and others established the Congress Socialist Party in 1935 which, curiously enough, continued to function within the organizational framework of the Congress. In the third phase, they and their friends established a rival Congress Party Organization in Kerala in 1938, which began functioning independently of the All-India Congress leadership. Finally, in 1940, a further shift to the left took place, when the most radically minded departed from this rival Congress organization and formed themselves into the Communist Party of Kerala.

Hence the struggle between the leaders of the Communist Party and the traditional leadership of the Congress in Kerala is not a post-independence phenomenon; it goes back to the late
thirties. The elections of 1957 temporarily terminated this protracted conflict in favour of the communists.

Undisputed Leadership of the Congress

The communist movement in Kerala had been nurtured within the Congress Party, and its early history is the story of the Congress. In fact, the Congress Party in Kerala entered the struggle for independence very late, only in 1903. By that time the spirit of the freedom movement had been implanted in the state by such independent stalwarts as the radical journalist K. Ramakrishna Pillai, editor of the Swadeshabhimani published at Trivandrum, who wrote a biography of Marx in Malayalam in 1912.

Although the first conference of the freedom fighters of Kerala was convened by the Congress Party in Kozhikode in 1903, the party did not function in the state until 1910, when the first Congress District Committee was formed in Malabar. Even this committee, however, somehow slumbered and no organized activity of the party was evident until May 1916, when the First District Conference of the Congress Party was held in Palghat. The leadership was in the hands of landlords and rich businessmen who, while steering the party against the British and their servants, opposed the call for social reforms pressed for by its radical wing. The conflict came to a head at the Fourth District Conference of the Congress Party, held at Manjeri in 1920. There not only a resolution was passed demanding complete independence of India, but another resolution was adopted, with an overwhelming majority, which called for reforms of the tenancy of land holdings. The defeat of the conservative leadership at that conference thus marked the emergence of a militant group not only clamouring for constitutional reforms directed against the British, but also for social reforms aiming at the interests of the local wealthy classes. The group was composed of members of the middle class background, and the leadership of the national liberation movement passed into its hands. By that time the non-cooperation movement against the British was in full swing in Kerala. The people rallied in great numbers to the banner of the Congress Party, now led not only by nationalists but also radical social reformers.

The Fifth District Conference of the Congress Party was held
in Ottapalam in April 1921. The conference called for further intensification of the non-cooperation movement and boycott of foreign cloth and other foreign goods. It was attended by delegates from all parts of Kerala. The first Congress newspaper, Mathrubhoomi, appeared in 1923. By that time the nationalist movement was a force to reckon with, which functioned in various forms in different regions of Kerala. In Malabar, the nationalist movement was far more radical than in Travancore and Cochin. In Malabar it had a distinct political character, because it combined political opposition of the middle class in towns, fighting against British rule, with the struggle of peasantry against domestic feudal exploitation and oppression. In Travancore and Cochin, the nationalist movement acquired political characteristics much later and, in its first phase, had been chiefly concerned with social reforms and modernization of the caste and community life. In Malabar, the nationalist movement was truly a popular upsurge in which all communities and castes participated; in Travancore and Cochin, this was confined to the elite of the caste Hindus. Soon, however, the Congress Party called off the non-cooperation movement in Kerala and the struggle for freedom took new forms mainly through constructive work. The Congress started the Khadi Movement, movement against untouchability and drinking, for teaching Hindi, and to promote other objectives.

The nationalist movement received a new and vigorous impetus in January 1924, when the Ernakulam Session of the Congress Party passed a resolution against untouchability and demanded the right of entry of the lower Hindu castes into temples. The resolution was passed because of the pressure which the Ezhavas, under the leadership of T. K. Madhavan and the Nairs under Mannath Padmanabhan, put upon the Congress Party. Following this, both communities came publicly forward with a bold programme of struggle against untouchability and for the right of entry of low-caste Hindus into temples. Three prominent men—A. K. Pillai, K. Kelappan and T. K. Madhavan—took up this noble cause and toured Kerala to bring the message to the people. Arriving in Vikom, they organized a satyagraha in order to force the right of the non-caste Hindus to pass along a public road close by to a temple. Because of the vigorous response of the people, the government banned the satyagraha.
However, the non-caste Hindus, assisted by some caste Hindus, broke the ban with the result that a number of them were arrested. The incident touched off a protracted struggle with the authorities, which lasted one full year and inflamed democratic aspirations elsewhere in Kerala.

Shortly thereafter the nationalist movement in Kerala acquired the character of an agrarian struggle. A galaxy of prominent Kisan leaders appeared—among them G. S. Nair, K. P. Raman Menon and Mannath Krishnan—who led the peasants into battle for reform of the tenancy rights, security of tenure and the bar on evictions. The agrarian struggle found a great deal of support among the leadership of the Congress Party with the result that the landlord element within it considerably cooled off. The successes in organizing the peasant movement prompted the leaders to convene the First Kisan Conference of Kerala in Ernakulam in April 1928. At the same time, the sponsors organized a People's State Conference, a gathering exclusively political in nature. While the Kisan conference adopted a resolution demanding new and far-reaching tenancy legislation, the People's State Conference called for the unification of Kerala. Furthermore, it warned the all-India leadership of the Congress not to interfere in internal affairs of individual states by suppressing radical political and economic demands.

The Fourth Annual Conference of the Congress Party of Kerala was held in Pavannoor in May 1928. It urged the All-India Congress to demand complete independence of the country at its coming session in Calcutta. Later in 1928, the great railway strike broke out in South India. It engulfed all railway centres in Kerala and was seized upon by the working class to start organizing trade unions. Between 1928 and 1930, trade union organizations appeared in Alleppy, Kozhikode and Cannanore. The organized labour movement in Kerala was born in that period.

The next important phase in the upsurge of the nationalist movement in Kerala was touched off by the Lahore Session of the Congress Party, held in 1929. At that session the Congress declared its determination to win complete freedom for the Indian people. Consequently, its leaders decided not to attend the London Round Table Conference, to withdraw the Congress members from all provincial assemblies and, finally, to abandon
the policy of non-cooperation and instead to launch a movement of civil disobedience wherever possible. The Congress Party of Kerala responded splendidly to the decisions of the Lahore Session, and organized hundreds of meetings on January 26 to celebrate the Independence Day.

This injected the civil disobedience campaign into Kerala. Following Gandhi’s example, who had mounted the historic Salt Satyagraha in March 1930, the civil disobedience movement in Malabar was launched by Shri K. Kelappan on April 13, 1930. The sweep, extent and popular support of the movement surprised the authorities, who passively watched its rapid progress. The arrest of Gandhi on May 5, 1930 was, however, a signal for the Madras government to initiate extensive repressive measures. In Kerala the black day came on May 12, 1930, when the police brutally attacked the Satyagrahis, arrested hundreds and injured even more. Two prominent leaders of this popular movement, Krishna Pillai and Shri Sharma, gave particularly inspiring examples of patriotism in defending the national flag against the assault of the police. Pillai later became one of the founders of the Communist Party of Kerala.

The police assaults failed to destroy the freedom movement, which grew by leaps and bounds, although by March 1931 over 500 patriots of Malabar were in jail. In Malabar, the first civil disobedience movement ended when Mahatma Gandhi was released from jail on January 26, 1931, and when all those under arrest in Malabar, but not Travancore-Cochin, had been freed. The release of prisoners in Malabar was the consequence of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, through which the Congress had promised to liquidate the civil disobedience movement and stop all agitation.

A new chapter in the stewardship of the nationalist movement in Kerala opened as a result of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, which permitted peaceful picketing of liquor shops. This provision was seized upon by the Congress leadership for initiating a massive campaign of peaceful picketing of toddy shops throughout the state. At the same time, the Congress decided to renew agitation for the right of entry into temples for the low-caste Hindus, and a satyagraha was organized in front of the Guruvayoor Temple. The struggle was led by K. Kelappan, and lasted from November 1, 1931, until the end of September
1932, when Gandhi himself requested Kelappan to call it off and wait for the outcome of negotiations which he was to conduct with the British at the London Round Table Conference.

Gandhi’s hopes to arrive at a settlement with the British were not, however, fulfilled and the conference broke down. Consequently, the authorities in India mounted a wave of repressive measures against the leaders of the freedom movement. Nehru and other leaders were arrested, and Gandhi was seized as soon as he returned from London. The High Command of the Congress retaliated with launching the second civil disobedience movement, to which the people of Kerala gave a magnificent response. Thousands broke the ban on meetings and agitation, and started a campaign of picketing shops selling foreign goods and liquor; within a fortnight the police arrested 306 of them. In the course of this clash with the police, the Congress convened the Sixth Annual Conference in Calicut on September 15, 1932. The conference turned immediately into a highly spirited demonstration against the British, and the entire 400 delegates were arrested. But the police repressions failed to immobilize the Congress and its leadership in Kerala, and soon district and taluk conferences were organized all over the state.

This is a very brief record of the main features of the stewardship of the nationalist movement in Kerala by the Congress Party. During that period, the party held its sway over the movement and wielded undisputed leadership.

Emergence of the Left Radicals

Soon, however, a number of factors entered the politics of the Congress Party which brought about a sharp polarization of its membership. The party split into a radical wing, which was imbued with Marxist and socialist ideas and pressed for a far-reaching programme of socialization even before the attainment of independence, and a moderate wing which opposed this programme and instead sought to win independence first, leaving the problem of social reforms for the future. This development within the Congress led to the separation of the radicals in the course of time and, finally, resulted in the establishment of the Communist Party of Kerala in 1940.

The polarization of forces within the Congress in Kerala, dormant for years, was accelerated by the soft policies which the
All-India Congress in Delhi adopted toward the British. Following the release of Gandhi from jail in May 1933, the Congress High Command discontinued the mass civil disobedience campaign and initiated individual satyagraha instead. However, by the end of 1933, even this movement for satyagraha was stopped, and then formally withdrawn in 1934. The defeatist attitude and the retreat from the past militant course of political action had a profound effect upon the radicals within the party. Moreover, the serious split, which had already been in the making over this issue, was aggravated by the impact of outside influences. While the Western world was in the grip of a deep economic crisis, the Soviet Union completed an extensive collectivization drive of agriculture and embarked on a course of economic and political consolidation. The image of the Soviet Union propagated in India portrayed this gigantic effort in agriculture in most optimistic colours, and calls appeared for its imitation in India.

The impact of the events taking place in the West and in the Soviet Union greatly affected the young Turks within the Congress. They began to challenge its traditional leadership and agitate for a revolutionary way to deal with foreign rule and the staggering economic and social problems of the country. The upshot of this radicalization was the establishment of the All-India Congress Socialist Party in 1935. This body was not an independent political party, but merely the institutionalized left wing of the Congress; it continued functioning within the old fold, although it brandished an independent label.

In Kerala, the Congress Party had been under the majority control of the left radicals for a long time, among whom most prominently figured the future communist leaders P. Krishna Pillai, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, Damodaran, K. P. Gopalan, Mayarath Sankaran, and others. While working within the Congress, these men tirelessly built their own following among workers, peasants, students and intellectuals, particularly in Malabar, laying thus the organizational foundation for the future communist party. When the final break with the Congress arrived in 1940, they took this following with them. The left radicals functioning within the Kerala Congress scored their first major success in 1934, when the rival Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, established in that year, had fallen into their hands.
The next success came in 1935, when the results of their efforts among the working class enabled them to organize the trade unions. An extensive strike wave which swept the state in 1934-5, the first strike conducted in an organized fashion, demonstrated the revolutionary potential of the working class and indicated that it would be possible to build upon it an independent political movement. Consequently, the communists and other radicals from the Congress dispatched agitators and organizers to all corners of Kerala to propagate the new faith. Encouraged by the results, the leftists forced through the Kerala Provincial Committee of the Congress Party a resolution strongly flavoured with socialist ideas, which called upon the Congress to give full support to the immediate demands of the workers and peasants. Simultaneously with staging this internal revolution within the Congress, the radicals convened the First All-Kerala Trade Union Congress at Kozhikode in May 1935.

Because the success of this Congress confirmed the assumption that the working class and peasantry in Kerala had awakened, the radicals decided to launch their own political movement while nominally remaining within the fold of the Congress. The upshot was the establishment of the Kerala Congress Socialist Party in May 1935.

**Period of Congress Communism**

The next stage in the development of communism in Kerala can be best described as a period of the Congress Communism. It was marked by a feature strikingly similar to the split of the Russian Social Democratic Party into its Bolshevik and Menshevik wings in 1903, and to the activities of Lenin in building his own party while nominally remaining within the fold of the maternal organization. Also in Kerala, the communist radicals remained within the Congress Party during the transitory stage. At the same time, however, they launched a programme of ideological education of their followers in Marxism, and of building the Kerala Congress Socialist Party through organizational effort among the working class, peasants, students, youth and intellectuals, and through injecting Marxism into the communal organizations. In addition, they waged an incessant struggle within the Congress Party to deepen and aggravate its
split and win to their cause as many leaders and rank and file activists and agitators as possible.

The most outstanding feature of the activities of the Congress Communists was their introduction of Marxism into the ranks of the communal organizations. This move anchored the future communist party within the bodies of communal power, the very root of politics in Kerala. E. M. S. Namboodiripad, and his other Brahmin colleagues, organized the Namboodiri Movement among young Brahmins; they published newspapers and staged plays which pitted the young generation against the Hindu orthodox and traditional leadership. Hence, communism was introduced into this élite caste not through the study of Marxist literature, but under the guise of a reformist movement which aimed at mitigating some of the most conservative customs, habits and family patterns of the caste.

Because of this, the ideological clash was avoided between Hinduism, embodying the high spiritual values of India and the way of life of non-violence, tolerance and accommodation, and the atheistic, militant and western Marxism. The symbiosis of these two outlooks took place on the plane of social reform and joint efforts for cultural advance, and not on the plane of philosophy, religion and ethics.

Similarly, other Congress Communists injected Marxism into the ranks of other Hindu castes. Some Congress Communists were influential leaders of the Nair Service Society, and introduced Marxism through a programme linking it with social reforms. Among the third Hindu caste, the Ezhavas, Marxism was introduced through the work of its prominent Congress Communist leaders K. P. Gopalan, C. H. Kanaran, R. Sugathan, and others.

No less effective were the Congress Communists in their activities among the working class in Kerala. It will be recalled that they established the first trade unions and convened the First All-Kerala Trade Union Congress in Kozhikode in 1935. In Malabar, this work was carried out by such leaders as P. Krishna Pillai, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, N. G. Shenoy, and K. P. Gopalan. In Travancore, by M. N. Govindan Nair, P. T. Punnoose, K. C. George, and others. In Cochin, the Praja Mandalam Movement was led by Achutha Menon, Gangadharan, and K. K. Warrier.
The Congress Communists used imaginative forms of work among the intelligentsia, teachers and students in building their organizations within these strata of the population. The best elements and features of the national tradition and cultural heritage of the people of Kerala—their folk songs, drama, dances and art—were harnessed to an enormous Kultur Kampf and turned into vehicles to propagate Marxism among this cultural élite. The communist propagandists divested Marxism of all its unpalatable features and propagated it in the garb of a movement striving for national renaissance, cultural advance and social reform. A great number of literary pieces in the Malayalam language, folk songs and drama were written by the intellectuals from among the Congress Communists and their friends. While drawing upon the best features of the ancient tradition of the Malayalee people, these artists imbued their works with contemporary and highly revolutionary content which helped to radicalize the intelligentsia as well as the common people. In 1937, the Congress Communists organized a large campaign against l'art pour l'art and in favour of Art For the People, and a number of plays written by progressive writers was performed by the communist sponsored dramatic clubs. The most famous play, with a highly explosive contemporary theme, was written by Damodaran. It was entitled 'Arrears of Rent', and portrayed the system of rural usury and other evils in very realistic terms. Another play depicted the struggle of the working class for the improvement of its living conditions; it had a horrible title, the 'Drinking of Blood.'

The next target of the Congress Communists in promoting their movement became the peasants. The foundation of the first peasant movement in Kerala had already been laid by the Congress Communists in 1935. The work continued through the introduction of the cultural movement into the country-side. In fact, this activity was the extension of the cultural offensive waged by the propagandists in the urban area. The leadership of the Congress Communists opened village evening classes and political study circles to teach the peasants to read and write and make them class-conscious at the same time. The Publishing House of the Congress Communists printed pamphlets and leaflets, and readily supplied the reading rooms in rural areas with suitable material. The school teachers in towns, who had
already joined the movement, had to return to villages during the holidays to carry the message to their own people. Particularly responsive to the work of the communist propagandists were the peasants of the Ezhava and the Nair communities, who later became the backbone of the Communist Party in the countryside.

In Malabar, the peasant movement took an especially militant posture during 1938-39. The movement started as a campaign against the heavy levies which the peasants had to pay to landlords. It reached the highest pitch in the winter of 1938-39, when the peasants not only refused to pay the levies but resorted to boycott and ostracism of landlords. The agitation was so militant that many landlords escaped to towns, and those remaining had to request the authorities for police protection. The authorities dispatched a number of punitive expeditions to villages to suppress the agitation and force the peasants to pay.

The agitation for the abolition of levies, which originated in North Malabar, then spread into Cochin and Travancore and soon engulfed the whole countryside. It rapidly evolved into a peasant mass movement, which entrenched itself in the dense network of the Kisan Sanghram. It was led by the Congress Communists who demanded reduction of rent, abolition of feudalism and landlordism and transfer of land to the tillers. In this movement the landless agricultural labourers and the tenants joined hands under the leadership of the Congress Communists, with the result that when in 1940 the Communist Party was established, it commanded a base in rural areas from which it could not be dislodged.

The first real test of the operational effectiveness of the mass organizations led by the Congress Communists came in 1938, when the Congress Party organized a large campaign demanding the setting up of 'responsible government' in Travancore in order to emulate the formation of the first Congress Ministry in Madras in 1937. The Congress Communists dispatched a group of 40 volunteers on a march, 759 miles in length, from Malabar to Travancore, to organize the campaign. They further trained 3,000 volunteers, and organized 500 village and rural district committees in the area. The trade unions in Alleppey and Sherthalay played an important role in this movement. They staged a general strike in Alleppey, the first general
strike in Kerala, and declared that work would not be resumed until 'responsible government' was established. The general strike reached its peak on October 24, 1938, when demonstrators clashed with the police.

It was during this period that the future Communist Party secured a strong mooring among the principal sources of political power in Kerala: the Ezhavas and Nairs through their communal organizations; workers through trade unions; intelligentsia, students and youth through clubs of writers, dramatists and artists and student unions; and peasants through the Kisan Sangham. It must be emphasized that all this agitation and organizational activity had been carried out while the Congress Communists had been working at the same time as respected functionaries of the Kerala Congress. This fact justified the claim of the Communist leaders in 1957 that their party was deeply rooted among the people, grafted on the best elements of cultural tradition and heritage of Kerala, and that it had a lion's share in the attainment of freedom and independence.

As the record shows, this claim is not easy to refute. In fact, the process of transfer of the leadership from the Congress Party to the communists had been initiated a long time before the latter separated themselves from the maternal body, and before the two sister groups plunged into the battle for the heritage of the pre-independence days in the elections of 1957.

The Communist Party Founded

Although five leading members of the Congress Communists had been functioning within the Congress Party since 1937, as a nucleus of the Communist Party of Kerala, the party was not formally established until the Congress split under the impact of the Second World War in 1940.

As soon as the Nazi armies invaded Poland on September 1, 1939 and England declared war a few days later, the Congress Communists seized the involvement of England in the war as an opportunity for striking for freedom of India. This further aggravated the polarization process over the policies of the freedom movement, which had been taking place within the Congress since the establishment of the Kerala Congress Socialist Party in 1935. The Congress Communists now declared that the war was an imperialist war, and that the Congress must launch
a campaign of direct action to terminate British rule in India. Because this demand encountered a considerable opposition from the Congress leadership in Delhi and the majority of their colleagues in Kerala, the Congress Communists organized their own campaign against the war and for an immediate end of British rule. As a consequence, a great number of them was arrested.

It was shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, during January-February 1940, that the leadership of the Congress Communists decided at a series of meetings that both the international situation, as well as the struggle against British rule in India, called for the establishment of a revolutionary party. It was agreed that such a party would pursue a militant policy wholly independent of the central leadership of the Congress Party in Delhi, but in accord with the line which the Indian Communist Party had expressed in its document entitled 'The Proletarian Path'. Consequently, a decision was made to establish a branch of the Communist Party of India in Kerala. However, the assembled leaders agreed not to separate themselves from the Congress Party and continue their primary membership in that body. The reason for this ambivalent decision was that the Communist movement had been under a police ban for some time, and that the British authorities had already imprisoned a number of leading leftists for their anti-war and seditious propaganda. It thus appeared that the Congress Party would be the best hiding place which could protect the Communists.

In view of this, the operational plan evolved at that time by the Communist Party of Kerala was a highly complicated affair which called for: (a) building an underground revolutionary apparatus which later could launch open battles against the British; (b) retention of the leading positions within the Kerala Congress Committee and its provincial, district and local organizations; (c) close relations with the membership of the provincial, district and local organs of the Congress. Operating on these three levels, the newly founded Communist Party displayed an enormous mobilizing effectiveness in leading the Congress membership, and its own following, into battles against the British in clear defiance of the policies of the central leadership of the Congress Party in Delhi.
The situation lasted almost a year when, finally, the entire left wing of the Congress Party, i.e. the Congress Socialists and the Congress Communists, forced the Congress to launch a campaign of individual satyagraha on September 15, 1940, and to proclaim that day an Anti-Imperialist Day, which drew thousands to demonstrate against the British. It was a memorable event, for it was the first political action in which militant resistance to the police was organized under the leadership of the newly founded Communist Party. During the street fighting, two young communists, Aboo and Chathukutty, lost their lives, and in the aftermath K. P. R. Gopalan was sentenced to death. The dual policy which the Communist Party pursued at that time was best described by E. M. S. Namboodiripad in stating that it was the Communists, first functioning as Congressmen, who had issued the call for the Anti-Imperialist Day in Kerala; and that it was again the Communists, then functioning as the Communist Party of Kerala, who organized the militant action on that day.

The central leadership of the Congress Party in Delhi took very strong exception to this unauthorized action, which aggravated its relations with the British on the all-India level. After a month of yielding to the pressure of the leftists from Kerala, the Congress High Command in Delhi exterminated the leftist influence from within its Kerala branch by dissolving, on October 15, 1940, the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and all district committees in which the Congress Communists had control of the majority. To replace them, the High Command nominated new committees from men loyal to the central leadership.

Because the dissolution of the leftist Congress Committees deprived the Congress Socialists of their organized basis, they joined en bloc the Communist Party of Kerala, then an independent organization. This move was the high water-mark of unity of all leftist forces of Kerala, never to be repeated. The entire left was now unified within the Communist Party. However, the anti-British agitation and militant struggles of the Kisans in Northern Malabar demanding the right to cultivate fallow lands, which had been organized by the Communists, resulted in the police killing five men at Kavumbayi and Karivelloor and in a more severe ban upon all Communist activities. Because of this, the leadership abandoned all overt forms of action and took the
party fully underground. The party now concentrated upon the extension of its underground apparatus and worked through the local organizations of the Congress which appeared less conspicuous and, in fact, were tolerated by British authorities. The severe ban on all activities of the Communist Party, and the persecution of its members, lasted until July 1942 when it was lifted.

It must be emphasized, however, that since the outbreak of the war in September 1939 until July 1942, the Communist Party in Kerala was more anti-British than the Congress, and earned a large measure of credit for its refusal to compromise with the British when the war had placed them in discomfiture in India. Because of this, the Communist Party appeared to many as a more patriotic and anti-imperialist force than the Congress, and as the real leader of the entire anti-imperialist movement in Kerala at that time.

This hard-won and precious political capital was depreciated, however, shortly after the Soviet Union entered the war in June 1941, and when the Communist leaders submitted to the dictates of international communism and placed obligations toward the Soviet Union above obligations toward their own country. The main enemy of Kerala was no more British imperialism, but German fascism threatening to destroy the Soviet Union, the first socialist state and the base of the world revolution. Consequently, the Kerala Communists forgot their past differences with the British and started to support them, for any assistance to the British, then allied with the Soviet Union, helped this base of the world revolution to preserve its existence.

The chief theoretician of the Communist Party of Kerala, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, explained the reason for this volte face in the following terms:

... meanwhile, however, the character of the war changed: on June 22nd 1941 the war ceased to be an attempt of antagonistic imperialist groups to re-partition the world among themselves, but a war to decide the future of the Soviet Union and through it of world socialism. Since, however, this change in the character of the war was of such a type as could be seen only by the class conscious representatives of the proletariat, it led to very complicated situation. The genuinely-left petty bourgeoisie was of course sympathetic towards the Soviet
Union but could not, on that account alone, see any transformation in the character of the war so long as Britain continued to rule our country. The advanced elements among the working class, on the other hand, felt that nothing should be left undone to defend the land of Socialism. It was naturally the latter stand that the Indian Communists, after an initial leaning towards the former, took in 1942 when they declared that, with the entry of the Soviet Union as one of the contestants, the war had become a People's War....

However, it was not easy for the Communist Party to campaign for the abandonment of the national aspirations of the people and for an alignment and, 'outright class collaboration, with foreign oppressor.' As A. K. Gopalan observed, the political line of the party at that time 'ran counter to the anti-imperialist sentiments of the majority of the Indian people', and many serious mistakes had been committed by its leadership.

Interestingly enough, while this anti-national stand of the Communist Party in Kerala severely shook its top leadership, it had practically no effect upon its local cells. In fact, it was during this period that the party grew into a mass organization. As soon as the ban upon its activities had been lifted in July 1942, the party started publishing a weekly journal in Malayalam, which became the largest weekly newspaper in Kerala in that language. The financial resources for the expansion came from public collections and donations, which amounted to Rs. 300,000 between 1942-45.

The main reason for the growth of the basic units of the party, in spite of its anti-national stand, was the fact that only its top leadership dealt with problems arising out of the support of the British war efforts. The local party units had been purposefully kept away from these delicate problems of high policy, and the local leadership was instructed to concentrate on the immediate and concrete problems facing the working class and peasantry.

Conditions highly favourable to the growth of the Communist Party in Kerala were further created by the co-operative attitude shown by the authorities. The British appreciated the effort of the party leaders at keeping the ordinary members away from anti-war and anti-British agitation and harnessed to the promo-
tion of the war effort. Thus while the patriots from the Congress Party, and a great number of non-party nationalists, went to jail for their anti-war and anti-British agitation, the Communist Party in Kerala not only enjoyed sympathy but also support of the authorities as a reward for maintaining industrial peace in the state.

The anti-national policy of the Communist Party in Kerala, which led the working class into an alliance and class collaboration with an 'imperialist power', had a profound effect upon the other leftist forces. Their leaders charged the communists with the betrayal of the national cause, and labelled them 'paid agents of British imperialism'. Namboodiripad well remembers those days:

...this made a basic change in the alignment of forces inside the national democratic movement in Kerala. For, the undisputed position of leadership over all genuinely anti-imperialists, which the Communists had enjoyed till 1942, was shaken. The right-wing bourgeois leadership of the national movement, which had always appeared to the rank and file anti-imperialists as compromising, now assumed the role of uncompromising fighters against imperialism, engaged in a last-ditch battle with the enemy; while the Communists, who had always been regarded to be the best fighters, appeared as compromisers. The hitherto solid unity of the left elements was thus broken, a section of the leftists allying themselves with the right-wing Congressmen. Anti-Communism became a hallmark not only of the right-wing but of sections of the left also. A new generation of anti-imperialists grew who genuinely believed that the Communist Party was a paid agent of British Imperialism.4

To safeguard the working class of Kerala against the dangers inherent in its co-operation with the national and class enemy under the leadership of the Communist Party, the leftist elements from within and outside of the Congress Party, i.e., former allies of the Congress Communists, decided to launch extensive organizational work in order to break the hold of the Communists over the trade unions, kisans and organizations of intellectuals, students and youth. To further this task, the left wing
of the Kerala Congress split away and formed itself into the Socialist Party of Kerala in 1942.

The formation and functioning of this party, under the direction of K. B. Menon, had a profound effect upon the leadership of the Communist Party. The result was that a number of the Congress Socialists, who had joined the Communist Party *en bloc* when the left-controlled Congress committees had been dissolved by the Congress High Command on October 15, 1940, resigned from the Communist Party and joined hands with their former colleagues from the Congress in the newly formed Socialist Party of Kerala. Here ended the unity of the leftist forces, which during the past two years had been achieved under the hegemony of the Community Party. The new party threw itself into the task of breaking the Communist control over the principal mass organizations in the state, and soon established rival trade unions, organizations of peasants, intellectuals, students and youth. The Socialist Party of Kerala thus acquired its own basis among the principal strata of the population, so essential for its activity as an independent political force.

Commenting ten years later upon these developments, Namboodiripad put his finger squarely upon the crux of the problem which had split the leftist movement in Kerala in 1942. According to him, it was the conflict between loyalties to the Soviet Union and the international communism on the one hand, and to India on the other, which had ripped wide open the socialist camp in Kerala. The Communist Party decided to follow Moscow. Said Namboodiripad:

There had, till 1942, been no anti-Soviet, anti-Communist, bias inside the socialist movement in Kerala, thanks to the genuine socialist convictions of the first generation of socialists in Kerala. This is why not a single member of the Socialist Party of Kerala dissented when it decided, in 1940, to transform itself into the Communist Party. But the apparent conflict in 1942 between loyalty to our anti-imperialist movement created a new generation of socialists in Kerala who were as anti-Soviet and anti-Communist as the Masanis and Mehtas....

So complicated a political situation as this required a high degree of political maturity on the part of the Communist Party. For it was a question of linking up the national anti-
imperialist tasks of the Indian proletariat with its international tasks. It was again a question of fighting the pro-fascist sentiments growing among the anti-imperialist masses in such a way that, while it effectively exposed the conscious fascist agents, it won over the majority of anti-imperialists... It was, above all, a question of preserving and extending the unity of the trade unions, Kisan Sabhas, student organizations, etc., in such a way that the day-to-day demands of the mass of the people were secured without resorting to such forms of struggle as would help the conscious fascist agents.

There is no doubt that the Communist Party failed to show such a high degree of political maturity. Various mistakes were no doubt committed in assessing the anti-imperialist content of the 1942 upsurge... The essence of these mistakes consisted, no doubt, in the under-estimation of the national factor in working out the tactics of revolution, in the failure to realize that the Communists in a colonial country can fulfil their class tasks only if they take proper account of the fact that national aspirations are the decisive political factor in a colonial country.

The main point, however, is not that these mistakes were committed and that the Party in consequence got temporarily isolated from the non-party mass of anti-imperialists. The main and decisive point is that, in the first major political conflict with the bourgeois leadership of the national movement, the Communist Party took its international and class task as the main task. This was particularly so for the Communists of Kerala who... grew inside the national movement and hence carried with them innumerable remnants of bourgeois nationalism. And yet they carried out this part of their task as a united party; all the fervent hopes cherished by the opponents of the party, that it would either be forced to give up its slogan of People’s War or would get disrupted, were dashed to pieces... 

It will be recalled that the Communist Party in Kerala had been formed by the separation of one radical wing from the Congress in 1940, and that this process was repeated in 1942, when another group of radicals split away and founded the Socialist Party of Kerala. However, the process of polarization of forces
within the Congress Party did not stop here. In 1948-9 another group of leftists separated itself from the Congress and formed the Indian Socialist Party of Kerala, and in 1950 yet another group split away and established the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party.

One outstanding feature of politics in Kerala between 1947-57, as shortly will be seen, had its root precisely in this continuous emergence and then separation of the leftist groups from the main body of the Congress, and in their formation into a number of socialist parties. As offspring of the Congress on the one hand, and sister organizations of the Communist Party on the other, the socialist parties imbued the political process with fluidity through their willingness to co-operate with the Congress at one time and the communists at another. The Congress Party poised on one end of political spectrum, and the Communist Party poised on the other, functioned as two poles between which the political pulse in Kerala oscillated. The socialist parties had no inhibition in joining hands with the Communists to pull down the Congress from power any time an occasion presented itself. Conversely, they did not hesitate to come back and ally themselves with the Congress any time the other offspring of this body, the Communist Party, threatened them with annihilation in the embrace of united front.

Upon these shifting sands was based the politics of united front, for which Kerala became notoriously famous during the decade after independence. The socialist parties functioned as the ballast which continuously adjusted the shifting balance of power between the Congress, and its prodigious child, the Communist Party.

The most important chapter in the history of the Communist Party in Kerala, during the rest of the pre-independence days, deals with its conduct of a campaign for ‘responsible government’ in Travancore. The Dewan of Travancore had proposed a constitutional reform on ‘the American Model’ in 1944. While the Congress opposed this reform but in the end accepted it, the Communist Party resolved to organize a campaign against it. The Communist leaders submitted to the government a sixteen-point memorandum, demanding among other things the end of the rule of the Dewan and the granting of ‘responsible government’ to Travancore. Though the Dewan agreed to all points but the two mentioned above, the Communist Party was
not satisfied and decided to answer with a mass campaign of direct political action to force the issue. Consequently, the party organized a general strike on September 24, 1946, and on the 26th a huge procession marched into a coastal village of Punnappura, where the demonstrators armed themselves and then seized public buildings in order to establish a people's rule. Meanwhile, the police had arrived and shot down a number of rebels. The uprising, however, could not be suppressed and the government declared martial law and ordered special detachments of army to liquidate it. Before the army arrived the rebels had withdrawn to a nearby island of Vayalar, which they seized and fortified. The military surrounded the island on September 28, and opened fire from three sides in an assault to capture it. About 150 people were killed during the assault and some more after the occupation of the island by the troops. Simultaneously with the massacre on the Vayalar island, the army crushed another uprising led by the Kerala Communists in two places on the coast of Travancore; in one attack 130 people were killed, and in another 10. Here ended the first and the last attempt of the Communists at a violent seizure of power in Kerala. According to one source, the concluding scene to this episode took place on October 23 and 24, 1946, when the government forces fired without respite and injured and killed about 4,000 rebels in two talukas of Travancore.

At the same time, the Communist Party organized a series of agrarian rebellions in Malabar in which several party members were killed. The government then dispatched a special officer to investigate the activities of the Communists in Malabar, and we have an interesting memorandum addressed by E. M. S. Namboodiripad to him on January 12, 1947, explaining the reasons for the unrest.⁷

By the time India attained independence on August 15, 1947, and when Travancore and Cochin merged to form one state shortly thereafter, the Communist Party was a serious social force ready to contest openly the Congress Party's right to lead Kerala. First, it was an unequal race. Soon, however, the Congress began to show serious signs of internal decay which made it unable to rule and which, finally, in the eyes of the electorate made it to forfeit the right to govern the state.
REFERENCES


5 Ibid., pp. 152-4, *passim*; emphasis supplied.


7 *Police Terror against Malabar Kisan*, Memorandum to the Congress Working Committee from the Malabar District Communist Party of India, (People's Publishing House: Bombay, no date, 1947?), pp. 17-29.
CHAPTER III
TRANSFER OF LEADERSHIP: 1947-1957

The decade following the attainment of independence by India, from 1947 until 1957, was marked by a rapid deterioration of the position of the Congress Party in Kerala with the result that at the end of the decade it was voted out of power. Two main reasons were responsible for this turn in the fortunes of that party.

In the first place were the group rivalries within its leadership. They originated in the parochial outlook, regionalism, personal ambition and extreme selfishness and opportunism of some leaders. Any time a new group succeeded in attaining the controlling influences within the Congress, the group enlisted the support of the communist and socialist parties in the assembly to defeat the Congress government and form a new cabinet composed of its own members. The internal conflicts within the party became thus projected into the government with the result that a number of the Congress cabinets, led by various factions, followed in a rapid succession. Kerala experienced ten governments and one Presidential Rule in one decade.

The second factor responsible for the deterioration of the position of the Congress was the process of polarization which had not terminated by the establishment of the Congress Socialist Party in 1935, Kerala Communist Party in 1939, and Kerala Socialist Party in 1942. The Congress underwent further division with the result that the Indian Socialist Party of Kerala was established in 1948, and another group of dissenters formed itself into the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP) in 1950.

Not only had these fissiparous tendencies seriously impaired the Congress Party internally; more important, they became the basic cause of governmental instability. The bitterness between the parent organization and its offsprings reached such intensity that the socialist parties eagerly co-operated with the Communists to dislodge the Congress from power through combined assault.
Aided by the rival groups fighting for power within the Congress itself, this combination of leftists succeeded six times in bringing down the government without, however, being able to form a government of the opposition parties. Any time the point had been reached when unity and constructive policies became imperative for carrying the leftist alliance beyond the mere defeat of a Congress government, as in 1954, the alliance broke up with the result that some of the socialist parties, enraged and dismayed by the attitude taken by the Communists, bounced back into co-operation with the Congress for a short spell of time until the whole circle repeated itself.

An important point to note is that it had not been the staggering economic and social problems, nor a conflict over large policy issues, which caused the downfall of the Congress within a decade. The door to the Communist rule was opened, on the one hand, by the gradual but steady decline of the ethical, moral and political standards of the Congress, and on the other by the willingness of the leftist parties to ally themselves with the Communists. The following record of the post-independence decade clearly bears out this conclusion.

First Ministry

The first free elections based upon adult franchise were held in Travancore-Cochin from February 2 to 16, 1948, to contest 120 seats of the State Legislative Assembly. The Communist Party, and the newly established Indian Socialist Party of Kerala, formed united front in Travancore. These two parties also had an electoral agreement with the Travancore Tamil Nad Congress (TTNC) in South Travancore, which was the very first instance of a Congress group joining hands with the Communist Party in an assault upon the maternal organization. Although negotiations took place for a communist-socialist united front in Cochin, no arrangement was arrived at, and the two parties separately boycotted the elections in the Cochin area. The Congress Party commanded an enormous prestige from the pre-independence days and emerged from the elections with a majority unparallelled anywhere in India.

Out of 120 seats in the State Legislative Assembly, the contesting parties secured the following number:
Transfer of Leadership: 1947-1957

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Congress Party</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>80.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The TTNC</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muslim League</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>120</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The people of Kerala clearly paid a handsome tribute to the Congress Party for its stewardship of the struggle for freedom and for winning independence. Their vote gave the Congress Party, combined with the Travancore Tamil Nad Congress (TTNC), a total of 111 out of 120 seats, which was 92.6 per cent.

The Communist Party contested 17 seats, and the Kerala Socialist Party 8, but both parties failed to secure a single seat. Out of 32 independent contestants, only one was elected. Obviously, the Communist Party was too inexperienced to exploit, through the electoral process, the following it had commanded at the grass-root level. This shortcoming was soon to be removed.

Shortly after the elections the deputies formed the first freely constituted local legislative body in all India, and elected a veteran Congressman, A. J. John, to its chairmanship on March 21, 1948. The Maharaja of Travancore-Cochin then made a proclamation converting this body into a State Legislative Assembly, and on March 24, 1948 the first cabinet was formed under the premiership of Pattom Tharu Pillai. It was a small cabinet of three members consisting of the premier, called the Chief Minister, and his two colleagues, T. N. Varghese and C. Keshavan.

Due to unrest organized by the Communists in the rural areas of the state, which imitated the militant policies currently launched by the central leadership of the Communist Party of India in Telengana to seize power through agrarian revolution, and also because the Union Government had banned the Communist Party of India in several areas of the country, the first Congress ministry in Kerala also banned the local Communist Party.

Second Ministry

The Communists were not, however, the main enemy of the Congress government in Kerala at that time. It was the internal strife and dissent which in a short period of time annulled the
enormous vote of confidence the people of Kerala had accorded to it in the 1948 elections. Interesting and important as it might be to trace the causes of this internal malady, which transformed the Congress into a minority party within a few years, only those features which relate to our subject would be touched upon.\(^2\)

The malady of internal dissent attacked the heart of the ruling party only four months after it had assumed government in Kerala. The very fact that the party suddenly came to power began to feed the group rivalries and personal ambitions of its leading members. The internal conflict soon reflected itself in the work of the cabinet, and Chief Minister Pattom Thanu Pillai, who at the same time functioned as President of the Congress, found his two ministerial colleagues poised against him. The upshot was that the Chief Minister sought to reinforce his hand and, without consulting his two colleagues, enlarged the cabinet on July 13, 1948 by taking in his allies K. K. Korah, A. Achuthan, G. Ramachandran and P. S. Nataraja Pillai. The two ministers viewed seriously this shift in the balance of power within the cabinet and the manner in which it had been accomplished, and threatened to resign. At the end of a heated wrangle reconciliation was achieved at the cost of the ascending group, which agreed to the elimination of P. S. Nataraja Pillai from the cabinet 48 hours after he had been sworn in.

*Third Ministry*

The reconciliation of the conflicting groups within the Congress and the cabinet did not last long, and soon a new combination had enough forces to stage another assault upon the cabinet.

The group within the Congress, opposing Pattom Thanu Pillai, was led by T. K. Narayana Pillai and K. A. Gangadhara Menon. These two men, and the group they represented, argued that the same person, Pattom Thanu Pillai, should not be permitted to concentrate so much power in his hands by being President of the Congress and at the same time Chief Minister of the government. The upshot was the resignation of Pattom Thanu Pillai from the Congress Party. This prompted the rebels to move in the State Legislative Assembly a no-confidence motion, on October 17, 1948, to bring down Pattom Thanu Pillai’s cabinet and clear the way for the winning faction to assume the state power. The cabinet fell. In this connection it
must be remembered that the Congress controlled 92.6 per cent of seats in the assembly, and that the government was defeated not over policies and by the opposition parties, but because of the rivalries within the Congress and by the vote of the Congressmen themselves.

The winning group consolidated its position first within the Congress by electing T. K. Narayana Pillai to its presidency, and then by forming a new cabinet on October 22, 1948. The concentration of power was not, however, abolished and the new President of the party, T. K. Narayana Pillai, also assumed the premiership of the government. His cabinet consisted of A. J. John, K. R. Elangath, V. O. Markose, N. Kunjuraman, E. K. Madhavan and Sri Parror. The consolidation was completed on December 6, 1948, when T. V. Thomas was elected Speaker in the State Legislative Assembly.

Fourth Ministry

The new cabinet remained in power without changes until July 1, 1949. On that date came into force the decision of the Union Government to merge the two princely states then constituting Kerala, Travancore and Cochin, into one unit called Travancore-Cochin State. The Union Government announced that the Maharaja of Travancore would be the Rajpramukh of the new state, and that the Maharaja of Cochin would be pensioned.

The unification of the two princely states brought about reorganization of the cabinet and the State Legislative Assembly. The enlarged cabinet of the new state was formed on July 1, 1949. It consisted of Chief Minister T. K. Narayana Pillai, Panampilly Govinda Menon, Ikkanda Warrier, A. J. John, K. Ayyappan, E. K. Madhavan and T. A. Abdulla. The State Legislative Assembly elected T. M. Varghese to the chairmanship.

The unification of Travancore and Cochin injected a new apple of discord into the already faction-ridden Congress Party, and now parochialism and regionalism began to dominate it. The underlying cause of much more intensive factional struggle was the election of T. K. Narayana Pillai to the presidency of the Congress Party of the unified state. The election had a profound effect upon the formation of the new cabinet, which
became dominated by a group from Travancore, and injected the traditional rivalry between the Congress groups from Travancore and Cochin into the government structure. The regional and parochial aspirations asserted themselves so powerfully on the very day of the formation of the cabinet, July 1, 1949, that the Chief Minister had to accommodate the rival group by enlarging his cabinet and accepting into it N. Kunjuraman, E. J. Phillipose and Miss Annie Mascarenies. On the other hand, E. K. Madhavan was forced to resign from it.

Fifth Ministry

The adjustment in the balance of regional forces operating within the Congress was not a lasting achievement. A new upsurge for the control of the party and cabinet, between the Travancore and the Cochin groups, reached a critical point and the cabinet was forced to resign on February 24, 1951.

This time, the premiership was placed in the hands of G. Kesavan, who thought that by reducing the number of cabinet seats he could eliminate the factional strife which had proved so deadly to the stability of the Congress rule in the state. His cabinet consisted only of three members: himself, T. K. Narayana Pillai and A. J. John. But Kesavan was wrong in hoping that he could stabilize his cabinet by denying representation to the Cochin group. This group was much embittered and, under the leadership of Panampilly Govinda Menon, threatened to resign from the assembly in order to defeat the government if some of its members were not taken into the cabinet. Premier Kesavan refused, however, to accommodate the demand of the Cochin group and resigned from the leadership of the Congress in protest against its pressure politics.

Sixth Ministry

The inability of the Congress to provide the people of Kerala with a stable government, in spite of its large parliamentary majority, had such a bad effect upon the public that the party realized that it could no longer afford the internal dissent. This prompted the warring groups to restore unity, to some degree, by re-electing Kesavan to the leadership of the Congress Party. Kesavan then agreed to accommodate the Cochin group by enlarging his cabinet. His new cabinet, formed on September 6,
1951, was composed of K. K. Kora, G. Chandrasekhara Pillai, L. M. Pylee and P. K. Kuttikrishna Menon. Since T. M. Varghese had, in the meantime, resigned his membership in the Congress Party, A. M. Thomas was elected to the chairmanship of the State Legislative Assembly. The sixth ministry lasted until the formation of a new cabinet, which was set up as a result of the first general elections, held in all India from December 1951 to January 1952.

The continuous struggle for the positions of power was not without effect upon the party itself. It will be recalled that a group of the Congress Socialists had separated itself and established the Kerala Socialist Party in 1948. Former Congress president and the first premier of the government, Pattom Thanu Pillai, joined the new party and became the staunchest opponent of the Congress Party, in bitterness next only to the Communists.

Further internal deterioration of the Congress took place in 1950. A prominent and influential leader of the All-India Congress Party, Acharya Kripalani, resigned and established the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP). The split on the national level affected Kerala, where veteran Gandhian leaders, K. Kelappan and K. A. Damodaran, left the Congress and founded the Kerala branch of the KMPP.

By that time, the record of the Congress Party in Kerala was so poor, and its moral and ethical standards so low, that in the general elections of 1951-52 the KMPP co-operated with the Communist Party to defeat the Congress at whatever cost.

**Seventh Ministry**

The seventh ministry of the Congress Party was the result of the general elections, held in Travancore-Cochin from December 10, 1951 to January 5, 1952.

Subsequent to the unification of Travancore and Cochin into one state, the number of seats in the State Legislative Assembly was increased to 109. The political parties fielded 347 candidates: the Congress Party 99, United Front of the Leftists 71, and other parties and independents 267. The total number of eligible voters was 4,863,951; out of these 3,398,193, or 69.9 per cent, cast their vote.

The Communist Party and other leftist parties of the state, i.e., the Kerala Socialist Party (KSP) and the Revolutionary Socialist
Party (RSP), formed a United Front of the Leftists in Travancore-Cochin area. In the Malabar area, the Communist Party formed a United Front with the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party. The Congressmen from south Travancore, who had broken away from the Congress over the question of incorporation of the Tamil-speaking taluks into the Tamilnad, plunged into the elections as an independent party retaining the old name of the Travancore Tamil Nad Congress (TTNC). Thus the Congress Party stood alone, isolated and exposed to the combined assault of its off-springs.

The electoral results came as a rude shock to the leadership of the Congress Party, for they revealed to what extent it had lost support among the people and squandered the large fund of goodwill and sympathy it had commanded after independence. Its combined strength with the TTNC was reduced from 111 seats (92.6 per cent) won in the 1948 elections, to only 52 seats, (47.9 per cent) obtained in 1952. On the other hand, the Communist Party shot from the zero point in 1948 to 29 (26.6 per cent) assembly seats, and emerged the second largest party.\(^3\)

The most spectacular defeat which the Congress suffered was in Malabar. Out of 30 seats, which went from Malabar to the Travancore-Cochin assembly, the Congress won only 4 seats; and out of 6 seats which went to the Lok Sabha, it secured only two. The Congress Party was completely routed in Malabar, and ceased to represent an effective political force.

Because the poor results had reduced it to a minority party three years after the resounding victory in 1948, the Congress was unable to form the new government. The cabinet of Kesavan was therefore permitted by the Union Government to function as a caretaker. The crisis was solved after protracted negotiations, when the Congress finally succeeded in convincing the TTNC to co-operate. In return, one member of the TTNC was given a seat in the new cabinet, which was sworn in on March 14, 1952.

The new cabinet was, of course, a minority government, because the combined strength of the two Congress groups amounted to 52 votes in the assembly of 109. This arrangement was the only solution of the crisis of the Congress rule, and as such was approved by the Union Government. Soon, however, the situation improved. The minority government received the support of two PSP members of the assembly who had deserted their party
and joined the Congress, and of two independents elected on the TTNC ticket. With these four additions, plus one nominated independent who was a Congressman, the Congress now commanded 57 votes in the house of 109.

The new ministry was composed of A. J. John, who became Chief Minister, Panampilly Govinda Menon, T. M. Varghese, Kalathil Velayudhan Nair, V. Madhavan, K. Kochukuttan and Chidambara Nadar.

By this time, not regionalism but communalism played the dominant role in the election of the Congress President and the formation of the new cabinet. A Christian, A. J. John, was elected President by defeating a rival Hindu candidate, Panampilly Govinda Menon, by two votes in the party caucus. The choice was the result of an analysis of the pattern of communal vote cast in 1952, which indicated that the principal Hindu castes had deserted the Congress and thrown their support behind the Communist Party, while the Christians became the backbone of the Congress.

The general elections of 1952, and the formation of the new cabinet, stabilized the volatile situation in the state only for a while. The rival groups soon proved unable to work together and a new crisis began to impede the work of the government. The issue which precipitated the new crisis within the party was the resistance of the TTNC group to the pressure urging its dissolution and unification with the main body of the Congress. The Congress leaders argued that there was no need for the two rival Congress groups in Kērala, and that the incorporation of the TTNC into the main body of the party would eliminate the root of all evils, regionalism and parochialism, which had cost the party so much in the past. But the TTNC group, realizing well that it had the Congress under its thumb because without its support in the assembly the Congress could not rule, proved adamant in demanding the right to maintain its separate identity and political personality.

On the governmental plane, the crisis was precipitated by the TTNC demanding the four Tamil-speaking taluks of south Travancore-Cochin to be allowed to secede and merge with Madras State. This was strongly opposed by the Congress, which demanded a vote of confidence on the issue in the assembly. When the voting took place, the TTNC withdrew its support from the
government with the result that the confidence motion was defeated by 56 to 51 votes on September 23, 1953. Hence another Congress government fell with a stab in the back administered, as always in the past, by the dissenting group of the ruling party. After the defeat of the confidence motion proposed by the government, the assembly was dissolved and fresh mid-term elections called for, while the cabinet continued functioning as a caretaker.\(^4\)

*Eighth Ministry: PSP Minority Government*

It is inexplicable why the two rival Congress groups thought, given the situation as it was in the state, that the mid-term elections could result in an assembly in which both would command better positions than in the dissolved house. Had they hoped so, then they fatally misread the temper of the people tired of bickering within the ruling party, which made it sadly ineffective and unable to provide stable administration. Moreover, the rival groups failed to see that the call for unity of the leftist parties was no more a slogan as in the past, but a popular movement determined to depose the Congress and form a government of united front composed of all leftist parties of the state. The results of the elections were not only to indicate that the Congress failed to stage the victorious comeback hoped for by its leaders. They were also to show a decisive leftward shift in the balance of forces within the state to such a degree that a government of united front appeared a real possibility. The leftist parties were to win 60 seats in the house of 118, while the two Congress groups could muster only 58 seats.

The leftist forces plunged into the electoral assault upon the positions of the Congress under the banner of united front. The United Front of the Leftists, as it was officially called, was composed of the Communist Party, Kerala Socialist Party, Revolutionary Socialist Party, and progressive independents. There was also a separate electoral agreement with the Praja Socialist Party, (PSP) a new party which had appeared after the merger of the Indian Socialist Party with the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party.

The Communist Party made significant concessions to accommodate its electoral allies in order to forge the anti-Congress united front. In negotiating the agreement, the party generously allocated a disproportionately large number of seats to its friends for having them under its banner. It must be remembered that
the Communists, in attempting to form this united front at such heavy cost, merely implemented the general policy line of the Madurai Congress of the Communist Party of India, held in 1953, which called for the replacement of the Congress rule in Kerala by a Government of United Front at any cost. Thus the Communist leadership in New Delhi was willing to pay dearly for demonstrating that the Congress could be defeated in Kerala, for such a victory would incalculably affect the Communist movements in other parts of India.

The Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress contested the elections again as an independent party, campaigning for the separation of the Tamil-speaking taluks of south Travancore and their incorporation into Madras State. For the mid-term elections in 1954, the State of Travancore-Cochin was re-organized and divided into 106 single-seat and 11 double-seat constituencies. The State Legislative Assembly was enlarged to 118 seats, 117 to be elected and one nominated by the Anglo-Indian community. The political parties threw 230 contestants into the field: the Congress 115, Communist Party 33, PSP 38, RSP 8, TTNC 16, Independents 17, Jan Sangh 1 and RCPI 2. The polling took place from February 15 to 29, 1954; its results are given in Table VI.

The electoral strategy of the Communist Party paid off well. True, the party lost heavily in its own position because it had been too generous while concluding the electoral agreements and allocating the seats to its allies. The number of its seats in the assembly declined from 29 (26.6 per cent) in 1952, to 23 seats (19.8 per cent) in 1954. The principal gainer of the united front strategy was the PSP, which increased the number of its seats from 11 (10.1 per cent) to 19 (16.3 per cent), and the leftist parties of the United Front which all improved their positions. The new alignment within the assembly was reflected in the fact that the seats won by the United Front of the Leftists and the PSP amounted to 60, and outnumbered the combined seats of the two Congress groups, reinforced by one nominated independent, which totalled 58. For the second time, the Congress was reduced to a minority party unable to form the new government.

The situation was, however, vastly different from that of 1952. While in 1952 the Congress had also been defeated and emerged a minority party, the combined votes of the leftist parties in the assembly was not sufficient for the formation of the new govern-
ment. In 1954 the position of the leftist camp was quite different, and prospects seemed good for winning the PSP for co-operation with the United Front of the Leftists on the formation of the new government. In fact, with its 19 seats, the PSP held the balance between the United Front of the Leftists and the two groups of the Congress in the assembly.

Given this new correlation of forces, the leadership of the Congress plunged into hectic negotiations with the opposition parties for the setting up of the new cabinet. But the united front could not be broken, nor could be the PSP won over. The two groups of the Congress stood alone and unable to constitute the new cabinet. The other solution, the formation of a government of united front in which the Communist Party would be the leading force, was unacceptable because of the effect it would have upon the polarization of forces in the whole country. This serious impasse was broken by the intervention of the Congress High Command, which advised the distressed Kerala branch that the emergence of a united front government must be prevented, and that it would have no objection to a minority PSP cabinet backed in the assembly by the votes of the Congress.

The PSP proved well disposed to the proposal. True, it had an electoral adjustment with the Communist Party and the United Front of the Leftists; but it was not a member of this front and, therefore, was a free agent. In view of this, the leadership of the PSP rejected the pressure of the Communist Party attempting to win it for co-operation on the establishment of a united front government. The PSP's ideology of democratic socialism, and the experience of the socialist parties of some countries, militated against sharing power with the Communists and ruled out its entry into the proposed government of the united front. On the other hand, the PSP could not support the Congress in the assembly nor form coalition with it because of its past record. The solution was found in a formula, suggested by the Congress High Command, which favoured the formation of a PSP cabinet supported in the assembly by the joint Congress-PSP vote.

The PSP Ministry, which was thus established in March 1954, was composed of former President of the Congress and the first Premier of Kerala and now leader of the PSP, Pattom Thanneer Pillai, who became Chief Minister, P. S. Nataraja Pillai, P. K. Kunju and A. Chuthan. Kerala was now ruled by a govern-
ment commanding only 19 votes of its own in the house of 118 members. Being unable to rule, the Congress abdicated the leadership of Kerala in favour of the PSP in order to prevent the Communist Party, ascending through the united front, to seize it.

**Congress Dislodged in Malabar**

The placing of the stewardship of the state in the hands of the PSP, hoping that the Congress would recover in the meantime, could not arrest its malady. The Congress Party in Kerala was sick, in fact well beyond recovery. This became tragically clear from the results of the elections held in Malabar in October 1954, in a region which later was incorporated into the Travancore-Cochin State to form the new united state of Kerala. It will be recalled that in the pre-independence days Malabar had been the stronghold of the Congress Communists. This fact fully asserted itself in 1954.

The elections were to elect the Malabar District Board. Having freshly in mind the heavy cost which the Communist Party had paid to its allies in the 1954 elections in Travancore-Cochin, and realizing that in view of the PSP-Congress co-operation it would be impossible to draw the PSP into an electoral adjustment, the Communists of Malabar decided to strike against the Congress on their own. The only alliances which they concluded was with progressive independents; 12 were promised the party's support. The party put into the field 36 candidates of its own. This strategy was hailed as a 'new type of united front, which would help to build a united movement of the people for the realization of immediate demands while safeguarding the independent role of the Communist Party'. The leadership made an enormous organizational effort, and set up a Communist election committee in almost every village of Malabar. It was estimated that the number of the election committees was about 50,000.

The result were astounding, as Table VII indicates. The Congress in Malabar was badly defeated. It won only 31.2 per cent of seats of the Board, while the Communist Party secured 50 per cent. A Communist candidate, Bhaskara Panikkar, was elected President of the Board. As a result of this victory, the district board administration began to function under the leadership of the Communist Party, and to serve as a kindergarten in which the Communist cadres learnt the ABC of responsible government.
and effective administration. In fact, some Communist cadres serving on the Board and in the Communist-controlled municipal bodies, later received awards from Nehru for efficiency and model administration.6

The elections in Malabar were important for several reasons. In the first place, they showed the extent to which the position of the Congress had deteriorated in Malabar, and that this malady was not confined to Travancore-Cochin.

Secondly, while the defeat of the Congress in the elections for the State Legislative Assembly in Travancore-Cochin in 1954 had created a vacuum in which no party was strong enough to form the new government, in Malabar the rout of the Congress left no vacuum. Here the Communist Party emerged the majority party, commanding exactly 50 per cent of seats in the newly elected Board. True, in Malabar the elections were only a municipal affair. But the important factor of the situation was that the Communist Party emerged strong enough to assume power. Here the transfer of the leadership was fully consummated, and the Congress reduced to a minority party commanding 31.2 per cent of votes of the Board. In Malabar, the Congress did not abdicate as in Travancore-Cochin: it was defeated.

The third important feature of the elections showed the Communist Party alone, assisted by some Independents who ran on its ticket, routing the Congress and stepping into its shoes. There were no cumbersome transitory stages of united fronts or coalitions in the rise of the Communist Party to power in Malabar. The party shot to monopoly of power on its own momentum.

The last and very important aspect of the elections presented Malabar as the first case of peaceful transition to communism in India, long before the formal introduction of this theory at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956. Hence, the Malabar District Board elections were a preview of things to come in the new state of Kerala.

The final comment upon the mid-term elections for the new assembly in Travancore-Cochin, and the elections to the District Board in Malabar, must emphasize that by 1954 the Congress Party was a spent force in Kerala. The leading position of the Congress in that state was not to be terminated as the result of the second general elections in 1957. It ended in 1954, six years
after the Congress had been catapulted to paramountcy in 1948, winning 92.6 per cent of seats in the assembly.

There is hardly a similar record in the history of any formerly dependent country, which became independent after the Second World War, showing the national leadership to squander, within six years, the enormous political capital it had won during the liberation struggle. This fund should have lasted the party, which had brought liberty to the people, for decades. However, the most outstanding feature of the downfall of the Congress in Kerala shows that it was sustained in the course of peaceful process, and through corrosion and decay of moral, ethical and political standards of its leaders. It was not sustained in the course of war, civil war, nor as a result of communist conspiracy or coup d'état. The Congress Party of Kerala was deprived of its political heritage by its own hand.

Ninth Ministry

The PSP ministry of Pattom Thanu Pillai, which was installed in power as the result of the March 1954 mid-term elections, lasted 11 months, until February 8, 1955. It accumulated a good record of progressive legislative measures and attended the needs of the people. The government also pursued a policy of supporting the trade union demands, and generally ruled in favour of the working class.

The PSP ministry would have been a success had not the Congress, on whose behalf it ruled, indulged in scheming which caused its downfall by withdrawing support in the assembly. Several factors were responsible for the collapse of the Congress-PSP alignment, which saved Kerala from chaos and a Communist-led government of the united front following the precarious division of the house subsequent to the mid-term elections of 1954.

In the first place, Panampilly Govinda Menon was elected to the presidency of the Congress Party. This revived the old personal rivalry between him and Chief Minister, Pattom Thanu Pillai, now leading the PSP. The deep animosity between them dated back to the time when the latter had been President of the Kerala Congress and the first Chief Minister of independent Kerala in 1948.

In the second place, the TTNC organized a campaign of agitation demanding that the four Tamil-speaking taluks of
Travancore-Cochin be incorporated into Madras State. At one point, the agitation took a violent turn, the agitators clashed with the police and during the encounter the police fired and killed several people. The event antagonized the TTNC to such a degree that it was ready to enter into conspiracy with Panam pilly against Pattom’s regime.

The third factor at play appeared in the progressive and pro-labour policies of Pattom’s government. During several industrial and agricultural strikes the PSP government effectively intervened on the side of workers, and was rapidly winning support of the working class in general and organized labour in particular. These pro-labour policies, and the considerable support which the PSP had won among the trade unions as a result, were much resented by some Congress leaders jealous of the growing prestige and influence of that party.

The fourth factor at play was the active opposition organized by some Congress labour leaders against the pro-labour policies of the PSP regime. During some strikes on tea plantations, even special squads were organized by these labour leaders to break them. As a result, several clashes of the police with the striking men and the squads injected a considerable element of unrest into the labour front. The unrest was used by the opponents of the PSP regime to charge it with inability to maintain law and order in the state. The situation was further aggravated when some Congress leaders formed the Seva Dal Squads, or Citizen Committees, allegedly organized for the purpose of fighting lawlessness.

In this situation, the PSP leadership laboured under crossfire of conflicting pulls, stresses and strains. The progressive and pro-labour policies on the one hand, and the resort to police actions during the plantation strikes and the TTNC agitation on the other, made two PSP members of the house defect and join the Congress parliamentary group. The defection was greatly aided by the advances which Panampilly had been making for a long time to various factions within the PSP opposing Pattom’s leadership.

As soon as the two PSP members defected, Panampilly moved rapidly into the picture. A new alignment appeared possible which not only would depose the PSP regime, but enable him to muster 60 votes in the house of 118 to form a cabinet of his
own. This stratagem was executed in a matter of days. Panampilly first secured the support of the 12 members of the TTNC, who all appeared ill-disposed against Pattom's ministry for opposing the incorporation of the Tamil taluks into Madras State and because of the police firing during the campaign for secession. Panampilly then secured the backing of the two deserters from the PSP, and of one nominated member of the assembly, and thus commanded a combination of 60 votes. The last phase of the coup de grace was executed by one member of the TTNC, who moved a no-confidence vote against the PSP regime on February 8, 1955.

During Panampilly's negotiations for this combination, the Communist Party made an effort to save the PSP regime. Once again the possibility of a government of united front, composed of the Communist-led united front of the leftists and the PSP, appeared on the horizon of Kerala. Unlike in 1954, the PSP now responded to the advances of the Communist Party. Obviously, the PSP was badly hurt by the attitude of the Congress leadership, the continuous scheming of Panampilly and the lack of foresight shown by the Congress in pressing for the downfall of its ally.

The new political climate propelled the PSP into the arms of the Communist Party, and soon negotiations were afoot for saving the PSP ministry by the votes of the Communists and their allies in the house. The Communist Party laid down these conditions: (a) release of prisoners sentenced as the result of the Communist uprising at Punnnapura and the Vayalar Island in 1946; (b) introduction of an anti-eviction bill in the assembly.

While the PSP agreed to the first condition, in fact the government immediately ordered the release of the insurgents, it procrastinated on the second demand and the negotiations broke down. Meanwhile, Panampilly's drive for a combination to defeat the PSP ministry was completed and, as has already been mentioned, the TTNC moved a no-confidence motion on February 8, 1955. Needless to say, all Congress members of the house supported this move, while the Communists remained neutral. The PSP government was doomed.

Panampilly Govinda Menon attained his objective when the new cabinet was installed in March 1955. He became Chief Minister; the cabinet was composed of A. J. John, A. A. Rahim,
K. Kochututtan and K. I. Velayudhan. This was the ninth ministry since independence.

Tenth Ministry

It was unrealistic on the part of the new Chief Minister to hope that he could offer to Kerala stable and effective administration in an atmosphere vitiated by factional strife, alliances and counter-alliances and opportunism. A new internal crisis within the Congress erupted soon, which resulted in the defection of six Congress members of the assembly, who formed a group, and then denied their support to Panampilly’s cabinet.

The crisis was precipitated by the intervention of the Congress High Command in the affairs of the Kerala Congress in an effort to end the suicidal factional struggle which slowly but surely was killing it. During a sharp clash for the presidency of the Kerala Congress the High Command threw its support behind Udayabhanu, who was the nominee of the ruling Panampilly-Madhavan-Nair group, as Nair was Secretary General of the All-India Congress Committee. In the clash the rival group, aspiring to the leadership of the party and led by Kumbalam Sanku Pillai, former President of the Kerala Congress, was defeated. The six dissenting Congressmen in the house aligned themselves with this defeated group, consisting mostly of members of the Nair Service Society.

The rebels demanded resignation of Panampilly’s cabinet because it had failed to make the Congress High Command reject the suggestion of the State Reorganization Commission proposing the secession of the Tamil-speaking taluks from Travancore-Cochin and their incorporation into Madras State. In fact, this group led a movement called Akhanda Kerala, which campaigned for the rejection of the State Reorganization Commission’s proposal and the continuation of the Tamil taluks within the Travancore-Cochin State. The Congress was rocked with an internal crisis unparalleled in recent times: one group, the TTNC, fought for the secession of these Tamil taluks, while the other group for their continuation within the state. The pressure from the centre, and the visit of the Congress President, U.N. Dhebar, to Kerala in order to unify the party by imposing disciplinary action against the rebels, proved of no avail.8

The conflict over the Akhanda Kerala movement, taking place
within the Congress Party, soon engulfed the house. The six rebels declared that they would not support the budget proposals, to be presented by the cabinet to the assembly on March 15, 1956, because they considered themselves no more members of the Congress parliamentary party. Such a step would have reduced the majority of the Congress from 60 to 54 votes. But Panampilly Govinda Menon would not wait to see his regime defeated by members of his own party and resigned on March 11, 1956. The tenth ministry in Kerala was gone.

The fall of Panampilly's ministry inaugurated a period of hectic political activity in the state. Because the internal division of the Congress made it unable to form the government, the possibility of supporting another cabinet of the PSP appeared once again on the scene. Should, however, the Congress or the opposition parties fail to form the new government, then the only solution of the ensuing impasse was federal intervention through the imposition of Presidential Rule.

The Communist Party was particularly keen to avoid the imposition of Presidential Rule, because it was leading a popular movement demanding the formation of United Kerala, the so-called Aikya Kerala movement, which was rapidly gaining momentum. In view of this, and also because of the forthcoming general elections, to be held early in 1957, the party feared that the imposition of Presidential Rule would prevent the movement from fully unfolding its potential and thwart the party's chances for electoral success. The Communist Party therefore approached the PSP with a proposition of both parties co-operating in order to preclude the imposition of Presidential Rule; the Communists proposed the formation of a government of the opposition parties without, however, their claiming representation in it.

The fact that the Communists would not press for ministerial seats in the new cabinet made the proposition attractive. The formation of a PSP cabinet, which would include some independent progressives agreed upon by the PSP and the Communists, appeared a practical possibility because the arrangement would avoid the PSP sharing power with the Communist Party; such a contingency had always been unacceptable to the PSP's leadership. The co-operation of the PSP with the Communist Party in the assembly would be, however, an entirely different matter.
With these considerations in mind the PSP and the Communist Party, the latter speaking also for the United Front of the Leftists, concluded an agreement which gave the new combination 59 votes in the assembly of 118; this included the votes of two rebel Congressmen who promised support. Before, however, the combination could assume power one member of the United Front of the Leftists, Narayanan Potti, who represented the Revolutionary Socialist Party in the assembly, disappeared without trace. It was alleged that he had been kidnapped to thwart the combination. As a result the precarious majority, or rather a tie, was gone and the scheme ended.

By that time the central government appointed P. S. Rao as Adviser to the Rajpramukh. The latter became impatient over the political crisis in the state and, without waiting for the clarification of the disappearance of Narayanan Potti, sent a memorandum to the central government stating that he was unable to make the political parties form a new cabinet. The upshot was the declaration of the President of the Union of India to the effect that until November 18, 1956 the state would be under Presidential Rule.10

The declaration formally ended the Congress rule in Kerala. It was a record of dismal failures: nine Congress cabinets and one of the PSP supported by the Congress. There was, however, a big change in the making in Kerala, and the next government to assume power was of the Communist Party.

REFERENCES

1 The Kerala Mail (February 14, 1960), p. 9.
3 The United Front of the Leftists won altogether 37 seats of which 25 went to the Communist Party, 6 to the RSP, 1 to the KSP, 4 to Communist independents, and 1 to an independent candidate elected by the support of the United Front, Crossroads, Vol. III, No. 36, (January 18, 1952), pp. 2-3.


The leadership of the Communist Party outlined a programme of action for the Malabar District Board to show that the Communists would be better administrators than the Congressmen. On the basis of this programme the party invited other leftist parties and progressive individuals to share power in the Board. See "A Programme to Meet People's Demands: Draft Programme of The Democratic Front in Malabar District Board", New Age, Vol. II, No. 9, November 28, 1954, p. 10; also "Democratic Front Takes Charge in Malabar District Board", New Age, Vol. II, No. 10, December 5, 1954, p. 3; also "Democratic Front Administration in Malabar District Board", New Age, Monthly, Vol. II, No. 1, January 1955, p. 2.


8 New Age, March 18, 1956, pp. 1 and 16. For the interference of the center in the affairs of the Kerala Congress and Dhebar's visit to the state, see Unnikrishnan, S. V., "Travancore-Cochin Congress; Charges And Counter Charges. Dhebar Fails in Rapprochement Mission", New Age, Vol. III, No. 39, (June 24, 1956), p. 2; also Unnikrishnan, S. V., "Travancore-Cochin Rebels' Ultimatum", New Age, Vol. III, No. 41, (July 8, 1956), p. 13. The 21 rebels met in a conference at the end of June 1956 to decide what action to take against the disciplinary measures imposed by New Delhi upon 8 of them. They presented the Delhi leadership with an ultimatum demanding the lifting of the ban on their activities, and no objections to the Akhanda Kerala movement which they led.

Also see "Travancore-Cochin Cabinet Crisis Created by Quarrels Inside the Congress", New Age, Vol. III, No. 25, March 18, 1956, p. 1 and 16.

9 The imposition of the Presidential Rule upon Kerala was vehemently opposed by the communist members of the Lok Sabha. For the debate in the Lok Sabha, on March 29, 1956, see "Suppression of Democracy in Travancore-Cochin Comes Under Fire", New Age, Vol. III, No. 27, April 1, 1956, pp. 16.

10 The Presidential Rule was approved by the Lok Sabha on March 29, 1956 by 100 to 25 votes.

CHAPTER IV
ELECTIONS OF 1957
COMMUNISM VICTORIOUS

The strategy of the Communist Party in Kerala in the second general elections, held in January-February 1957, was based upon the realization that there was no need to defeat the Congress Party because this was already a spent force. The history of the post-independence years sufficiently demonstrated that the Congress could not rule, and that the admiration and support it had once commanded among the people were gone.

Particularly striking was the fact that the Congress failed to provide the leadership and guidance to the forces of new nationalism which demanded the formation of United Kerala. The clamouring for the realization of this goal not only survived the decade of political reverses, but brought about cultural renaissance almost equal to one experienced during the struggle against the British. As we have seen, the Congress remained blind to the new upsurge of patriotism and cultural craving. The Communist Party, however, carefully listened and then based its strategy upon harnessing that nationalism and cultural renaissance to its electoral campaign.

The problem for the Communist Party was not to defeat the Congress, it had defeated itself, nor to wage the electoral campaign on negative issues and by criticism of the Congress. The problem was how to place the party at the helm of the new national and cultural upsurge and make the electorate recognize it the successor of the Congress.

Once this basic line of approach was clarified, the rest was a matter of organization and suitable electoral alliances.

Nationalism Harnessed

The theoretical foundations which enabled the Communist Party to place itself at the helm of the renaissance movement was laid by the foremost theoretician and future Chief Minister of the
Communist government of Kerala, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, in an important work entitled *The National Question in Kerala*. In that paper, written in 1952, Namboodiripad boldly stated that it was not the programme of socialist revolution but nationalism, patriotism and catering to the national and democratic aspirations of the people which proved the most potent forces in the colonial countries after the Second World War.

Focussing upon the national problem of his own state, the writer declared that the essence of the mistakes which had been committed by the Communist Party in the past lay in

... the underestimation of the national factor in working out the tactics of the revolution, in the failure to realize that the Communists in a colonial country can fulfil their class task only if they take proper account of the fact that the national aspirations are the decisive political factor in a colonial country.¹

Applying this maxim to the concrete situation obtaining in Kerala in 1956, the Communist Party launched a campaign to revive the movement for the *Aikya Kerala*, the United Kerala. The movement put forward a demand that the Malayalam-speaking districts of Madras Presidency, i.e., Malabar, be united with the State of Travancore-Cochin. The campaign for the *Aikya Kerala*, led now by the Communist Party, drew inspiration from an ancient legend, when Kerala had been united under Emperor Mahabali as a large empire and when all, as the story goes, 'were equal and had plenty to eat'. Taking the cue from this folklore, the Communist Party campaigned for the return of those happy days through hard work and unification of all Malayalam-speaking districts into united Kerala. The message of this folklore was then reduced to a modern semantic symbol calling upon the people to struggle for a *United, Democratic and Prosperous Kerala*, which slogan found its way into all important documents of the Communist Party. As Namboodiripad declared:

... the Party, however, did not remain satisfied with this practical unification of the democratic movement throughout Kerala, but, through a series of articles and pamphlets raised the programmatic slogan of uniting all the homogeneous Malayalam-speaking majority areas of the Madras Presi-
dency and the States of Cochin and Travancore into one province without any maharajas. This, as we shall see subsequently, was a slogan which caught the imagination of the people and created a very powerful mass movement for democracy... .

The Communist Party was not, however, satisfied with the exploitation of the national content of the Aikya Kerala movement. A new dimension was added to it as soon as the Communists linked it with the calls for political and social reforms. Namboodiripad explained this in the following terms:

...it was the Communist Party alone that gave an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal content to this slogan. For it was the Communist Party alone that declared (1) that the struggle for United Kerala is an indivisible part of the struggle of the people of India for the ending of imperialist rule; (2) that the struggle for United Kerala is also a struggle for ending princely rule and other remnants of feudalism, a struggle for the introduction of full and genuine democracy for the people; (3) that the boundaries of United Kerala are to be so drawn-up that all those contiguous areas of Madras, Travancore and Cochin wherein the Malayalam-speaking people are in majority shall be included, the rest going to neighbouring national area provinces; (4) that in the struggle for United Kerala, being the struggle for democracy, the common people of Kerala, in alliance with their brethren in the neighbouring nationalities, are the decisive forces in that struggle.

It was these basic premises of a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the national question in Kerala that enabled the Party to carry on an ideological struggle against the various disruptive slogans advanced by the feudal, bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties with regard to United Kerala...

The uniqueness of this Namboodiripad's formula lies in the recognition that the national content of the national and democratic revolution in Kerala, and India, is not exhausted by the attainment of independence from external control. The flame of nationalism, in the form of local patriotism, is sustained and fanned by the demands for the formation of states on the
linguistic basis and calls for adjustments of the territorial domains of overlapping nationalities and their states. It is in this manner—wheels within wheels—that Namboodiripad conceived the dynamism of the national question in Kerala. The key aspect of Namboodiripad's formula was the recognition that the linguistic oppression of the Malayalee people living in the non-Malayalam speaking territories of the neighbouring states had been linked with their economic exploitation, and that these two generated almost equal intensity of antagonism and passion as foreign oppression and economic exploitation had done in the past.

True, the movement for the Aikya Kerala had originally been led by the Congress Party, which had established a United Kerala Committee for the purpose, already in 1947. That body had been composed of the Congress, Praja Mandalam of Cochin and the Travancore State Congress, and organized the first All Kerala Convention in April 1947. We have seen, however, that regionalism and parochialism soon began to eat into the vitals of the Congress. One section of the Congress leadership agitated for the separation of the four Tamil-speaking taluks from Travancore and their merger with Madras State, while another section advocated the formation of a large multilingual Kerala. It was to include Travancore, Cochin, Malabar, Coorg, some areas of South Kanara, and the Tamil and the tribal areas of the Nilgiris. The internal conflict prevented the Congress from giving the movement a united leadership. Anyhow, the movement ended with the merger of Travancore and Cochin into one state in 1947, as a result of the integration policy of the princely states pursued by the Union Government.

This was not, however, the ultimate end of the movement; only its stewardship by the Congress had terminated. The Aikya Kerala movement received a new impetus in 1952, when the people of Andhra took the lead in organizing a campaign which demanded the formation of states on the linguistic principle. The hunger strike of one of the leaders of the new movement, Potti Sriramulu, undertaken to force the central government into agreeing to the formation of the Visala Andhra or United Andhra, and his subsequent death, unleashed a powerful national upsurge in Andhra. The movement was led by the Communist Party, and soon clashed with the police with the result that
several people were killed. The demands of the movement were answered the next day after the massacre, when the central parliament agreed to appoint a commission to inquire into the question of re-organization of the states of the Union on linguistic basis. Consequently, a three-member States Reorganization Commission was appointed, which toured the country to ascertain the nature of the problem and suggest remedy.

The agitation for the Visala Andhra, and the appointment of the Commission, had a profound effect upon Kerala because it revived the movement for the Aikya Kerala, defunct since 1947. By this time, however, the leadership of the revived movement fell into the hands of the Communist Party. The Congress stood immobilized on the issue by the revolt of the TTNC, the policy of the central government and the attitude of the High Command of the Congress—which all opposed the formation of states on the linguistic basis—and, finally, by the rebellion clamouring for the Akhandha Kerala.

The clear policy of the Communist Party on the national question in Kerala, formulated by Namboodiripad, provided the party with a guide which enabled it to place itself at the helm of this movement. The party organized several campaigns which employed national and patriotic slogans and emotionally charged poems and songs specially composed for the purpose. No less than 2,000 poems and 200 short stories were published in 1951 alone.8

Renaissance swept Kerala. The Communist Party was its inspirer and undisputed leader, while the Congress lay prostrate with internal dissent. It was by riding high on the crest of this renaissance movement that the Communist Party was catapulted to power in the 1957 elections.

When the States Reorganization Commission came to Kerala, it found the people in the state of high agitation in favour of the formation of the United Kerala on the linguistic basis, exactly as had been proposed by the Communist Party shortly before. The upshot was that the central government, acting on the recommendation of the Commission, ordered the formation of a united state through the incorporation of Malabar and Kasergod into Travancore-Cochin State, and the separation of the four Tamil-speaking taluks from Travancore and their merger with Madras State. The new state assumed the proud and
ancient name of Kerala, and officially came into existence on November 1, 1956. On November 27, former adviser to the Rajpramukh, B. R. Rao, was appointed Governor of Kerala.

The first of November became a day of victory and rejoicing for the Communist Party, comparable in significance to the meaning which August 15 has for the All-India Congress Party. It became the Independence Day for Kerala.6

The Communists thus emerged the unifiers and liberators of the Malayalee people from the national, linguistic and economic oppression by the neighbouring nationalities. The deliverance from British rule in 1947, and the role which the Congress had played in it, was mostly forgotten or over-shadowed by contemporary events. The Communist Party was in the saddle, enjoying the leadership over the new upsurge of nationalism in Kerala, long before the general elections of 1957.

 Builders of New Kerala

The leadership of the Communist Party realized that it must carefully guard the freshly won hegemony over the forces of the Aikya Kerala movement. To make sure that the hegemony was not lost after the attainment of the United Kerala, that the movement continued, it was important that the party concentrated upon problems which would be created precisely by the unification. Thus to give a fresh impetus to the movement immediately after the unification of Kerala, a programme of economic and social reconstruction was needed which would fire the imagination of the people with the hope of bringing nearer the dream of Emperor Mahabali's time. The Communist Party would continue its hegemony over this movement and ride upon its crest through the electoral campaign.

The Party dealt with this problem at a Provincial Conference at Trichur from June 22 to 24, 1956, which adopted a resolution proudly entitled For Democratic and Prosperous Kerala. The resolution welcomed the final plans for the formation of the United Kerala, lauded the role which the Communist Party had played in their formulation and declared that they had been finalized in spite of the 'anti-national' and 'anti-linguistic' policies of the Congress Party. However, with the formation of the new state only one part of the tasks would be fulfilled. The new tasks would tackle the problem of building Kerala into a democratic and
prosperous state of all Malayalee people. The resolution appealed to the people:

...as till now and even more so let us work together on issues on which there is agreement. Let us now direct the unity and selfless work, which we had in the struggle for the Aikya Kerala, into the task of building up the new Kerala of which we have been dreaming till now. The differences among us must not become an obstacle to this...?

An attack upon the Congress came next. The resolution declared that Kerala was rich in resources and natural wealth, but the poor husbandry of the Congress had prevented the people from profiting from these riches. If the people united their forces in a political struggle it would be possible to form a new government, a people's government, which would fulfil the old dream because it would industrialize the state and lay the foundations of socialism. The possibility to form such a government was a real one, and only the Congress stood in the way of its realization. The central problem of Kerala was political and not economic.

The resolution then outlined the following programme for building the new democratic and prosperous Kerala.

In the first place, the people should fight against injustices, malpractices and anti-democratic measures of Presidential Rule. They should further demand from the central government that the State Legislative Assembly should be convened on October 1, 1956, when the new Kerala State comes into existence. Following that, the central government should immediately form a government responsible to the new assembly. The Presidential Rule must terminate. Conditions must be created which would make impossible the reappearance of the ministerial crises and forever terminate the instability of the government. Resolve must be made to form a stable government capable of implementing a minimum programme of building democratic and prosperous Kerala. On the basis of such a programme the people must forge an electoral alliance which would consist of all leftist parties, democratic and progressive individuals and the Congressmen 'willing to fight against the reactionary policies of the Congress'. Such a united front would then give rise to a coalition government capable of implementing the minimum programme.
The resolution appealed to the leftist parties, progressive individuals and 'patriotic Congressmen' to unite in order to arrest the rise in prices, fight for increase of wages of workers and the middle class, ensure fair prices for agricultural produce, prevent land evictions and attain the fulfilment of other immediate demands of the people. In many parts of Kerala, people from different political parties had found in this 'national task a common basis for co-operation'. This auspicious trend must be accelerated and promoted by every means.

The resolution then declared that a detailed outline of all the above proposals would be soon presented to all progressive parties, groups and individuals to make them understand the tasks ahead and initiate the work of building the new Kerala. An appeal was made to all for co-operation on these national tasks. A special appeal was addressed to the Praja Socialist Party:

... the Communist Party wishes to make its special appeal to the PSP. The Communist Party appeals to the PSP to remember again the great enthusiasm generated among the people by the united front of the Communist Party and the PSP in Malabar during 1951 elections, and between the Communist Party, the PSP and other Leftist Parties during the general elections in Travancore-Cochin in 1954, and the demoralization of the people when after the elections this united front broke up.

Nobody can deny the historical truth that it was the anti-Communist line of the PSP's leadership which made it impossible in 1954, and even earlier, to unite the democratic forces of Kerala, to oppose the Congress Government's undemocratic policies, and to establish a Government which would have followed policies in the interest of the people.

Will they continue to follow the same policy in some form or other? Will they continue their intrigues to deny the Communists the place in the Legislative Assembly and in the Government which they have already earned in the public life of the people. Will they try to make agreements with other parties and groups excluding the Communists, or even opposed to them? The Communist Party appeals to the PSP as a whole to re-examine its entire policy and to answer satisfactorily all these questions. At the same time the Communist Party greets
the PSP friends who are making efforts to re-examine their policies in this manner, and lay the foundation for unity.¹⁸

There was also an appeal to the leaders of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, whom the Communists wished to use as a pressure group to hammer the PSP into the united front:

The Communist Party wishes to remind the Revolutionary Socialist Party that it has a special role to play in getting the Praja Socialist Party to accept such a policy. . . . ¹⁹

Long before the Trichur Provincial Conference of the Communist Party, its research department had been hard at work drafting the first comprehensive plan of economic reconstruction of the new Kerala. It was through that programme that the party hoped to safeguard its continuous hegemony over the forces of the Aikya Kerala movement after the formation of the United Kerala. The resolution of the Trichur Conference referred to the plan of national reconstruction in the following terms:

... as a basis for uniting these forces and building a democratic and prosperous Kerala the Communist Party puts forward a minimum programme before the people. The Party realizes that there are Congressmen who do not either accept the programme in full, or in accepting it in full believe that the Congress itself can implement it. To these Congressmen the Communist Party appeals: Let us work united on items of the programme to which you agree.

The Party does not consider that this programme is either complete or that it needs no changes. The Party has prepared it for discussion and acceptance by the entire Malayalee people. The Party declares that after eliciting the views of the people and consultations with other parties, it is ready to make necessary changes in the programme.

The unity that we require today cannot be confined to alliances and agreements among political parties. The task of building a democratic and prosperous Kerala is a task which could be fulfilled only by the entire Malayalee people. The Communist Party therefore appeals to the workers, peasants, middle classes, intellectuals, women, youth and literary, art
and cultural workers of Kerala to strengthen their organizations and units to develop a powerful mass movement to back this task...\textsuperscript{10}

Having adopted the resolution and the minimum programme for building democratic and prosperous Kerala, the party plunged in the electoral campaign. The outstanding feature of these two documents was that they presented the party as a national and democratic force striving for nothing more than a better implementation of the economic programme of the Congress. In fact, the minimum programme was based upon the general outline of the Second Five Year Plan, prepared by the central government, and called for the development of state capitalism and not for an immediate nationalization of industry, expropriation of land and its distribution to the tillers and other radical measures to introduce a Communist system. In broad terms, the minimum programme identified the immediate goals of the Communist Party with the goals of the Congress.

\textit{Search for Allies}

Having the basic outline of the electoral strategy laid down at the Trichur Conference, the Party concentrated upon the formation of a united front. The greatest obstacle was the decision of the National Conference of the PSP, held in Gaya in December 1955, which had declared that the PSP would have no alliances or even electoral adjustments with the Congress, communists, or parties of communalism.

To that decision Namboodiripad addressed himself in January 1956. He first cited another decision of the PSP Gaya Conference, which had said that 'it is not possible today for any of the opposition parties, either singly or collectively, to replace the Congress Government and to establish a Government that is pledged to the defence of the interests of the working people'.\textsuperscript{11} That notion, said Namboodiripad, had also been re-affirmed at the founding conference of the new Socialist Party of India, which had been held at that time in Hyderabad. He continued:

...we, Communists, would therefore urge upon both the PSP as well as upon the Socialist Party of India to realize that, even supposing that they are correct in saying that it is not possible
today or for a few years to come to replace the Congress Government by a Socialist Government or by a Government of several Socialist Parties, it is quite possible even today to wage a successful struggle against many of the policies which the Congress Government is pursuing. . . . For, we are of the opinion that it is only to the extent to which we unite ourselves in such a struggle. . . . that we will be able to create the necessary conditions for the replacement of the Congress Government by an alternative Government. . . .

The Communist Party was prepared for anything to secure co-operation of the PSP for a joint assault upon the position of the Congress. This subject was dealt with at a meeting of the Provincial Committee of the Party, held in Ernakulam from October 6 to 9, 1956. The resolution adopted there declared that the party would take all necessary steps and continue negotiations to unite all parties and individuals ready to agree to a common programme of forming an alternative government in order 'to prevent the Congress from returning to power'. The resolution further declared that the general elections in 1952 and 1954, the elections to the Malabar District Board in 1954, and the municipal elections in Travancore and Cochin in 1954-56, all had made it abundantly clear that the Congress commanded no more the support of the majority of the people. Addressing itself to the PSP, the resolution expressed a hope that the forthcoming National Conference of the PSP would change the decision which had been adopted by the National Executive in Bombay, to enable the PSP in Kerala to co-operate with the Communist Party.

Commenting later upon this resolution, A. K. Gopalan said that the Ernakulam meeting also had dealt with the formulation of a common political and economic programme which could serve as a basis for the formation of the united front of the leftist forces. The Communist Party maintained that before any electoral alliance could be concluded, all parties to the alliance must first agree on such a programme. A novel feature of the programme included the following conditions about co-operation after the elections: (a) should the alliance win the majority, it must not break up but continue in order to form the new government; (b) it would be wrong for any party of the alliance to form such a government alone and without other parties; (c) should the
Communist Party win the absolute majority, the party would honour this agreement. It would not exclude other parties of the united front from sharing power.\textsuperscript{14}

The necessity for the Communist Party to have the PSP in its electoral fold, because it held the balance between the declining Congress and the ascending Communists, prompted the Communist leaders once again to press the PSP into a joint assault upon the Congress. A Plenary Meeting of the Kerala Committee of the party, held at Alwaye from January 1 to 3, 1957, dealt mainly with the prospects of this Communist-PSP co-operation.

The adopted resolution first reviewed the preparatory work so far undertaken for the fast approaching elections. Next, the resolution spelled out the main electoral slogan, which called for the formation of a stable government based on co-operation of the Communists with the leftist parties, progressive individuals and groups.\textsuperscript{15} The resolution said that the Revolutionary Socialist Party had already agreed to the minimum programme as well as the conditions for co-operation after elections. It went on to state that to ensure the future of the United Kerala, end the proverbial political instability and terminate Presidential Rule it was not enough to reduce the Congress to a minority party, or merely strengthen the democratic opposition. The lesson of the 1952 and the 1954 elections in Kerala, and the events since, pointed out that the downfall of the Congress from power had not automatically resulted in the formation of a stable and popular government, and that the political instability continued. Experience indicated that the only solution to these difficulties lay in the most determined efforts at the formation of a government of all opposition parties.

Next, the resolution attacked the PSP for its unwillingness to co-operate with the Communist Party in the formation of an electoral alliance. This negative stand of the PSP was the result of its National Convention, held in Bangalore from November 26 to 28, 1956, which reaffirmed the Gaya Thesis, but amended it so that only minor adjustments with other parties would be allowed in extremely grave cases. The Alwaye resolution of the Communist Party declared that the PSP had shown no readiness at all to accept the Communist-proposed solution for the governmental instability in Kerala. The PSP leaders had only promised,
said the resolution, that they would not enter into any alliance with the Congress, nor otherwise help it climb back to power. But the PSP leaders would not unite with other leftist forces in order to form a popular government, declared the resolution, nor help such an alliance to win power. They even had failed to state whether they would not try to form a minority government, with the support of the Congress, after the elections. Such a stand must be condemned, said the resolution, for it ignored the demand not only of the political parties but the entire people for a stable and popular government, which could secure progress of the United Kerala. The resolution appealed to the PSP to give up such an ‘anti-national stand’, and co-operate on the creation of conditions favourable for the replacement of the Congress government by a government of the leftist unity.

As for the position of the Communist Party, the resolution declared that the party firmly stood by the slogan calling for the formation of a popular government, and that the party and its allies would go ahead to implement it regardless of the position of the PSP. This did not mean, the resolution hastened to add, that the Communist Party would not seek any other type of electoral understanding or adjustment with the PSP. The party was prepared to avoid contest between the PSP on the one hand, and its own candidates and those of the front on the other, in the constituencies where the contest would result in the victory of the Congress candidates. However, such an understanding with the PSP, if arrived at, must in no way affect the alliance which the Communist Party would have with the RSP and other parties and friends.

The decision made at the National Convention of the PSP in Bangalore that—‘adjustments of seats only with very limited objective of preventing mutual competition between the parties and elements of democratic opposition’ would be permitted to the PSP State Committee—provided an opening for the State Committee of the Kerala PSP to enter into negotiations with the Communist Party for such an electoral adjustment. The decision to initiate the talks had been reached at the Kerala State Convention of the PSP, held at Pudukhot on January 6, 1957, and the negotiations followed at once. They progressed extremely well, and soon included proposals concerning not only the formation of the united front but even the terms for an alternative
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government. The Communist negotiators proved generous in offering exceedingly favourable terms. However, the appetite of the PSP grew—or perhaps the exorbitant demands were merely to thwart in an oblique way the prospects of co-operation—with the result that the other party could accept the demands of the PSP only at the cost of almost self-destruction. A report of January 8, 1957, indicates that the PSP demanded, as price for co-operating with the Communists, 55 out of 77 seats in former Travancore-Cochin State, and 20 out of 49 seats in former Malabar District. The Communists strongly objected and the negotiations broke off.16 On January 9, 1957, the Communist Party sent a letter to the PSP offering 13 seats in Malabar, the allocation in Travancore-Cochin to be renegotiated. But the PSP put forward new and steeper demands, and the negotiations broke down in a day or so.17 The final negotiations of the Communist Party with the Revolutionary Socialist Party proved also futile, and the party had to plunge into the electoral contest alone, supporting only some independent candidates.

The leadership of the Communist Party was aware, however, that even if the party had won the majority of seats in the assembly on its own, it would have to invite the PSP to share power in the cabinet in order to isolate the Congress and prevent an eventual formation of a hostile PSP-Congress combination which could harass, and even depose, the Communist regime. Hence, after the breakdown of the negotiations with the PSP the Communist leadership stated that 'even after the elections, if the Communist Party wins an absolute majority, the Communist Party's declared objective is to form a Government of Democratic Opposition'.18 This left the door open for an eventual Communist-PSP co-operation.

Communist Election Manifesto

After futile efforts at securing an electoral alliance with the PSP, the Communist Party initiated the last phase of its electoral campaign. The final action, which put the campaign in top gear, was the publication of the Election Manifesto in January 1957.

The manifesto was a unique document, which combined hard-hitting punches against the Congress with a constructive programme of political, economic and social reforms. The Communist Party was the only party which placed before the electorate
not only a plan of how to end the agony of political instability in the state, but also how to improve the lot of the people.

The first part of the manifesto was framed in nationalistic and patriotic terms. It praised the role which the Communist Party had played in the establishment of the United Kerala and charged the Congress with 'anti-national and unpatriotic policies', bordering on national betrayal, on that question. The most interesting aspect of the situation in January 1957 was the fact that in the 1948 elections it was the Communist Party which had suffered badly from a record of anti-national policies pursued during the war, while the Congress had been riding high on the crest of nationalism and patriotism. In the elections of 1957 the position was reversed: now the Congress was labelled 'anti-national and unpatriotic', while the Communist Party assumed the garb of a national and patriotic force. In this single fact of the exchanged roles lies the entire significance and meaning of the Communist victory in Kerala in 1957.

Recalling the role which the Communist Party had played in the unification of Kerala, the manifesto made a surprising statement that the future of the new state was not at all secure because several conspiracies against it were under way. Three conspiratorial groups menaced the future of the state: (a) advocates of the Southern State; (b) advocates of the Western Coastal State; (c) and agitators for the Akhanda Kerala. All these groups had not given up their separatist ambitions. Their aim was, said the manifesto, to see that there would be no stable government as the result of the forthcoming elections. This in turn would create a constitutional crisis, causing the Presidential Rule to continue under the pretext that the new state was an artificial conglomeration unable to rule itself. Thus the way would be paved for the separation of the southern provinces and their formation into a separate state, allegedly able to form a stable government because of its more homogenous population.19

It was against this background that the manifesto called upon the people to rally behind the Communist Party and its allies, not only to defeat these machinations but also realize a centuries-old dream of prosperous Kerala. The record of the Congress Party showed, said the manifesto, that it could not rule and that, in spite of the enormous natural riches of the state, all the Con-
gress governments had failed to attend even to the barest necessities of the people.

The Communist Party would admit, said the manifesto, that the Government of India and the All-India Congress Party had adopted a number of progressive measures. It was a matter of satisfaction to the party to note that the Congress Party, which for years had been attacking the Communists by saying that socialism could not grow in the soil of India, now declared that socialism was the goal of the country. Equally so the party drew satisfaction from the fact that the Congress Party—which in the past had labelled the Communists as Russian agents because they had insisted that only the Soviet Union, China and other socialist states were the real friends of India—now accepted this as a fact and worked for strengthening of ties with these socialist lands.

After the criticism of the central government and the All-India Congress Party, the manifesto took the Kerala Congress to task. The document declared that the Congress stood indicted for 'not accepting even those progressive measures which Pandit Nehru and the All-India Congress leadership had adopted'. If after ten years of the Congress rule Kerala still remained a problem state, the responsibility must fall upon the heads of the local Congress leaders. They failed to implement the programme for the development of Kerala mapped out by the central government—large sums allocated by the Five Year Plan had not even been spent—'but indulged in factional quarrels, breaking the heads of the people agitating for their demands'. That had generated hatred and dissatisfaction even among the patriotic Congressmen, added the manifesto.

The manifesto made a bid at placing the leadership of the 'people's struggle against the decadent rule of the Congress' in the hands of the Communist Party. The document said that the people of Kerala had enough of the Congress rule, and that they would tolerate no longer its anti-people policies. Their verdict had already been recorded in the 1952 and 1954 general elections, the Malabar District Board elections in 1954, and the municipal elections which took place in Travancore-Cochin late in 1955 and early 1956. In the next elections, the people would reject the Congress even more firmly. Defeat was the fate of any 'majority
party which ruled by bayonets and against the wishes of the people.’

The political instability in the state could be eliminated, said the manifesto, only if the majority of people united in voting for progressive policies. There were good indications that the majority was prepared to do so, and that in fact it had already demanded the formation of a stable government. The Communist Party was ‘fighting this election to give a definite shape to this desire of the people’.

To convince the people that the Communist Party would be able to rule, if entrusted with the mandate by the electorate, the manifesto cited the record of the Communist-ruled Panchayats and, above all, the successful Communist stewardship of the Malabar District Board:

... the people also know that the administration of many municipalities and of the Malabar District Board under the leadership of the Communist Party is better than before, and that both the panchayats which won awards from Prime Minister Nehru for good administration are under the leadership of the Communist Party. These experiences have made it clear that the Communist Party is capable not only of uniting the people for conducting agitation, but that it can also take over and run the administration successfully ... 21

Making its final appeal to the voters, the manifesto declared that the Communist Party had no other programme than of developing Kerala into a democratic and prosperous state. With such a programme the party would confidently face the people.

The last section of the manifesto outlined a detailed programme of economic, social and administrative reforms. 22 The following are its abridged principal items:

1. To provide the necessary funds for the national development programme, the central government would be requested to increase the capital allocation for Kerala's Second Five Year Plan from Rs. 870 million to Rs. 2,000 million. This would amount to about 130 per cent increase in capital resources.

2. With these funds, new industries would be established to provide new employment opportunities.

3. The funds would also be used for the development of co-
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operatives in small-scale industries, such as coir, handlooms, etc.
4. Plantation and industrial labour would receive an immediate wage increase of 25 per cent.
5. Workers would be given a bonus up to 12.5 per cent of their actual wages.
6. Fundamental changes would be made in agriculture by introducing an Agrarian Relations Bill. The main aim of the bill would be to safeguard the interests of the tenants, put a ceiling on land holdings, redistribute surplus land to the landless, and fix fair rents.
7. An Anti-Eviction Bill would be introduced to bring an immediate relief to the tenants, maintain the present status quo in the tenure, and make sure that the tenants would not be evicted before the Agrarian Relations Bill is passed.
8. Tea, coffee and other foreign-owned plantations would be nationalized.
9. Special attention would be paid to the increase of food production in order to convert Kerala from a food-importing into self-sufficient area; to this end the production of food-stuffs would be increased by 50 per cent.
10. Large programme of housing would be launched; care would also be taken to provide the people with basic commodities in good supply at fair prices.
11. The entire educational system, and the system of government subsidies to schools, would be reorganized.
12. The entire administrative structure of the state would be reorganized through decentralization of power; measures would be taken to increase efficiency, eliminate red tape and bring down cost.
13. Far reaching changes in the police policy would be introduced, so that the police may not interfere in the class struggle of workers, agricultural labourers, students and other sections of the working people fighting for their rights. The new police policy would make sure that the labour laws were strictly and vigorously enforced ‘in the interest of workers and against the employers’.
14. Merciless fight would be carried out against corruption, nepotism and favouritism in order to provide the state with clean, cheap and efficient administration.

The manifesto had laid down the main line of attack upon
the positions of the Congress. And once the political line is laid down, teaches an old Stalinist maxim, organization decides everything. Consequently, the party made an enormous organizational effort to carry its message to all corners of the state by throwing into the electoral battle close to 300,000 propagandists and party activists.23

To Power Through the Ballot Box

It was through the ballot box that the leadership of Kerala was formally transferred in the hands of the Communist Party. It will be recalled that for some time the party had already been the undisputed leader of the movement for national renaissance. The general elections of 1957 merely projected this dominant position into the political sphere, giving it a concrete expression in the form of vote polled and seats won.

The new state of Kerala was divided into 114 single-seat, and 12 double-seat constituencies to elect 126 members of the State Legislative Assembly. The political parties threw the following number of contestants into the fields: the Congress 124; Communist Party 100; Praja Socialist Party 62; Revolutionary Socialist Party 28; Muslim League and Independents 74. The Kerala Socialist Party did not contest the elections. There were 7,514,622 people eligible for voting, and out of these 5,899,822, i.e., 66.65 per cent, voted. Table VIII shows the number of votes polled and the seats won by the contesting parties.

The Communist Party emerged the second largest in terms of the votes polled, having won 34.98 per cent of the votes cast, but largest in terms of the seats won, having secured 47.6 per cent of seats in the assembly. The Congress won 37.45 per cent of the votes cast, and 34.1 per cent of seats. True, the Congress still remained the largest party in the state, polling 2.47 per cent of votes more than the Communist Party. But the electoral tactics of the Communists—i.e., concentration of fire-power on weak constituencies, running candidates in the safe constituencies, and the party's electoral adjustments with the RSP to avoid triangular contests and splitting of votes—coupled with the non-proportional representation electoral system in use, prevented the Congress from giving effect to its almost 3 per cent larger popular appeal and turning this into a corresponding number of seats. On the other hand, these factors played into the hands of the Communist
Party, making it to win 47.6 per cent of seats with 34.98 per cent of votes.

It was only in the elections to the State Legislative Assembly that the Congress retained the position of the largest party in the state in terms of the votes polled. The votes polled for the election of deputies which Kerala would send to the Lok Sabha, the federal parliament in New Delhi, placed the Communist Party in the leading position by giving it 37.2 per cent of votes, against the Congress' 36.1 per cent.24

The Communist Party thus commanded in the State Legislative Assembly 60 seats of its own and, together with the 5 Independents who had been elected through its support, it controlled 65 out of 126 seats. This amounted to 51.58 per cent of the total seats, making the party eligible to form the new government.

The regional distribution of the seats won by each contesting party can be ascertained from Table IX. Out of 60 deputies to the State Legislative Assembly, elected in Travancore, the Communist Party won 32; out of 18 deputies in Cochin 9; and out of 48 deputies elected in Malabar it received 19. In addition, one Independent from Travancore, and four from Malabar, improved the position of the party to 65 deputies.

An analysis of the distribution of the votes cast by the principal communities of the state shows an important shift in the established pattern, which was the main factor responsible for the victory of the Communist Party. Table X indicates the following: (a) the total number of members of each community according to 1951 census; (b) the percentage of seats which each community could secure if all its members voted for its candidates; (c) the number and percentage of seats actually secured by each community in the 1957 elections.

The Table shows that politics in Kerala is strictly a communal affair, and that the communities vote on communal lines. In the 1957 general elections the Hindu community, accounting for 61.0 per cent of the population of Kerala, elected 88 Hindu deputies, which is 69.8 per cent of the seats of the assembly. The Christian community of 21.3 per cent elected 26 Christian deputies, which is 20.6 per cent of seats in the house. The Muslim community of 17.7 per cent elected 12 Muslim deputies, which is 9.6 per cent. Thus while the Hindu and Christian communities voted strictly
on communal lines, the strength of the Muslim community failed to assert itself. The disparity between the percentage of the Muslim community (17.7 per cent), and the percentage of the Muslim deputies elected (9.6 per cent), can be attributed to the fact that a part of the female section of the Muslim community failed to vote.

On the other hand, the highly favourable correlation between the strength of the Hindu community (61.0 per cent), and the number of Hindu deputies elected (69.8 per cent), can be explained by the fact that it was among this community that the Communist Party made an enormous organizational effort. As mentioned earlier, the party threw 300,000 activists into the field, which averaged one propagandist for every 17 voters. This was a concentration of effort which no party could match.

Given the fact that the communities of Kerala voted strictly along the communal lines, Table XI shows that the Hindu community gave 61.4 per cent of its vote to the Communist Party, while the Congress received only 23.8 per cent.

Thus the sources of strength of the Communist Party was the Hindu community: the Nairs giving 65.7 per cent of their vote to the party, the Ezhavas 65.6 per cent, and the Scheduled Castes 53.3 per cent. The hard core of the party were, however, the Ezhavas. According to K. R. Narayanan, General Secretary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam, which is the organization of the Ezhavas, that community had contributed 30,000 to the 60,000 members of the Communist Party of Kerala; a full 50 per cent of the party’s membership. 25

The Nair community had voted for the Congress in the early post-independence days, then shifted its loyalty to the PSP and, in 1957, supported the Communist Party. The shift in the voting pattern of the Nair community in favour of the Communists, as had already been said, was responsible for the victory of their party in 1957. The man who brought about that shift in the Nair vote was M. N. Govindan Nair, Secretary General of the Communist Party of Kerala. He started his political career as a prominent leader of the Nair Service Society, joined the Communist Party comparatively late, and manoeuvred the Nair community into the Communist fold.

While Hindus backed the Communist Party, Christians voted for the Congress. Table XII shows that the Christian community
was the pillar of the Congress Party, contributing 73.3 per cent of its vote cast to the Congress. The Communist Party received 15.2 per cent.

The decline in the number of the Christian voters, as the result of the formation of the new Kerala State on November 1, 1956, was one of the factors contributing to the decrease in the number of votes received by the Congress Party. The separation of the four Tamil-speaking taluks from Travancore,—these had large Christian population—and the incorporation of the Malabar area into the new state, considerably changed the balance of communal forces in Kerala, adversely for the Congress and favourably for the Communist Party. With the territorial shift in Travancore, the Christian population in that area dropped from 31 per cent to 24 per cent, while the incorporation of Malabar increased the percentage of the Ezhava community from 22 to 26 per cent.

The formation of the new Kerala proved a double disadvantage for the Congress. Given the voting straight on communal lines, the 5 per cent decrease in the voting potential of the Congress and the 4 per cent increase in the voting potential of the Communist Party, could not but have a significant effect on the new distribution of power between these two principal contestants.

Of the two principal political parties, the Communist Party was the most communal in outlook, judging from the fact that 90.0 per cent of its deputies were Hindus, 6.6 per cent Christians, and 3.4 per cent Muslims (see Table XIII). The Congress Party attempted to cut across the communal lines, and offered to the electorate the candidates of all communities in better balance, as is evident from the communal composition of its deputies. Of the 43 deputies of the Congress Party, 48.5 per cent were Hindus, 44.8 per cent Christians, and 6.7 per cent Muslims.

When finally the dust settled over the electoral battle-field in Kerala in the middle of March, the Communist Party emerged the strongest in the assembly and formed the new government, which was sworn in on April 5, 1957. It was headed by veteran Congress Communist E. M. S. Namboodiripad, and was composed of T. V. Thomas, C. Achuta Menon, K. C. George, Joseph Mundassery, Dr A. R. Menon, K. P. Gopalan, V. R. Krishna Iyer, T. A. Majeed, P. K. Chathan and R. K. Gouri.

The peaceful transfer of the leadership in Kerala was fully consummated, confirming in the main the general validity of the
first and second propositions of the Theory of Peaceful Transition to Communism and its applicability in India. On April 5, 1957, when the first Communist government ever elected through a free ballot assumed office in Kerala, the way was opened for implementing the third proposition of that theory.  

REFERENCES

2. Ibid., p. 156.
3. loc. cit.
4. The High Command of the Congress was slow in understanding this aspect of the national question in the multinational Union of India. Not only in Kerala, but in Andhra, Maharashtra and other states of the Indian Union, the national aspirations of the local people proved a force of considerable potential. The large increase in influence of the Communists in Maharashtra, through the Maharashtra Samyukta Samiti, which campaigned for the division of Bombay State on the linguistic basis and the formation of a Maharashtra State, and the noticeable spread of their influence in Assam, West Bengal, NEFA, and Punjab, are due mainly to the harnessing of dynamism of this local patriotism to the promotion of their movement.

The Congress High Command in New Delhi called these aspirations for linguistic and other adjustments of the people of different states of the Union of India communalism, and vehemently fought them. That left the entire field for the Communists to place themselves at the helm of these movements. The attacks upon the Communist Party that it is ‘anti-national’ have practically no effect, because the local branches lead genuine national movements which are deeply rooted among the people.


8. loc. cit.
9. loc. cit.
10. loc. cit.

12 loc. cit.
14 loc. cit.
18 The negotiations broke down because of the following demands of the PSP:
In Travancore-Cochin: 41 seats out of 77; (8 out of 12 in Trivandrum District, 15 out of 28 in Quilon, 10 out of 17 in Kottayam, 8 out of 20 in Trichur). The number of seats which PSP had won in Travancore-Cochin in 1952 elections was merely 10; 5 of them had been won with the support of the Communist Party.
In Malabar: 20 seats out of 48; but this demand was later reduced by the PSP negotiators to 15. The Communists offered 13 seats in the letter of January 9, 1957.
21 The full text of the manifesto was not available at the time of the preparation of this study. It was published only in the Malayalam language, and the public demand was such that the 20,000 copies printed sold within a few days. The points are taken from its abridged form, published in English in New Age. See “Communist Manifesto for Stable Government, Prosperous Kerala”, New Age, Vol. IV, No. 20, (February 10, 1957), pp. 8, 9 and 10.
22 For the results of the municipal elections in Travancore-Cochin, which served as an index showing the rapidly changing correlation between the Congress and the Communists, see “Congress Defeats in Travancore-Cochin Chairman Elections”, New Age, Vol. III, No. 29, (April 15, 1956), p. 5.
24 This section of the manifesto was taken from Singh, Jitendra, Communist Rule in Kerala, pp. 22-4.
25 One leader of the Communist Party of Ceylon, Pieter Keuneman,
declared that the Communist Party in Kerala 'had nearly 300,000 cadres actively working for it in the elections'; see *The Times of India*, (August 29, 1957).


26 For the formulation of the Theory of Peaceful Transition by the Kremlin at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956, and its adoption by the Communist Party in India, see V. M. Fic, *Peaceful Transition to Communism in India* (Nachiketa Publications: Bombay, 1969).
CHAPTER V

THE KERALA PATTERN

The salient feature of the day on which the new government in Kerala assumed power, April 5, 1957, was the fact that the Communist movement in India, and for that matter the world Communist movement, acquired a large base on the soil of the Indian sub-continent. Although the base had been won peacefully, functionally it was comparable to Chinese Yenan, because it represented a focus of Communist power from which its influence could radiate until it engulfed the whole nation.

April 5, 1957, should have dispelled many wrong notions which some Indian leaders entertained about communism, when reassuring their people, and the rest of the world, that 'it cannot happen here'. And yet, grave misconceptions about the aims and nature of communism in India persisted long after the installation of its regime in Kerala. By that time, the Congress leaders found themselves so engrossed in propagating the Moscow-engineered link between the Leninist concept of peaceful co-existence and that one traditionally accepted in the East that President of India, Rajendra Prasad, welcomed the establishment of the Communist power in Kerala as an example of peaceful co-existence which should set an example for the whole country.

Speaking at a public meeting, held at the new Police Stadium in Trivandrum on August 14, 1957, Prasad declared:

...I am happy that this great experiment, which is being made in your state, is going to serve as a great lesson not only to other states but to the country as a whole as an example of co-existence, of living and working together, in spite of differences, for the good of all...1

In fact, it was upon the advice and insistence of Premier Nehru that the Union Government invited the Communist Party in
Kerala to form the new government. S. A. Dange made the following statement in Bombay on August 3, 1958:

...Even though the Communists won a majority in Kerala in general elections in 1957, the Congress President Mr. U. N. Dhebar and other Congressmen did not relish the idea of a Communist Government in any state of the country. It was only at the insistence of Mr Nehru that the Congressmen allowed the Prime Minister to have his way in the matter....

The exact motivations of Nehru for this step are not known. It would appear that in putting into practice the idea of peaceful co-existence of communism with democracy, in which he sincerely and ardently believed, his action might have been motivated by a widespread notion that if communism came to India it would undergo severe modifications which would emasculate its undemocratic and other undesirable attributes. It was generally believed that if communism engulfed the country, the genius of the Indian people for absorbing and modifying foreign ideologies—the power of age-tested synthesis and reconciliation of diverse ideologies and religions—would again assert itself and mould the alien ideology of communism into an indigenous cast.

It is also possible that in pressing his colleagues in the government and the Congress to allow the Communist Party to assume power in Kerala, Nehru hoped that the placing of formidable responsibilities and burdens into its hand would discipline it and make it realize the difficulties which his own government faced on the all-India level. Criticism of the government without responsibility is one thing; governing, however, is another.

It is most likely, however, that by commissioning the Communist Party to form the new government in Kerala, Nehru merely bowed to the verdict of the electorate.

Whatever might have motivated Nehru in inviting the Communist Party to form the new government in Kerala, the manner in which it functioned was not to be the example of peaceful co-existence hoped for by Prasad. The operations of the Communist government, taken in their totality, amounted to a unique case of systematic adaptation, conversion and exploitation of the institutions of parliamentary democracy for the purpose of its transformation into a special form of the dictatorship of the pro-
letariat, a ‘people’s regime’. The transformation was conceived as a peaceful process.

Possibilities versus Limitations

The manner in which the Communist regime in Kerala began functioning immediately after its installation represented the attempts at implementing the third proposition of the Theory of Peaceful Transition to Communism.

The third proposition maintained that if the Communist Party, after securing a firm parliamentary majority, organized a mass movement and led this into open class struggles, it would be possible to break the power of the opposition parties and then transform the entire governmental machinery into an instrument of people’s rule. The transformation would enable the party to introduce profound political, economic and social changes which, ultimately, would result in the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and secure the party’s perpetual monopoly of power.

The communist party in Kerala accepted the theory as valid for the state. A. K. Ghosh had done so for the entire India, and E. M. S. Namboodiripad incorporated it into a text-book, written in 1957 for the use in the School of the Communist Party of Kerala, which provided its cadres with the basic ideological training.

In addition to this theoretical model, the Communist Party in Kerala could draw upon the great wealth of practical experience which the Communist parties of East Central Europe, China, Korea and Indo-China, had accumulated when they placed their countries on the road to communism after ‘winning’ parliamentary majorities in various ways.

However, not all theoretical models and practical experience, which the world Communist movement had in store, could be applied in Kerala. Two factors, not present elsewhere, forced the Communists there to blaze a completely new trail.

The first factor was the federal structure of the Union of India, of which Kerala is only a part. While the seizure of power in any country of East Central Europe had placed in the hands of the Communists the entire apparatus of a sovereign state, in Kerala the Communists controlled the apparatus only of a local
government, subordinate to the supreme powers residing in the Union Constitution and executed by the federal government.

The control of the entire apparatus of the sovereign states had determined the mode of transition to communism in East Central Europe. The three branches of government—executive, legislative and judiciary—functioned as its principal instrumentalities. The process entailed nationalization of industry, abolition of private ownership of land and its collectivization, state control of trade unions and other civic organizations, use of the educational system to propagate Communist ideology, use of police methods to emasculate the opposition parties and convert them into yielding tools and, finally, use of the judiciary to safeguard the monopoly of Communist power and execute class justice. Such a course was totally impossible in Kerala.

The second factor which impelled the Communist Party in Kerala to blaze the new trail was the Preamble and the Directive Principles of the State Policy of the Union Constitution. Because these called for the establishment of socialism in India, they placed an ample mandate in the hands of the Communists to attempt the transition as a matter of constitutional right. Transition to socialism would be the first step which would open the way for transition to communism as the second step; the first process would gradually but inevitably grow into the second.

Yet, in spite of the ample constitutional mandate it was difficult for the Communist Party to make full use of it for setting Kerala on the road to communism. The formidable federal powers in the hands of the Congress Party, which opposed any rapid transition to socialism except under its own control, acted as the limiting factor. A real and continuous danger hovered over the heads of the Communists that should they launch the process, the federal powers would be employed by the Congress government to arrest it and even depose them from power.

Between these two poles the Communist Party in Kerala had to evolve its policies. On the one hand was the mandate of the Preamble and the Directive Principles of the Union Constitution making the drive to socialism, which could serve as the first stage to communism, a matter of constitutional right. On the other hand was the control of all federal powers by the
Congress, which could not only arrest the process, but endanger the very existence of the Communist regime.

Another element having influence upon the formulation of policies of the Communist regime was the realization that it was the first instance of the Communists assuming power anywhere in India, and that this must be utilized for further polarization of forces elsewhere in the country. It was imperative for the Communist Party in Kerala to establish a record of clean and effective administration, which not only would demarcate it from the past misrule of the Congress, but prove that the Communists are more ardent champions of implementation of the Preamble and the Directive Principles of the Constitution of India about socialism. The drive of the Communists in Kerala to implement this commitment to socialism on the one hand, and the restraining hand of the central government on the other, would generate a great deal of tension which would expose the Congress as merely paying lip service to socialism. In fact, it was most desirable that the drive of the Communist regime brought to the surface the grave conflict inherent in the Indian constitution. The conflict between the vision of a socialist tomorrow, as promised in its preamble and the directive principles, and its cool operative provisions relating to the sanctity of private property and inviolability of civil rights and liberties. The sharp focusing upon this conflict, and the efforts of the Communist regime in Kerala to overcome it in favour of the former, would, place in the hands of the All-India Communist Party a mobilizing device which could be used for organizing new forms of struggle, defending the constitution, all over the country.

Also international considerations, undoubtedly, played a role in shaping the general course of advance of the Communist regime in Kerala. If the regime were able to maintain itself in power and make the federal government co-exist with it, this could further underscore a widespread belief that India had reconciled herself not only to the advance of communism in the world but also at home, and that her leaders searched for an accommodation with this inexorable march. President Prasad welcoming the establishment of the Communist regime in Trivandrum could have conveyed such a message.

Given thus the limitations imposed upon the freedom of action of the Communists in Kerala by the federal structure of
the government within which their regime had to function, and given the domestic and international requirements mentioned above, the Communists had to evolve a finer and more sophisticated mode of transition than used in Europe and China.

_Theoretical Foundations of the Kerala Pattern_

The theoretical foundations of the techniques which the Communist leaders in Kerala evolved, which this study calls the Kerala Pattern of Peaceful Transition to Communism, had been laid down long before their party assumed power. Its main architect, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, started to reflect upon the models through which his party could initiate such a process after his return from Peking in the fall of 1956, where he attended the Eight Congress of the Communist Party of China. Namboodiripad was captivated by the enormous wealth of concepts and practical experience which the Chinese had developed during their efforts at peaceful transition to communism after the conquest of power. He summarized his impressions in three articles, which hinted that the hard core of Chinese experience would be applicable in India in spite of the vastly different conditions obtaining in the two countries.4

The central lesson of the three articles was the realization that the first stage of the process of peaceful transition takes place, strangely enough, through building state capitalism and private enterprise. No effort is made at large-scale nationalization. Another lesson was the realization that in the next stage the government itself, relying merely upon the adoption of legislation would not be able to overcome the resistance of the classes to be dispossessed. The Communist Party must therefore organize the working class and peasantry into militant groups, which are led into direct mass actions to give effect to the legislative acts. The highly disciplined mass organizations function as the main driving force which during the open class struggle carries out the programme mapped out by the government. This idea particularly impressed Namboodiripad.

The next step in the development of the Kerala Pattern was Namboodiripad's textbook used in the party schools.

Answering question number 17 on the applicability of the Theory of Peaceful Transition in India, the writer stated that although the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of
the Soviet Union had not specified in which countries this could be attained, the Indian Communists would make an effort at implementing it. The main factors which would make the transition possible were listed as follows. The party presently in power, the Congress, must curtail the political power and economic privileges of the exploiting classes through making full use of the existing parliamentary and other democratic means. But to rely upon the legislative activities of the government, in order to destroy the exploiting classes, would not be enough. The broadest masses must be mobilized and their organizations used as instruments through which the legislative acts could be turned into reality. To enact legislative measures relating to the transformation in the industrial and agricultural spheres is not enough. What must be done is to implement these measures by committees of workers and farmers through direct action. The bureaucratic apparatus of the government alone could not carry out the transformation.

Another aspect of peaceful transition, declared Namboodiripad, was the fact that this takes place not only through the direct implementation of reforms by the organizations of workers and peasants, but also through the participation of these organizations in the work of public administration. This results in a most thorough democratization of the entire administrative structure of the state. The people's organizations, declared Namboodiripad, must be created on all levels within the municipal and state structures, from the Panchayats up to the highest organs of state power, i.e., parliament and cabinet. They must be given wide administrative and executive powers so that they could influence the working of the whole administration. The implementation of all these measures would open the way for peaceful transition to communism in India even under the Congress rule.5

Further contribution to the development of the Kerala Pattern was made by a number of pronouncements of the leading members of the Communist Party as soon as the electoral results had been announced. The pronouncements are important. To allay the fear that their government would be a regime of blood and terror, they emphasized that it would work within the framework of the federal constitution. On the other hand, they
warned that under the mandate of that constitution profound social transformation would be initiated.

Secretary-General of the party in Kerala, M. N. Govindan Nair, was first to address himself to this problem in New Delhi. The news that his party had won in Kerala hit the capital like a storm on March 20, 1957, and the press immediately interviewed him:

...we, as the majority party, expect to be called to form a Government; and we are confident of giving the people of Kerala a stable Government. Once we form a Government, we are not going to stage an upheaval the next day. What we mean to do is to function in the service of the people within the four corners of the present Constitution. This is nothing into the nature of the Red Revolution. The bogey of revolution, violently upsetting everything, is not of our making, but of our opponents....

Nair then said that his party had fought the elections by popularizing its own programme, which 'suggested nothing that would go against the Constitution'. He gave an example of the type of propaganda encountered during the campaign, and insisted that the party must remove the fears created:

...at some places during the election campaign I found that the people had been told that if the Communists came to power they would demolish temples and churches. They would chop off the heads of all those over 40 years old. Naturally, with such a propaganda, a sort of Frankenstein was created about the prospective Communist Ministry. That is why we have to make it perfectly clear that we do not intend to scrap the Constitution nor go against it....

Elaborating upon these points, Nair said that even the programme of land legislation, proposed in the election manifesto, had not gone beyond the limits set on the agrarian reforms by the Planning Commission of the Union Government. To a question whether the Communist government would not start 'by a big bang' of nationalizing tea, rubber and other foreign owned plantations, Nair declared that this would require con-
sultations with the Union Government, and therefore would not be implemented before the consultations cleared the way. He significantly added, however, that because the Congress Party had also committed itself to socialism it could not possibly oppose nationalization.

Commenting then upon the relationship between the Congress government functioning on the federal level, and the Communist regime on the state level, Nair said: 'I once again repeat that in our views there is no insurmountable difficulty in having a Communist-led Government in one State and a Congress-Government at the centre.' He concluded the interview by saying that the Communist government would do nothing drastic; it would merely implement the programme of the Congress Party but in a much better and more thorough way.

Another emphatic assurance that the Communist ministry would work within the four corners of the Union Constitution appeared in the editorial, published in the New Age on March 21, 1957:

...there is, no doubt, a feeling of uneasy misgivings that the Communists, once in power, will upset the settled state of affairs by something drastic, something frightening. The Communist Party unhesitatingly declares that there is absolutely no basis for such a scare. Our Party has made it quite clear that the Communists, in running the Government, shall work within the framework of the Constitution.... It is a welcome sign that the Press in the country have overwhelmingly come out in recommending that the Communists should be called upon to form a Ministry in Kerala.... And indications from the Congress circles also so far point out to a readiness to accept a Communist-led Government in Kerala. These are to be recognized as the encouraging signs of sound health of the Indian democracy....

The next assurance that the Communist ministry would work within the framework of the Union Constitution appeared in a resolution of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of India, adopted at a meeting held in Ernakulam from March 22 to 24, 1957. Moreover, the resolution made this startling declaration:
our Party will sincerely welcome the participation of the PSP in the Government that our Party is going to form. This is in conformity with the Party's declared policy that every party of the Democratic Opposition should have its due share in an alternative Government. The Political Bureau earnestly appeals to the National Executive of the PSP to take the situation in Kerala into consideration and take such decisions as would enable the PSP to share responsibility with our Party and participate in the Government for building a new Kerala...

Given the slender majority of the votes which Communist Party commanded in the assembly, this section of the resolution was a clear bid at winning the PSP for co-operation to preclude it from joining hands with the Congress and working against the Communist ministry. Nothing could be more damaging than the formation of such a hostile combination.

Another important contribution to the development of the Kerala Pattern was made by an editorial, published in the New Age on April 7, 1957. The previous pronouncements, by emphasizing that the Communist ministry would work within the four corners of the Union Constitution, aimed at allaying the fears of a red revolution. The editorial, however, boldly suggested that under its mandate a far-reaching social change would be attempted, regardless of whether 'the exploiting classes' would reconcile themselves to 'the democratic and historic process that would immediately follow':

the promise of the new Government in Kerala lies in that it will, while doubtlessly functioning within the four corners of the Constitution, make a resolute break from the unwholesome and undemocratic ways of the State Governments under the Congress. The Communist-led Ministry will return to the welcome but hitherto forsaken declarations of the Constitution (the Preamble and the Directive Principles, Ed.) and strive to realize them in flesh and blood, so that whatever the Constitution intends for the well-being of the people is given here and now.

The Communist-led Government will derive its authority from the Constitution, not to serve the privileged and wealthy
few, but to minister to the needs of the downtrodden millions. It will invoke the authority of the law and of the Constitution to remake Kerala.... It is through such a loyal service to the people that the Communist Ministry will strive to take the State under its rule in the direction of 'justice—social, economic and political'—which our Constitution solemnly enjoins. It is again through such service that the Communist Government will proceed to translate into living reality the Directive Principles the Constitution has laid down.

We are conscious that no miracles can be performed.... For, apart from the limitations of the Constitution itself, there are certain restraining factors even more powerful than the Articles of the Constitution. One has to reckon with the fact that the State power in India rests in the hands of the exploiting classes. It will be the worst illusion, therefore, to think that these classes will take kindly to a fact of the popular democratic government in Kerala, or reconcile to the democratic and historic process that would immediately follow....

Another contribution to the evolution of the theoretical foundations of the Kerala Pattern was an article written by Secretary of the Communist Party of Kerala, M. N. Govindan Nair, entitled the "Challenge of Kerala". Nair went explicitly on the record to state that the Communist ministry would make an attempt at applying the Theory of Peaceful Transition to Communism. Although his party realized that this was 'a new experiment to which there were no ready-made and stereotyped answers', it felt well prepared and theoretically armed to face such a task. In fact, said Nair, the party had adopted the theory 'as a matter of principle, as the new general line in the new conditions', already at its Fourth Congress, held in Palghat in April 1956.

Nair further said that the functioning of the Communist ministry would have a profound effect upon the rest of India. It would radicalize the forces struggling for socialism and help them clarify what socialism really means; in this way it would 'concretize' the possibility for peaceful transition to socialism in the whole country. But this did not mean, said Nair, that his party would be able, or that it would wish, to mount a programme of a too radical social change. There should be no illu-
sion on that score, said Nair. Its election manifesto had clearly said that it merely wished to alleviate the misery of the working people, introduce and implement only such agrarian reforms as would be in accord with the constitution and adopt measures to democratize public administration.

This limited programme did not, however, mean that the party would make no attempt at initiating the process of peaceful transition. Declared Nair:

... the more important and basic problem will, however, be the advance toward socialism. To this problem there can be no ready-made nor stereotype answers. This is a new problem, a new experiment, not for the Communist movement in India but of the entire world. But what is important is that the realization should grow that such a problem exists and that its solution is as important, if not more, as running an efficient administration. Indeed, the two things cannot be separated from each other in a mechanical fashion...11

Nair then lashed at the critics for their ignorance of the fact that the party had espoused the Theory of Peaceful Transition, as a general political line, long before it assumed power in Kerala. This did not mean, hastened Nair to add, that the communists 'have gone pink', or abandoned their ultimate objective of establishing communism in India by giving up revolution for reformism, Marxism for Gandhism. Nair was quite emphatic about this. He warned those who hoped that communism in India would become a democratic and reformist movement, and that the Communist ministry would merely work for the establishment of socialism in Kerala. Communism was the ultimate aim, implied Nair.

Addressing himself to the critics Nair declared that they should have realized that the Theory of Peaceful Transition

...was not something the Communists are trumpeting after the Kerala election results were announced. This is something which was stated almost a year ago at the Palghat All-India Congress of the Party, as a matter of principle, as the new general line in the new conditions.

Not knowing this, the same people now try to make out
that the Indian Communists have gone 'pink', that they have given up revolution for reformism, Marxism for Gandhism. The pity is that these gentlemen will have to be disappointed again.

It has not been and will never be the aim of the Communists to somehow grab hold of the ministerial chairs and then behave as 'good boys', courting favours of the central authorities. The Communists look upon the winning of governmental power as a great responsibility and an enormous opportunity.

With zest and sobriety the Communist Party wants also to make the fullest use of the opportunity that has opened out. It wants to seize this chance to give a fresh, and great impetus to the mass movement for democracy and socialism, to search out new paths in the situation to advance the movement to greater victories. The masses, through their struggles and many sacrifices, made this electoral victory possible. Now the victory itself must be put at their service . . . It is the organized strength of the toilers, led by the working class, and in alliance with other sections, that can bring socialism to India. There is no other social force, no other brilliant individuals, who can do it. Since Communists are true to their socialist professions, they will do their utmost as before to bring out the latent power of these toiling sections and make them an invincible force.

Therefore, it is not a question of the Communists now abandoning their radical aims and settling down to the humdrum of routine, to 'respectability'. Such a question can never arise, except as an intrusion of an alien ideology in our midst. In further developing the movement for socialism in Kerala and in the country as a whole, concrete policies would have to be evolved which will help to reduce, however slightly, the glaring inequalities in Kerala's social life. Inroads will have to be made through new laws into the concentration of wealth and power....

Even more important, however, will be the introduction of a new style of work which will bring the government closer to the people and enable them, as far as possible, to participate in its work....
Nair's article was the last in the series in which the Communist leaders expounded the theoretical foundations of the Kerala Pattern. It must be emphasized that this was not a closely worked plan of action, but merely a general outline arising out of the balance of possibilities and limitations inherent in the Union Constitution. On the eve of the swearing-in ceremony of the Communist ministry in Kerala, its leadership had a reasonably clear vision of the main features of the line of advance.

The Kerala Pattern in Operation

Having clarified the general framework of possibilities and limitations implicit in the constitution, the Communist leaders evolved a set of concrete policies in rapid succession.

The first detailed document outlining practical steps was the Policy Statement made by E. M. S. Namboodiripad, now Chief Minister, on the very day he assumed power, April 5, 1957. Another set of concrete policies was agreed upon at a plenary session of the Communist Party, held in Trivandrum during the last week of May 1957. Then came Namboodiripad's statement of July 23, 1957, outlining the basic principles of the Police Policy of his government. The statement spelled out ideas which became known as the Neutralization of the Police. Because of its crucial importance for the understanding of the Kerala Pattern, the full text of the statement is given in Appendix I. Then came a detailed account of the policies which the government had actually been implementing in every sphere of life in Kerala; this was made by Namboodiripad in a booklet entitled 'Kerala: Problems and Possibilities', published late in 1957. Finally, in November 1957, came Namboodiripad's report on the progress which his government had made so far, as well as an outline of further plans. Needless to say, it was the totality of the measures set forth in these documents which constituted what might be called the Kerala Pattern of Peaceful Transition to Communism. These documents are primary sources for its understanding; however, also secondary sources are abundant.

A detailed discussion of the primary and secondary sources on the Kerala Pattern is beyond the scope of this study. For our purpose, a brief summary of its six most outstanding characteristics, derived from this wealth of material, is sufficient. Further, it is more useful to concentrate on outlining the broad features
of the Kerala Pattern than on a detailed examination of the individual practical steps. Finally, the summary deals with the Kerala Pattern as it operated from the assumption of power by the Communists on April 5, 1957, until July 20, 1958, when it suddenly terminated by an outburst of violence, which led to the fall of the government in July 1959.

Given these limitations on the scope of our discussion, the first feature of the Kerala Pattern pointed out that it was based on the exploitation of the conflict inherent in the Constitution of India. This was a conflict between the Preamble and the Directive Principles of the Constitution calling for the establishment of socialism in the land, and those provisions guaranteeing the inviolability of private property and sanctity of civil rights and liberties on the other. The conflict generated the main driving forces of the Kerala Pattern.

The second feature of the Kerala Pattern pointed out that the actual process of transition took place through direct actions of the Communist-controlled mass organizations. They attempted to apply directly the Preamble and the Directive Principles in order to overcome the parliamentary limitations of the Communist regime regarding private property and civil rights. It must be realized that no significant inroads into the sphere of private property, civil rights and liberties could have been made by the legislative acts of the Kerala State assembly alone, though under the control of the Communist Party. The reason is that private property, civil rights and liberties are protected by federal powers, and that under the Union Constitution all legislative acts of the state assemblies affecting these required federal sanction, i.e. approval of federal parliament. The situation would have been entirely different were the Communist Party in power on the federal level, and in control of federal parliament. In that case, peaceful transition in the entire country could have been initiated not under the vague terms of the Preamble and the Directive Principles, but directly under the terms of the operative parts of the constitution because these endow the federal parliament with powers which could override provisions relating to private property and civil rights.19

The launching of the direct actions of the mass organizations entailed two elements: (a) mobilization drive; (b) organizational effort.
The mobilization drive was initiated through an ambitious programme of legislative and other reforms, advanced in the state assembly and elsewhere, which dealt with agriculture, industry, education, labour relations, prices and wages and public administration. They had to bring about an instant improvement in the living conditions, and by and large conform to the Minimum Programme, under which the party had plunged into the electoral campaign in January 1957. At the same time, however, these reforms were loaded with long-term objectives. These promised a much better tomorrow under socialism if certain constitutional and other limitations protecting the vested interests and binding the hands of the Communist regime were removed, if the regime had free hand to implement those provisions of the constitution calling for the establishment of socialism, and if the power of the opposition parties were broken to make sure that progress to socialism would not be impaired.

The heated exchanges in the state assembly between the Communist deputies, driving to inject these long-term objectives into legislative acts, and members of the opposition parties, bent on emasculating all provisions designed to hit their political and economic interests, served as a mobilizing device of considerable effectiveness. The Communist mass media first picked and amplified the conflict. In the next step, they portrayed it as a struggle of progressive with reactionary forces, in which progress was also obstructed by reactionary and formalistic devices of bourgeois democracy, such as majority rule. Next, the mass media called on the people to stand by and defend progress. And finally the mobilization drive radicalized the Communist mass organization which, under its heat, were led into direct actions in order to break the resistance of the opposition forces and implement those radical measures which had been blocked in the assembly and elsewhere by the formalistic paraphernalia of bourgeois democracy.

The second element of the direct mass actions, the organizational element, consisted of building a vast network of mass organizations in agriculture, industry, education, culture and elsewhere. It entailed unification of trade unions and other mass organizations, and setting up new trade unions, new Kisan organizations and new co-operative associations in agriculture, cottage industry, fishing, road and house construction, toddy
tapping and other fields. The state treasury heavily subsidized the new organizations and, as later became evident, a great deal of state funds had been diverted to them. They claimed to represent and speak for all 'progressive people of Kerala', on whose behalf they organized open class struggles to give effect to the Preamble and the Directive Principles of the Union Constitution. The people themselves implementing the constitution was advertised as the most direct and popular form of democracy, and as an example for all India.

The third feature of the Kerala Pattern was the Neutralization of the Police. The direct actions of the mass organizations attacking private property, civil rights and liberties should have brought into play the police and the courts, to see that the violators of law were apprehended, public order restored and the guilty punished. Such a course, however, was impossible in Kerala, because the government believed in an old Marxist dictum that any constitution and state apparatus function merely as instruments of class rule, and because the government was bent on interpreting and applying the constitution in class terms. In Kerala, the constitution and state apparatus should promote and protect the interests and aspirations of the class and its party in power, and not hinder the direct mass actions and punish their participants. However, because of the overriding federal powers in the hands of the Congress Party, it was impossible to follow this course and use the state apparatus as an instrument of transformation. It was quite clear that the federal powers would intervene, and even depose the Communist government, should the state apparatus be used for the promotion of class rule.

This greatly limited freedom of action made inapplicable in Kerala most of the theoretical solutions and practical experience which the Communist parties of East Central Europe and China had in store. Equally inapplicable was the model of peaceful transition announced at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956. That model could not serve as a guide to action for the Communist parties operating in provinces of federal states in order to mount the third stage.

Hence, the Communists in Kerala had to search for a new solution, whereby the state apparatus in their hands, operating
within a federal structure, could be used as a tool of transition but without inviting federal intervention and endangering the existence of their regime. The solution was found in the possibility of neutralizing the police. This important innovation meant that during the direct actions, mounted by the mass organizations, the police would not only refrain from giving assistance to the assailants but also deny protection to those attacked. It would remain neutral. The contested issues would be decided in an intense class struggle of 'the progressive against reactionary forces', in which the state apparatus would not be directly involved. Only in extreme cases of violence and disorder would the police step in.

The fourth feature of the Kerala Pattern was the direct use of only the judicial organs, the magistrates and various arbitral tribunals, for the transformation. The executive branch placed a great deal of pressure on the judicial organs, handling the cases arising out of the direct mass actions, in order to have them legalize the gains won by the Communist-sponsored groups. Upon instructions from the executive branch, the courts had to suspend criminal and civil proceedings against those who had been arrested during the violent class battles, and release them from jail.

The fifth feature of the Kerala Pattern was the linking of the state apparatus, and the bodies of municipal administration, to the Communist Party to make sure that the party commands were transmitted and executed. About 1,200 special liaison bodies were formed to link the Communist Party with the ministries, police, courts, magistrates and the panchayats. The officers refusing to execute the commands of the liaison groups were demoted, transferred to remote places or dismissed. On the lowest level of administration, in some villages and small towns, the Communists established the Cell Courts. These were composed of members of the party and functioned as agencies of class rule in rural areas. They adjudged cases involving party members, or advised the Panchayats on how justice should be carried out to safeguard the interests of the party.

The sixth feature of the Kerala Pattern reflected its dynamism—the direct actions of the mass organizations driving to assert class rights on the one hand and the neutralization of the police and subversion of the judiciary on the other—in statistics show-
ing a sharp increase of crime during the period under discussion. Figures tell the story how the Kerala Pattern functioned. Only partial statistics are available. These cover the period from the installation of the regime on April 5, 1957, until the end of that year. According to the Law Minister, the Kerala State Police Administration Report for 1957 showed the following increase of crime during that period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1957</th>
<th>increase %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognizable crimes</td>
<td>4,747</td>
<td>10,461</td>
<td>120.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious offences</td>
<td>4,149</td>
<td>4,880</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riots and Assaults</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
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</table>

In addition, the crime detection efficiency of the police dropped from 41.1 per cent to 27.5 per cent. During the same period, 236 criminal cases were withdrawn from courts upon request of the government; most of them involved members of the Communist Party.

Hence, the efficiency of the transition was reflected in the 120 per cent increase in the cognizable crimes, 81 per cent increase in rioting and general assault which were mostly of political nature, 67 per cent decrease in the crime detection efficiency of the police, and in the suspension of criminal proceedings against hundreds of people.20

Another light is thrown upon the functioning of the Kerala Pattern by a study of strikes and labour disputes, which resulted from the direct actions of the various mass organizations against factory and plantation owners, small entrepreneurs and landlords.

According to a report of Minister of Labour some 2,021,000 man-days had been lost in Kerala due to strikes during the 20-month period, from the assumption of power by the Communists until the end of 1958. Given the 100,285 factory workers in Kerala, each worker was absent from work for about 20 days in 20 months, one day per month. This considerable strike movement in Kerala under the Communist regime was reflected in a staggering increase of labour and industrial disputes. It must be remembered that it was the strike movement, the direct mass actions, which functioned as the principal instrument of the Kerala Pattern. The mass organizations themselves had to make
significant inroads into the property rights of the 'exploiting classes' and the economic base of the opposition parties. Thus while at the time of the installation of the Communist regime, in April 1957, Kerala had only 499 pending labour cases, during one year, until March 31, 1958, the number of new unsettled disputes shot to 6,285. This was a considerable increase of 1,175 per cent.21

The final remark upon the Kerala Pattern of transition must emphasize that the federal structure of the Indian Union forced the Communist Party in Kerala into abandoning the stereotypes which had been developed in East Central Europe. It will be recalled that it was precisely the state apparatus, especially the police, the courts and other 'oppressive organs' of state power, which in the non-federal states of East Central Europe had figured as the main tools of transformation to communism. These stereotypes proved inapplicable in Kerala, so did the model advanced at the Twentieth Congress, and the Communists there had to blaze a new trail. In fact, their leaders must be credited with a contribution to Marxism-Leninism in postulating and applying the Neutralization of the Police, as the mode of transformation applicable in a federal set-up, where a Communist party is in power in one state while another party controls the federal government.

Transition Ends

It is a matter of record that the Communist Party, under the leadership of E. M. S. Namboodiripad, scored remarkable successes in implementing the process of peaceful transition. The party commanded an ever increasing popular support, while the opposition parties stood badly divided and unable to organize any effective opposition. This favourable situation persisted through 1957, except for a short period of agitation against the Education Bill, and the first half of 1958. The success of the regime could be explained by the adroitness in advancing its policies, and by sensitivity to public opinion. A radical change in its fortunes took place, however, in the second half of 1958.

The disastrous trend was touched-off, curiously enough, by a victory of a Communist candidate in an important by-election, held in the Devicolam Constituency on May 16, 1958. By that time, the majority of votes which the Communist Party con-
controlled in the state assembly had dwindled so much that if that by-election were lost the government would fall. The Devicolam by-election thus became not only a major contest of popularity of the regime, but a matter of its survival. Its leaders confidently maintained that the party had further increased its popular appeal during the past year, while the opposition insisted that the Communist recklessness had alienated the people who would be glad to depose the regime.

Because the significance of the Devicolam by-election extended far beyond the confines of that constituency the Communist Party, as well as the parties of the opposition, made every effort at securing victory for their candidates. To make sure that its candidate was elected the Communist Party, fighting for the survival of its regime, inflated the electoral rolls with names of party members from the neighbouring constituencies who, on the day of voting, would come over and cast their votes in favour of its candidate. Moreover, the party distributed a large sum of money from the government coffers on the eve of the election, and threw every available agitator and organizer into the campaign long in advance.22

The victory of the Communist candidate by a margin of 7,000 votes (7 per cent) was considered by his party not only as an approval of its past policies, but as a fresh mandate authorizing intensification of the process of peaceful transition. The Communist leaders felt that now their party could rally an ever-increasing popular support, on which basis more radical steps could be mounted to accelerate the pace of social change. The fact that the opposition had not been able to mount an effective action during the whole past year seemed to indicate that it was seriously weakened, and that unless it pooled its resources and combined against the regime there was no danger. The leadership was also aware that such a development must be prevented at all cost, and resolved that should the opposition unite in an assault upon the regime the Communists would fight with all means.

This line of thought—on the one hand a belief that the process of transition could be accelerated while on the other a warning to the opposition parties not to combine against the regime—was expressed by Chief Minister Namboodiripad in a speech at Coimbatore on June 3, 1958, in which he celebrated the resound-
ing success his party had won in the Devicolam by-election. Namboodiripad declared that this victory symbolized a fresh mandate of the people of entire Kerala to his party to continue on the course so far pursued, and warned that if the opposition parties proved too unruly and combined to oppose the inexorable march forward this might lead to civil war as in China.

Namboodiripad's public threat to plunge Kerala into civil war should his government be prevented from forging ahead with its long-range plans, giving China as an example, startled the country. His Coimbatore statement became a subject of heated debate in the state assembly on July 4, 1958, with the result that the opposition parties began to find their way to each other.23 The Kerala State Praja Socialist Party called upon the people on July 9, 1958 to view the speech of Namboodiripad with all seriousness, and be prepared to face the civil war conditions that might be created by the Communists.24 Also the Congress Party began to mobilize. Its leader in the state assembly, P. T. Chacko, declared on July 18, 1958 that his party was prepared to accept the challenge thrown by Namboodiripad at Coimbatore. Moreover, said Chacko, 'we are determined to isolate and then to annihilate the unpatriotic Communist Party through democratic means'.25 The opposition parties thus considered Namboodiripad's Coimbatore speech as a declaration of war, and soon started to co-operate in order to bring about the downfall of his regime. A new alignment of forces was in the making.

Into this vitiated atmosphere, and by chance, fell like a spark into haystack a minor clash of students with the government authorities. The clash was insignificant, and could have been settled amicably. But the nervous Communist government wrongly suspected that the clash had been inspired by the opposition parties as the first shot of their combined attack and, in panic, threw a large police force into the streets to suppress the students. Brutality and arrests followed. The students would not yield, however, and started to organize a state-wide agitation against the authorities. The jittery government responded with more brutality and arrests, and soon Kerala was plunged into disorder and strife almost in fulfilment of Namboodiripad's threat of civil war.

This upset the sophisticated process of peaceful transition in
every sphere. In fact, the process terminated as soon as the Communist Party threw armed workers' militia, organized in the meantime, into the streets to defeat the opposition forces in open combat. Moreover, the government jettisoned the Neutralization of the Police and instructed the police commanders to support the assault of workers' militia. This introduced a new element into the conflict, which lasted one year, and terminated by the dismissal of the regime and the imposition of Presidential Rule in Kerala in July 1959.

To understand the exact point at which the process of peaceful transition terminated, because the Communist Party resorted in defence of its regime to naked force, a short review of events of that period is in place.

The trouble of the regime with the students started on February 24, 1958, when one ticket examiner on the state-owned ferry boat in Ernakulam insulted a student, and when the students present retaliated and assaulted the collector. To avenge their colleague, the transport workers attacked one group of students on February 27. The encounter resulted in a violent clash in which the police sided with the transport workers and tear-gassed and beat the students. This angered the student community not only in Ernakulam, but students everywhere started to show a very unfriendly attitude to the government.  

Although the agitation against the government subsided for a while, peace was not preserved for long. The cause of the second wave of student unrest was an increase in boat fare, from 6 paise to 12 paise, by the state-controlled Transport Corporation as a result of nationalization of water transport by the regime. The unrest spread from Quilon to Ernakulam and, by July 12, 1958, about 20 students were arrested for picketing the Corporation's office and obstructing the passage of boats.  

The refusal of the government to negotiate with the students, and the high-handed methods in dealing with them, brought into the picture the powerful Union of Kerala Students. This promptly issued a call to its affiliated organization all over Kerala to boycott the government transport facilities and stage a state-wide student strike. The strike which followed spread rapidly over the entire school system of the state with the result that the police arrested 134 students by July 14, 1958; over 2,000 students boycotted classes. By July 21, some 300 students were
arrested, while well over 10,000 students joined the boycott of classes. The clashes between the students demonstrating against the government and the police took now a violent turn. Hundreds of students were beaten in the streets and those imprisoned badly handled. This was a spontaneous upsurge of the student community against tyrannical methods of the government, so typical in the Communist countries of East Central Europe. It must be remembered that the series of revolutionary explosions which shook the Soviet bloc in 1956 had been inflamed by student unrest, and that in Budapest the students had kindled the October Revolution which overthrew Rakosi’s regime. The student agitation in Kerala moved in the direction similar to that in Hungary as soon as the public began to support the students in their encounters with the police.

The leadership of the Communist Party clearly saw the writing on the wall and, to counter the dangerously unfolding situation, made two important moves. First, to halt the unrest, the government ordered the police to promulgate Section 144 of the Criminal Code in many areas of the state which prohibited public demonstrations and processions. Second, to take care of those who would demonstrate in spite of the ban but, above all, to avoid the government’s involvement in their suppression, the party itself moved into the picture. On July 20, 1958 Secretary General of the party, M. N. Govindan Nair, issued a call ‘to all those interested in the progress of Kerala to organize local “citizens’ committees” to prevent the Opposition Parties from launching unnecessary agitation with the object of pulling down the Communist regime in the State’. This call mobilized the entire membership of the party and its sympathizers, who organized themselves into a militia ready to suppress the student and other agitations in open combat in the streets. The people themselves would defend their government, cried Nair. However the police, which had prominently figured in the suppression of the first wave of student agitation, would remain in the background to minimize the possibility of federal action.

The opposition parties in the state, the Congress Party, PSP, Socialist Party, Muslim League and other opposition groups, did not take Nair’s call lightly. This challenge could not remain unanswered. Their response came on July 25, 1958 in the form of a Joint Declaration to the effect that the ‘Com-
munist workers had been let loose throughout the State to oppress students and create disturbances'. The declaration further stated that the existing agitation should not be viewed as only a students' agitation, or one against the increase in boat fare. The conditions were such that 'they led to the belief that the Communist Party had already started a civil war in the state'. The declaration then appealed to general public, municipal organizations, Panchayats and the Bar Associations throughout the state and invited them to organize meetings to adopt resolutions protesting against the Communist Party fomenting civil war; the resolutions were to be forwarded to the Home Minister of the Union Government and Namboodiripad.\textsuperscript{30}

The plan of action, called for by Nair, looked good on paper. The leadership of the party made, however, a serious mistake in hoping that its militia could suppress the student agitation before it spread far and wide, and in underestimating the students and other opposition groups to organize themselves into a similar militia formation. The call for organizing a civilian militia to safeguard public order came from a Roman Catholic Priest, Father Vadakkan. On July 25, 1958 Father Vadakkan declared that the suppression of the student agitation by the government was the first example of the things to come, meaning civil war, and that therefore the people must organize themselves into a volunteer force all over Kerala 'to make life and property secure'.\textsuperscript{31}

Father Vadakkan was aware that the militia of the Communist Party would be a large body composed of members of the party, trade unions, Kisan organizations and co-operatives, and that the civilian militia, to be a meaningful counterforce, would have to be an equally large force. He declared on August 22, 1958 that the militia should have at least half a million members in its ranks:

\dots I have already enrolled 6,000 young men and women in my Shanthi Sena. Every town and village of Kerala should have a branch of the Shanthi Sena. When our constitutional rights are threatened by the Communists, all citizens should take up arms. All of us should strengthen the hand of our national leaders to safeguard democracy. I believe that the Communists will endeavour to undermine the Constitution,
and we should be ready to protect it by force of arms if necessary...32

The call of Father Vadakkan received a wide response all over Kerala, and soon almost every town and village had its militia called the Shanthi Sena (Peace Force). The Christian community and the Nair community were most active in organizing the Shanthi Sena. The volunteers organized by the Christian community were called Christophers.

A memorandum prepared by the police of the Communist government in May 1959 shows that the total membership of the Shanthi Sena was over 100,000. The following figures show the membership of the Shanthi Sena of the Catholic and the Nair Service Society (N.S.S.) in various districts:33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>N.S.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trivandrum District</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quilon District</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleppey District</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>1,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam District</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trichur District</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannanore District</td>
<td>4,136</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kozhikode District</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palghat District</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>N.S.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85,141</td>
<td>15,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total                   | 101,041  |

No figures are available to show the membership of the Communist militia; this might have reached half a million. The hostile alignment of forces in Kerala started to assert itself on
the very day, July 25, when Father Vadakkan called for the formation of the Shanthi Sena. On that day a group of Communist militia attacked the office of the United Front Committee, composed of the representatives of all opposition parties, from which the committee had been directing a two and half month old strike in the government-managed Sita Ram Mill in Trichur. The strike, an example of class struggle turned against the Communists, had been touched-off by the attempts to break the non-communist trade unions in that factory and incorporate them into the unions led by the party. Over 1,200 workers had been arrested during the strike. The Communist Party had enough of this resistance, and on July 25 dispatched its militia to attack the office and disperse the commanding strike committee. The assault resulted in serious injuries to eight of its members.34

How rapidly the membership of the Communist Party responded to Nair's call for organizing itself into a militia became obvious from two further tragic incidents which took place on July 29, a day after the assault in Trichur, when a group of Communist militia attacked with knives the Congress Party's office in Varandrapilly, about 15 miles from Trichur. In the bloody massacre five died on the spot and seven were seriously injured. Another group attacked several non-Communist workers conducting a sit-down strike at the Chandanathope Cashew Nut Factory on the same day, in order to break the strike. During the attack the police openly supported the assailants with the result that two non-Communist workers were killed and six seriously injured by police fire.35

By that time, however, workers of the non-Communist trade unions appeared on the scene of battered Kerala. On July 21 workers of the non-Communist INTUC in Cannanore and vicinity went on strike in sympathy with the students and in protest against the repressive measure of the government.36 About 30,000 workers affiliated with the INTUC went on a token strike in Coimbatore on July 28 in sympathy with the victims of the police firing in Chandanathope and of the attack of the Communist militia at Varandrapilly.37 In Cochin 10,000 stevedore labour of independent trade unions went on strike on July 29, 1958.38 The workers now turned against the Communists.

The attempts of the Communist government to annihilate the
opposition forces in open combat by militia and police prompted the opposition parties to organize *The Kerala Anti-Repression Day* on July 29, 1958. The campaign drew thousands of people all over the state into public demonstrations against the regime and was a great success. It brought the opposition parties together and laid the foundations for their co-operation against the regime. The civil war cry of Namboodiripad, and the subsequent excesses of the police and the militia, healed the animosity between the Congress and the PSP which went back to the downfall of the PSP ministry in 1954.

The call for the formation of the united front of all opposition parties came from Panampilli Govinda Menon, who declared on July 29, 1958 that

...the position in Kerala today was that if the Communists violated laws, they would not be arrested; if they were arrested, they would not be prosecuted; if they were prosecuted, the cases would be withdrawn; and if the cases ended in conviction, the sentences would be remitted.... The trouble arose in Kerala because the Communist Party took into its own hands the powers of the Government.... If the Communist Government of Kerala persisted in their policy of creating a second front of their partymen to suppress the opposition parties, the latter might be forced to form a third front of their own to resist it....

Meanwhile, realizing that they had badly overplayed their hand, the Communist leaders were ready to slow down. Namboodiripad submitted to all demands of the students and was willing to institute full investigation into the police firing. At the same time, the police was instructed not to yield to the directives of the local party bosses, as well as the functionaries of the liaison groups, in handling the agitation of students and the labour strikes, and stick to the letter of law. Minister of Justice, V. R. Krishna Iyer, declared at a conference of Collectors and Superintendents of Police that 'no political interference should be tolerated by officers'. He further warned that no officer would escape liability for failing to do his duty by invoking 'political influence or fear of displeasure of the party in power'. The Cell Courts operating in the rural areas were disbanded,
and the party's interference with the judicial organs also stopped. By divorcing the state apparatus from the party's control the Communist leader sounded a call for retreat in order to retrieve some of the lost popular support and clean the slate, and thus to avoid irritating the Union Government into a probe of the causes of the unrest.

It was too late, however, to save the situation. The opposition parties now started to press upon New Delhi a demand to dismiss the Communist ministry because of its misuse of the governmental powers for the promotion of the party's aims, its gross interference with the judiciary, and its responsibility for violence unleashed by the mass organizations and the resulting disruption of public order. The government of Kerala published two pamphlets in defence of its policies. One was entitled *The True Picture of the Situation in Kerala*, and the other *Ill-Informed Criticism against Communist Government Refuted*. The leadership of the Congress Party blasted back with a rejoinder entitled *The True Picture of the Situation in Kerala.*

Reports about the development taking place in Kerala reached Nehru in Calcutta. He dismissed outright the civil war threat, which had been pronounced by Namboodiripad in Coimbatore, took a protective attitude toward the Communist government and rejected the idea of federal intervention. Though by his next press conference, held in Delhi on August 7, 1958, Nehru had more evidence in hand regarding the civil unrest in Kerala and about Namboodiripad government's responsibility for it, he still hesitated to take a clear-cut stand. As usual in dealing with communism, he dismissed the whole problem with a mixture of criticism of communism in general and the denial that it posed any real danger to India. In Chandigarh, Nehru merely declared on August 9, 1958 that the individual liberties of the people of Kerala would have to be protected. It was the next day, while addressing the Congress Parliamentary Party in Delhi on August 10, 1958, that he took a more realistic stand by declaring that Namboodiripad's explanations of the incidents and of the general situation were unsatisfactory, and that he would favour an impartial investigation.

The lukewarm attitude of Nehru toward the disorder and lack of personal security in Kerala was a big disappointment for the people defending themselves against the onslaught of the Com-
munist militia and its protector, the police. The declarations and statements which had been made by the Communists themselves clearly placed the responsibility for the civil strife upon the shoulders of their government. And yet, in spite of this self-incriminating evidence, which outlined the main features of the Kerala Pattern of transition, the Union Government proved very slow to appreciate the significance of events following the civil war speech made by Namboodiripad in Coimbatore.

**Downfall of the Communist Regime**

The popular upsurge taking place in Kerala, to counter Nair's appeal to the Communists to organize a militia, profoundly affected the party leaders in Trivandrum as well as in New Delhi, and produced a wide split within their ranks with regard to the evaluation of policies so far pursued and the future course to lead the party out of the impasse.

Apart from its domestic origins, the new crisis within the party was seriously aggravated by the emerging Sino-Soviet doctrinal schism, which for the first time came into the open at a meeting of the Communist parties gathered in Moscow in November 1957 to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Bolshevik seizure of power. This has been discussed in some detail elsewhere. Here suffice it to mention that one of the key problems of the controversy was precisely the disagreement over the feasibility of peaceful road to communism. While the Russians in their enthusiasm, obviously drawing upon the experience of the significant and peaceful growth of the Communist movements in India and Indonesia and particularly the electoral victory in Kerala, presented a draft proposal of a joint declaration which spoke only about the peaceful transition, the Chinese rejected the idea and demanded substantial amendments. The Chinese delegation, led by Mao Tse-tung himself, insisted that the final draft of the declaration should speak only about the 'desirability' of peaceful transition, and that the entire emphasis should be placed upon the need, after securing a firm majority in parliament, to 'launch an extra-parliamentary mass struggle, smash the resistance of the reactionary forces and create the necessary conditions for peaceful realization of the socialist revolution'. The Chinese won this and other points, and significantly amended the final text of the joint document known as
THE KERALA PATTERN

the Moscow Declaration of the Twelve Communist and Workers’ Parties, published in November 1957.

Thus, according to the text of the declaration, the Communists in Kerala should have mounted a fierce extra-parliamentary mass struggle not only to open the road to the peaceful transition to communism but, above all, to defend their legitimate regime now under the severe attack of the ‘reactionary forces’! There now emerged a strong group within the central leadership of the party in New Delhi, as well as in the local leadership in Trivandrum, which espoused this interpretation of the declaration, and demanded that the regime in Kerala must stay in power at all costs and be defended by a revolutionary action of both the government and the party. This group became later known as the pro-Peking faction of the Communist Party of India (C.P.I.). On the other hand, the majority of the leadership strongly felt that any militant action would invite a federal intervention and result in an unequal fight in which the Communist forces would be defeated. This would not only remove the Communist regime from the scene at a heavy price, but would alarm and dislodge Nehru from his friendly and pro-Soviet orientation of his foreign policy which was so essential for the success of the Kremlin’s global strategy. This group were the moderates, later described as the pro-Soviet wing of the CPI, who were willing to sacrifice the achievements and interests of their party for the needs of the Kremlin’s strategic design.

In order to solve the rapidly developing impasse and to coordinate with the Kremlin, the CPI sent a three-member delegation to Moscow in the middle of July in which S. A. Dange represented the moderates, A. K. Gopalan the radicals, and A. K. Ghosh the centre position. No details are known about the discussions in Moscow, except for the fact that upon the return the majority of the delegation upheld the moderate position. The first announcement was made by Dange to the effect that he had disapproved the police firing in Kerala and that the central leadership of the party might even request the Communist regime to resign. He proposed, however, that the regime could be saved by inviting the local socialist parties to share power, which would transfer it into a coalition government of all leftist parties. This would broaden the base of the regime and weaken the opposition forces. Ghosh himself was
quite categorical in declaring that there will be no deviation from the Amritsar Thesis.40

The critical situation was a subject of deliberations of the Central Executive Committee of the CPI, held in New Delhi from August 5 to 7, 1958, which decided to give the matter a full dress debate in the next session, to be held in Trivandrum.50 The resolution adopted in Trivandrum on August 11, 1958 blamed the opposition parties for attempting to cause the downfall of the Communist government by foul methods; they were responsible for the state of unrest in the state. The resolution then attacked Nehru for some uncomplimentary remarks about the Communist government, and decided that by strictly adhering to the law the government must continue in power.51

The National Council of the CPI, which met in Madras from October 8 to 13, 1958, dealt further with this matter. A long resolution adopted in Madras explained the decisions of the Trivandrum Session of the Central Executive Committee. The major achievement of the Madras meeting was the rejection of the notion, current among the radical wing, that the Kerala experiment had clearly proved that the Theory of Peaceful Transition, now known as the Amritsar Thesis, was wholly unworkable in India, and that the Communist objectives in the country must be promoted by militant policies. The resolution affirmed that in spite of some mistakes committed by the Communists in Kerala, the Amritsar Thesis remained the general political line of the Communist Party of India.52 A nation-wide campaign would be mounted to defend the Kerala regime and popularize its achievements.

Also the Communists in Kerala were badly shaken by the internal dissent over the correctness of the policies followed so far, and over the course to break the existing impasse. A Special Conference of the Communist Party of Kerala, held in Alwaye from November 10 to 14, 1958 disclosed the following grouping among the distressed party leaders.53

One group advocated the resignation of the government, at the earliest and most favourable opportunity, over any issue which would throw the blame for the state of affairs on the opposition parties. This group held that under the existing conditions the regime would not be able to maintain itself in power for long, that the party would suffer an enormous blow to its
prestige should its government be dismissed through federal
intervention.

The second group followed Dange's suggestion to the effect
that the government should be transformed into a coalition, and
that the PSP and RSP be invited to share power. This stratagem
would split the opposition forces, isolate the Congress Party and
deal a blow to the anti-Communist agitation.

The third group argued that the government must continue
in power at all costs. These radicals maintained that the anti-
regime and anti-Communist demonstrations had been organized
by a handful of reactionaries, and that the majority of people
stood fast behind the government. This popular following must
be rallied in defence of the regime. Consequently, a mammoth
mass campaign should be organized, comprising the trade unions,
Kisan groups, co-operatives and other people's organizations.
Chief Minister Namboodiripad must, however, resign to make
room for a more militant and effective leader. The members
of this group argued that he had failed to apply correctly the
formulations of the Moscow Declaration regarding the peaceful
transition to communism which in fact called for launching an
extensive extra-parliamentary mass action, and which visualized
that the process of transition would take place in conditions of
sharp class and revolutionary struggle. Moreover, in the countries
in which capitalism was strong, where it has an enormous police
apparatus, a serious opposition of the reactionary forces is
inevitable. And India, maintained the critics of Namboodiripad,
belonged to that category of states in which the transition would
have to be carried out in a militant manner. The experience of
the Communist regime with the aggressive opposition fully con-
firmcd this understanding of the declaration.

By that time, however, Namboodiripad himself was aware that
his experiment had misfired, and that within the federal struc-
ture no transformation was possible until a revolution, as in
Russia and China, took place in all India. He declared at a public
meeting, held in Kannimala on January 14, 1959 that

... here are certain limitations on the side of the Government
(the Kerala Communist government, ed.) which obstruct the
ready fulfilment of the regional needs. The Executive would
meet with difficulties unless a total revolution similar to that
which had occurred in the Soviet Union and China took place in this country also.\textsuperscript{55}

Secretary General of the Communist Party of Kerala, M. N. Govindan Nair, also realized that the federal structure imposed far greater limitations on the regime than he had originally anticipated. Speaking at Vayalar on November 7, 1958, he declared that the Communist government was merely an instrument of class rule, and that if it proved unable to give full effect to the interests of the class it represented it would have to resign.\textsuperscript{56}

In January 1959 Namboodiripad went to Moscow to attend the Twenty-first Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and solicit advice on the policies of his regime, then sharply pitched against Nehru and the central government. No details are available. Obviously, the large strategic interests of the Kremlin demanded that India remained aligned with the Soviet bloc and dictated that Namboodiripad should play safe not to disturb Nehru. It is most likely that Namboodiripad was advised to be prepared to resign at the first auspicious moment. The Kremlin could not have run the risk of alienating Nehru by advising the Kerala regime to stay in power at all costs. There was too much at stake in view of the role which the Kremlin had tailored for India to play in its global design. The large strategic interests of the Kremlin were overriding and called for the utmost caution in Kerala.\textsuperscript{57}

As a result of Namboodiripad’s Moscow consultations, his regime sounded a partial retreat as soon as he returned. Steps were taken to further dissociate the state apparatus from the control of the party in order to placate the Union Government and minimize the danger of federal intervention. While the disengagement between the party and the state apparatus was executed, the party launched an extensive mobilization drive among the mass organizations to prepare them for the defence of the regime and to intensify the drive against the opposition parties. The opening stage of the campaign was launched at the series of taluk and district party conferences, held all over Kerala during April 1959, which mobilized its ranks and overhauled its entire organizational structure. The campaign revealed that the party had 64 Taluk Committees, which had 46,000
full party members and 15,000 candidates. The campaign was concluded by a resolution adopted by the Central Executive Committee in Trivandrum on May 9 to 10, 1959, which was appropriately entitled The Force Behind the Communist Party's Confident Call to Defeat Reaction's Attack.

The ambivalent policy adopted shortly after Namboodiripad's return from Moscow proved fatal to his government. While the regime had retreated on the governmental front, the party militia continued attacking the opposition parties with the result that the civil strife continued undiminished throughout 1958 and the first half of 1959.

By that time, however, the opposition parties co-ordinated their activities, organized counter-agitation and violently retaliated against the communist militia. The leadership was quick to realize that the offensive campaign of the party and mass organizations could not destroy the opposition and halt the popular upsurge, and that it would be better to attempt a negotiated settlement. The call for negotiations was issued by Namboodiripad in a statement on June 28, 1959. The opposition parties refused, however, to negotiate and insisted upon the resignation or dismissal of his regime. In view of this, the Central Executive Committee of the party decided during a closed session, held in Trivandrum on June 20, 1959, that the safest course would be to resign if the government were not to be dismissed by federal intervention. The refusal of the opposition parties to solve the crisis through negotiated settlement was a highly auspicious moment for resignation, because it would place the blame upon them.

However, the matter of resignation was not entirely in the hands of the local leadership. The final decision of whether the Communist government would resign, and under what conditions, lay in the hands of the central leaders in New Delhi. From a number of documents issued during June and July 1959, it was obvious that the leadership in New Delhi was not in favour of voluntary resignation. The decision of the local leaders to resign was overruled at a combined session of the National Council of the Communist Party of India with the State Committee of the Communist Party of Kerala, held in Trivandrum on July 15, 1959. It was decided that were it unavoidable, the
preferable course would be that the ministry be dismissed by federal intervention. This 'reactionary act' would be used as a basis for organizing a campaign all over India against the undemocratic methods of the Congress Party.

By that time, however, the events moved to the climax because of the uncompromising attitude of the opposition parties which had organized a Liberation Struggle in the meantime. The liberation campaign had been initiated by the Nair Service Society in April 1959, when the Society withdrew its support from the Communist ministry. It will be recalled that it was the shift in the voting pattern of the Nair community which had been the main factor responsible for the electoral victory of the Communist Party in 1957. Now the Nairs turned against the Communists.

In June 1959 all opposition parties formed the Liberation Struggle Committee and launched the final assault upon the Communist regime by demanding its voluntary resignation or dismissal by the Union Government. June 12 was declared the Deliverance Day. The liberation struggle was a campaign unprecedented in magnitude and intensity in India. During the 50 days of freedom fight, from its inception on June 12 until the dismissal of the ministry on July 31, the police fired in 7 localities with the result that 17 people were killed; lathi charges were made in 139 places, seriously injuring 332 and lightly 1,273; the Communist underground organizations and militia committed 21 political murders; 150,000 people were arrested, of whom 40,000 were women.

The determination of the opposition parties to defeat the Communist ministry, and the heavy price they were willing to pay, finally moved the Union Government into action. After six weeks of relentless struggle the Union Government dismissed the ministry on July 31, 1959, and imposed on the state Presidential Rule.

This was the end of India's experience in peaceful co-existence with communism on the home front, as President Prasad had labelled the installment of its regime in Kerala. The experiment in peaceful transition in India, into which the local Communists and the Kremlin had placed such high hopes and expectations, received a severe reverse. It must be emphasized, however, that the Kerala Pattern successfully operated for more than sixteen
months: from the installation of the ministry on April 5, 1957 until July 20, 1958, when the party suspended the Neutralization of the Police and Govindan Nair called for the formation of the militia.

A detailed discussion of the influence which the successful operation of the Kerala Pattern had on the evolution of the main political line of the Communist Party of India is beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to mention that at the peak of its successes the central leadership convened an Extraordinary Congress in Amritsar in April 1958, and that the essential elements of the general Theory of Peaceful Transition and its specific application in Kerala were incorporated into the major policy documents. The newly adopted *Constitution of the Communist Party of India* espoused Khrushchev's interpretation of the general theory as valid for India, while Resolution No. XIII, entitled *Kerala Shows the Way*, outlined the broad features of the policies followed in Kerala.67

In these two documents climaxed a decade-long evolution of the strategy of the Communist Party of India: from a policy of armed uprising, adopted at the Second Congress in Calcutta in February 1948, to a policy believing that the aims of the party could be attained in a peaceful manner, adopted in Amritsar in April 1958. Moreover, while the key propositions of the latter had been espoused as theoretical precepts already at the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of India in April 1956, by the time of the Amritsar Congress the successful functioning of the Communist regime in Kerala demonstrated the practicability of the peaceful road to power. The metamorphosis of the communist strategy in India, during a decade from 1948 to 1958, was an achievement which no communist party in Asia, except of Indonesia, could match.

The termination of peaceful transition in Kerala in June 1958, and the dismissal of the Communist regime in July 1959, had a great deal of influence upon the thinking of the central leadership in New Delhi. The unusual degree of unity, which had been attained among various factions at the Amritsar Extraordinary Congress in 1958, was destroyed. Strong voices now appeared calling to jettison the entire Amritsar Thesis and return to a revolutionary strategy based upon militant class struggle.
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But even the leftist radicals, like Ranadive, realized that the Communist regime in Kerala had to operate under extremely adverse conditions and that, perhaps, in the long run a showdown was unavoidable with the Congress-controlled Union Government. Generalizing and evaluating the Kerala Pattern in an article entitled the "Lessons of Kerala", Ranadive said:

...the Kerala Ministry was a voyage on uncharted seas. This was, perhaps, the first time in the history of the world Communist movement that the Communist Party had agreed to form a ministry under capitalism—with a bourgeois-landlord government controlling the Centre and with effective economic power in the hands of a handful few...  

On the other hand, it was well recognized that Namboodiripad, the chief architect of the Communist rule in Kerala, who had piloted the party to power in April 1957, badly overplayed his hand by the Coimbatore speech after the party had won an important victory in the crucial Devikolam by-election in May 1958. The subsequent events proved that in Coimbatore Namboodiripad had tragically erred in reading the then existing correlation of forces in Kerala. He believed that because the opposition had been sufficiently softened he could initiate a fresh assault to accelerate the process of transition, and that his party had been so well entrenched among the people that their support would thwart any adversities his thrust might encounter.

Namboodiripad's threat that his government would resort to civil war should the drive be obstructed, and then Nair's call for the militia to combat the opposition in open encounters, were recognized as the two mistakes which ultimately led to the downfall of his regime. It was believed that had Namboodiripad and Nair played softly the regime could have continued for the full five-year period, until the next general elections and, perhaps, longer. The slow rate of progress of the transition under those conditions would have been amply compensated for by the advantages which the central leadership in New Delhi, and the entire world communist movement, would have derived from their regime entrenched within the Indian sub-continent.

The lesson which the Communists could perhaps derive from the Kerala experiment is that any time they assume power in
one state of the Indian Union, the foremost task to be accomplished before embarking upon the process of transition quite apart from its slow rate, is to throw all resources into building mass organizations. The control over a vast network of these organizations, and the slow rate of transition, could preclude the opposition forces from amassing themselves. This would assure that the process takes place in a relatively peaceful atmosphere.

A contrary course would enable the opposition forces to rally under the impact of a too rapid pace, which in turn would force the hand of the Communists to make extensive use of violence to thwart them. This would terminate the process of peaceful transition, and plunge the country into chaos, if not civil war. Were such a development to take place within a fully sovereign state in which the communists controlled all supreme powers—the entire state apparatus, police and army—such a turn of events might not be disastrous because the opposition could be annihilated by the employment of these instrumentalities in a ruthless thrust. But such a thrust cannot be organized within a federal system, and the party faces a defeat to its regime by popular action or through federal powers.

Although the Kerala Pattern operated fairly well for the first sixteen months, the party failed during that time to build a sufficiently large mass base from which to launch the accelerated pace of the transition hoped for by Namboodiripad. Hence the termination of the Neutralization of the Police, recourse to police actions to suppress the opposition, and hence the federal intervention. However, it is fairly certain that had Kerala been a fully sovereign state and had Namboodiripad in his hands full control over the police, army and other state resources, the opposition would not have been permitted to challenge the regime and stage a come-back. The history of all countries in which communism has been installed in one or other way, is replete with examples showing that it is the full weight of the state apparatus which makes short work of the opposition parties. Once a Communist regime is established in a fully sovereign state there is no retreat, no restoration. The briefly successful Hungarian revolution in November 1956 is the only exception. True, in Kerala the Communist government was forced to relinquish power after twenty-seven months; but the fact that
it had to operate under the umbrella of overriding federal powers places Kerala into an entirely different category.

The final comment should emphasize that violence, worshipped by all prophets of Marxism, proved not only detrimental to the successful operation but fatal to the very existence of Namboodiripad's regime. On the contrary, it was the atmosphere of relative internal peace, and absence of violence, which provided the optimum milieu for the attempts at transforming the liberal and parliamentary system in Kerala into a Communist dictatorship between April 1957 and June 1958.

In this then lies the far-reaching significance of the theory inaugurated by Khrushchev at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956. Kerala, and for that matter India, proved between 1954 and 1957 that peace could be effectively harnessed to the promotion of communism. Peace and peaceful co-existence were no mere propaganda slogans, but fundamental conditions in which the Kremlin leadership sought to advance its long range objectives during the period under the discussion.

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7 loc. cit.

For further declarations that the Communist ministry would work within the framework of the Union Constitution, but that at the same time it
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Also a speech of B. Gupta, delivered in the Lok Sabha on March 29, 1957; New Age (April 7, 1957), p. 8.


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17 This writer had an interview with Chief Minister E. M. S. Namboodiripad in Trivandrum on December 29, 1958. It dealt with the Policy of Neutralization of the Police and problems arising out of the limited possibility of using the state apparatus, as the principal organ of transformation, within any federal structure.

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This aspect of the Constitution of the Union of India was commented upon by Mr Justice Subba Rao of the Supreme Court. Speaking at the Convocation of the University of Madras on September 12, 1962, Justice Subba Rao said that 'the seeds of destruction of the Indian Constitution are inherent in the Constitution itself'. He said that there was practically no fundamental right of liberty of person and life against federal legislative action. 'The fundamental right to property', he said, 'is also largely abridged against legislative interference. A citizen's property can be acquired or requisitioned on payment of compensation, but the question of compensation is not justiciable. A citizen's estate, as defined in the Constitution, or his right therein, can be extinguished or modified by a law; but this act is immune from an attack on the ground that it infringed the fundamental rights of the citizens. The State also, by legislation, can enter into business in competition with, or to the exclusion of, private citizens.'

Justice Subba Rao further added: 'There is a fundamental right of speech against privileges of the legislature. Though rights are enforceable against executive action, in actual set-up of our democracy, where there is no strong two-party system functioning, it is more illusory than real, as the executive can almost always put through any legislation, see "Self-Destructive Constitution—Subba Rao", in The Statesman (September 14, 1962).

This interpretation of the Indian Constitution suggests that should the Communist Party of India control the federal government one day, peaceful transformation to communism in the entire country could be initiated as a constitutional process, in which the state apparatus would play the key role. There would be no need for amending the constitution, as there are no provisions in it which could hamper that process.

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Obviously, the communist government abandoned the Policy of Neutralizing of the Police, inaugurated by Namboodiri pad on July 23, 1957. However, the entire concept of using the police as an instrument of transform-
tion was not given up, and soon the communist leaders announced a new formula whereby the police could become an ‘instrument of peoples’ power’ without, however, the undesirable effects. The concept became known as the ‘Role of Police in a Welfare State.’


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CHAPTER VI
SECOND CONGRESS-PSP COALITION

Electoral Strategy

The mid-term elections following the dismissal of the Communist Government and the imposition of Presidential Rule upon Kerala in July 1959 were held on February 1, 1960. The most important feature of the elections was the fact that the cooperation among the democratic parties and their united front forged during the liberation struggle were carried forward into the electoral battle. As a result the Congress Party, the PSP and the Muslim League concluded an electoral alliance in order to prevent triangular contests and the splitting of votes while the Communist Party stood alone, supporting, however, some independents. In negotiating the electoral alliance the coalition had invited the KSP and the RSP to join the common front against the Communists, but these two parties refused.

According to the electoral agreement the coalition parties contested 125 out of 126 seats, the candidates being distributed in the following manner. The Congress Party 80, the PSP 33 and the Muslim League 12. The Communist Party contested all 126 seats, and its candidates included 18 independents. The smaller parties fielded the following number of candidates: the RSP 18, the KSP 1, the Lohia Socialist Party 2, the Jan Sangh 2, the Karnataka Samiti 3, and there were 34 independent candidates.

The allocation of the seats among the three parties of the coalition, which would be supported by their members and followers to avoid splitting the vote, resulted in an electoral pattern in which there would be a straight fight and confrontation in 78 constituencies between the candidates of the coalition and the Communist Party. During the 1957 elections there had been only 21 straight fights in which the candidates of the Congress and the Communist Party had a direct confrontation. In other constituencies the democratic parties had been badly divided and fought each other with the result that many Communist
candidates had been elected by a minority vote. This time the coalition parties closed their ranks and agreed in advance behind which candidate they would throw their concerted support in each constituency to outvote the Communists.

The Congress Party entered the campaign under an electoral manifesto which declared that the extra-territorial loyalties and totalitarian methods of functioning of the Communist Party were a menace to independence and democracy. Moreover, the border conflict with China had revealed that when there was a conflict of interests between India and a foreign Communist country “the Communists would not hesitate to let down the motherland”. Also the record of the Communist Ministry in Kerala had amply demonstrated that their professions of loyalty to the Constitution and parliamentary democracy could not be trusted at all. The Congress, if elected, would provide a stable, good and democratic government in the state, repair the damage done by the husbandry of the Communist Government and would amend the Agrarian Relations and Education Bills in accordance with the declared policies of the Congress Party.

The manifesto of the Communist Party asserted that the dismissal of the Communist Government was a betrayal of provincial autonomy and parliamentary democracy, claiming that only the Communist Party was capable of providing Kerala with a stable and progressive government. The manifesto then advertised the following measures which had been introduced by its government: the Agrarian Relations and the Education Acts, increase of the salaries of badly underpaid government employees, elevating Kerala into the second place in all India in the fulfilment of the Five Year Plan, and introducing a new policy which put an end to the practice of repression against workers and other people while fighting for their rights.

The electoral campaign was hectic by any standard because the main point to be tested by the elections was to demonstrate that democracy in Kerala was not doomed and that the democratic forces could unite to elect a workable government which could present a viable alternative to a Communist rule. In view of this the national leaders of the two major parties campaigned for their protégés: Prime Minister Nehru, Morarji Desai and Sanjiva Reddy for the Congress Party, while S. A. Dange for the Communist Party. In several places the agitation became so aggravated
that violent incidents occurred. The most serious took place on January 25, 1960, when five Communists were stabbed by supporters of the coalition in one village. To avoid the spread of violence some 21,000 police were on duty on the election day, including 4,200 who came from Mysore, Madras and Andhra. The election day passed peacefully, except for one minor incident in which one person was killed and 15 injured. The polling was heavy and about 80 per cent of the electorate cast its vote; in some constituencies the vote reached 94 per cent, which reflected the extraordinary interest and excitement of the people. The election was marked by a heavy participation of women which was greater than that of men, and in Muslim areas where women still live in purdha the Electoral Commission had provided separate polling booths for them.

The electoral results, given in Table XVI, confirmed the correctness of the basic assumption upon which the coalition had been formed: as long as the parties committed to democracy stood united and co-operated, the formation of a Communist government could be prevented. The coalition won 54.0 per cent of votes and secured 74.6 per cent of seats. The Communist Party and its independent candidates won 43.6 per cent of votes and secured 23.0 per cent of seats. Thus the coalition controlled 94 seats out of 126, while the Communist Party and its supporters were reduced to mere 29 seats. The 126th deputy, the representative of the Anglo-Indian community, was nominated by the Governor of Kerala on February 16, 1960. The new government in Kerala would be that of the coalition.

Compared with the results of 1957 and in terms of seats the Congress won 20 more, the PSP 11 more, the Muslim League 3 more than in 1957, while the Communist Party lost 34 and its independent candidates 2, altogether 36 seats, which was a significant drop of 60 per cent of seats. The Congress Party won 25 seats from the Communist Party and lost 4 to the Communists and one to the RSP. All seats gained by the PSP and the Muslim League had been won at the expense of the Communist Party.

The smaller parties gained two seats. The Karnataka Samiti, which won 38,630 votes, secured a seat from an Independent. The party had campaigned for incorporation of the Kanarese speaking areas of Kerala into Mysore State. The RSP won a seat from the Congress Party.
Looking at the composition of the votes cast all four major parties much increased their vote due to the increase of the electorate from some 7.5 million in 1957 to 8.1 million in 1960, due to the exceptionally high degree of voters participating, and because of the decline of support for smaller parties and Independent candidates. The Congress Party polled 582,044 more than 1957, the PSP 517,768 more, and the Muslim League 194,227 more.

However, the largest gain in popular vote was registered by the Communist Party and its allies, who secured some 1,17 million more votes than in 1957. The success of the Communist Party was mainly in the Palghat District, where the party had won 10 seats out of 15 as against 11 in 1957, gained one seat from the Congress and lost two to the Muslim League. However, the significantly increased popular support for the Communist Party manifested itself even in the districts in which the party had lost heavily in seats due to the electoral strategy of the coalition. In Trichur District, where the party had lost 7 of its 8 seats, it increased the total of votes polled from 38.8 to 48.8, a net gain of 10 per cent. In Trivandrum Districts, where the party had lost 6 of its 8 seats, the popular support for the party increased from 44.4 to 47.0 per cent. On the whole the Communist Party, and its independent allies, increased their popular support from 40.7 per cent of the votes obtained in 1957 to 43.6 in 1960, a net gain of 2.9 per cent. This increased voting strength of the Communist Party was not only due to the three factors touched above, but mainly to the organizational effort made during the crisis of 1959 and in defense of its regime.

Thus the salient facts of the situation immediately following the mid-term elections of 1960 were the following: (1) the Communist Party remained the largest party in the state, commanding with its supporters 43.6 per cent of popular vote against 34.7 of the Congress, which was a 10 per cent lead; (2) the party not only continued to command the loyalty of its supporters, which had survived the onslaught of the liberation struggle, but increased its popular appeal by 2.9 per cent; (3) its loss of 39 seats was due mainly to the electoral strategy of the coalition which avoided the triangular contests amongst its three parties; (4) the border dispute of China with India, and the branding of the Communist Party as a traitor by the election manifesto of
the Congress, had no effect whatsoever upon the fortunes of the Communists. The party was so firmly entrenched within the body politic of Kerala that even an attack of a Communist power upon India had failed to awake sympathy among the Communist followers for their motherland; (5) although the coalition would form the new government its viability and survival would depend upon the fact whether the partners would be able to carry their co-operation beyond the mere electoral victory and into the operations of the government; (6) thus contrary to a general notion Communism in Kerala had not been eliminated; it commanded an ever increasing mass base and waited for new opportunities.

The formation of the new government proved not an easy matter because while the coalition partners before the elections had joined hands on a negative platform, merely to defeat the Communists, they failed to conclude a binding agreement about the post-election co-operation and the formation of a new cabinet. In view of this, the formation of the new ministry had to be postponed for three weeks due to the inability of the coalition parties to agree upon the form of co-operation. Thus while the Congress Party was prepared to form a coalition government with the PSP, perhaps led by a PSP Chief Minister as in 1954, or alternatively to support a ministry formed by the PSP alone or in coalition with the Muslim League, the Congress refused however to join any coalition government in which the Muslim League would be represented. The only concession the Congress was prepared to make was to agree to the election of a Muslim League deputy as a Speaker in the State Assembly. The reason for this negative attitude of the Congress was the charge of the Congress High Command that the Muslim League was a communal organization, and the fear that any co-operation with it in a cabinet in Kerala might have serious repercussions upon the political process in the rest of India. Explaining the policies of the Congress Party toward the Muslim League, Prémier Nehru said on February 24, 1960 that the election manifesto of the League was more or less the programme of the old League and that it contained very objectionable things. Three days before this, on February 21, the leadership of the Kerala Muslim League had issued a statement denying that their party was a communal organization. The statement declared that it was un-
just and unwarranted to compare an organization of a minority, indispensable for safeguarding its legitimate rights and interests and voicing its grievances, with the organization of the majority community which was working in the direction of preserving its communal domination. The charges of Nehru were refuted by leader of the Kerala Muslim League, K. M. Seethi Sahib, who on February 27 declared that the electoral manifesto of the League was substantially identical with those of the Congress and the PSP. The only distinctive feature was a demand for changes in the electoral law to ensure an effective representation of the Muslim minority in elected bodies in the state.

The second largest coalition partner, the PSP, refused on the other hand to enter any coalition in which the Muslim League would not be represented, but as a concession it was prepared to support in the State Assembly a government formed by the Congress Party alone, which commanded 63 out of 126 seats, exactly 50 per cent. This long impasse was finally solved on February 21, 1960 when the Muslim League requested the PSP to form a coalition government with the Congress Party without its own representation in it, but with a promise that the League would support the government in the State Assembly. In exchange, the Congress Party promised its support for a Muslim candidate for the post of the Speaker in the State Assembly.

This gesture of the Muslim League paved the way for the formation of the new cabinet, which was sworn in on February 22, 1960 under the Chief Ministership of the stalwart PSP leader Pattom Thanu Pillai. The coalition cabinet consisted of 8 Congress and 3 PSP members. Pattom Thanu Pillai: Chief Minister, General Administration, Planning, Community Development, and Municipalities and Panchayats; R. Sankar: Finance and Co-operatives; P. T. Chacko: Home, Police, Prisons; K. A. Damodara Menon: Industries, Information, and Publicity; K. Chandrasekharan: Law, Revenues, Civil and Criminal Administration, Justice, Excise, and Prohibition; E. P. Poulrose: Food and Agriculture; K. T. Achuthan: Transport and Labour; P. P. Ummer Koya: Education and Sports; D. Damodaran Potti: Public Works and Tourism; V. K. Velappan: Public Health, Electricity and Charitable Institutions; K. Kunhambu: Harijan Uplift and Registration: R. Sankar was appointed Deputy Chief Minister by an Order of the Governor of Kerala on March
5, 1960. Among the eight Congress Ministers were one Muslim, P. P. Ummer Koya, and one Harijan, K. Kunhambu. The three PSP Ministers were: Pattom Thanu Pillai, K. Chandrasekharan and D. Damodaran Potti. Finally, the Muslim League Leader, K. M. Seethi Sahib, was elected Speaker in the house according to the previous agreement.

The final act of restoring the self-government in Kerala was performed on February 22, 1960 when the decree of July 31, 1959, imposing Presidential Rule upon the State, was revoked.

Although the coalition governments are extremely difficult to work, particularly in Kerala where politics is a field of fast shifting sands, the Congress-PSP cabinet, supported in the Assembly by the Muslim League, was off for a good start. The first major legislative measure was the work on the Agrarian Relations Bill, which had been passed by the Communist Government in 1959. Because the bill had some serious shortcomings the President of India had returned it on July 27, 1960 to the Kerala State Assembly with recommendations for amendments. One of the most important of these recommendations proposed that the plantations, and land held by educational institutions or granted to defence personnel for service to the country and gallantry, should be exempted from the provision relating to the imposition of a ceiling on land holdings. Several committees of the State Assembly spent a great deal of time in working out the amendments. Its new version was presented to the house by the Chief Minister who assured the deputies that his own government was as much interested in its speedy implementation as the Communists, who had drafted and passed its first version. The new bill was adopted on October 15, 1960.

The general style of work of the coalition government and return to quiet and effective administration after a period of unrest during the past few years reflected themselves in an increased support which the parties of the coalition received from the people. One indicator of this increase was the result of local elections for the City Council of Trivandrum, held on October 21, 1960, in which the parties of the coalition registered significant gains. The PSP emerged the strongest party, winning 18 seats against 14 in the previous council. Then came the Congress, winning 8 against 6 seats. The Muslim League won 2 seats against 1. The Communist Party and the RSP formed an
electoral alliance and the former won 6 against 8 seats, while the latter maintained its 4 seats. The two electoral alliances, one of the ruling coalition and the second of the Communists and the RSP, reduced the Independents from 8 to 2.

The first development which seriously strained the coalition government did not originate from the disagreement over the policies of the cabinet but, as in the past, from an internal crisis within one of the coalition partners. In the 1954 Congress-PSP coalition it was the internal crisis within the Congress which had torpedoed the co-operation between these two parties. This time it was the upheaval within the PSP.

The crisis erupted at the annual convention of the PSP, held in Trivandrum on February 25, 1961, over the re-election of Pattom Thanu Pillai to the chairmanship of the party by 486 against 88 votes cast in favour of C. G. Janardhanan. The defeated candidate opposed the re-election of P. T. Pillai because this contravened a resolution which had been adopted at the 1960 convention to the effect that those party members who hold position in the government cannot be office-bearers in the party. In view of this P. T. Pillai, who was at the same time Chief Minister of the coalition government, was not eligible for the re-election to the chairmanship of the party. Janardhanan suffered a serious defeat when the convention revoked this resolution and proceeded to re-elect P. T. Pillai. Subsequently to the convention the defeated candidate brought on the floor of the State Assembly charges of corruption and nepotism against the Chief Minister and the two PSP Ministers and demanded that a public inquiry be instituted. The PSP leadership charged back and suspended him, together with the deputy leader of the PSP Legislative Party, P. K. Kunju, from the party membership. In addition, the PSP District Committees in Trichur and Ernakulam, which had supported the dissidents, were dissolved. The split within the PSP was carried to maturity in a convention of the dissidents, held on May 7, 1961, which decided that the dissidents would function as a rebel group within the party in order to combat corruption and the dictatorial methods of the party leadership. Another dimension to the crisis was added on June 7, 1961, when the third PSP member of the State Assembly resigned from the party's parliamentary wing and declared that he would sit as an independent.
SECOND CONGRESS—PSP COALITION

While this dissent within the PSP touched only slightly upon the stability of the coalition, a more serious impact had the death of Speaker of the House and Chairman of the Muslim League in Kerala, K. M. Seethi Sahib. While the Congress Party had agreed in 1960 to co-operate with the Muslim League in the form of electing a Muslim member to lead the house, now the Congress High Command as well as the local Congress leaders decided that their party would not support the candidacy of another Muslim to this position. In view of this, leader of the Muslim League Legislative Party, C. H. Mohammed Koya, resigned pro-forma from the League on June 7, 1961 and contested the speakership as an independent candidate with the support of the Congress and the PSP. The election took place on June 9 when Koya defeated a Communist candidate by 86 to 30 votes.

At this point it is important to observe that it was the Congress Party which struck the first blow upon the coalition of the three parties by terminating its co-operation with the Muslim League. It took a few more irritations of this nature, in combination with other factors, and the League started to orient itself toward the Communists, entering into a left united front in 1967 to administer a crushing blow to the Congress, particularly in Malabar.

A strain between the two principal partners of the coalition developed during October of 1961 over the division of responsibilities between Chief Minister Pattom Thanu Pillai, a PSP party member, and Deputy Chief Minister R. Sankar, belonging to the Congress Party. The Congress Ministers demanded that the rules governing the procedures and activities of the cabinet be amended so that the Deputy Chief Minister—could be informed about and participate in all major decisions and appointments. The Congress Ministers complained in particular that the Chief Minister had failed to consult them about the extension of the appointment of A. G. Menon as the Chief Secretary of the Government of Kerala. The Chief Minister, on the other hand, claimed that the demand for the amendment of the procedural rules of the cabinet was not necessary, was politically motivated and in fact aimed at reducing the power of his office in order to bring it under the direct control of the Congress. The irritation came to a head on October 23, 1961
when the Chief Minister made a public statement to the effect that he had a serious doubt whether the coalition cabinet could be maintained for its full term. He said that neither he himself nor his party would be instrumental in breaking it up, but if the Congress Party continued making difficulties he would have to resign. This statement was replied to by the Deputy Chief Minister himself who said that he was much surprised by it, and said that in fact his party had shown the utmost patience, tolerance and tact in order to make the coalition functioning smoothly.

However, the Chief Minister received a significant support for his position from Asoka Mehta, Chairman of the all-India PSP, who on November 6, 1961 declared that the Chief Minister of Kerala could not share or abdicate the powers and responsibilities vested into his office by the constitution as long as he performed that function.

At this stage of the crisis Governor of Kerala, V. V. Giri, stepped in to mediate by proposing the following course of action for the Chief Minister and his Deputy: (a) they should consult each other on all correspondence with the Central Government in New Delhi and with the governments of other states of India; (b) all important matters should be decided by consultations between them; (c) all important appointments in the state should be approved by both of them; (d) failing such an agreement and co-operation all disputed matters should be placed before the whole cabinet and decided collectively.

The efforts of the Governor of Kerala to mediate were successful. However, the main factor which resolved the impasse between the two principal partners of the coalition was the need to save the alliance for the general elections, to be held early in 1962, to elect 18 members of the central parliament, the Lok Sabha. If the coalition failed to continue for its full 5 year term, until 1965, fresh mid-term elections would have to be held in Kerala. In view of this, the Chief Minister stated on November 21, 1961 that he had agreed to the proposal of his Congress ministerial colleagues because he wanted the coalition government to continue so that the forthcoming elections could be fought jointly. He said, in a press statement, that the two main parties of the coalition would continue co-operating to face the elections jointly, and he appealed to the people to continue giving their
support to the efforts of his government to improve the conditions in the state.

While the two coalition partners pledged themselves to fight jointly the coming elections, the Muslim League further alienated itself from this combination which had scored such a significant victory in 1960. The Muslim League of Kerala made the decisive step on November 9, 1961 when its Executive Committee decided formally to terminate its alliance with the Congress and the PSP. The new policy directives called upon the party to withdraw its support from the coalition government in the State Assembly and instead to vote with the opposition. Moreover, the League would oppose both parties in the coming elections to the Lok Sabha. In view of this, and upon the request of the Executive Committee, C. H. Mohammed Koya resigned his post of the Speaker of the House and resumed the leadership of the Muslim League Parliamentary Party to oppose the coalition on the floor of the house.

This decision of the Muslim League in Kerala was the consequence of the split within its all-India leadership. On October 29, 1961 the Indian Union Moslem League had split when a section led by Mohammed Raza Khan separated itself and formed the All-India Moslem League. The split came mainly over the electoral strategy: whether the Muslims in India should support the Congress Party in the coming elections or put forward independent candidates opposing the Congress. The new party was in favour of supporting the Congress Party instead of emerging as an independent political force. The Council of the new party adopted a resolution on January 21, 1961 calling upon the Muslims in the country to vote for the Congress candidates. However, the maternal organization, the Indian Union Moslem League, urged for an independent posture and its leader, Mohammed Ismail, insisted that his followers in Kerala put forth three candidates of their own to oppose the Congress-PSP coalition.

While the Chairman of the PSP, Pattom Thanu Pillai, committed his party for a joint electoral effort in 1962 the rebel group within his party had decided already on June 24, 1961 that it would start functioning as a fully independent party. To assert this independence it would put forward its own candidates to contest all local elections in Kerala as well as the elections to the Lok Sabha. This step was precipitated by the estimate, made
by leader of the rebels, B. C. Varghese, that at least 7,000 of the 44,000 members of the PSP had resigned and joined his new party.

With the alignments thus drawn the political parties plunged into the electoral campaign. The Congress and the PSP continued the coalition and threw into the contest for 18 seats 14 candidates; 14 for the Congress and 4 for the PSP. The Muslim League went to the polls alone, fielding 3 candidates. On the other end of political spectrum the Communist Party put forward 14 candidates to oppose those of the Congress, and in the remaining 4 constituencies it supported 1 candidate of the RSP and 3 independent candidates running against the 4 candidates of the PSP who were supported by the Congress.

The electoral results, shown on Table XV, were a rude shock for the leaders of the coalition. While the Congress Party won 6 seats, as in 1957, the PSP lost in all four constituencies in which it had contested to 3 independent candidates and 1 candidate of the RSP who all had been supported by the Communist Party. As a consequence, the PSP lost the two seats won in 1957. The Communist Party won 6 seats and lost 3 by supporting the independent candidates aligned with it. In fact, by this proxy the party had suffered no loss at all. The RSP won 1 seat, as contested, with the Communist support. The Muslim League won 2 seats, one more than in 1957; one candidate was President of the Indian Union Moslem League, Mohammed Ismail, and the second C. H. Mohammed Koya, leader of the League in the Kerala State Assembly.

However, in terms of the votes polled, which is the real index of the mass support of any party, the success of the Communist Party was really telling. While the party itself had won 35.46 per cent, the votes polled by its independent allies increased this percentage to 47.06 per cent, as compared with the 34.26 per cent won by the Congress, which was a 12.8 per cent lead. The Communist Party and its allies had increased their overall lead in mass support over the Congress from 43.6 in 1960 to 47.06 in 1962, which represented an increase of 3.46 per cent. Thus the net gain of the Communist Party and its allies in mass support between 1957 and 1962 was from 40.7 in 1957 to 47.06 in 1962, a gain of 6.36 per cent. The Table further shows that the Communist Party and its allies, the independents and the RSP, had won 50.66 per cent of votes and 55.50 per cent of seats.
while the Congress and its PSP ally had won 44.17 per cent of votes and 33.33 per cent of seats.

The Congress Party experienced a reversed trend during the same period and had lost some mass support. In 1957 it had commanded 37.84 per cent of the popular vote, in 1960 this dropped to 34.5 per cent, and in 1962 this further dropped to 34.26 per cent; on the whole the Congress had lost 3.58 per cent of popular vote during this period.

The greatest loser was, however, the PSP. Its mass appeal had first increased from 10.77 per cent in 1957 to 14.10 in 1960 as a result of its co-operation with the Congress, and then dropped to 9.91 per cent in 1962. This was a net decline of 4.11 per cent between 1960 and 1962.

Another aspect of the returns was the fact that the elections to the Lok Sabha had been organized on the basis of the 126 constituencies into which Kerala was divided, and that the votes polled in each constituency represented an indication of the relative position of the political parties. Thus the Congress-PSP coalition won majorities only in 42 constituencies. This meant that had these elections been coupled with elections to the Kerala State Assembly the coalition would have secured only 42 out of 126 seats while the Communist Party and its allies 82 seats. This would have meant a new Communist ministry, resting upon a formidable majority in the State Assembly.

On the basis of these results E. M. S. Namboodiripad understandably claimed that his party had never lost the confidence of the people of Kerala, that his government had been unjustly deposed from power in 1959 and that fresh elections to the Kerala State Assembly should be held without delay to give effect to this will of the majority. The electoral results were, said the former Chief Minister, a clear vote of no-confidence to the Congress-PSP regime. The Congress Party in Kerala and the Union Government rejected, however, such an interpretation of the results and refused to seek a fresh mandate for the coalition government.

**Collapse of the Coalition**

The electoral results, particularly the poor showing of the PSP even though supported by the Congress, placed a great strain upon the working of the coalition. In fact, when the
Union Home Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, visited Trivandrum between July 5 and 9, 1962 to smooth the differences between the two coalition partners which had emerged as the result of the elections to the Lok Sabha, the local Congress leaders urged that the coalition should be terminated. On July 7 the Executive Committee of the Legislative Congress Party informed him that the party was convinced that the coalition experiment was wholly against the interest of Kerala and of the Congress Party because of the activities and attitudes of the PSP. In view of this the committee unanimously recommended to terminate the coalition and proposed that the Congress Party should set up a cabinet of its own. This proposal was contrary to the current policies of the Congress High Command and the Union Minister urged the local Congress leaders to be patient and work out all differences with the PSP. In fact he proposed that an informal machinery should be set up to co-ordinate the work of the two parties, which would consist of the Chief Minister, his Deputy, and one more minister for each party. The function of this committee would be to discuss major political issues and propose joint solutions of them. An informal advisory committee would be created, composed of prominent personalities from all walks of life, upon which the committee itself would draw for advice. The leaders of the Kerala Congress accepted his proposals with the result that at the end of his visit the Union Minister declared that the coalition would continue functioning.

In spite of these efforts of the Union Government to save the coalition in Kerala this was soon terminated by the initiative from the PSP. The chief factor in the situation was the offer of the Governorship of Punjab to Chairman of the PSP and Chief Minister of Kerala, P. T. Pillai, which had been made to the latter by Lal Bahadur Shastri during his another visit in Kerala, when the appointment of K. C. Reddy to that post had been cancelled. Obviously, the Union Government wished to save the coalition by promoting the strong personality of the Chief Minister to the Governorship of Punjab, who in the eyes of the Congress leaders of Kerala, was mainly responsible for the frictions within the Kerala government. The Chief Minister accepted the appointment, announced in New Delhi on September 25, 1962. On the same day P. T. Pillai resigned into the hands of Governor of Kerala V. V. Giri, and on September
26, Deputy Chief Minister and leader of the Parliamentary Congress Party, R. Sankar, was sworn in as the new Chief Minister. There were no changes in the membership of the new cabinet and its coalition structure was maintained because the two PSP ministers, K. Chandrasekharan and D. Damodaran Potti, continued in office. As the departure of P. T. Pillai vacated the position of the leader of the PSP Legislative Party, K. Chandrasekharan was elected to replace him.

The appointment of P. T. Pillai to the Governorship of Punjab was not taken lightly by central leadership of the PSP in New Delhi, which saw his removal from Kerala as an attempt of the Congress to weaken the position of the party in that state and to dominate the coalition. As a consequence, the National Executive Committee of the PSP decided on October 6 that the PSP ministers should not continue serving under the changed circumstances and that the Kerala branch of the party should resign from the coalition. This decision was put into effect the following day, October 7, when the two PSP ministers tendered their resignation. This act brought to an end co-operation between the two partners of the coalition which had provided Kerala with a stable and effective government during the past 31 months, a considerable period of time.

The new Chief Minister R. Sankar expressed on October 8 a little concealed pleasure at the resignation of the PSP ministers and politely said that the Congress was convinced that this was no time to break up the coalition. However, it was the duty of the Congress Party to carry on the functions of the government, which the party was determined to do, and he expressed confidence that his party would be able to form a suitable cabinet. He concluded that the two former PSP ministers had told him that although they had resigned they favoured supporting the Congress government, and he hoped that the entire PSP party, both in Kerala and at the Centre, would give support to his Congress government in the state.

The breakup of the coalition by the resignation of the two PSP ministers necessitated some changes in the composition of the new cabinet, which now consisted wholly of the Congressmen, with the addition of M. P. Govindan Nair. The new cabinet was sworn in on October 9, and consisted of the following members. R. Sankar: Chief Minister, General Administration,

The concluding scene of this incident was enacted on the floor of the State Assembly on October 10 when K. Chandrasekharan alleged that the Congress Party had been deliberately sabotaging the work of the coalition, and that the PSP ministers had to resign because of the persistent attempts of the Congress not only to humiliate and insult them but to liquidate the party altogether. The Chief Minister Sankar in return made the PSP responsible for the break up of the coalition which the Congress had wished to maintain, so he said, and denied that his party had ever attempted to insult the PSP.

The dissolution of the coalition provided an excellent opportunity for the Communist Party to test the strength of the new Congress Ministry and attempt to bring it down by exploiting the Congress-PSP rift. A no-confidence motion was presented by E. M. S. Namboodiripad who charged that the formation of the wholly Congress dominated government represented a new chapter of development in Kerala for which the Congress lacked mandate. He demanded that fresh elections must be held in the state to ascertain the wishes of the people. The Chief Minister rejected the argument that with the withdrawal of the PSP from the coalition the Congress had lost mandate to rule. He explained that the Congress had entered into a merely electoral alliance with the PSP and the Muslim League for the purpose of jointly fighting the 1960 elections. It had never been agreed that the co-operation would be continued after the elections in the formation of a coalition government. It was true that after the elections the Congress had entered into a coalition government with the PSP because the party wished to have a stable administration resting upon a broad support. In view of this, Namboodiripad was not correct in stating that the Congress had
no mandate of its own to rule the state, concluded the Chief Minister.

Namboodiripad's no-confidence motion was rejected by the house on October 11, 1962 by 78 to 29 votes. The position of the Congress was supported by the Congress, the PSP, two Independents and the nominated deputy representing the Anglo-Indian community. The proposal of the Communist Party was supported only by the deputy of the RSP, while 1 Communist deputy and 4 independents did not participate in the voting. The 11 deputies representing the Muslim League abstained.

While at the time of the breakup of the coalition by the resignation of the two PSP ministers from the cabinet their party had pledged support for the Congress ministry, a significant shift in the position of the PSP took place in early months of 1963. In March of that year the leadership of the PSP in Kerala announced that it would withdraw its policy of constructive co-operation with and support of the Congress cabinet in the State Assembly which had been in force until that time, and that the party would assume a new role and function as an effective opposition in the house checking the policies of the government.

While the PSP was striking an independent posture the by-elections for the three vacant seats in the house, held in May 1963, indicated that in fact the party was losing rapidly on its mass appeal. The Congress and the Communist Party won one seat each from the PSP, the third seat being retained by the Congress. An interesting aspect of this election was the fact that the Communist winner, who at that time was in detention under the State Government's emergency powers proclaimed after the attack of China upon India in October 1962, bagged the Trivandrum seat which had been held for many years by former Chairman of the PSP and Chief Minister P. T. Pillai. After the by-elections the alignment in the house of 126 was the following: the Congress Party commanded 66 seats, excluding the Speaker; the Communist Party controlled 30 votes of its own and one Independent; (3) the PSP was reduced to 16 votes; the Muslim League had 11 seats; the RSP 1; there was one Independent.

The greatest enemy of the Congress in Kerala were not the opposition parties but the internal dissent, indiscipline and other unsound practices which started to weaken the party from
within during 1963, after a period of internal consolidation which had been attained during and after the liberation struggle of 1959. The new crisis within the Congress in Kerala was the reflection of the general malady of the ruling Congress Party in all India. Conflicts between rival factions had paralyzed the Congress in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, and during the summer of 1963 they engulfed the Congress organizations in Gujarat, Kerala, Orissa and the Punjab. The dissident groups brought charges of corruption against the Chief Ministers of Orissa, the Punjab and Kerala, and additional charges had been made alleging irregularities in the elections to party offices in Bihar and Kerala.

In order to arrest the fast spreading malady the Congress High Command adopted three main policies in August and September 1963. The first was the Kamaraj Plan, under which the Chief Ministers in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh had to resign so that they could devote themselves fully to the party work: young men in those states had to be elected to the leadership of the Congress Parliamentary Parties. The second measure was the decision made by the Central Parliamentary Board on September 27, 1963 to the effect that the ministries in individual states should not have more than 20 members, and should represent the Congress Party as a whole and not any particular faction. Third, the Board appointed a three member committee on September 3 to inquire into the charges of corruption made against the Chief Ministers and other Congress leaders. The charges against the Chief Ministers of Kerala and the Punjab were to be investigated by Premier Nehru himself.

In Kerala the internal controversy within the Congress erupted in June 1963 when the President of the Congress Party of Kerala, C. K. Govindan Nair, accused Chief Minister Sankar and Minister for Industries Damodara Menon of undermining the Congress in the state by their alleged corrupt practices. Nair himself, however, came under fire on the floor of the State Assembly on September 26, 1963 when a group of 25 dissenting Congress deputies who resented Nair's control over the Congress machinery demanded that the last elections to party offices be cancelled and fresh elections held. The dissidents charged that the membership and party offices had been thrown open to Communist infiltrators and that the elections had been marred
by violence, drunkenness and stabbing. The internal strife reached its climax on October 6 at a very disorderly first meeting of the newly elected State Committee of the Congress Party of Kerala, where the elections of the Chairman of the party and of the new executive committee had to be postponed to a later date to be set by the Congress High Command in New Delhi.

This internal crisis rocking the ruling Congress Party was again seized upon by the Communists who on September 20, 1963 proposed a vote of no-confidence against the Congress Government. This was based mainly upon the charges of corruption which had been levied against Sankar and Menon by the member of the Nair group in June and later. The government, however, survived the motion and defeated it by 65 votes against 43. During the critical moment all Congress deputies voted for the government, while the PSP voted for the first time with the Communists and their allies. The Muslim League abstained from voting, although it agreed in principle with the charges upon which the motion had been based.

The internal dissent within the Kerala Congress continued unabated during the rest of 1963 in spite of the fact that Chief Minister Sankar and Minister for Industries Menon had been cleared of the charges of corruption by the inquiry headed by Premier Nehru, which had been brought against them by Nair, Chairman of the State Congress Committee of Kerala. During that time the internal struggle developed into a highly complicated affair in which two basic elements were: (1) conflict between the ministerial and organizational groups of the party, and (2) deep-seated communal animosities of the Congress leaders who belong to different communal organizations. Looking at the first element, this consisted of the conflict between Chief Minister Sankar, his ministerial colleagues and their supporters within the party, who represented the ministerial group, and the organizational group which controlled the party apparatus and which was led by C. K. G. Nair, Chairman of the Congress in Kerala. The communal element of the situation was represented by the fact that Chief Minister Sankar belonged to the Ezhava community, and he was supported by a minority faction of the Nair community under the leadership of P.T. Chacko, his Home Minister. On the other end of the communal spectrum was his main opponent C. K. G. Nair, leading the majo-
rity faction of the Nair community and supported by a section of the Christian community.\footnote{1}

This alignment of forces within the Congress headed for a direct confrontation as a result of a minor incident involving Home Minister P. T. Chacko. While driving home on December 8, 1963 his car hit a cart and injured four people. It was alleged that he had failed to stop to assist the injured and instead had driven away. This incident was seized upon by the opposition parties which demanded his resignation, in which they had the support of some Congress members of the Assembly belonging to the Nair faction of the organizational wing of the party. The pressure on him was so great that he resigned on February 21, 1964, but was acquitted on April 3 of the charges of dangerous driving and failing to stop and offer assistance to the injured. As a result of his resignation the ministerial group split, the supporters of Chacko charging Chief Minister Sankar with failing to stand by his ministerial colleague against the critics and letting him down. Chacko then decided to carry the fight against Sankar to a higher level by running as a candidate for the Chairmanship of the Kerala State Congress Committee in the hope that in winning he would defeat his former foe C. K. G. Nair as well as assert his control over Chief Minister Sankar as his boss. This calculation misfired on June 14, 1964 when Chacko lost the fight to K. C. Abraham from the Christian community, who surprisingly rallied support from the organizational wing of the party as well as the ministerial group of Sankar.

In an effort to enlarge the struggle against Sankar, Chacko resorted to the most extreme measures of political infighting. Although he himself died on August 1 his followers withdrew their support from the government on September 2, 1964 under the pretext that the Congress Party would definitely be defeated in the coming state elections if it remained under the control of the existing leadership. The opposition was quick to exploit this development and tabled a no-confidence motion accusing the government of corruption, misadministration, failure to cope with an acute shortage of food and the rising prices. The rebel Congressmen joined the debate on the motion and alleged that the government had spent large sums on reclaiming the land, and planting it with rubber trees, which belonged to Chief Minister Sankar's wife. This time, however, the opposition won;
its motion was adopted on September 8 by 73 to 50 votes only because the rebel Congress deputies cast their votes with the Communists, the PSP and the Muslim League. Thus yet another Congress government fell with a stab in the back administered by its own members. The Congress, obviously, had not learnt much during the past decade for it was the same practice which had opened Kerala to the Communist victory in 1957.

While the opposition parties had succeeded in bringing down the government with the assistance of the rebel Congressmen they were unable to form a new government. As a result, the President of India issued a proclamation on September 10 which dissolved the Kerala State Assembly and imposed Presidential Rule upon the state to remain in force until February 1965 when the new state elections were due. The declaration of the President was then approved by the Lok Sabha on September 23. The next day the Lok Sabha adopted the Kerala State Legislature Bill, to delegate powers, which would enable the Union Government to rule Kerala until a new self-government would come into existence as the result of the next elections. The bill conferred upon the President the powers of the Kerala Legislature to make laws for the state. It further provided for the establishment of a parliamentary committee which the President could consult regarding any legislation for Kerala. This committee would consist of 45 members; 30 representing the Lok Sabha and 15 from the upper house, the Rajya Sabha; it would include all deputies of the lower house who had been elected from Kerala.

The final act of installing Presidential Rule in Kerala was its approval by the Rajya Sabha on September 30, and the appointment of the Joint Secretary of the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Chemicals, R. Prasad, as Adviser to the Governor of Kerala on September 2, 1964.

NOTES

CHAPTER VII

SPLIT OF POLITICAL PARTIES

While in the past Kerala had been by and large shielded from the impact of outside influences, during 1964 all major political parties in the state underwent a division mainly as a consequence of China's attack upon India in October 1962. The Communist Party, the Congress Party, and the PSP split into rival factions the activities of which imbued the political process in that state with a highly volatile character. In fact by the time of the next elections, to be held in Kerala in March 1965, the rival factions established themselves as six independent political parties and contested the elections in an intensive fratricidal struggle.

Schism Within Communist Ranks

The first to split was the Communist Party of India and its branch in Kerala. Both had been labouring under the strains of the Sino-Indian border dispute between 1958 and 1959 and then under the impact of the ever widening ideological and strategic schism between Moscow and Peking. The party came under an enormous pressure after the first serious border clash which took place in the Chang Chemo Valley of southern part of Ladakh on October 20-21, 1959, and during which Chinese troops patrolling some 40 miles deep within Indian territory killed 9 members of Indian police patrol and captured 10 others.

The Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party, at that time dominated by the pro-Moscow wing, issued a resolution on September 26, 1959 which declared that the party stands with the rest of India for the territorial integrity of the country and that it would be second to none in safeguarding it. However, the resolution at the same time expressed confidence that China had no aggressive design upon India and urged immediate negotiations to settle the dispute.

In the meantime, however, an intensive internal struggle
developed within the leading organs of the party between the pro-Soviet and the left radical wing refusing a wholesale condemnation of China. In particular, the Central Executive Committee was divided on the issue, denying now support to Dange and his strongly pro-government policies. Dange gave a public vent to his feelings in a speech in Bombay on October 25 where he indicated that there was a deep disagreement within the Central Executive Committee on the border dispute with China, and that he did not agree with the committee's stand. He further expressed a hope that China would correct her attitude toward India and settle the dispute peacefully. He gave a full support to Premier Nehru's efforts to solve the dispute by negotiations and said that it was the duty of every Communist to resist such a deliberate invasion and occupation of Indian territory.

Dange was, however, able to rally his forces and guide the party toward his position at the crucial meeting of the National Council, held in Meerut on November 14, 1959. The meeting adopted a resolution which declared that the areas south of the McMahon Line were a part of India and should remain so, and that the government had taken a correct stand on the border question in Ladakh, and that a negotiated settlement should be sought. While Dange had won his point and impressed upon the public stand of the party his policy, he was at the same time censured by the National Council for publicly revealing the differences existing within the Central Executive Committee on the border dispute, and in a statement admitted a breach of party discipline.

During 1960 the internal strife within the Communist Party over the border dispute with China was further intensified by the impact of the Sino-Soviet controversy. The two wings within the Communist Party of India echoed the main theoretical propositions expounded by the rival mentors in Moscow and Peking, and a centrist group attempted to mediate and vacillated between the two extremes. When the controversy almost ruptured the party, a crucial meeting of the Central Executive Committee was convened on September 4, 1960 in an attempt to resolve the dispute so that the party could go to its next congress, to be held in April 1961, as a unified force. However, by that time the theoretical positions of the rival factions had been so solidified
that no compromise was possible and no united stand of the party was therefore adopted.

In view of this the party went to its Sixth Congress, held in Vijayawada from April 7 to 10, in complete disarray. The Congress was attended by M. Suslov, Secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, to steady the support for the pro-Moscow wing of the party and make sure that the Indian Communists remained aligned with Moscow. The polarization of forces within the party was best seen from the fact that three rival documents were presented to the congress, two of them being full-fledged proposals for a new programme of the party.

The first major document was prepared by the National Council in April 1961 and entitled the Resolution on the Present Political Situation. It represented the position of the Secretary General of the party, A. K. Ghosh, and of the dominant centrist groups of the party, which consistently upheld the past policies of the party, followed a pro-Soviet course and was in favour of mild amendments of the existing party programme without abandoning it. The programme called for the formation of the national democratic front, to include also the left wing of the Congress Party, which would pave the way for peaceful transition to communism.

The second draft proposal was presented by S. A. Dange, P. C. Joshi and G. Adhikari, which was entitled A Draft Programme for the Communist Party of India. The draft argued that the national bourgeoisie in India had not yet exhausted fully its revolutionary potential, that the Communist Party must co-operate with it on the establishment of a State of National Democracy, which would serve as a transitional stage on the way to a communist regime in the form of a People's Democracy.

The third document was prepared by Bhumesh Gupta and P. Ramamurthy. It was a more radical proposal for a new party programme which believed that there was no need for the transitional State of National Democracy, and that a full-fledged regime of People's Democracy could be reached directly through a revolutionary mass struggle organized on the basis of a united front of all leftist forces and directed against the entire Congress representing the Indian bourgeoisie.

These three documents opened the congress to a wild debate
during which several hundred proposals, counter-proposals, amendments and resolutions were presented with the result that no majority agreement could be reached on any of them. In view of this the preparation of the new party programme was vested into the hands of a 110-member National Council which the congress elected. The three-way split projected itself into the composition of the new council, which consisted of some 50 rightists, 40 leftists, the center positions being held by 20 members. Because no concerted policy could be agreed upon the report of A. K. Ghosh to the congress was later amended by the conflicting factions to represent the last common understanding of the situation, as a substitute for the new programme.  

A new distribution of power in the leading organs of the party was prompted by the death of Secretary General A. K. Ghosh on January 13, 1962. The National Council met on April 29 to amend the constitution of the party to the effect that there would be a party Chairman and a General Secretary instead of the General Secretary as before. At the same time the membership of the Secretariat was increased from 5 to 9 members and of the Central Executive Committee from 25 to 30 members. The meeting elected S. A. Dange to the chairmanship of the party, and E. M. S. Namboodiripad as its Secretary General. The other elected members of the Secretariat were Bhupesh Gupta, P. Sundarayya, M. N. Govindan Nair and Jyoti Basu. While Dange represented the right wing of the party Namboodiripad stood between the left wing and the centre, the left wing being represented by Jyoti Basu. The number of votes commanded by each faction was: the right wing 4; the center 1; the left, center 1; the left wing 3.

This new distribution of power within the central organs of the party among the rival factions was strained to the utmost by a full-scale attack of China upon India launched on October 20, 1962 in the North-Eastern Frontier Agency and in Ladakh. Responding to the attack Premier Nehru made a nation-wide broadcast on October 22 in which he called the nation to arms and said that a powerful and unscrupulous opponent had confronted India with the greatest menace since her independence. To deal with the national crisis President Radhakrishnan issued on October 26 a decree proclaiming a state of emergency throughout the whole country following a cabinet decision of the same day. To implement the emergency rules the cabinet set
up a six-member ministerial committee under the chairmanship of Premier Nehru. On the same day the President promulgated the Defence of India Ordinance 1962, which conferred special emergency powers upon the Central Government to make regulations for the defence of India during the emergency. This ordinance was soon superseded by the Defence of India Bill, which conferred upon the government emergency powers to maintain public order and ensure an effective conduct of military operations. The complete collapse of Nehru's non-aligned policy, for which Minister for Defence Krishna Menon had been blamed, resulted in a public demand for his dismissal, and on November 14, 1962 it was announced that Y. B. Chavan, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, replaced him.

The leadership of the Communist Party of India, which was dominated by a faction siding with Moscow against Peking and advocating co-operation with Nehru's government, was thrown out of balance for a few days during which an intensive discussion took place. Within the 9 member Central Secretariat three belonged to the pro-Peking wing—Joyti Basu, P. Sundarayya and Harkishan Singh Surjeet—who refused to condemn China outright because they believed that a socialist country can never commit an aggression. The center group of 2 members was represented by Bhupesh Gupta with E. M. S. Namboodiripad holding the left-center position. The pro-Moscow wing of 4 was represented by S. A. Dange, Dr. Z. A. Ahmad, M. N. Govindan Nair and Yogendra Sharma. The positions adopted proved not reconcilable and in view of this the three leftists resigned, while Namboodiripad wanted to resign from his position of the General Secretary. The pro-Moscow group, however, carried the day and Dange, Chairman of the Party, was invested with wide powers to guide the party during the emergency, of which mandate he made a full use.

The statement issued by the National Council of the party on November 1, 1962, dominated by Dange and his pro-Moscow followers, rallied the party behind the government. It called upon all people in the country to unite in defence of the motherland and against Chinese aggression. Moreover, the party extended its full support to Premier Nehru and his government in this emergency to fight the aggressor, and agreed with them that no
negotiations could take place unless the Chinese troops withdrew to the positions held before September 8, 1962.

While this stand of the party saved the pro-Moscow wing from the wrath of the government, the leading members of the pro-Peking wing and others were arrested under the Defence of India Ordinance. Among the arrested there was one member of the Lok Sabha, 30 members of the State Legislative Assemblies and five ministers of former Namboodiripad's government. Some 100 Communists were arrested in Madras, 60 in West Bengal, 35 in Gujarat, 25 in Kerala, 24 in the Punjab, 22 in Andhra Pradesh, 13 in Assam, 11 in Madhya Pradesh, and others in Delhi, Bombay, Mysore, Orissa and elsewhere. Over 350 went to jail in all India, among the most prominent were E. M. S. Namboodiripad, Joyti Basu, P. Sundarayya and B. T. Ranadive.

A new polarization of forces within the party took place at a meeting of the National Council, held from February 4 to 12, 1963. After an 8-day long exchange between Namboodiripad and Dange over the current policy line of the party, during which the former branded them as revisionism, Namboodiripad was outvoted and submitted resignation from his post as well as the chief editorship of the New Age, weekly organ of the party. The resignation was accepted on February 12. The meeting decided that the party would function for the time being without filling the vacancy, and that Dange would co-ordinate the work of the party's executive. The hold of the pro-Moscow group over the party apparatus further increased as a result of the next meeting of the National Council, held from June 16 to July 3 1963, which elected two new members of the Central Secretariat. They belonged to the rightist alignment and were P. C. Joshi and Romesh Chandra. This brought the membership of the Secretariat to 7, the other five were S. A. Dange, Bhumesh Gupta, M. N. Govindan Nair, Z. A. Ahmad, and Yogesh Sharma.

The worst hit by the arrests was the party in West Bengal where the left wing had been dominating the party organizations since 1961. The party was practically liquidated when 50 leftists of a 101-member State Council were arrested. The right wing welcomed this opportunity to re-establish its control in West Bengal and rapidly restructured the local party organs to bring them under its heel. The left wing, however, enjoyed a broadly based support of the basic units of the party and in September
1963 launched a mass campaign for the release of the detainees. One prominent leftist from Kerala, A. K. Gopalan, supported the campaign in spite of the decision to the contrary of the Central Secretariat. The mass campaign was successful. The government soon released all detainees, except two, with the result that the defunct State Council was revived on February 3, 1964 and the party brought again under the dominant influence of the leftists. The new bodies which had been created in West Bengal by the pro-Moscow group dominating the party leadership in New Delhi, in particular the Organizing Committee which had to remake the party to Delhi’s image, lost control over the situation. This Committee was led by Bhowani Sen, Somnath Lahiri and Mrs. Renu Chakravarti. The split in West Bengal was soon to be an accomplished fact.

In the meantime, a National Council meeting, held from October 14 to 19, 1963, attempted to prevent the split of the party and the formalization of the factions in individual state of India into two rival parties. Of the 110 members of the council only 66 attended; the rest was in jail. The most important point dealt with was a proposal of disciplinary measure against the West Bengal group which had organized a mass action in the state in September. However, the report of the Control Commission, which under the chairmanship of S. V. Ghate had to investigate the split of the party in individual states of India and the functioning of the so-called parallel centers, could not be discussed as it was not ready. On October 16 the council adopted by 52 against 22 votes a significant resolution on the Sino-Soviet schism which lined up the party behind Moscow and attacked Peking’s position. A counter-resolution proposed by Namboodiripad had been defeated by 55 to 20 votes because it advocated neutrality for the Indian Communists in the Sino-Soviet dispute. On October 19 the council adopted a resolution which censured A. K. Gopalan for his support of West Bengal dissenters. The leftist leader Sundarayya warned, however, the council against harsh disciplinary action against the left groups for this would surely split the party in many states, like in West Bengal and Andhra, where it would lose the status of the main opposition party in the local assemblies.
The final factor which precipitated the split of the party on the national level was an incident which involved Chairman of the party Dange. In March 1954 the party was stunned by the publication of letters which had been allegedly written by Dange while in prison in 1924, in which he had offered services to the British in exchange for his release.\textsuperscript{12} The letters were branded as forgeries by the Secretariat which had been fabricated by the pro-Peking faction in order to split the party. While the letters were discussed at a meeting of the National Council on April 11, 1964, Dange refused a demand to step down from the chair so that an impartial inquiry could be held, whereupon 32 members of the 96 present, including Namboodiripad and 5 more leftists from Kerala, left the meeting.\textsuperscript{13} The remaining members of the council continued the meeting and on April 14 closed the case by adopting a resolution to the effect that there was not even a \textit{prima facie} case for the genuineness of the letters.\textsuperscript{14}

On April 14 the National Council decided to expel 7 and suspend 25 of those 32 leaders who had left the meeting, but on the next day the council reversed itself to a milder punishment of merely suspending them all.

The next move was made by the dissenters. In the morning of April 14 they issued a joint 2,500-word statement which made the following demands: (1) re-organization of the party Secretariat and the Central Executive Committee; (2) thorough investigation of the letters written allegedly by Dange by an agreed and impartial machinery; (3) postponement of all disciplinary actions for splitting activities until the next party congress, which would adopt a new programme; (4) new verification of all members of the party through an agreed process; (5) agreed upon commission to prepare and examine all basic documents for the next congress. These were the conditions upon which a compromise with the rightists would be possible to save the unity of the party.

At the same time the statement declared that all basic party units would be presented with a new draft programme, which had already been prepared, and with an appeal explaining the basic differences and asked to express their views. After this ground work had been laid a convention of representatives from different states would be held within two months to ascertain in
which direction the rank and file wished to go, and then preparations would be made for a party congress to coincide with the October congress planned by Dange's group.

The statement made a special reference to Namboodiripad, who had also signed it. It conveyed an impression that Namboodiripad had shifted his position from left-center closer to the left, and stated that while the group would be distributing its own draft programme for discussion it would distribute also an alternative draft prepared by Namboodiripad. Thus the leftists were eminently interested in having the brilliant leader from Kerala on their side of the fence and prepared to make concessions to him. The over all impression conveyed by the statement of the 32 dissenters was that they would make a determined effort at capturing the initiative and leadership from the lowest to the highest party organs without, however, breaking away as an independent organization, provided the Dange group was willing to co-operate and let the next congress to decide the issue. Should, however, the rightists not co-operate then the programme outlined would have laid sufficient foundations for a congress of their own.

In order to launch the organizational campaign the dissenters separated themselves physically from the facilities available in the Central Secretariat and established their headquarters in the house of Basavapunniah, who would be in charge of carrying out the daily routine. However, to decide important policy matters and launch and co-ordinate the work in individual states of India the whole group of 32 dissenters was vested with powers of an executive and co-ordinating committee.

On April 15 the leftist co-ordinating center released its draft programme, to be presented to the basic party units. The programme called for a united front of all leftist forces in order to replace the Congress Government with the government which would carry out a sweeping agrarian reform, abolish foreign monopoly capitalism in the country and establish a People's Democracy.

Shortly thereafter Namboodiripad himself distributed to the leftists a draft of his own programme, and was ready to carry into Kerala the struggle against the revisionist Dange group controlling the Kerala State Committee of the party. To that end he and 6 other dissenters from Kerala who had been suspended
issued a statement to the basic units of the party in their state to start making preparations for a united action of all left forces for the next mid-term elections to be held in March 1965. Namboodiripad and his colleagues accused the rightist dominated Kerala State Committee of class collaboration with the Congress Party. They said that the rightist leadership would be co-operating with the Congress in the next elections in order to help it to survive politically. They called upon the members of the party to steer a leftward course, defeat the plans of the State Committee and work for a united front of the left forces. By this time the Kerala State Committee was sufficiently polarized and Namboodiripad's group received a rejoinder from a rightist leader C. Achutha Menon, Former Finance Minister in Namboodiripad's cabinet, to the effect the former Chief Minister wanted to create a wrong impression that the State Committee was not interested in defeating the Congress in Kerala; he labelled Namboodiripad's statement as bogus.

While the National Council was in session in New Delhi, the Secretary of the West Bengal State Council, Promode Dasgupta, declared on April 16 in Calcutta that his organization owned no allegiance to the rump National Council and refused to recognize Dange's leadership. The revolt against Dange was spreading when Dasgupta declared that his group would align itself with the 32 dissenters and accept their programme. In order to rally the party to the new line the State Committee issued an instruction to all basic party units in West Bengal to denounce Dange's leadership and reorganize the party on the basis of ideas of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin.

The National Council sitting in New Delhi on April 16 nearly panicked at the developments in West Bengal and immediately dispatched M. N. Govindan Nair and Bhowani Sen to Calcutta to salvage as much as possible. Rajendra Rao and N. Rajasekhar Reddy were dispatched to Andhra, while C. Achutha Menon and Kumaran rushed to Kerala to offset the impact of Namboodiripad's new course upon the party in the state. The terms of reference for their missions called for: (1) explaining the decisions of the National Council, (2) assessing the situation and the alignment of forces, and (3) in places where the situation was hopeless to structure new units loyal to the center and willing to carry out its directives.
When the Central Executive Committee met in New Delhi from May 12 to 22 to take stock of the developments following the stormy session of the National Council, the process of disintegration of the party was in full progress. The analysis of the voting pattern of the National Council, which was presented on behalf of the dissenters to show that Dange and his group had no mandate to lead the party, indicated that of 110 members only 96 had participated in the meeting, 32 had left during its session, and of the remaining only 50 had voted for the main resolution on April 15. This was less than 50 per cent.

An attempt to save the unity of the party was made on June 11 when the National Council offered to revoke the suspension of the dissenters provided they returned to the council and dissolved or dissociated themselves from all parallel party organizations. The last attempt at reconciliation was made on July 4 when the unity talks were initiated in New Delhi. The dissenters were represented by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Joyti Basu and Promode Dasgupta. The official leadership was represented by G. Adhikari, C. Rajeshwar Rao and Bhupesh Gupta. The two parties merely reiterated their stands and after a 2½ hour long exchange the unity talks terminated.

The meeting of the National Council on April 11, 1964, had been the last gathering of the united party.

**VII Congress of the CPI (Leftist)**

After the breakdown of the unity talks the events moved in a rapid succession, mainly determined by the initiative of the dissenters.

The first major step was taken at a convention of the leftists, held in Tenali, Andhra, from July 7 to 11, 1964. Over 150 delegates from all India participated, among them E. M. S. Namboodiripad, A. K. Gopalan, P. Ramamurthy, Muzaffar Ahmad, Promode Dasgupta, Harekrishna Konar, Harikishen Singh Surjeet, M. R. Venkataraman, P. Sundarayya, M. Basavapunniah and others.

When the programme of the leftists came for discussion one of its drafters, M. Basavapunniah, said that the fundamental differences between the two rival factions had reached such a stage that there was no possibility for reconciliation. He claimed that his group commanded the support of the majority
of the membership of the party, estimating that some 100,000 of the total membership of 150,000 would rally behind it. In view of this the group was the only real representative of the party.

A more forceful claim to the leadership of the party was made by P. Ramamurthy when he said that his group was not forming a new party. He said that the great majority of the party membership supported the group and that the so-called official leadership under Dange was nothing but a rump of the National Council. Asserting that his colleagues were the real Communists he said that Dange’s faction had forfeited the confidence of the entire party and had no right to call itself the Communist Party of India.

The convention passed several resolutions, of which the most important was presented by Namboodiripad. The resolution reviewed the events since the walk-out of the 32 dissenters from the meeting of the National Council on April 11. Dange’s faction was charged with dishonesty for making the unity talks a mere smoke-screen behind which it could consolidate its position. Finally an appeal was made to all party members and sympathizers to isolate totally Dange and his followers from the Communist and Socialist movements in India.

However, the most important part of the convention was the discussion of the draft of the party programme presented by Namboodiripad. Although he had associated himself with the leftists he maintained ideological independence and successfully impressed his train of thought upon the meeting and thus steered the leftist movement in India toward a real and responsible alternative to the course pursued by Dange and his reformists as they now became known. The draft saw as inevitable the clash with the existing Indian state and advocated the establishment of a People’s Democracy which would be based upon a coalition of all genuine anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces and led by the working class. The key section of the draft which dealt with the attitude toward the Congress Party clearly spelled out Namboodiripad’s differentiation from the “rightist revisionists” of Dange as well as the “left-sectarians”. The draft said that the policy of the Communists toward the Congress Party should be one of co-operating with and struggling against, i.e., united action on some issues and struggle against on others. However, the united action must not lead to the establishment of a general
united front with the Congress. Such a stand, said the draft, would keep clear the party of the policy of Dange's right opportunists who clamoured not only for a Congress-Communist co-operation but a complete coalition, and of the left-sectarian line which refused to form the unity of action with the Congress.

As its final act the convention decided to hold the VII party congress in Calcutta at the end of October. The group had the full mandate to organize such a congress to claim and carry forward the legal and political continuity of the party.

These developments thus paved the way for complete independence of the group as a party, which was accomplished on September 8, 1964 when the leftist leader of 32 Communist deputies in the Lok Sabha, A. K. Gopalan, and 11 of his colleagues separated themselves and formed an independent parliamentary party. By this act the Communists lost the official status and privileges of the major opposition party, which now devolved upon the Swatantra Party, commanding 29 seats. The leftist group, which maintained the name of the Communist Party of India but became known as the Marxist party, or the CPI (M), was recognized on September 15 by the Electoral Commission as an independent party for the purpose of the forthcoming elections in Kerala.

The leadership of Dange's group retaliated and on September 14 expelled from the party the 32 dissenters who had been suspended and all those who had attended the Tenali Convention.

As far the actual alignment of the membership was concerned conflicting claims were made by both parties. The new party, CPI (M), claimed on October 5, 1964 that it had rallied into its ranks some 90,000 members. The group of Dange, retaining the old name of the Communist Party of India, or the CPI, denied this and said that less than one-third of the membership of 200,000 had split away, which would mean some 66,000. Some indication of the actual alignment became clear from the division of the Communist deputies in the State Legislative Assemblies across the country. Out of 170 Communist deputies 49 had declared allegiance to the CPI(M), while 9 adopted a neutral posture.

In the meantime, an intensive organizational work was under way in all states of India to structure the basic units of the rival party and to that end local, district and provincial confe-
rences were held. When the Seventh Congress was finally convened in Calcutta on October 31, 1964 the separation from the maternal body had been completed and the party had its own network of units all over the country.

The Credential Committee gave an impressive report, according to which the congress was attended by 422 delegates and 63 observers. The distribution by the age groups was the following: between 18 and 30 years 41 delegates; between 31 and 40 years 179 delegates; between 41 and 50 years 100 delegates; between 51 and 60 years 71 delegates, and above 60 years 16 delegates. Classification according to the years of party membership the report presented the following picture: pre-1938 membership 44; 1938-42 membership 146; 1934-47 membership 100; 1948-51 membership 68; 1952-56 membership 88; and 1957-63 membership 36. The following delegates represented various front organizations: trade unions 147; women 6; students and youth 12; agricultural workers 31; kisan 144; teachers 3; cultural field 2; and party activities 137. The following was the regional distribution of the delegates: Central Organizing Committee 13; Provincial Committees 210; District Committees 208; Taluq Committees 19; Town Committees 6; Branch Committees 10, and the Central Control Commission 7. According to the class origin 62 came from the working class background; 106 middle peasant; 21 landlord; 204 middle class; 22 poor peasant; 30 rich peasant; and 16 agricultural worker. The delegates practised the following professions: 5 workers; 39 peasants; 14 lawyers; 4 students; 7 office employees; 6 journalists; 8 teachers; 4 doctors; 315 whole-time party workers; and 12 businessmen. The delegates had the following educational qualifications: graduates 100; intermediates 57; matriculates 130; middle school 130; primary school 63; illiterate 2. The following number of delegates had been elected to various bodies of central, state and local government: Lok Sabha 9; State Legislative Assemblies 32; Municipal Councillors 23; Panchayat Sarpanches 33; Panchayat members 25; Block Samiti members 18; Zila Parishads 10; and Directors and Presidents of Co-operative Societies 63. The aggregate period which the delegates had spent in jail was 1,340 years, 2 months and 20 days. The aggregate period spent underground was 848 years, 10 months and 15 days.26

From the report of the Central Control Commission emerged
the following profile of the leadership of the new party which styled itself Marxist-Leninist: (1) it was dominated by the 31-50 age group; (2) the pre-independence Communists formed over 70 per cent; there was very little of new blood; (3) the leadership came predominantly, 74.74 per cent, from the middle class, landlord, rich and middle peasant origin; more members had a landlord, 21, than agricultural worker, 16, background; (4) the leadership was dominated by full-time employees from within the party's apparatus, 76.01 per cent; only 5 workers and 39 peasants, or 10.63 per cent, supported the claim that it was the party of India's working class and her millions of poor; (5) the leadership was, however, well educated, with a high percentage of university graduates; (6) on the whole the leadership of the party was dominated by pre-independence members, working now as employees of the party apparatus; these were of the middle class, landlord, rich and middle peasant background; only 10.68 per cent were active workers and agricultural labourers.

The congress opened in a tense atmosphere due to the fact that 25 delegates from West Bengal, elected to attend, were arrested on the eve of the congress. The congress adopted a declaration claiming the legal and political continuity of the party by stating that the delegates assembled were the "true representatives of the Communist Party of India and that the Dange group has no right to call itself by that name". The declaration said that the 422 delegates represented 104,421 members of the party units from all over the country. This was 60 per cent of the total membership recorded on the rolls at the time of the congress.

The congress adopted a 92-page Political – Organizational Report entitled "Fight Against Revisionism". The report opened by stating that "this Congress will go down in history as the Congress of struggle against revisionism, as the Congress which made the decisive break with revisionism and class collaboration in the Communist Movement in our country." The details, since 1951, leading to the crisis within the party and the final separation were discussed on some 64 pages of the document, the rest dealing with the existing political situation.

The congress then passed 20 resolutions, among them On the Tasks of the Party in the Present Situation, On Ideological
Differences, On Kerala Elections, On Food and High Prices, On Indian Repatriates from Burma, On the Situation in Southeast Asia, and others. In a resolution entitled On India-China Border Dispute the congress reiterated the stand taken at the Tenali Convention to the effect that the party had noted that the government was prepared to consider favourably the suggestion that it should start negotiating with China, without prejudice to its claims, if no civilian posts remained in the demilitarized area in Ladakh. The party therefore urged the government to communicate with the government of China for breaking the deadlock. The Tenali Convention had also expressed a desire that Indian and Chinese representatives should meet together to explore the possibility of opening negotiations on the above basis or any other basis acceptable to both.

The resolution further said that the congress desired to point out that the continuation of the deadlock was harmful to the Afro-Asian and anti-imperialist solidarity. In view of this the congress urged the government to take initiative to contact the government of China so that negotiations could be started. The congress also hoped that China would take a similar initiative to bring about a settlement suitable to both parties.  

In addition to these resolutions the congress adopted a new constitution which in a significant way amended the old constitution adopted at the V Congress, held in Amritsar in April 1958. The key amendment was the elimination of the Preamble, which had committed the party to a policy of pursuing its objectives through peaceful methods, i.e., the strategy of peaceful transition. This omission was later to be interpreted by the Government of India as committing the new party to a revolutionary strategy on the Chinese pattern and led to the arrest of its leaders on December 30, 1964, as will be seen soon. This interpretation, however, was unwarranted because the congress incorporated the commitment to peaceful methods into the new party programme.

The new programme was a 75-page document of which the most important was section VII, entitled Programme of People's Democracy. The section declared that the party firmly adhered to its aim of building first socialism and then communism in India. In order to promote these objectives, and as an immediate goal, the party was striving for the replacement
of the existing bourgeois-landlord government by a government of People's Democracy, which would represent a coalition of all genuine anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces, headed by the working class. Such a government would complete the tasks of the democratic phase of the Indian revolution and pave the way for putting India upon the road to socialism. Thus the government of People's Democracy would initiate the transition to socialism only; communism was not immediately on the agenda of the new party.

The document then listed the tasks which the government of People's Democracy would carry out to set the country upon the road to socialism. The most important tasks related to the changes to be introduced in the sphere of state structure: (1) proportional representation in all elections; (2) decentralization of the federal structure; (3) reorganization of states on the linguistic principle; (4) formation of special bodies to control local administration; these would be elected by the people and invested with powers over the local state organs; (5) people's initiative and control would be introduced over all activities of the national life; this would be exercised by the trade unions and other mass organizations; (6) representatives of people's organizations would be drawn into a direct participation in the work of state organs.

Section VII of the programme, entitled Building of People's Democratic Front, explained how such a government of People's Democracy would be attained and by which methods. The section first explained that India was going through a "people's democratic" phase of the revolution which would carry out the following two tasks: a radical agrarian reform and then the expulsion of foreign monopoly capital from India. With the accomplishment of these two tasks the power of feudalism and local monopoly capital would be eliminated. However, the agrarian aspect is the cardinal point of the whole revolution, its main axis, and the failure to grasp this means to miss the very essence of the people's democratic phase of the revolution.

In order to carry out the people's democratic phase of Indian revolution a new instrumentality, a new tool, must be first created. This instrumentality would be "a people's democratic front", which would be under the leadership of the CPI(M). What would be the composition of such a front? First, its core would
consist of the working class and peasantry. Furthermore, it would have in its ranks agricultural labourers and poor peasantry, which constitute some 70 per cent of the rural households. Then an attempt would be made to include middle peasants; even rich peasants could be won over as allies by suitable tactics. Then urban and other middle class would be recruited into the people's democratic front. From the bourgeois class, an attempt would be made to win over, as an ally, the non-monopolistic section of the national bourgeoisie and separate it from the big bourgeoisie. However, while the CPI(M) must not hesitate to go into joint action with any party or group on concrete issues in defense of interests of the people, independence and in fighting imperialism, there would be no question of a general united front with the ruling Congress Party, the parties of rightist reaction and the communal parties.

The People's Democratic government would be established by the people's democratic front as a result of struggle which would be protracted and complicated. It would have to be waged in varying conditions and in varying phases. Different classes, and different strata within the same class of the front and outside, are bound to take different positions in these distinct phases of the development of the revolutionary movement and, in view of this, complications would arise. Because of this, the party would have to develop various interim slogans in order to meet the requirements of the rapidly shifting political situation. The programme visualized that the road to power at the centre would be through the weakening of the central authority and the establishment of non-Congress state governments which would be committed not to a radical programme of socialization but to giving an immediate relief to the people. The programme contained this key formulation:

"The formation of such governments will give fillip to the revolutionary movement of the working people and thus help the process of building the democratic front. It, however, would not solve the economic and political problems of the nation in any fundamental way. The party, therefore, will continue to educate the mass of the people on the need for replacing the present bourgeois-landlord state and government, headed by the big bourgeoisie, even while utilizing all
opportunities for forming such governments of a transitional character which give immediate relief to the people and thus strengthen the mass movement.”

This formulation is absolutely indispensable for our understanding of the policies under which the party was to go into the elections in Kerala in March 1965 and then into the general elections in all India in February 1967. The formulation was based upon the experience of Namboodiripad's government when his own regime had been in power in Kerala between 1957 and 1959. The regime, as we have seen earlier, had attempted to accelerate the process of transition to communism but had generated such a mass opposition that it had to be terminated by federal action. The lesson to be learnt was that any future communist regime in any of the Indian states, or a coalition in which the CPI(M) would participate, must first ensure its political survival by following non-controversial policies and concentrate merely on the immediate relief of the people. The formulation is important also from another angle, because it freed the CPI(M) and its State Committees for entering into electoral alliances and alignments on the basis of minimum programmes which were a far cry from the ultimate communist goals. This imbued the party with a great deal of tactical flexibility to enter into even opportunistic alignments to bring down the Congress governments in individual states of India and to weaken the authority of the Central Government in New Delhi, all this without the danger of compromising its general principles and goals.

Another key formulation of the programme related to the strategy of peaceful transition:

“The Communist Party of India strives to achieve the establishment of people's democracy and socialist transformation through peaceful process. By developing a powerful mass revolutionary movement, by combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forms of struggle, the working class and its allies will try their utmost to overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and bring about these transformations through peaceful means.

However, it needs always to be borne in mind that the ruling
classes never relinquish power voluntarily. They seek to defy the will of the people and seek to reverse it by lawlessness and violence. It is, therefore, necessary for the revolutionary forces to be vigilant and so orientate their work that they can face up to all contingencies, to any twist and turn in the political life of the country."

This formulation then committed the CPI(M) to the strategy of peaceful transition as understood in the *Statement of 81 Communist and Workers' Parties* of December 1961, at least for the period in which the immediate target was the dissolution of the central authority and the establishment of non-congress governments in individual states of the country. About the strategy for the next stage the programme remained discreetly silent; however, an answer even to this problem was to be given soon. It must be emphasized that the programme had been based upon a previous draft prepared by Namboodiripad; also the answer to the strategy of the next stage was to be given by Namboodiripad.

An interesting aspect of the congress proceedings was the discussion of a resolution on an armed struggle in Angola and Mozambique. In his report Basavapunniah said that all talks about the left Communists resorting to an armed struggle were infantile nonsense. The objective of his party was to preserve the parliamentary democracy and defend it against all attacks. He saw no reason for the present policy of his party to develop into an armed uprising as in 1948. The errors of 1948 had not been so much in the policy as in the incorrect reading of the existing correlation of forces, and in the sectarian over-emphasis upon the revolutionary strategy. Moreover, the majority of members present at the congress were in the 40-60 age group, and it should be conceded to them that they had learnt from that experience. He further said that the CPI(M) would soon write to Moscow to demand recognition as the Communist Party of India and be invited to the proposed conferences of the International Communist Movement.

As its final act the congress elected a Central Executive Committee on November 7, the last day of the proceedings. The committee had its first meeting on the following day and elected unanimously P. Sundarayya as General Secretary of the party.
A 9-member Political Bureau was then elected, consisting of M. Basavapunniah, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, A. K. Gopalan, P. Ramamurthy, Joyti Basu, Promode Dasgupta, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, B. T. Ranadive and P. Sundarayya.

VIII Congress of the CPI (Rightist)

In the meantime Dange and his group had prepared the basic papers for the congress of their party and published a draft of their own programme on July 9, 1964.26

The VII Congress of the party was then held in Bombay from December 12 to 23, 1964. Significantly, the congress opened with singing the national anthem Jana Gana Mana. A delegation from the Soviet Union was on hand and its leader, B. Ponomarev, lectured how India should be grateful to the Soviet Union for economic assistance. He was very pleased that “there are big opportunities in your country for the activities of the Communist Party”27 and called for closing of ranks.

According to a report of the Credential Committee, the congress represented 136,888 members, including 26,286 recruited since 1962. The congress was attended by 581 delegates and 259 observers and a number of invitees. The delegates had been elected by the State Party Conferences in accordance with the decision of the National Council that one delegate was to be elected for every 200 members on the basis of the rolls of 1962, excluding those who had joined the rival party. In view of this the state conferences had elected 546 delegates who represented the 107,762 members who remained loyal to the party. The party members in the Central Headquarters had elected 5 delegates, and members of the Central Executive Committee and the Central Control Commission participated as full delegates.

The total number of delegates who had been elected or ex-officio was 593. Out of that number 581, i.e. 98 per cent, attended. The state conferences had elected and the State Councils and the National Council had nominated 259 observers.

Of the attending members of the party the Credential Committee had received duly filled forms from 514 delegates and 187 observers, from which the following profile of the party leadership emerged.

The bulk of the delegates, 407 out of 514, belonged to the
age group 35-55. Similarly the observers: 115 out of 187 belonged to this age group. In the age group below 25 there was not a single delegate and only 3 observers. In the age group above 55 there were 30 delegates and 10 observers. The party leadership was thus as old, lacking a new blood, as the leadership of the rival party.

Regarding the length of the membership the following picture emerged: pre-1935 membership 24 delegates and 3 observers; 1935-1942 membership 182 delegates and 28 observers; 1943 to 1948 membership 164 delegates and 56 observers; 1949 to 1962 membership 142 delegates and 98 observers. Also here the profile resembled the CPI(M), showing that the leadership consisted overwhelmingly of old and pre-independence Communists.

An analysis of the class origin of the delegates shows that of a working class background there were only 47 delegates and 32 observers, or 11.33 per cent. The detailed breakdown is the following: working class origin 47 delegates and 32 observers; middle class origin 400 delegates and 137 observers; agricultural workers 20 delegates and 7 observers; landlord origin 39 delegates and 11 observers; merchant background 4 delegates. The largest number of delegates, 400, and observers, 137, came from the middle class: full 77.04 per cent. Another strange feature was the fact that altogether 50 participants, 39 delegates and 11 observers, were of the landlord background while only 27 participants were of the agricultural workers stock. Here again the party had a spurious claim to represent the working class and the agricultural poor of the country.

This conclusion is reinforced by the look at the distribution of the participants by their professions: only 3 delegates and 4 observers were active workers, and only 65 and 27 farmers; these groups represented merely 14.33 per cent of delegates. The congress was dominated by 443 delegates and 101 observers, or 78.04 per cent, who were full-time employees of the party apparatus. The party was thus represented by a self-perpetuating professional political elite of a middle class and landlord origin having among itself only 7 active workers.28

A long political resolution, after criticizing the government for its vacillating and sometimes rightist policies, found that
"The Government of India's defence policy, however, remains basically non-aligned. It has rejected the idea of defence pacts with the imperialists and refused to permit foreign bases on Indian soil. It has sought to develop the country's independent defence potential by seeking assistance from the Socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union, as well as from the western powers.

Outstanding in this connection is the MIG factory agreement, which vividly contrasts with the imperialist reluctance to supply vitally necessary heavy equipment and technical know-how. This opens the possibility of overcoming to some extent the dependence on imperialist powers.

The democratic forces, however, must maintain constant vigilance to ensure that our national sovereignty is not jeopardized in any way in the name of securing so-called western 'aid' for national defence.

The government has not made basic changes in the national policies. It carries forward both the positive as well as the negative aspects of the policy in general."  

The resolution further stated that the contradictions between the democratic forces and the ruling class, including the government, had sharpened and would be further aggravated as a result of the capitalist path of development imposed upon the country by the government. Also the differences within the Congress Party had been significantly on the increase. In view of this,

"the most favourable opportunity exists for bringing about a shift to the left in the governmental policies by uniting all progressive democratic forces...

The result of the third general elections shows a shift in favour of the parties of right reaction. While the CPI not only maintained its position but also slightly gained, the ruling party lost mainly to the right reaction, as a result of which they emerged more united and consolidated. In some by-elections that followed, the Congress in spite of maintain-
ing its dominant position, has lost more to the right then to the left. All the right forces both inside and outside the Congress are being more and more consolidated.”

The congress of the CPI was much concerned with the internal crisis of the Congress Party. The political resolution said that even the Congress masses had been drawn into struggles which had been organized by the leftist parties on a number of issues like food, high prices, nationalization of banks and others. This was a new development, but such forces were weak and only in the preliminary stages of their crystallization.

The Congress itself was in the midst of an internal crisis:

“Under the impact of the crisis and due to the weakness of the democratic forces inside the Congress, the ruling party has reached a new stage of factional conflict in different states as well as at the centre. These factions have at times used the people’s discontent in some states. The political prestige and the mass influence of the Congress, though still very extensive, had fallen appreciably.

These factional conflicts, combined with increasing exposure of ministerial corruption, continue to reduce the mass popularity of the Congress and undermine its unity. This will lead to a situation of instability, frequent political crisis in some states, as has already happened in Kerala. Unless the democratic forces unite and intervene, the situation will be successfully exploited by right reaction.”

In anticipating the decline of the Congress as an inevitable process the political resolution then prepared the party to inherit this political patrimony:

“The task of the party is to forge living links with the masses including those sections who have not yet moved into action and develop these movements, giving them an organized character. Conscious fraternal effort must be made to bring about the widest possible unity of all democratic forces, including Congressmen and Congress committees, to make them
participate in the common movement, in any form of organized activity that can serve the interests of the people against the price-rise, food scarcity, black market and corruption."

Regarding co-operation with other leftist parties the political resolution stated that the CPI would co-operate with any of them to promote the creation of a National Democratic Front. An important section of the political resolution outlined its attitudes to the rival Communist Party:

"In spite of all the disruptive and non-communist methods and language of the rival party leaders, the CPI will adopt an attitude of patience and fraternity. The CPI will spare no effort in trying to draw the rival party into joint mass campaigns while simultaneously exposing its wrong ideology, policies and organizational methods.

The CPI is confident that in this manner, learning from their own experience, an increasingly large number of those who have temporarily gone with the rival party will once again take their due place in the ranks of the CPI.

In this complex situation, the CPI sets itself the immediate task of going all-out to build and consolidate the unity of all democratic and socialist forces for the defeat of right reaction, for reversing the anti-people policies of the government and for bringing about a shift to the left. It appeals to all left parties, to all progressive forces and personalities, including democratic Congressmen, to join together to discharge this sacred national task at this moment of peril and promise."

The political resolution then outlined the following immediate platform, to serve as a minimum programme, on which basis a united action with any democratic party, group and personality could be initiated:

"1. Institute state monopoly of the wholesale trade in food-grains, with reasonable, assured prices for the peasants and a fair price for the consumer; introduce statutory rationing in all cities and towns and deficit states, like Kerala; open
consumers' cooperative stores, fair price shops in urban and rural areas and guarantee regular supply of foodgrains and other essential goods to them.

2. Develop an all-India food production drive by distributing fallow lands to agricultural labourers and poor peasants; by granting occupancy rights to tenants-at-will and sharecroppers other than the holders of land belonging to the rural poor and the poor toilers of the towns; by fixing fair rents; by amending ceiling acts in favour of the peasantry and implementing them immediately; by opening state farms wherever possible as in Suratgarh, by increased facilities for the toiling peasants to improve cultivation through irrigation, fertilisers and adequate credit; by expansion and democratisation of the cooperative movement; by providing debt relief to the peasants and agricultural labourers; by securing a minimum wage and providing house sites for the agricultural labourers; by assuring fair prices for agricultural goods as well as supply of industrial goods at controlled rates.

3. Secure higher wages and increased bonus for industrial workers and middle-class employees and link their DA with the corrected cost of living index; ensure trade-union and democratic rights for the working class in both the private and state sectors and for all government employees; secure opening of cheap price shops for supply of essential commodities in all factories and establishments employing 300 or more persons; develop and promote TU unity and united actions of the working class.

4. Nationalise banks, general insurance, foreign trade, oil, coal and other mines and plantations; impose control over prices, raw materials and rate of profit in the case of existing large-scale industries like cotton and jute manufactures, sugar, cement, etc.; take over industrial units and establishments where industrial control measures prove inadequate to prevent mismanagement, corruption and profiteering; democratise the working and management of the public sector.

5. No further taxes on the people; increase taxes on the higher income groups and profits above the bank rate; cancel the privy purses and all princely privileges; reduce the existing unbearable taxes on essential commodities and reduce their prices to a reasonable level; direct tax burdens on
peasants to be reduced and uneconomic holdings exempted from land revenues.

6. Remove and punish corrupt ministers and officials; take over companies guilty of swindling public money; take effective steps to unearth black money and to prevent tax evasion; ban forward dealings in futures and forward markets.

7. Lift the emergency, scrap the DIR, release all political prisoners and detenus and restore fundamental rights.

8. Promotion of communal harmony, secularism and national integration; ban all communal propaganda; ban the RSS; take effective steps for the security of the life and property of the minorities; take adequate measures for the rehabilitation of refugees from East Pakistan; campaign against casteism.

9. Take adequate measures for the uplift of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes and tribals.

10. Defend and develop the national policy of peace and disarmament, non-alignment and anti-colonialism and move forward to the government's implementation of the Cairo Declaration.

11. Work for the settlement of the conflict with China on the basis of the Colombo proposals.

12. Work for friendship with Pakistan through bilateral talks for the solution of all outstanding problems.

13. Stop all cuts in allocations for health, education and other social services; introduce the regional language as the medium of instruction up to and including the university stage; ensure adequate salaries for teachers and for doctors in government hospitals.

14. Take effective and immediate measures for the democratisation of the state machinery, basing them on the principle of decentralisation and with more powers and finance to the elected panchayats and other local bodies.

15. Establish full-fledged responsible governments in the centrally administered areas of Manipur, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi on a par with other states.

16. Break the Congress monopoly of power to form a government of all progressive parties, groups and individuals in whichever state the situation permits, in the first place in Kerala, without any alliance with communal parties."
With this immediate platform the CPI hoped to go to the people, organize and lead them in order to build the National Democratic Front and complete the National Democratic Revolution in India. Obviously, this platform would serve as a programme for any non-Congress government which might come to power in any of the states of India and in which the CPI would participate.

A resolution on ideological controversy repudiated the stand taken by China on all 8 major points: (1) the significance of the new epoch; (2) question of war and peace; (3) peaceful co-existence and peaceful competition; (4) revolutionary potential of the national liberation movement; (5) government of National Democracy; (6) forms of transition to communism; (7) cult of personality; and (8) unity of the world communist movement. Peking’s stand was branded as dogmatic, disruptive, and causing a great damage to the cause of communism. The theoretical and practical line of Peking suffered from narrow nationalistic and chauvinistic distortions, said CPI. By this resolution the party again reaffirmed its alignment with Moscow.35

The report on organization explained first the causes leading to the split of the party. The figures from individual states of India, see Table XXXVI, except from Kerala all figures were available, indicated that of the total of 161,202 members in 1962 the CPI commanded in 1964 the support of 107,762, or 66.84 per cent, the CPI(M) only 40,392, or 25.06 per cent, while 13,048, or 8.10 per cent, remained undecided. The party had been registering a steady decline of its membership. At the time of the Fifth Amritsar Congress in 1958 this had been 218,532; at the time of the Sixth Congress in Vijayawada it had dropped to 178,717; and in December 1964 it was 158,210.36 The resolution then concentrated upon proposing new organizational methods to evolve a mass line for different front organizations and to guarantee a continuous guidance of and better co-ordination between the parliamentary and other wings of the party.

The congress adopted a number of other resolutions, among them one on Dange’s letters, which absolved him of the charges which had been levelled against him at the meeting of the National Council in April.37

The most important document passed, however, was the new programme of the party. The heart of the programme was con-
tained in section VIII, entitled the *National Democratic Revolution and the Path Forward*. The goal of the party was to lead the working people of India toward the establishment of a "proletarian statehood", a real, genuine democracy for carrying out socialist transformation. In order to embark upon the socialist road India must first complete the present stage of her revolution, which is anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and national-democratic.

To accomplish this, the following path of development was proposed by the programme as an alternative to the capitalist path of development pursued by the Congress: (1) eliminate the grip of foreign monopoly on the national economy; (2) expand the state sector into a powerful instrument to build a self-reliant national industry and economy; (3) break up the Indian monopolies which concentrate in their hands economic power in industry, commerce, banking and others; (4) eliminate power of the landlords and feudal remnants; introduce a radical agrarian reform.

All these measures would open a new path of progress which would represent an intermediate stage called a non-capitalist path of development. In that stage the main direction of the economy would be on such lines and the growth of capitalism would be so progressively restricted as to create the prerequisites of putting India upon the road to socialism.

The programme then posed the question which were the classes interested in carrying through such a plan of action and listed them as follows: (1) working class; (2) peasantry; (3) rising class of urban and rural intelligentsia; (4) national bourgeois, excluding its monopoly section.

In order to implement the above programme it would be necessary to build from the listed classes a *National Democratic Front*. Such a front was not in existence at the time of the congress, said the document, but it would be forged in the course of the national mass movements, "parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggles", which are aimed at isolating and defeating the forces of reaction and strive to bring about radical changes in the policies and set-up of the government necessary for the implementation of the above programme. The CPI would take the initiative to build such a *National Democratic Front* and start the national mass movement. The national
movement would "attain its countryside sweep and striking force when it embraces the broadest masses of peasantry and the agricultural labourers in the vast rural areas." 40

The working class in cities and urban areas had the responsibility of assisting the peasants and agricultural workers to build their mass organizations and develop their struggle as a part of the national campaign. This, said the document, "will bring into being the workers-peasant alliance which, together with the mobilization of the middle class and the intelligentsia will be the main driving force behind the National Democratic Front." 41

Addressing itself to the central problem, what would be the aim of these mass actions of the front, the programme outlined the following perspective:

"Developing out the joint actions of the mass organizations of workers, peasants, employees and agricultural workers, as well as of the Communist Party and other left and socialist parties, the National Democratic Front will draw into its ranks not only the masses following the Congress but also its progressive section.

As the National Democratic Front becomes ever more broad-based, militant and powerful in the course of the rising temper of the mass movement, it defeats the forces of reaction inside and outside the ruling party and comes to the position of taking governmental power into its own hands.

As the National Democratic Front is born out of struggles, mainly led by the working class alliance with the peasantry and the revolutionary middle class, along with whom the patriotic sections of the national bourgeoisie will play a positive role and become its component part, the front on assuming power will eliminate the grip of foreign monopoly and break Indian monopoly combines, carry out fully all the necessary land reforms and establish national democracy." 42

This is an important distinction from the programme of the CPI(M) which had visualized that a people's democratic front would lead directly to the establishment of a state of People's
Democracy. The rightist party, however, visualized the path of further development in the following way:

"The state (of National Democracy) will no longer be the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie developing capitalist economy.... The monopoly of power of the bourgeoisie will be ended.

The national democratic state in the hands of the National Democratic Front will be a transitional stage, in which power will be jointly exercised by all those classes which are interested in eradicating imperialist interests, routing the semi-feudal elements and breaking the power of the monopolies. In this class alliance the exclusive leadership of the working class is not yet established, though the exclusive leadership of the bourgeoisie no longer exists."

"As the government of the National Democratic Front and the class alliance it represents will be based on the worker-peasant alliance as its pivot, the working class will increasingly come to occupy the leading position in the alliance, as it is this class which is the conscious initiator of the National Democratic Front."43

This section of the programme had obviously been lifted from the documents of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). They had described in great detail this particular stage in the development of a revolution in which the correlation of forces had reached a tie, a half-way-house, in which the exclusive leadership of the old forces no longer exists while the exclusive leadership of the new forces is not yet established. This is known as the theory of two aspects of the state power.44

However, the Indonesian Communists under Aidit's leadership, had also solved the question of a further advance of the revolution from this dead-center-point to a complete domination of the government of national democracy by the Communist-led forces. They visualized the National Democratic Front organizing a powerful mass movement which gradually and in a peaceful manner would push out of the state organs the old forces and replace them with new forces. As Aidit had
formulated it, "the anti-popular aspects of political power are increasingly replaced by popular aspects, while the government's policies are increasingly shaped by the demands of the people".45

Also the CPI adopted this formulation in its new programme, suitably adjusted to Indian local conditions. The basic difference between the time-tables of the Indonesian and Indian revolutions, and the positions of the PKI and the CPI, was that while the Indonesian Communists had already been leading a national democratic front in the form of NASAKOM and shared power in the cabinet, the CPI had yet to build such a front, nothing to say about sharing power in the government.

However, the CPI would follow the path blazed by Aidit and his party:

"The slogan of setting up the National Democratic front and later the government of the NDF—the state of national democracy—has today the greatest mobilizing force. That is why we make it the central slogan of this period.

Such a state including patriotic sections of the national bourgeoisie acting under the constant pressure of the national mass movement from below, will be forced to act unitedly and implement the programme of the national development in a non-capitalist way; i.e. eliminating foreign monopoly, breaking Indian monopoly combines, carrying through radical agrarian reforms. Extending democracy to ensure the active participation of the working class in the economic and political life of the country. In this process the balance continuously shifts in favour of the working class and the workers-peasants alliance, paving the way for the leadership of the working class in the state, thereby creating the conditions for transition to socialism."46

It was exactly the basis of this formulation that the Aidit was to launch the September 30th Movement in Indonesia in 1965 in order to get the revolution of the dead center, carry the momentum further, eliminate from the cabinet the old forces and replace it by a NASAKOM cabinet in which his party would play the dominant role. The transition from the DWIKORA to the NASAKOM cabinet was to be executed peacefully
and almost succeeded. The attempt collapsed after its initial success because Aidit failed to act resolutely in the last and most decisive phase of the operation.47

Thus in adopting the Indonesian solution the CPI had a reasonably clear perspective of the individual stages of its road to power.

Another interesting aspect of the CPI programme was its attempt to enlist the left wing of the Congress into the process of destruction of this party and a gradual communization of India also on the Indonesian pattern. The KPI had succeeded in splitting the major nationalist and religious parties in Indonesia, and making the government ban other parties, in order to form with their centers and left-wings the grand national democratic coalition, the NASAKOM. The CPI formulated its goal of harnessing the Congress to the process of its own political death in the following manner:

"Centering around these differences, progressive and reactionary trends inside the Congress are in the process of formation. The formation of the National Democratic Front does not mean progressive parties merging with the Congress or entering into a formal alliance with the Congress. Nevertheless, no National Democratic Front would be real unless the vast mass following of the Congress and the progressive section of the Congress at various levels take their place in it. It is the task of the Communist Party to make ceaseless efforts to forge unity with the progressive forces within the Congress, directly and through common mass movement, to bring about a leftward shift in the policies of the government, to fight for the realization of the demands of the National Democratic Front."48

Section X of the programme of the CPI adopted at its Seventh Congress in Bombay was entitled the Programme of the National Democratic Government. The section explained in detail what policy such a government would follow, listing them under the headings of International Relations, State Structure, Industry and Commerce, Agriculture, Religions, Minorities, Tribal People, Education and Health, and Literature and Art. On the whole the National Democratic Government was visualized as a transitional state which would introduce the non-capitalist
path of development and put India upon the road first to socialism and then communism. It was drafted in mild terms and in fact was close to the policies for which the left-wing of the Congress Party had been clamouring; this was a move in order to facilitate the co-operation of the left wing of the Congress in the formation of the National Democratic Front. Obviously, beyond this State of National Democracy was visualized a state of People’s Democracy, which would perform similar functions as People’s Democracy conceptualized in the programme of the CPI(M) adopted in October 1964 in Calcutta. The CPI(M) had visualized the transitional state even in a milder form and defined its functions as merely giving aid and immediate relief to the people.

Section XI of the programme of the CPI was entitled the Struggle for Peaceful Path and its Development, and explained that the party would attempt to attain its objectives in a peaceful way:

"The Communist Party of India strives to achieve the establishment of national democracy and create conditions for the advance to the goal of establishment of socialism by peaceful means. By developing a powerful mass revolutionary movement, by winning a stable majority in Parliament, backed by such a movement, the working class and its allies will strive their utmost to overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and transform Parliament from an instrument serving the bourgeoisie into a genuine instrument of the people’s will for effecting a fundamental transformation in the economic, social and state structure.

The rallying and cohesion of the revolutionary forces of the working class and all working people and the expansion of mass revolutionary action is of decisive importance for winning a stable parliamentary majority, for the victory of the revolution.

The form of transition depends on the international situation and on specific internal conditions, mainly on the latter. The Communist Party and the working class work for creating and strengthening necessary conditions for the peaceful path to
socialism by developing broad-based popular struggles for the strengthening and extension of democracy; by curbing the power of the monopolistic big bourgeoisie and reactionaries and by isolating them; by giving a resolute rebuff to the opportunist elements; by ceaselessly developing class struggles of the workers, peasants and other democratic sections of the people against the forces of reaction." \(^{49}\)

This perspective was adopted almost verbatim from the party's previous programme and the *Statement of 81 Communist and Workers' Parties* of December 1960. The most important part of the next section, which outlined the perspective of the non-peaceful development of the revolution, should the above peaceful process go wrong, was exactly identical with the perspective put forth by the CPI(M) at its Calcutta Congress a month earlier. The CPI repeated after the CPI(M) that

"It needs to be always borne in mind that the ruling classes will not relinquish their power voluntarily. Experience shows that they defy the will of the people and seek to suppress it by lawless and violent methods. It is therefore necessary for the revolutionary forces to so orientate themselves and their work that they can face up to all contingencies, to any twists and turns in the political life of the country." \(^{50}\)

In its concluding section the programme of the CPI declared allegiance to the principles of Marxism-Leninism which the party attempted to apply to the specific conditions existing in India. In this task the party would be guided by the "collectively worked-out general line" of the world communist movement as expressed in the Declaration of 1957 and the Statement of 1960.

In view of the fact that the commitment to the strategy of peaceful transition was now incorporated into the programme of the party the congress amended the constitution adopted at the Fifth Congress, held in Amritsar in April 1958, by deleting the section dealing with this problem. \(^{51}\) Thus the congresses of both Communist Parties amended their constitutions in the same fashion in this specific regard.

Thus at the end of December 1964 the rank and file Communists in India faced two Communist Parties and two programmes to choose from. Perhaps a short summary of the main
similarities and differences of the two programmes might be useful to restore the perspective.

1) both parties followed identical goals: first socialism, as a transitory stage to communism;

2) in the existing stage the Indian revolution was going through the national democratic phase for the CPI, while for the CPI(M) it was a people's democratic stage; the revolution was of people's agrarian character;

3) the main forces of the revolution in this stage were for the CPI the working class, the peasantry, the middle classes and the national bourgeoisie; for the CPI(M) it were the working class, the peasantry, the middle classes and the non-monopolistic section of the national bourgeoisie;

4) the instrument of the revolution, according to the CPI, would be the National Democratic Front, which would consist of the main forces of the revolution; for the CPI(M) it would be the People's Democratic Front;

5) on co-operation with the national bourgeoisie as represented by the Congress Party the CPI held that it would include into the National Democratic Front its left wing while it would not enter into a united front with the Congress as a whole; the CPI(M) would not include the left wing of the Congress into the People's Front, but would not hesitate to co-operate and form united front with it on individual issues;

6) both programmes agreed that the fronts would be forged in the course of protracted revolutionary mass actions;

7) after their establishment the fronts would continue organizing nation-wide mass actions, into which the peasantry would be increasingly drawn, and which would have two different results:

a) The CPI visualized that the National Democratic Front, a coalition in which the left wing of the Congress would participate, would come to power at the center through elections or through the split of the Congress in which the left wing would need the support of its partners of the front and would bring them into the union government to share power. This would be a coalition government of National Democracy, putting India on the road to socialism through the non-capitalist path of development. Obviously, this strategy would apply also on the state level. However, such state governments would not be able to
carry out the tasks of the Government of National Democracy as these applied only to the union level. They would most probably implement a programme of the immediate platform of action as outlined in the Political Resolution.

(b) The CPI(M) put forward another perspective. Once the People's Democratic Front, or merely a united front of the leftists was established, it would generate such a mass support that it would assume power in individual states of the union and implement there a minimum programme of giving an immediate relief to the people. Only when the central authority of the union government would be sufficiently weakened and the governments of the left united fronts in power in many states of India would a Government of People's Democracy come into power at the center to implement its programme which would open the road toward a socialist transformation.

Thus the basic difference between the CPI and CPI(M) was that the former visualized the possibility of coming to power at the center through the formation of a coalition government with the left wing of the Congress. This perspective applied also to the establishment of non-Congress State Governments which would carry out a minimum platform. On the other hand, the CPI(M) visualized the road to power at the center through the formation of the governments of the left united front on the state level. This perspective was more realistic as the establishment of the Left-United Front Governments, dominated by the CPI(M), in West Bengal and Kerala in the 1967 elections, and in West Bengal again in 1969, was to prove;

(8) both parties were committed to the use of peaceful means in their drive to power. Regarding the non-peaceful perspective both parties used identical formulations to the effect that they would orient their work and prepare their membership even for a revolutionary action;

(9) once in power, the CPI maintained that its Government of National Democracy would implement the non-capitalist path of development, for which was necessary an extensive economic assistance from the Soviet Union and integration of India into the trade pattern of the Moscow bloc. The CPI(M) rejected the concept of the non-capitalist path of development and insisted on developing a self-reliant economic base.

In the final analysis then the principal difference between the
CPI and the CPI(M) was that the former aimed at communizing India in co-operation with the left-wing of the Congress Party and the assistance of the Soviet Union, while the latter hoped to attain the same goal in opposition to the Congress and without excessive dependence upon the Soviet Union.

However, the rank and file members rallied behind the CPI or the CPI(M) not mainly because of a well reasoned agreement with, or rejection of, one or the other programme. A common man was swamped under tons of paper and resolutions which he had no time to read and digest, and a volume of argument which he could hardly understand. At the grass-root level of the party organization the alignments were formed not on the basis of programmes but personal loyalties and ties and even communal affinities or cleavages.52

Enter: The Samyukta Socialist Party

Another development which took place during 1963-64, as a result of China's attack upon India in October 1962, was the merger between the Praja Socialist Party and the Socialist Party. The latter was also known as the Lohia Socialist Party, which had been established by Dr. Rammanohar Lohia on December 28, 1955 following his expulsion from the PSP on July 21 of that year as a result of his serious disagreement with the Executive Committee of the PSP.

The great national crisis which swept over the country in the wake of the Himalayan conflict rekindled sentiments of patriotism and of the need for national integration to unify the badly divided country. Within the PSP, which had originated in the merger of the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party and the Indian Socialist Party, these feelings expressed themselves by calls not only for co-operation with the Congress Party but return into this maternal body from which the splinter socialist groups had separated themselves in the past. While in the past this division had been justified, the current crisis demanded the closing of ranks, building the sinews of national power and strengthening of the Congress Party as the premier national organization.

The main promoter of co-operation with the Congress Party and the government was Asoka Mehta, one of the founders of the PSP and its former Chairman, who had resigned from this
post in June 1968. On September 4, 1963 it was announced that Mehta had accepted an appointment as one of four principal leaders of the Indian delegation to the Eighteenth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Moreover, on September 26 it was announced that Mehta had been appointed Deputy Chairman of the Indian Planning Commission. Both positions had been offered to him by Premier Nehru.

The acceptance of these two appointments brought into the open an internal conflict within the PSP precisely over the question of co-operation with the Congress and the Government or with other left parties. The national executive of the PSP discussed the problem and appointments for two days and on September 26 decided by 14 to 5 votes that Mehta should not have accepted them as they contradicted the line adopted by the party at its National Conference, held in Bhopal in June 1963. At that time the party had adopted a policy of determined opposition against the Congress and no co-operation with other opposition parties. Mehta's action was defended by Chandra Sekhar, PSP member of the Lok Sabha, who argued that the Planning Commission was an independent body and joining it was quite different from joining the government; he resigned from the executive in protest on the same day.

In the meantime another trend within the PSP, this calling for its merger with Lohia's party, had gained a dominant influence. The movement for unity had been initiated on December 31, 1962 when the legislative wings of the two parties in Uttar Pradesh adopted a resolution to the effect that they would merge in order to establish a United Socialist Party of India. The danger posed to the country by the Chinese invasion, the growing influence of communism in the country, and the weakening leadership of the Congress Party had been listed as the main reasons for the merger. The unity talks on the national level were initiated on January 4, 1963 when the Central Secretariat of the PSP invited Raj Narain Singh, Chairman of the Socialist Party, to New Delhi for the purpose. The talks were successful and the national executive of the PSP decided on January 31, 1963 that all preparations would be made for the merger.

A serious setback for the unification moves on the national level appeared when the pioneering group, the United Socialist
Party in Uttar Pradesh, had split into two constituent units and both decided to put up candidates for the by-election in the Farrukhabad Constituency for a vacant seat in the Lok Sabha. In view of this the national executive of the PSP decided on May 5 that the prospect for a unified party was bleak and that no useful purpose would be served by any further unity talks.

A new phase in negotiations was initiated on January 28, 1964 when Dr. Lohia proposed that his party should merge with the PSP unconditionally and without insisting any longer upon a joint manifesto. The national executive of the PSP accepted this proposal on February 16 and a joint committee appointed by the two parties reached an agreement on February 23. The decision of the PSP leadership to merge with the Socialist Party was then ratified by the PSP Convention held on May 18, 1964. As the next step both parties nominated members of an ad hoc national committee of the united party, which on June 6-7 elected S. M. Joshi as Chairman of the new party. Joshi had been Chairman of the PSP since June 10, 1963 following the resignation of Mehta from that position. Raj Narain Singh, Chairman of the Socialist Party, was elected General Secretary of the new united party and Prem Basin, General Secretary of the PSP, was elected one of its three Joint Secretaries. The combination became known as the Samyukta Socialist Party.

The merger was strongly opposed by many prominent members of the PSP who were led by Asoka Mehta. In fact, Mehta had been expelled from the party on February 15, 1964 because of his acceptance of the two appointments from the hands of Premier Nehru mentioned above. As the PSP ceased to exist on June 7 it was announced in Lucknow on June 11, 1964 that Asoka Mehta had joined the Congress Party and that some 1,000 PSP members and his supporters all over the country had refused to enter into the Samyukta Party and followed Mehta's lead into the Congress. In some places, like in Trivandrum, some members refused to merge with the Samyukta as well as follow Mehta into the Congress and continued their independent PSP organizations.

This, however, was not the end of the travails of the PSP. Many leading members of the party had a second look at the merger and, interestingly enough, initiated a move toward separation and re-establishment of their old party at the very
Founding Conference of the SSP, opened in Banaras on January 29, 1965. After an acrimonious debate on January 31 the leader of the PSP group, H. V. Kamath, read out a memorandum signed by 12 of the 14-member PSP delegation to the ad hoc unification committee which had been set up the previous year to carry out the merger. The memorandum said that the merger of 1964 was tentative and that in view of this the PSP had decided not to go through with it. After this declaration the 12 leaders, followed by 625 delegates out of some 800 who represented the PSP, left the conference hall to hold a separate conclave. This meeting was presided over by S. A. Dwivedi; it declared the PSP-SSP merger annulled and unanimously resolved to revive the party units on all levels. Prem Basin was elected an interim Secretary General. The major factor in the separation was a belated realization that the outlooks of the two parties were really not reconcilable. While the "primary duty of the SSP was to overthrow the Congress" even in co-operation with the Communists, the PSP "considered itself as having an uncompromising opposition to both Communist Parties".

In the meantime, however, the SSP conference refuted the charges of Kamath that the merger was tentative. It said that the Indian Electoral Commission had accepted the unification as a fact, had assigned a new symbol to the unified party and therefore the merger was final; in view of this PSP was no separate legal and political entity.

While after the Banaras conclave the PSP rushed to reestablish itself as an independent entity and regain control over the old local and state committees, which in many places was successful, it was too late to accomplish this in Kerala. The reason was that one of the 14 PSP delegates to the ad hoc unification committee, K. Chandrasekharan, who was from Kerala, refused to return to the old fold and retained a substantial portion of the old PSP membership within the organizations of the SSP in Kerala. This was a significant development which weakened the democratic camp in Kerala and led to an electoral alignment of the SSP with the CPI(M) in the mid-term elections. This was another example of the vacillating and rather erratic behaviour of the PSP, another swing of the pendulum to the left and then its return to the old position, which in its phase on the left had always proved immensely beneficial to the communist movement.
fact, some early successes of the CPI in Kerala had been mainly due to the willingness of the PSP to be drawn into co-operation with it. The swing of the national leadership of the PSP into the merger with the Socialist Party had almost liquidated the PSP in Kerala and at the same time provided the CPI(M) with a powerful electoral ally in the form of the SSP.

In December 1964, on the eve of the next elections into the Kerala State Assembly, the division of the Communist Party and the Praja Socialist Party on the national level had been completed. This division soon split these two parties in Kerala, where the Congress had already been divided since the defeat of Sankar’s Government on September 8, 1964.

The dissident Congressmen held their first convention in Kottayam on October 9, 1964, where they established a new political party under the name of the Kerala Congress. They would, however, retain the constitution of the Congress Party. The convention adopted a political resolution which declared that the aim of the Kerala Congress was the establishment of democratic socialism in the country and elimination of corruption from the government. The convention also elected a 25-member committee, with K. M. George as its President.

Kerala was thus ready for an unusual spectacle in which the opposing factions of the three principal political parties would combat each other during the electoral campaign.

NOTES

1 The main issues and the implications of the schism for the Indian Communists are discussed in Victor M. Fic, The Strategy of Peaceful Transition to Communism in India, (The Nachiketa Publications: Bombay, 1969), Chapters VII, IX and X.


5 The New Situation and Our Tasks, Speech by Ajoy Ghosh as Amended and Adopted by the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of India, Vijayawada, April 7-16, 1961, (The Communist Party of India: New Delhi, no date, 1961?). See also The National Democratic Front for National Democratic Tasks, Political Resolution Adopted by the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of India, Vijayawada, April 7-16, 1961, (The Communist Party of India: New Delhi, no date, 1961?).
These developments are discussed in great detail in the *Political-Organizational Report*, entitled “Fight Against Revisionism”, Adopted in Calcutta at the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India (M), October 31-November 7, 1964, (Published by E. M. S. Namboodiripad on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India, from Press Road, Trivandrum, Kerala: Printed by Samir Dasgupta at Ganashakti Printers, Calcutta, December 1965), pp. 16-7.


13 The events leading to this meeting of the Council as well as the developments at the meeting itself are discussed in *The Political-Organizational Report*, “The Fight Against Revisionism”, adopted at the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India, Calcutta, October 31-November 7, 1964. (op. cit.), pp. 49-62.

14 The controversy was not closed and more material from the National Archives of India was brought out against Dange. See, Muzaffar Ahmed, *S. A. Dange and the National Archives*, (Vanguard Publishers: Calcutta, July 1964).


18 *Loc. cit.*


22 The Programme of the Communist Party of India. Adopted at the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India, Calcutta, October 31-November 7, 1964. (Published by the Communist Party of India, Calcutta, June 1966), p. 34.
23 Ibid., pp. 37-45.
24 Ibid., p. 53.
25 Ibid., p. 54.
29 Ibid., Volume I. Documents, p. 67.
30 Ibid., p. 30.
31 Ibid., pp. 69-70.
32 Ibid., p. 71.
33 Ibid., pp. 73-4.
34 Ibid., pp. 74-6.
36 Ibid., p. 120.
37 Ibid., pp. 196-9.
38 Ibid., pp. 1-60.
39 Ibid., p. 39.
40 Loc. cit.
41 Ibid., p. 40.
42 Ibid., pp. 40-1.
43 Ibid., p. 41.
48 Proceedings of the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India, Volume I, Documents, (op. cit.), p. 44.
49 Ibid., pp. 56-7.
The policies and programme of the CPI(M) were further elaborated upon by E. M. S. Namboodiripad in *The Programme Explained*, (The Communist Party of India (Marxist): Calcutta, December 1966). A comparison of the programmes of the two parties was made by B. T. Ranadive, *The Two Programmes: Marxist and Revisionist*, (The Communist Party of India (Marxist): Calcutta, December 1966).
CHAPTER VIII

BREAKDOWN OF TRADITIONAL ALIGNMENTS

The mid-term elections held in Kerala in March 1965 proved an extraordinary event by any standard. Given the split of the Congress Party, the Communist Party and the division between the SSP and the PSP, the contestants concentrated more fire upon combating the rival wings of their own parties, to win legitimacy and political legacy of their predecessors, instead of fighting traditional enemies. It was a test for all, in which the goal of each group was to demonstrate that it could survive as a viable political entity, establish its identity and carve out for itself from the electorate a share as large as possible. Because of this, the main line of battle was not drawn between the Communists and the Congress as in the past; now the battle field was divided into subsidiary lines in which the Communists combated their own comrades from the rival party while the Congressmen and the PSP cheerfully fought their own kind. The dominant feature of the 1965 elections was an intra-party, instead of an inter-party, confrontation with the result that none of the contestants could win the majority of seats in the State Assembly and form a new government. And as usual, Presidential Rule was the answer to the ensuing political crisis.

This breakdown of the traditional lines dividing the main political forces in the state ended an era of inertia which had dominated the politics in Kerala since the dismissal of Namboodiripad's government in July 1959. It released a tremendous vitality which opened unprecedented opportunities for the formation of new alignments out of the existing chaos and exceeding fragmentation. It was the CPI (M), under Namboodiripad's leadership, which was to forge a new dominant combination of the left forces which propelled him to power for the second time in a decade in the general elections of 1967.
The first party to initiate preparations for the coming mid-term elections, to be held on March 4, 1965, was the CPI(M). The Calcutta Congress had decided that the electoral strategy would be formulated at meetings of the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee, to be held in Trichur, Kerala, early in January 1965, the latter convened for January 4. Accordingly, the leading members of the party arrived in Trichur on December 29, 1964, and in the early hours of December 30 were arrested by the police. Among the arrested men in Trichur were P. Sundarayya, P. Ramamurthy, A. K. Gopalan, M. Basavapunniah and Harkishan Singh Surjeet. This was a serious blow to the just established party.

Later it was announced in New Delhi that on December 30, 1964 over 500 members of the CPI (M) had been arrested in a nation-wide operation under the Defence of India Rules. The majority of arrests had been in Kerala, Madras, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. Those who had been arrested in Madras State included M. R. Venkataraman, Secretary of Madras State unit of the CPI (M), and two members of the Lok Sabha, R. Umanath and K. Anandan Nambiar. Among those detained in Andhra Pradesh were T. Nagi Reddi and Gunthur Bapanayya, leader of the CPI(M) in the State Legislative Assembly and his deputy, three members of the Lok Sabha and eight members of the State Assembly.

Of the total cadres of the CPI (M) arrested 130 had been detained in Kerala, 130 in Andhra Pradesh, 78 in Madras, 53 in Maharashtra, 39 in West Bengal, 32 in the Punjab, 26 in Gujarat, 13 in Assam, 9 in Delhi, 7 in Rajasthan, 3 in Madhya Pradesh, 2 in Jammu and Kashmir and 1 in Bihar. The arrests continued during December 30 and 31 with the result that on the latter date the total came to some 660 persons, on January 1 to some 700, and by January 5, 1965 the total reached 754 communist cadres.

An interesting aspect of these arrests was the fact that the men who had played a major role in drafting the programme of the CPI (M), E. M. S. Namboodiripad and Jyoti Basu, had been spared the ordeal. In explaining this, indications were made that the mere membership in the CPI (M), or even a leading
position within its organs, had not been by themselves the determining factors in the detention. The example of the two undetained leaders was cited to show that only cadres whose activities had assumed dangerous proportions had been arrested.

The first mention of reasons for the arrests came from Home Minister of the Central Government G. L. Nanda, who said in Hyderabad on December 30 that the action had not been connected with any special development but had to be taken against forces trying to undermine the security of the nation. However, the main explanation came in his nation-wide broadcast on January 1, 1965, reported the next day by all newspapers.

The Home Minister first referred to the emergence of the left wing within the Communist Party of India and then said that during the attack of China upon India in October 1962 Peking had called upon the CPI to stage an uprising and thus develop a "pincer movement" which would press the government from without as well as within. At that time, said the Minister, the left wing of the party had been too weak to respond to that call and organize an effective action. It was on the basis of this experience that both Peking and the left wing of the CPI had proceeded to improve and co-ordinate their policies. In reviewing further the development of the left wing the Minister said that it had been at the Tenali Convention that the left faction had separated itself and established a new party, and that there were reasons to believe that this had been done under the inspiration of Peking. According to him the new party had to serve as an instrument for creating conditions of instability in the country and to promote China's design against India. He further said that there was reason to believe that the CPI (M) had close links with the Chinese, from whom it drew ideological inspiration and received "other forms of support". On the border question the party's propaganda followed faithfully the lines supplied by the Chinese Government. The party had been circulating widely a number of documents of foreign origin which were anti-Indian and pro-Chinese. The Minister further charged that the party had been consistently putting out Chinese propaganda justifying China's territorial claim in Ladakh and questioning the validity of the McMahon line. In flagrant disregard of facts it had absolved China of invading Indian territory.
The Minister then referred to the VII Congress of the party and said that it represented the landmark in the evolution of the left Communist Party as an anti-national organization. The congress had adopted a programme which espoused Peking's concept of "people's democracy" against parliamentary democracy existing in India. The congress, said the Minister, had laid stress on the necessity of pursuing a non-peaceful path to socialism, and it had characterized the peaceful path in India as a self-deception and deception of others. The most serious charge against the CPI (M) made by the Minister was that the party had amended its constitution by dropping the Preamble which had been adopted in Amritsar in 1958 and which emphasized the possibility of peaceful transition to communism.

Another serious charge of the Minister was his contention that the Calcutta Congress had introduced certain changes in the organizational structure of the party in order to create a monolithic organization suited for subversive and conspiratorial activities. He made an astounding declaration to the effect that the programme adopted in Calcutta had a "striking similarity" to the Political Resolution adopted at the II Congress of the CPI in 1948, after which the party had embarked upon a path of violent revolution to overthrow the government. He said that some important leaders of the CPI (M) had noted with satisfaction that unlike at the time of the Telengana uprising in 1948-9 there now existed a communist power as a neighbour which would make revolutionary activities in India more favourable. The objective of the party, said the Minister, was to promote an internal revolution and synchronize it with a fresh attack of China; this would place India into a kind of pincer movement and destroy democratic institutions, as had been planned in 1962.

The Minister said that after the Calcutta Congress the authorities had decided not to take an immediate action but watch for some time the activities of the party to see how the policies adopted would be implemented. But during the past two months the authorities had received reliable information about the nature of these activities. From that information it clearly emerged that the leaders of the party had been preparing the rank and file membership for an armed revolution and guerilla warfare. The leaders had been exhorting their followers
to organize massive agitation designed to create an atmosphere of disorder in which the party could resort to violent methods. Various units of the CPI (M) had been instructed to strengthen their organization for illegal underground operations which had been described as the "technical apparatus for revolutionary action".

It had been these mounting activities, organized on the basis of the ideology and programme adopted at the Calcutta Congress, that made the government consider whether action against the CPI (M) could be safely postponed. However, the conclusion was inescapable that the authorities would court a serious risk regarding the internal and external security of the country if they failed to take immediate action. The authorities could not allow the party, which was an instrument of China, to go about weakening the will of the people to resist aggression, dislodge India's defense efforts, and disorganize the economic life of the country.

The Minister assured his listeners that no narrow consideration of party interests had even remotely influenced this decision of the authorities to take action against the CPI (M). The government had given very serious consideration to the risk of the action being misunderstood as directed against the mid-term elections in Kerala to be held on March 4, 1965, but had decided to take the action because of the vital interests of national security, which overshadowed the importance of the planned elections in Kerala. It had not been a sudden or premature decision; in fact, the government had been making only a sparing use of the emergency powers. However, the activities of the left party had been constantly watched and when it became obvious that the worst fears were justified only then the final decision was made.

Minister Nanda justified the arrests of the leaders of the CPI (M) on two main grounds. First, on the basis of the policies and programme adopted by the Calcutta Congress; second, on the basis of the documents which came into the possession of the authorities and then the actual activities of the detained men. While the programme, constitution and political resolution which had been adopted at Calcutta and referred to by the Minister were public documents, no documentary evidence was offered by the Minister regarding the second justification for
the arrests. This was amended on January 4, 1965 when it was stated in New Delhi that a secret document came into the possession of the authorities which showed that the left communist elements called for changing the existing organization of the party to carry out a revolutionary activity in the country. The document in question was a booklet in Bengali, entitled Bartaman Paristhithi O Communist Partyr Karmaniti (tr. The Present Situation and the Communist Party's Policy), which had been distributed clandestinely.

The document explained first the posture on the question of the border dispute with China. It said that the border dispute had given an opportunity to the government to incite the people against China in the name of war, although since the border clash in 1962 there had virtually been no war on the border. The government came under a sharp attack also because it had been receiving military equipment from the imperialist countries, the United States and Great Britain, in the name of war. In explaining this posture the document said that the slogan of nationalism, which had been raised by the capitalists and bourgeoisie, was opposed to internationalism which was the main viewpoint of the proletariat. The strategy of the proletariat was to wage a revolutionary war against the capitalists and bourgeoisie which co-operate with their counterparts in other capitalist countries. In the moment the proletariat deviates from this policy it reduces itself into a stooge of the bourgeoisie. To the working class nationalism means a national revolution in its own country, supplemented by an international revolution. The India-China border dispute, said the document, must be seen and judged from this class angle.

The document then touched upon the experience of the communists in Kerala. It said that a state power cannot be preserved without the force of arms and that the past communist government in Kerala, having been bereft of such armed power, had been destined to die at the hands of the ruling bourgeoisie. Despite this experience the party had failed to take a proper lesson.

Next, the document reviewed the evolution of the split within the CPI since the VI Congress, held in Vijayawada in 1961. It said that the main political line which had been adopted at that congress decided to support the government and oppose
the reactionary forces in the country. It had been further decided to strengthen the progressive policies of the government and to turn them gradually towards the left. This, implied the document, was an abdication of revolutionary activity. The next major step in the deterioration of the revolutionary spirit of the party had been made at the February 1963 meeting of the National Council, where adopted resolutions accused China of aggression against India and supported the policies of the government on the border conflict. Thus the revolutionary spirit of the party had deteriorated and the party had been transformed into a nationalist organization; any member who challenged the correctness of the resolutions had been branded as an 'ultra-leftist'.

The document then said that the existing leadership of the CPI had created a rift within the party because it had abandoned the policy of democratic centralism. This had deprived the members of the party organizations on all levels of their right to criticize the policies and participate in the policy making. This state of internal organization of the party had destroyed its revolutionary character. The policy of class collaboration, parliamentarianism and electioneering had reduced the party to an organization with a middle class outlook and provided scope for many opportunists, eager to sit in the State Legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha, to join the party. This predominance of parliamentary policies had polluted the revolutionary spirit of the party, which contradicted the basic aspirations of the people who were animated with a revolutionary fervour.

Because of these developments the old leadership stood in the way of the progress of the party, and new forces must take over in the new historical circumstances. This was an inescapable verdict of the historical evolution. In the existing situation it was the duty of every Marxist-Communist worker to re-establish the party on true Marxist principles, introduce revolutionary processes within the party organizations and create a new revolutionary leadership. For this purpose, said the document, it was necessary to initiate discussion among the party members in order to evolve a new party programme along the following lines:

(1) building up a revolutionary party which has as its goal the dictatorship of the proletariat, and which is reorganized and re-established on the basis of class struggle and true com-
munist principles; (2) complete alliance with communist internationalism; (3) avoiding a defamatory attitude toward all fraternal communist parties in the world; (4) forming small primary cells instead of the present branch committees, especially in class organizations; (5) forming different cells according to necessity in greater mass organizations and co-operate with them; (6) forming link committees of the cells on regional basis also; (7) maintaining the branch committees during the intervening period; (8) changing the class structure of the party; (9) trying to bring into the party field workers who have experience in agitational methods; (10) rejecting omnibus policy of indiscriminately increasing the strength of the basic members; (11) maintaining the party office and guiding its functions openly, but arrange its work in such a manner that the link is not disrupted at any stage; (12) change the present organization of the party into a revolutionary party on the basis of Marxism. The principal objective of the revolutionary party would be to struggle against revisionism which would require: (a) spread of Marxist education within the party; (b) initiation of comparative discussions on revisionism; (c) analyzing the picture in respect of India, manifestation and character of revisionism and placing it before the party for discussion; (d) removing the revisionist leadership and, if necessary, turning it out; (e) giving up parliamentary policies. This meant to oppose and change the current that had been set in motion within the party by parliamentary policies. This does not, however, mean boycott of parliamentary institutions. In the existing stage, said the document, the parliamentary forum must be utilized as much as possible, i.e. the work in the State Legislative Assemblies, Lok Sabha and other self-governing institutions. But instead of bestowing all attention on them steps would have to be taken to develop a complementary work, which means that the stress would be laid mainly upon the work in the mass movements.

Letter from Viyyur Jail

The answer to the charges of the Home Minister against the CPI (M) was not long in coming. It was in the form of a letter of 5 arrested members of the Polit Bureau, written in Central Jail, Viyyur, Trichur, on January 7, 1965. The letter was
addressed to Premier Lal Bahadur Shastri and signed by P. Sundarayya, P. Ramamurthy, A. K. Gopalan, M. Basavapunniah, and Harkishan Singh Surjeet.

The letter opened with a statement to the effect that in the early hours of December 30, 1964 the undersigned had been arrested at Trichur, where they had gone to attend a meeting of the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee of their party. "You must certainly be aware", continued the letter, "that these meetings... had been fixed in Kerala with a view to help the preparations that our party was making to fight the forthcoming elections to the Kerala State Assembly. The whole world knows that the Congress Party faces prospects of a defeat in these elections and that our party will play the leading role in bringing about that defeat." In fact, said that letter, in the face of this situation the Government of India had tried to avoid the elections by first constituting a Cabinet Sub-Committee to see if the Constitution could be amended in order to avoid all mid-term elections. But faced with the opposition from all quarters it had retreated.

The letter then took point by point the charges of the Home Minister against their party.

First on the agenda came the problem of the non-peaceful path. The letter said that the Home Minister had charged that in Calcutta the party had cast off the peaceful road to socialism as a deception of the people. "A more brazenfaced lie cannot be imagined," retorted the arrested men. "We challenge Shri Nanda to point out any passage in either the Draft Programme, or Political Organizational Report, or any resolution or document adopted at the Congress to substantiate his claim." The letter then cited verbatim the pertinent sections of the programme which reaffirmed the commitment of the party to a policy of peaceful transition and said that "It should be also stated that a similar formulation is found in the Draft Programme of the Dangeite National Council and that their Bombay Congress did not change the formulation in any way."

Next the letter replied to the charges that the Calcutta Congress had significantly amended the constitution of the party by leaving out the formulation about the peaceful possibilities of transition. The letter said that it was at the Palghat Congress, held in 1956, that a decision had been made to pre-
pare a new programme of the party and incorporate into it a section on the possibility of attaining the transition to communism in a peaceful manner. However, it proved impossible to prepare a new programme of the party by the next congress held in Amritsar in April 1958, and therefore "in the absence of a Programme it was decided to insert the Preamble into the Constitution which defined the aims and objectives and the means for achieving them." 7 At the VI Congress in Vijayawada in 1961 it also proved impossible to adopt a new programme, and it was only at the VII Congress held in Calcutta in 1964 that the formulation was taken out of the Preamble of the Constitution and placed into the new programme, where it belonged. "Now that the Party had adopted a full-fledged and detailed Programme," said the letter, "which clearly defines the aims and objectives as well as means..., the need for the stop-gap arrangement by the way of a Preamble to the Constitution disappeared and hence it was deleted from the Constitution to restore it to its normal form and content at Calcutta." 8

The letter further denied charges that the Calcutta Congress had decided on certain amendments in its organizational structure of the party to create a monolithic organisation suited to conspiratorial and subversive activities, and explained what really had happened at Calcutta:

"... It is remarkable that the Home Minister who asserted about this change in the character of the Party structure dared not refer to any concrete amendments.

The fact is that all along, the highest organs of the party functioning between two party Congresses were the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee. At Amritsar it was decided to have, apart from these two bodies, a new body of 101 members called the National Council in order to have wider consultation and discussions which was to meet once in six months. A similar arrangement was provided at state and district levels.

In practice this was found difficult and unworkable. Meetings of the National Council took place at intervals of over 8 months. In practice, the decisions were taken by a small Secretariat. The organizational sub-committee set up by the National Council in 1961 had recommended the scrapping of the three-tier system
and reverted to the earlier two-tier system. The Vijayawada Congress could not take up the amendments to the Constitution.

It was mainly this amendment that was carried out at the Calcutta Congress. As a matter of fact, the constitutional amendment provided for a Central Committee whose membership was fixed at 41—larger than the Central Executive Committee—the interval between whose meetings should not exceed three months.

At the same time, the amendment also provided for a plenum annually which would be a much wider body than even the old National Council consisting of the members of the Central Committee and representatives of State Committees for discussions on important political questions.

Thus the constitutional amendments provided for more democratic functioning than before and for minimising the need for a small body like the Polit Bureau taking important decisions. Where is the question of any provision "suited to conspiratorial and subversive activities" in all this?...

Denying further the charges that the Calcutta Congress had adopted conspiratorial methods the letter said that the draft of the new programme had been published and sent to all party units seven months before the convocation of the congress. Comments and criticism received from these units had also been published and distributed within the party. The draft and its criticism had been then discussed at local, district and state conferences which had suggested amendments. These were then taken into consideration at the Calcutta Congress, discussed, and final amendments agreed upon incorporated into the new programme. "Do all these show conspiratorial methods or the conscious attempt to develop the widest democracy—a thing unknown in the ruling Congress Party?", blasted back the arrested leaders.

Next the letter answered "another puerile argument" advanced by the Home Minister to the effect that the programme accepted in Calcutta was in fact a Peking's prescription of People's Democracy as distinguished from the parliamentary democracy existing in India.

"... it is difficult to match the naivite of this argument of the Home Minister."
Kerala: Yenan of India

Does he not know that the Communist Party has always accepted the establishment of People's Democracy as its immediate programme long before the People's Republic of China was established? Even when the Palghat Congress kept in abeyance the then current Programme, the aim of People's Democracy was affirmed in a separate chapter of the political resolution adopted at the Congress.

Does Shri Nanda not know that the Amritsar Preamble to the Constitution, approvingly referred to by him in his broadcast, also reiterates this aim of People's Democracy? The recent congress at Vijayawada did not change this and the Preamble which defined the aim continued to be valid. Where does the question arise of our Seventh Congress suddenly accepting Peking's prescription of People's Democracy?..."11

As the next point the arrested men answered the charges of the Home Minister about the anti-national stand of their party on the India-China border question. Their letter said that as early as 1959, at the meeting of the National Council held at Meerut, the party had adopted a resolution to the effect that the area south of the McMahon Line, which had been under the effective administration of India, should remain within India. As a matter of fact, said the letter, this position had been reiterated in the alternative resolution by P. Ramamurthy at the meeting of the National Council which had been held at the end of October 1962, after the Chinese forces had crossed the McMahon Line. However, the acceptance by the party of "the Indo-China boundary as disclosed by the Government of India", said the letter, does not solve the problem. We have to reckon

"... with the existence of a dispute with China over the boundary. It is our firm conviction that no military solution can ever be found to this problem and that a political solution by peaceful negotiations will have to be found. This we urge in the interest of our own people and the country.

True, China has not accepted the Colombo Proposals in toto; what is to be done under the circumstances? Statesmanship does not consist in drifting and allowing the deadlock to continue. For, quite apart from the larger cause of peace and Afro-
Asian solidarity, the continuation of the deadlock brings harm to our own country and people.

The Tenali convention met when it was reported that Sirimavo Bandaranayake had enquired whether India would consider it a fulfilment of Colombo proposals if the Chinese withdrew the civilian posts in the demilitarized 20 kilometer area in Ladakh. There were indications that the Government of India was inclined to agree.

In the circumstances, the Tenali Convention noted these developments and urged the Government of India to take the initiative by directly contacting the Chinese Government and explore the possibilities of starting negotiations on this or any other basis acceptable to both parties.

Only a prejudiced person, or who is deliberately bent upon creating prejudice, can see in this resolution an attempt to blame anyone. Nothing of the kind. What we were and are interested in is breaking of the deadlock. India has diplomatic relations with China. Then what is wrong and dishonourable in exploring a mutually acceptable basis for starting negotiations through these diplomatic channels? On the other hand, we are convinced that such an initiative on India's part will add to its prestige as a nation seeking ways and means of breaking the deadlock and ensuring peace...”

What is the alternative, asked the letter. It had been the endless missions to the United States, England and other countries seeking arms, and missions from Britain and America to India which tell her what she required or not for defence. In the bargain, said the letter, the diversion of a thousand crores into military expenditure had resulted in a spiral of inflation, rising prices and intensification of poverty for the common people. And yet, in spite of all this

...it is admitted on all hands that the problem has no military solution.

Shri Gulzarilal Nanda’s dubbing us as anti-national and shutting us up behind prison bars will not deter us and we will continue to urge this course. We know that some day or other the Government of India will come to the realization of the need for a peaceful negotiated political settlement, and
when that realization comes, the Government will explore the basis acceptable and honourable to both for starting negotiations. Voices in support of this as the only sensible course have been raised during the last few months from Sarvodaya leaders like Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Jai Prakash Narayan to others including Congress members of Parliament. It would be the height of absurdity to dub them anti-national and pro-China because they advocate this course...13

In connection with advocating a peaceful settlement of the India-Chinese border dispute the letter took up a charge that the party had been preparing an internal revolution to be synchronized with a fresh attack of the Chinese upon India. The letter said that

...Any sane man would see that if this is true then we must be anxious that there should be no settlement of the border dispute with China, we must be anxious for the mounting tension and for a renewal of armed clash between the two countries. But, in the same breath, he blames us for urging the Government of India to take the initiative to break the deadlock and espouse a mutually acceptable basis for starting negotiations on the border dispute. If this is done, obviously, the possibilities for armed clashes would disappear. Why should we advocate such a course, if we are interested in a renewal of armed clashes?

Shri Nanda can only resort to such ridiculous absurdities and contradictory arguments for he had to justify an unjustifiable case...14

Next, the letter answered the charges that it had been on the insistence of China that the party had split. This is, said the letter, a concoction. Differences inside the party had started nearly ten years before and they came to a head at Vijayawada Congress, which was almost 18 months earlier than the border clashes in October 1962. The differences had been patched up at that congress at the last moment. However, the controversy was renewed and became acute in 1964 and its details are publicly known and can be found in pertinent published documents. This was, obviously, a reference to the Affair Dange and the crucial meeting of the National Council on April
11, 1964. The letter to the Premier continued and said that it was during the past year that open polemics had been carried on and that they related to the attitude which the CPI should adopt toward the ruling Congress Party and the government. The Political Organizational report adopted at Calcutta gives details of the controversy and documents it. In the face of all these facts, asked the letter, how the Home Minister could say that the split had been instigated on the insistence of China.

Next, the arrested men took up the charge that the party had "received other forms of assistance" from China. However, Shri Nanda

...did not specify what these 'other forms of assistance' were. But under the inspiration of official spokesmen newspapers have carried the canard that we are receiving financial assistance through the Bank of China. This story has been going round for the last two years. Even in Parliament innuendos were made to this effect.

For over two years, the Special Police has been investigating the affairs of the Bank of China. The Finance Minister has been announcing from time to time that after completion of investigation the findings would be placed before Parliament. And yet, in the last session the Finance Minister announced in Parliament that the Government considers it would not be in public interest to place the findings of the investigation. If these allegations which the Government allowed to be spread, have been borne out by the investigations, is it not highly in public interest to let them have the findings that some people in our country's public life have so debased themselves as to sell themselves to a foreign power?

We have shown above that in regard to our political position the Home Minister indulges not only in suppressio veri, but also in actual invention. When he has descended to such depth, to what levels he and his Home Ministry would go in sheer concoction of imaginary activities can easily be imagined. His statement that our party has been engaged in preparing for armed struggle can only be based upon reports of agents provocateurs and their forged or cooked-up documents, if any...
The letter then quoted a portion of the programme of the CPI(M) which said that the immediate aim of the party was to depose the Congress Governments in as many as possible states of India and replace them by governments which would merely implement a minimum programme of giving an immediate relief to the people. It was in pursuance of this understanding that the party had given

...a slogan of defeating the Congress Party in the coming elections in Kerala and forming an alternate Government of left parties. In the face of this can anyone believe that our party is preparing for armed struggle? It is clear that the Government wants to prevent such a government from coming into existence...

By the way it may be pointed out that we do not believe that the Home Minister honestly believes that the Programme adopted at the Seventh Congress bears a 'striking resemblance' to the thesis adopted at the Second Congress in 1948. Anyone even cursorily reading the two documents can see the gulf that divides the two in their analysis of the Indian situation, and the tasks facing the Communist Party. Can the Home Minister concretely point out that "striking resemblance"?

Shri Nanda had charged us with a string of treasonable activities. With the Government’s huge police establishment it must be easy enough for him to place evidence relating to some at least of the charges before a normal court. He dare not take that course for the simple reason that they cannot be proved and the truth will come out that they are just concocted stories of the police over which the Home Minister presides...16

In the last portion of their letter the arrested leaders challenged the validity of the Defence of India Rules under which they had been detained. The letter said that the "highest Court in the country has expressed the view that the provisions relating to detention in Defence of India Rules are ultra vires of the Constitution."17 These rulers cannot make the 'unconstitutional provision constitutional', said the letter. The detainees declared that if there is any modicum of respect for the Constitution and rule of law "we demand the cancellation of the detention orders and open trial of the specific charges".18

The five arrested men wrote another letter from the Central
Jail in Viyyur on January 31, 1965, which was addressed to N. C. Chatterji, Member of Parliament and Advocate of the Supreme Court, in New Delhi. The letter said that because the Home Minister had failed to provide evidence of his contentions and in fact had "resorted to distortions, suppressions and falsifications of our political stand as embodied in our Programme, Resolutions and other documents", they had requested Chatterji to draft a complaint of defamation to be filed in a court in New Delhi. Chatterji wrote back on April 7, 1965 that he had gone through the charges against them, which by then had been published as a White Book, and that the book was a political judgement "full of ideological effusion and is particularly lacking in cogent legal evidence".

_Cosmic Maya_

It is quite possible that Minister Nanda had in hand other evidence and proofs to substantiate his charges and arrest of the CPI(M) leaders, which under the Defence of India Rules he did not have to disclose. But from the presentation of his charges by merely citing from the documents adopted at the VII Congress of the CPI his case was indeed weak. And if the so-called West Bengal Document had been cited to provide such an evidence then the very opposite was attained for the reason that it had disclosed how terribly misinformed were the authorities in India about communism in their country. The West Bengal Document was in fact a sectarian paper which had been prepared long before the VII Congress spelling out the task which the dissenters within the party must undertake to purge the reformist leadership of Dange. The plan of setting up cells, and the rest of the 12 points cited above, related to the organizational separation of the left wing and its establishment as an independent party. This process had been consummated at the Calcutta Congress, and the document cited in New Delhi related to the past and not the future. Even the formulation to the effect that the parliamentary policies would have to be given up, which sounded so sinister to the Minister, was qualified in the subsequent paragraph which explained that this really did not mean the boycott of parliamentary institutions and rejection of parliamentary struggle.
It seems that the Home Ministry failed to study the documents adopted by Dange's party in Bombay at the beginning of December, for on the most crucial aspect of Nanda's charges both parties had adopted identical formulations. Both parties had amended their constitutions and shifted their commitment to policies of peaceful transition into their programmes. Moreover, on the fundamental aspect of the non-peaceful possibilities, which means whether the parties in the final resort would organize an armed uprising, both parties gave an affirmative answer in formulations which were surprisingly identical. In fact, from the point of view of the survival of the Congress Party the group of Dange posed a greater danger for it had predicated its success on an active promotion of a split of the Congress and then the harnessing of its left wing to the process of communization of the country. Finally, in charging the CPI(M) with an anti-national stand on the border dispute the Home Minister failed to understand that the "patriotism" of the Dange group had been merely a function of the Sino-Soviet schisms in which this group followed Moscow's strategic, national and lastly the ideological interests.

An analysis of the documents adopted by both parties at their Seventh Congresses and of Minister Nanda's charges suggests that the Indian authorities suffered from a maya of truly cosmic dimension as far as the understanding of the world and Indian communism was concerned. An ancient vedantic concept of the advaita philosophy maintains that there is a fundamental unity and identity of all phenomena of the universe and that only the imperfection of man's cognitive processes and their limitations—which is called maya or illusion—make him see these phenomena as different and contradictory. To use this simile, it seems that the Indian authorities had suffered from a bad case of a maya, an illusion, in failing to see that there existed a fundamental identity of purpose between the two communist parties of India, that their differences were really marginal and that both were functionally related to the world communist movement. It would really make a little difference whether India would be communized and the Congress thrown into the dustbin of history through the National Democratic Front or the People's Democratic Front.

Another aspect of the arrest of the CPI(M) leaders demon-
strated how ineffective is a police action to contain communism in such an advanced stage of its growth as in India, and what problems the governments encounter in a similar situation. The police action organized by Sardar Patel in 1948-49 had fought the communist insurgency in Telengana to a standstill and had effectively contained the communist movement because it was in its initial stage of its growth. But once this movement had been legitimised, permitted to exploit the pro-Soviet orientation in India’s foreign policy during Nehru’s era for building a mass following, and to function as a constitutional force attempting to establish socialism in the country as a matter of constitutional right, which was the goal of the Congress Party, it was well beyond the reach of a police action however severe.\textsuperscript{21}

This lesson became patently clear to all within two months when the electorate in Kerala rejected at the polls the patriotic Dange’s party and absolved the CPI(M) of charges portraying it as anti-national and subversive. The verdict of the electorate reduced Dange’s group to mere 3 seats (2.25 per cent) in the State Assembly, while Namboodiripad’s party and its policies were vindicated by winning 40 seats (80.08 per cent) in the house. The struggle for Kerala was lost on the political battle field and no police action could reverse the trend and eradicate the solemn fact that out of the 40 deputies 29 were elected while detained in jail since the big swoop of December 30 of the previous year. This, obviously, presented a new problem for the Home Ministry.

\textit{Venetian Imbroglio}

The split of the Communist Party in Kerala was a complicated process for several reasons.

In the first place, it was a grave political risk to split the party and thus weaken the communist movement on the eve of the mid-term elections. In no other state of India the party faced such a predicament, because there both wings had enough time, up to the next general elections in 1967, to consolidate their positions.

Second, the split in Kerala did not take place along the ideological argument as the main dividing line; the main factors in the division of the party were the community, caste and personal loyalties.
Third, in addition to the ideological, community, caste and personal factors, the split was exceedingly aggravated by considerations of practical politics of survival, i.e., what alliances and alignments to form for the impending electoral battle. This last element imbued the politics in Kerala during that period with a truly mercurial character, making the political pendulum swing from one possible combination to another across the whole political spectrum. The western coast of Kerala with its lovely canals and water transport and Allepey as its center—called the Venice of the East—resembled more than in one way the old Venice and its volatile politics.

At the end of December 1964 the alignments within the party were as follows. While Dange's party commanded the support of 19 members out of 30 which the united party had in the State Assembly, only 10 deputies declared allegiance to the CPI(M) while 1 remained undecided. A similar ratio was true regarding the allegiance of members of the Lok Sabha, the National Council and the Kerala State Council. Moreover, the prominent leader of the Nair community, M. N. Govindan Nair, aligned a substantial section of this community with Dange's party. The fact that Nair became leader of the rightist group in Kerala had a background of deep personal animosity and antagonism which had developed between him and Namboodiripad during the crisis of the communist regime in 1958-59 over the policies to follow. On the other hand, the CPI(M) was led by men of great personal influence, prestige and charisma, which really appealed to ordinary party members. The split not only ended some old friendships and associations but strained some most personal relationships, as in the famous Thomas family where Mrs. K. R. Gouri Thomas followed Namboodiripad's lead while Mr. V. T. Thomas lined up with Nair's group.

The break-up of the party in Kerala coincided with the onset of the electoral campaign for the mid-term elections which in the fall of 1964 was in full swing, and both events interacted and escalated into a campaign of mutual vilification and abuse.

The rightist group came under fire because of reports that in the mid-term elections it would co-operate with the Congress Party and enter into an electoral alliance with it in order to pave the way for the formation of a Congress—CPI coalition government. Theories were advanced, very similar to Ramamurthy's
Thesis of June 1954 and to the theory of National Emergency of Ghosh of February 1966, to the effect that conditions for such a coalition had finally arrived.  

First, the Congress Party in Kerala had effectively split by the separation of its conservative wing as an independent party, the Kerala Congress. The democratic center of the Congress would be looking for allies, for it would not be able to stand alone. It was most unlikely that the Congress would be able to win for co-operation the PSP and the Muslim League because of their bad experience in the last coalition government which collapsed in 1964. This then created a possibility for the Congress-CPI co-operation which the latter must explore.

The second element was the external threat to India from China, which had created a situation of National Emergency. By backing up the government on the Indo-China border dispute the CPI had earned enough merit to be considered a patriotic and national force worthy of co-operation. Strangely enough, in 1954 Ramamurthy and in 1956 Ghosh had hoped that it would be the danger of "American imperialism" which would drive the Congress into the arms of the CPI; in 1964 this function was to be performed by the danger posed by China. In an extraordinary paradox, a hostility of an external power belonging to one communist alignment would create conditions favourable for a significant advance of a communist party belonging to another communist alignment.

Third, the situation of external emergency was coupled with a great internal danger, in the eyes of the Communist leaders, that the vacuum which was being created by the decline of the Congress would be exploited by the rightist and communal parties, which must be prevented.

Fourth, the internal danger was further compounded by the separation of the pro-Peking wing from the CPI and its establishment as an independent party which would attack from the left and may plunge Kerala into a civil strife. This possibility may further induce the Congress to co-operate with the CPI to contain the left adventurism.

Fifth, the separation of the left wing from the CPI had seriously diminished the chances of the latter of winning a substantial number of seats and thus the CPI itself needed an ally.

All these factors then spoke in favour of exploring the possi-
bility of the CPI co-operating with the Congress Party. Such a co-
operation might lead to the formation of a National Platform be-
tween the Congress and the CPI, to the exclusion of other parties.
It might lead to the formation of a National Democratic Front,
which would be composed of the Congress, or a section of the
Congress Party, the CPI and other leftist parties, opposing the
rightist Kerala Congress and the left extremist CPI(M). Finally,
the co-operation between the CPI and the Congress might be
limited merely to electoral adjustments in certain constituencies
in order to avoid a direct confrontation of their candidates, or to
give a joint support to agreed upon candidates. While the first
possibility was rated very low, the second development was con-
sidered feasible if the leftist parties could be won over for co-
operation with the Congress, the main emphasis being placed
upon its left wing, and vice versa. This perspective had found
its way into the concept of the National Democratic Front, as
we have seen, adopted at the VII Congress in Bombay. The
third prospect was a real and practical possibility. It was because of
these speculations and unfolding possibilities that Namboodiri-
pad and the other 6 suspended members of the National Council
who hailed from Kerala had issued a statement to the basic units
of the party warning that Nair’s group would co-operate with
the Congress in order to assist it in surviving as a political force
(supra, pp. 152-3). As the electoral campaign and split of the
party intensified and interacted upon each other, the Nair group
was accused of class collaboration and of being a stooge of the
Congress Party and government operating within and splitting
the left ranks in Kerala. Moreover,

... the right-wing Communists proved themselves more
anxious to ‘isolate the anti-national left Communists’ who,
according to them, had ‘split the Communist Party at the
behest of the Chinese’ and to ‘defeat the reactionary-communal
Muslim League’ than to defeat the Congress ...

Namboodiripad’s group, on the other hand, came under heavy
fire from the rightists, branded as anti-national and un-
patriotic, working on behalf of Peking and planning adventur-
istic policies. Moreover, the group was charged with responsi-
bility for splitting the party and setting up a separate party
apparatus in order to lay the foundations for an armed uprising.
BREAKDOWN OF TRADITIONAL ALIGNMENTS

An interesting aspect of these charges levelled at the leftists was that when the government arrested their leaders in December 1964, the Home Minister drew heavily upon the interpretation and criticism of the CPI(M) programme and policies thrown up by Dange's group in the electoral campaign in Kerala in order to justify the swoop upon their party. As Namboodiripad said,

... the campaign material brought out by the right-wing Communists thus became the biggest weapon in the hands of the Congress leaders not only for their political campaign but also for a country-wide swoop on the left-wing Communist Party. This was expected to 'isolate the left Communists among the people', prevent the formation of a united front of the leftist forces and thus pave the way for a Congress victory in the midterm election that was coming... 24

In fact there was an uneasy feeling and suspicion among the leftists that Dange's group had its hand in the government's raid upon the leadership of the CPI(M) to eliminate an uncomfortable political opponent and paralyze him on the eve of a crucial election. If the left leadership could be contained and the party paralyzed and prevented from organizing an effective campaign, the defeat of the dissenters would be ensured. This exemplary defeat would have a beneficial effect upon the chances of Dange's group to ride out the crisis, open the door to the dissenters and heal the split as the elections in Kerala would show that their policies were rejected by the electorate. In view of this the "anti-national, pro-Peking and treasonable" aspects of the campaign were heavily painted in order to scare the electorate from voting for an anti-national organization when Dange's party, by that time its patriotism had been certified by the government, offered an alternative leadership to all good and patriotic communists in Kerala. This is, perhaps, how also the Home Minister reckoned the problem of the CPI(M) on the eve of the elections in Kerala.

However, by the fall of 1964 the speculations about the possibility of the CPI co-operating with the Congress subsided. A new understanding of the situation became evident in the resolution of the National Council of the CPI, held in Trivandrum from November 4 to 8, 1964. The meeting had been convened in Trivandrum precisely to make an attempt, on the spot, at
arresting the trend toward the split, reinforce the hand of the rightist elements and lay down the strategy for the next elections. The Chairman of the party, S. A. Dange, said that the general line for his party in the next elections in Kerala would be an effort to build a Democratic Front of the progressive forces with the aim of defeating the Congress Party. However, the party would have to make a careful study of the alignments to see with whom it might co-operate. It was quite clear that the party would not form an alliance with the communal organizations, like the Muslim League, or the right wing parties. The party would also not consider co-operating with the Kerala Congress, added Dange. This position, which in fact had been adopted earlier within the party, had paved way for the CPI to respond to the invitation of the CPI (M) to enter into negotiations for a united front of the leftists.

The evolution of this new line was not, however, an easy matter for the CPI, for it meant casting off the prospect of co-operation and even coalition with the Congress. This was the most cherished objective which had been haunting the party since the days of Ramakrishna's Thesis in 1954 and Ghosh's concept of National Emergency in 1956, for it had been well realized all the time that from the moment the CPI would enter into such a coalition the prospects of a rapid transition to communism would be immensely enhanced if not completely ensured. It is true that both Ramakrishna's Thesis and Ghosh's concept of National Emergency related to the coalition to be formed on the national level, on the level of the central government, but it was equally true that such a coalition would have to project itself downwards and establish corresponding coalitions on the state level wherever possible to provide the mass support for the dominant combination at the center. It was also feasible that a coalition at the center might be formed by a reversed trend, i.e., by local coalitions being first established in those states in which the split of the Congress would offer such an opportunity, and then by forcing this pattern on the central leadership.

It was for this reason that a section of the CPI in Kerala, which had particularly close ties with the Congress Party, had clung hopefully to this perspective, and that when the CPI was approached by the CPI (M) with proposals for a left united front this group made the CPI spurn the offers.
BREAKDOWN OF TRADITIONAL ALIGNMENTS

It was only after a careful study and evaluation of the alignments within the Congress Party, and perhaps after guarded and unsuccessful soundings and feelers had been carried out, that this perspective was reluctantly abandoned and the CPI was ready to swing to the left and entertain proposals on the united front of the leftists as a less desirable alternative.

From the moment the idea of the united front of the leftists had been adopted in principle by the CPI, negotiations with CPI (M) and the RSP proceeded swiftly about the composition of such a front. A hitch developed when the CPI (M) argued that a flexible attitude should be adopted toward the Muslim League, which was vehemently opposed by the representatives of the CPI. However, the differences were soon removed and an agreement reached that the following parties should form the front: the CPI, the CPI (M), the RSP, the SSP and the Karshaka-Tozhilali Party, and that the front would support a number of progressive individuals attached to no party.

This was a major break-through which in turn paved the way for a discussion of a common electoral platform, then an agreement to carry the electoral alliance forward after the elections to the formation of a coalition cabinet, and finally an agreement on a Minimum Programme of Action which such a government would implement if elected. At this point the strong pro-Congress faction within Dange’s party in Kerala demanded that the common platform should declare its stand on the India-China conflict and should brand Peking an aggressor. This move, however, was successfully resisted by the CPI (M) which argued that such a question had never been raised by the representatives of the CPI in the course of deliberations of the United Front Committee, when the common platform and the minimum programme had been discussed.

By the beginning of November the negotiations between the CPI (M), the CPI and the RSP progressed to a point where all problems had been solved, and what remained was to evolve a principle, and agree upon it, which would be used as a formula for allocating the number of seats to be contested by each party and for allocating specific constituencies to each party.

The allocation of seats and constituencies proved, however, a major stumbling bloc on the way ahead. The representatives of the CPI (M) in the United Front Committee proposed that the
distribution should be made on the basis of the political influence which each party of the front wielded in the state. And, of course, to assess this was the most difficult and controversial matter touching the crux of the split of the party. The representatives of the CPI argued that according to the declared allegiance of members of the Kerala State Council of the party, the State Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha, their party had a legitimate claim to the largest number of seats to be allocated to it, and that in view of this the CPI (M) really represented not a party but a small group of 'splitters and individuals'. The CPI (M) representatives retorted that while it was true that the rival party had the allegiance of the majority of members in the representative organs of the party, this was really a misleading criterion for the allocation of seats; the only realistic and just criterion was the mass support among the rank and file members and sympathizers with the party which each rival faction commanded at the grass-root level. And there, insisted the spokesmen for Namboodiripad's group, their party commanded an overwhelming support. Here the negotiations became stalemated because the only real test of the allegiance of the mass following at the grass-root level were the forthcoming elections.

The VII Congress of the CPI(M) paid a handsome tribute to the partial success of the negotiations for the United Front but warned that Dange's group should shoulder all responsibility if the effort at the end collapsed:

... The Congress noted with satisfaction that the efforts at building the United Front have gained partial success. The representatives of the Communist Party, of the Dange Group and of the RSP have agreed not only on the composition of the front (the three parties plus the SSP and the Karshaka-Tozhilali Party), together with the progressive individuals attached to no particular party, but have jointly prepared the programme of action for the United Front government. This Congress hopes that this will be followed up by agreement on the correct principle of distribution of seats in proportion to the political influence of each party and group, combined with the necessary adjustments and compromises on the basis of 'give-and-take'.

Having heard the report on how the representatives of our
Party in the State carried on negotiations with the other parties, groups and individuals and how they propose to continue them, the Congress endorses the line taken by the Kerala comrades.

The Seventh Congress of the Party cannot but take notice of the obstructive tactics adopted by a section of the leadership of the Dange group...

...Above all, they refuse to accept the only legitimate principle for the distribution of seats—the principle of distribution in proportion to the political influence of each constituent of the united front.

This Congress, however, hopes that the healthy sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the people of Kerala would put a stop to the anti-unity manoeuvres resorted to by the Dange group. It also hopes that the rank and file members and sympathisers of the Party, still owning allegiance to the Dange group, will realize that if their leadership persists in this attitude and if in consequence the United Front breaks down, then the responsibility for it will rest squarely on their shoulders...25

The key to the great flexibility demonstrated by the CPI (M) in taking the initiative in negotiations for the United Front of the Leftists, and in its willingness to make concessions and compromises, was explained in the Political Organizational Report adopted at the Calcutta Congress. The resolution said that the stock of the Congress Party, torn with an internal dissent, was at a very low ebb, and that it was no more possible for it to form an anti-communist alliance as in the mid-term elections in 1960. In view of this, every possible combination should be formed in order to inflict the final blow upon this decaying political body. A real possibility existed in Kerala for the Communists and democratic parties and progressive individuals to win a majority in the State Assembly and form a non-Congress government.

This great flexibility was also shown by the representatives of the CPI(M), in negotiating the terms of the Minimum Programme for the government of the United Front. Here again the Political Organizational Report indicated what mandate the negotiators had:

...While it will be a dangerous illusion to imagine that a
state government formed by the Communist Party together with its allies can transform the economic or political set-up in the state, nonetheless the formation of such a government will be of great importance in today’s conditions. It can play a positive role, both in Kerala as well as in the country as a whole. Apart from enabling the solution of a limited number of local problems which such a government can without doubt do, its existence and functioning will bring greater morale to the democratic masses everywhere and thus strengthen the democratic movement. It can become a weapon in the hands of the masses in the struggle against the anti-people policies of the central government. It will at the same time further intensify the struggle between the forces of progress and reaction inside the ruling party itself. The Party should, therefore, endeavour to forge a programmatic alliance with democratic and left parties and individuals in the state, and adopt flexible tactics without compromising our political principle, in order to not only win a majority, but a sizable and stable majority for these forces, and in order to reduce the representation of the Congress Party to the minimum. ... 26

While these negotiations for a United Front of the Leftists were in progress, a hectic political activity was evident on the other end of the political spectrum. As we have seen, only the CPI, the CPI (M) and the RSP had agreed on the formation of such a front, hoping that other parties, particularly the SSP, would join. However, the SSP was holding back, negotiating at the same time with the Kerala Congress and using the parallel negotiations as a lever to extract as many concessions as possible from the prospective partners before finally casting its lot with one or other combination.

The Kerala Congress itself was very active in an effort to form an anti-communist combination. To that end the Kerala Congress had entered into an electoral alliance with the Muslim League by November, and a hard bargaining was in progress with the SSP for joining the combination. Negotiations were also in progress with those PSP organisations which had not merged with the SSP, and other smaller parties, groups and individuals. The strategy of the Kerala Congress was to project an image of a new Congress—purged of corrupt, selfish and high-handed elements—
which could present an alternative to the old Congress and rally all democratic forces into a *democratic front* in order to checkmate both communist parties. The Kerala Congress hoped that it could provide a new, viable and clean leadership and re-create the Congress-PSP-Muslim League coalition which had ruled Kerala between 1960 and 1964.

As for the Congress Party itself, it stood there as an old banyan tree, lashed at from all sides by a storm of its offsprings who had formed themselves into independent parties and who battered upon it from the left, center and right. It adopted a most inflexible strategy of all contestants. It would not co-operate with the Muslim League which in its eyes was becoming increasingly strong and even more communal; it would not touch Dange's group; it could not face the SSP and the PSP because of their bitter experience in the last coalition; and it would co-operate with the Kerala Congress only under one condition: its return to the old fold.

These were the principal alignments in November 1964. As new entrants on the scene were the Swatantra Party and the Jan Sangh Party. The Swatantra assessed that its chances as a newcomer were not bright for an independent posture, and in view of this declared its readiness to support and join the democratic front with the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League. The Jan Sangh stood stoically alone, as did the Congress Party.

The beginning of November was the highest watermark of the efforts for the formation of the left united front because during December the situation deteriorated. While the negotiations were stalemated over the allocation of seats and, in view of this it appeared unlikely that an agreement could ever be reached, the CPI (M) having a mandate of the Calcutta Congress to follow a flexible policy to defeat the Congress started to look for new allies and combinations to that end.

The party developed a position that if it were impossible to form a united front of the leftist parties then the CPI (M) should have mere electoral adjustments not only with the leftist parties but also with the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress. The CPI (M) leadership reasoned that the break-up of the Congress-PSP-Muslim League coalition in 1963-4, followed by the break-up of the Congress Party itself, were events of highest
political significance. Were the left united front impossible then
the CPI (M) must have electoral adjustments with both the
Kerala Congress and the Muslim League to avoid competition
and to win for itself as many votes as possible. To build its own
strength was the goal in the situation, even at the cost of
electoral adjustments with the Kerala Congress and the Muslim
League, because the leadership of the party believed that such
adjustments would not substantially strengthen these two parties
and that there was no danger of any of them emerging a domi-
nant force. In the final analysis, it was believed, the balance of
advantages of such electoral adjustments would be more in favour
of the CPI (M) than the other parties to the bargain, although
to some extent it would strengthen them. The willingness to co-
operate with the Muslim League also reflected a new posture
which the CPI (M) had been developing on the entire commu-
nal question, the linguistic problem, the problem of minorities
and tribal people, which soon became formalized by Namboodiri-
pad into new and highly significant theories on the whole
national question in India (see Appendix III).

Apart from this calculus of power which justified the electoral
adjustments with the Muslim League, the emergence of a strong
left wing within the Muslim League was an added consideration.
The CPI(M) watched carefully the process of polarization within
the Muslim League induced chiefly under the impact of the
rapidly evolving pro-Peking trend in Pakistan’s foreign policy
engineered by Foreign Minister Z. A. Bhutto. By concluding the
electoral adjustments with the left elements of the Muslim League
the CPI (M) would not only reinforce the process of polarization
within that party but provide an opportunity for these leftists in
some constituencies to take an independent stand against the offi-
cial leadership and be elected with the support of the left com-
munists. This was a far-sighted move which paved the way not
only for co-operation of the left wing of the Muslim League with
the CPI(M), but which was to bring the entire Muslim League into
a left united front in the general elections in Kerala in 1967, a feat
unthinkable of in 1965.

This trend evident within the CPI (M) was about all the
rival party could take, and it gave vent to its feelings on this
matter in a Resolution on Kerala Elections, adopted at the Bom-
bay Congress held in the second half of December 1964. The
resolution said that the Congress noted with satisfaction the efforts which had been made by some left parties to form a united front based upon a minimum programme. However, said the resolution, the party could not shut its eyes to the fact that of late certain negative developments had taken place.

First, the two communal elements which had broken away from the Congress—these elements claimed to represent two socially and economically dominant communities—had formed themselves into a new party under the name of the Kerala Congress. Second, this party had already formed an alliance with the Muslim League. Third, the Swatantra Party had also entered the field and declared its willingness to support the Kerala Congress-Muslim League alliance. Third, both the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League, apart from the fact that they seek to divide the people in the name of religion and caste, had always been very reactionary and pose a real threat.

From this analysis a deduction was made as to what should be the policies of the party. The resolution said that the task of the left forces in the state in the existing situation was not so simple as in the past. The new formula, said the resolution, is that

...these left forces have to unite and fight to prevent the Congress coming back to power. At the same time they have to conduct the fight equally vehemently against such a reactionary communal combination as one represented by the Kerala Congress-Muslim League alliance. This is why the Kerala State Council of our Party has repeatedly made clear that it will join only a united front of all democratic and progressive forces, groups and individuals and that it will have no truck with reactionary communal groups such as the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress. The Seventh Congress of the Party endorsed that stand...²⁷

This policy line as laid down by the Congress meant that the CPI would co-operate with the CPI (M) only on the establishment of a leftist united front and that it could not be won over for the flexible strategy toward which the rival party had been moving. In view of this, the resolution regretted that the rival party had pursued this dangerous course and said that it was unfortunate that the CPI (M) and the SSP had been taking an equivocal stand on the issue of the united front of the leftists.
KERA LA: YENAN OF INDIA

While the SSP had so far failed to declare its willingness to enter into such a front both parties, the CPI (M) and the PSP

... are willing only to have adjustments in the matter of seats and this they are prepared to have not only with the left parties in the State but with all opposition parties including the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress. It is deplorable that the rival party is trying to follow such a line...

Keeping in view the serious danger of communal reactionary forces outside the Congress gaining in these elections, apart from those within the Congress, the Seventh Congress of the CPI wishes to point out that the only correct path for all progressive and democratic forces in the state is to take a principled stand on this question and fight both the Congress as well as the reactionary communal combination represented by the League-Kerala Congress. Any compromise with such elements will only help to strengthen reaction in the country and will deliver a disastrous blow to the whole democratic movement. The left democratic forces in Kerala are stronger than in many parts of India and they can be fully confident of winning electoral success provided they stand united on a minimum programme of development for the state and the relief to the people together with a principled stand on key issues of national significance.

The Seventh Congress makes a fraternal appeal to the SSP and the rival party to retrace their steps from the slippery and dangerous path they are contemplating and join hands with the Communist Party, the RSP and all other democratic and progressive forces to forge a firm united front for the purpose of delivering a shattering blow not only to the Congress but to all types of reactionary combination... 28

With the policy lines so drawn by both parties—the CPI adopting a "principled" stand of fighting on two fronts the Congress and the Kerala Congress-Muslim League at the same time while the CPI (M) aiming at merely defeating the Congress and to that end was willing to make adjustments with the Kerala Congress and the League—the prospects for a united front of the leftists collapsed early in 1965.

Namboodiripad later explained that the split of the party in Kerala had not only been connected with larger issues dividing
the world communist movement and with the questions of strategy to be pursued by the party on the all-India level. Above all, it was seriously exacerbated by the conflicting assessments of the developments in Kerala and the conflicting approaches to the problems of electoral strategy. It were these divergent outlooks which had really torpedoed the so advanced efforts for a united front of the leftists.

The left wing party, says Namboodiripad, had looked upon the break-up of the Congress-PSP-Muslim League coalition and the break-up of the Congress itself as “developments favourable to the growth of the democratic and socialist movement in the country.” The CPI (M) had known, of course, emphasized Namboodiripad, that the elements which had broken away from the anti-communist coalition and those from the Congress were not “radical-progressives, not to speak of revolutionaries”. Some of them, like those rebels who had formed the Kerala Congress were as reactionary and, in some respects even more, as the Congress itself. However, the mere fact they had separated themselves was not sufficient and would not be to the advantage of the party if this failed to exploit such a development in a true Leninist fashion. In view of this, it was necessary for the party, repeated Namboodiripad an old Leninist dictum, to

...exert the utmost effort and necessarily, thoroughly, carefully, attentively and skilfully, take advantage of every, even the smallest, fissures among the enemies, among the various groups and types of the bourgeoisie; to take advantage of every, even the smallest opportunity of gaining a mass ally, even though this ally may be temporary, vacillating, unreliable and conditional. ...

The right wing of the party, said Namboodiripad, had taken the stand that the emergence of groups like the Kerala Congress, and the probable strengthening of the Muslim League, posed a much bigger danger to the democratic and socialist movement in Kerala than “the maintenance of the Congress in power”. At one stage, said Namboodiripad, the rightist elements had considered even the PSP a more reactionary party than the Congress. And during the 1963 by-elections, which had to fill the vacant posts, they had even offered a “division of seats between the Congress and the Communist Party in order to defend the
national policies of non-alignment, planning and socialism against the attacks from the PSP."

This pro-Congress attitude of the right wing party leadership, said Namboodiripad, stood in contrast to the left wing stand that the Communist Party should have united front with all socialist and left opposition parties and some adjustments with the Muslim League. This very difference between the two had divided the party from top to bottom, said Namboodiripad. While the majority of the top took the rightist stand, the majority down below agreed with the left. It had been the conflict between these two political approaches, concluded Namboodiripad, which had ultimately led to an open split of the party.

But instead of learning from this experience, lamented Namboodiripad, the right wing leaders had doggedly persisted in their "pro-Congress line". They had demanded of the left wing to carry on "an equal and simultaneous struggle against the Congress on the one hand and the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League on the other". Since this demand had been not acceptable, the right wing party along with its allies the RSP and some independents, had turned their fire against the left party and its allies, who were accused of "allying themselves with communalism and reaction". It had been this "narrow sectarian approach to other opposition parties, this shamelessly right-opportunist approach to the Congress", that had so isolated the right wing leaders and their allies that they had created a "record in loss of deposits". This was the final verdict of Namboodiripad.

The final impasse between the two parties over the electoral strategy arrived when the CPI (M) decided for the following course. The prime consideration was the defeat of the Congress. Second, there was no chance for the Muslim League and any other reactionary party getting the majority in the house. Third, in view of this the CPI (M) would concentrate all fire upon defeating the Congress and, to that end, build a "progressive front" and then lead it into battle. Fourth, at the same time the party would put up its own candidates against the Muslim League in the latter's very strongholds in order to defeat them in a direct confrontation. Fifth, while working towards the defeat of the Congress the CPI (M) would enter into an understanding in three constituencies in Malabar with some independent candidates who were inclined towards the League, knowing very well
that if elected with the assistance of the CPI (M) they would later join the League. This, says Ranadive, "was enough of an excuse for the revisionists to break away from the front and prevent a complete rout of the Congress".33

Against this background it is clear that both parties paid merely lip service to the left unity and that behind the negotiations for a left united front they had followed policies totally irreconcilable. The real issue was the assessment of the relative strength of the mass following commanded by each of them. This problem, however, did not lend itself to solution by negotiations and had to be decided on the electoral battle field. This was the only arbiter.

One more aspect of the electoral campaign is worth recording. While Dange's party in Kerala had a strong right wing which pressed hard for closer ties with the Congress Party and a coalition with it, the CPI (M) had within its ranks individuals who advocated extremism on the left. The heads of some individuals started to spin with a vision of a revolutionary struggle which would execute revolutionary justice to eliminate the reactionary classes. At the end of January 1965 several officials in the government of Kerala received a cyclostyled anonymous letter which had been issued in the name of a "People Court" and posted from Trichur. The letter said that the addressee had been sentenced by the court for a crime of conspiracy against the leaders of the people and for complicity in "bestial repression being carried out by the Congress fascists. The sentence is liquidation for you and all members of your decadent bourgeois family. You shall suffer the same fate as the landlords of Yenan and Telengana." The letter further said that the judgment of the people of Kerala would not be long in coming. The revolution was approaching and the day when the sentence would be carried out was not too far. The addressee was then warned that he should not think of escaping or hiding behind police protection. The arm of the people would strike at the right moment, and even the children and their children would be dealt with at leisure and in the ripe time. "We will take no delight in liquidating your kind", said the letter, "but the land of Kerala must be cleansed and purified of all bourgeois contamination." The letter concluded that the vengeance of the people had been delayed, but when it comes it would be terrible.34
Nothing is known about the origin of this letter. However, it was symptomatic of an unrest on the extreme left in Kerala and elsewhere in India which shortly was to lead to an outburst of violence in Naxalbari, West Bengal, and in Kerala itself. This leftist fringe was to separate itself from Namboodiripad's party and emerge as a host of splinter groups which styled themselves as Maoists, Trotskyites, Castroists and other assorted names.

An imbroglio of split parties, combinations and counter-combinations, charges of mutual abuse, thus represented the setting and back-drop for the mid-term elections in Kerala in 1965.

*Rout of Dange's Party*

The fact that it proved impossible to form a united front of the left parties greatly influenced the electoral strategy of other contestants in the sense that the compelling need for a counter-alliance of democratic parties had disappeared. Another main characteristic of the electoral strategy, in addition to the absence of major alliances, was the support of independent candidates by the major parties, except the Congress. Putting up independent candidates, supported by major parties from behind, so to say, was resorted to as a stratagem to lure the marginal voter who probably would not vote directly for a party candidate but might vote for him if he appeared on an independent ticket. This device, getting electoral support by proxy, testified to the extreme uncertainty of political parties about the mass support they could win by a direct appeal, and about the response of voters to new political entities. It was believed that the fate of the parties would not be decided mainly by the devoted and loyal voters who would anyway follow their party, but by shifts in the voting pattern of the marginal, uncommitted voters. This then introduced an element of great uncertainty into the electoral calculus.

This strategy, i.e., electoral adjustments and support of independent candidates, was evident from the number of candidates fielded by each party.

The CPI (M) had an electoral adjustment with the SSP, the Muslim League independents, and the KTP (Karshaka Thozhilali Party) or the Peasants' and Workers' Party. The CPI (M) fielded 73 candidates of its own and supported 9 independent
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candidates, 7 independent candidates together with the CPI, 6 independent candidates of the Muslim League, and 10 candidates of the KTP.

Out of the 73 candidates fielded by the CPI (M) 39 were under detention since the big swoop at the end of December 1964. To make sure that these would not be released by a new government after the elections—the order to arrest them had been issued by Governor of Kerala, V. V. Giri, and therefore could be rescinded by the new government—immediately before the elections the Central Government served new detention orders on all detainees. Such orders could not be revoked by the local government.

The CPI had an electoral adjustment with the RSP; it fielded 78 candidates of its own and supported 14 independent candidates.

The Congress Party had no adjustment with any party, supported no independent candidate, and contested all 133 seats as a matter of principle.

The Kerala Congress had an electoral adjustment with the Swatantra Party, and it fielded 60 candidates of its own.

The Muslim League fielded 16 candidates, and supported 1 independent.

The SSP fielded 29 candidates; the RSP 13; the Forward Bloc 2; the Jan Sangh supported 17 independent candidates; the Swatantra Party, supported by the Kerala Congress, fielded 12 candidates; the KTP, supported by the CPI (M) and the MKU (Malnad Karshaka Union) 10; the Backward Classes Christian Federation 2; the Republican Party 3; DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) 2; the PSP 5; there were 56 independent candidates who were not supported by any party. Altogether 562 candidates contested 133 seats; over 4 candidates for each seat. The electorate had increased since the last elections to 8.55 million; 6.43 million cast their votes, which was a 75.2 per cent turn-out.

When the dust settled on the battered Kerala and the votes were finally counted the following major features of a new political pattern emerged, the details of which can be discerned from Tables XVI-XXX.

The Communist Party—Marxist CPI(M). It proved impossible to destroy the CPI (M) through the arrest of its top leadership, over 130 had been detained in Kerala since the big swoop who could not participate in the campaign, or through branding it as
an anti-national force and an agent of China who had cast off parliamentary rules and would plunge Kerala into civil war and chaos.

The CPI (M) won 1.26 million votes (19.55 per cent) and 40 seats (30.08 per cent), and thus emerged the largest party in Kerala as far as the number of elected deputies was concerned. This was an achievement which no party could match and the greatest surprise for all. The voters also gave their verdict on the split of the communist movement in Kerala, and generously endorsed the CPI (M) as the authentic successor to the once unified party. Out of the aggregate vote polled by both parties the CPI (M) received two-thirds, while the CPI one-third. Thus Namboodiripad had been right in arguing that while it was true that the rival party had commanded the majority support in the leading party organs, his party had the mass following.

Another aspect of the success of the CPI (M) was the superb planning and assessment of its own strength in negotiating the electoral adjustments in individual constituencies in order to prevent the splitting of its own vote with the result that with a mere 19.55 per cent of votes the party won 30.08 per cent of seats. Furthermore, the arrest added an element of charisma to the candidates of the CPI (M) instead of discriminating them in the eyes of the party members and general voters, with the result that 29 of them were elected.

In addition to the 40 seats of its own the CPI (M) could count on the support of one independent seat won with its support, and of two independent seats elected jointly through the support of the CPI (M) and the CPI.

The Marxist Party registered particularly strong gains in Malabar, where in Cannanore District (Table XVII) it scored 30.40 per cent of votes and won 7 (50 per cent) seats, annihilating the rival by reducing it to mere 2.59 per cent of votes. In Kozhikode District (Table XVIII) the CPI (M) further reduced its rival to 1.37 per cent of votes, while itself scoring 21.09 per cent. In Palghat District (Table XIX) the CPI (M) dominated the political scene by bagging 41.26 per cent of votes and winning 78 per cent of seats; the rival won 6.43 per cent of votes and no seat. In Trichur District (Table XX) the position of the CPI (M) deteriorated to 12.48 per cent of votes and to mere 2 seats (15.38
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per cent), while the rightist party emerged stronger by command-
ing 16.75 per cent of the electorate, but winning only one seat. In Ernakulam District (Table XXI) the position of the CPI (M) improved to 16.92 per cent of the electorate, while the rival dropped to mere 3.07 per cent. In Kottayam District (Table XXII) the rival parties divided the electorate by equal share, the CPI(M) taking 10.92 per cent of the electorate but winning 4 seats, the rival taking 10.17 per cent of votes but winning 1 seat. In Alleppey District (Table XXIII) the CPI (M) shot to the lead by winning 19.88 per cent of votes, while the rival trailed behind with 7.01 per cent. In Quilon District (Table XXIV) it was the CPI which carried the day by winning an all-time high 18.99 per cent of votes, although taking only one seat, while the leftist rival dropped to 9.08 per cent of votes, winning no seat at all. In Trivandrum District (Table XXV) the CPI (M) reasserted its lead and shot to 19.92 per cent of votes, winning three seats, while the rightist rival dropped to 7.47 per cent of votes.

The Communist Party (CPI). It was a sad day for the rightist party when the results became known. They demonstrated the enormous disparity between the claims made and cool facts, showing the leaders of the party out of touch with the existing realities in Kerala. The party won 516,205 votes, a mere 8.02 per cent, and 3 seats, which was 2.25 per cent. Compared to the claims and assessment made before the elections the party went almost into liquidation. Particularly striking was the disparity between the 8.02 per cent of votes won and the mere 2.25 per cent of seats secured, for which a poor and unrealistic planning was responsible, with the result that out of its 78 candidates only 3 were elected. This was a miscalculation of colossal dimensions.

However, Dange's group suffered its most damaging defeat in those constituencies in which it had hoped to assert its control over the members and followers through a direct confrontation, in a straight fight, challenging the candidates of the rival party. The direct confrontation between the candidates of both parties was staged in 45 constituencies, with an astonishing result that in none of them Dange's party won a single seat while the rival bagged 24 seats.

The fiercest battles were fought in Quilon District (Table XXIV), where the rivals combated each other in 8 out of 15 constituencies, none of them winning any of them due to this
competition and the division of total communist vote. Then came Palghat District (Table XIX) where the battle raged in 8 out of 14 constituencies in which the CPI (M) routed the rival by winning 7 seats. Then came Alleppey District (Table XXIII) in which the CPI (M) won 3 out of 6 seats contested by the rival, and then Kottayam Districts (Table XXII) in which the CPI (M) bagged 4 out of 6 seats contested by the rightists. In Kozhikode District (Table XVIII) 5 seats were fought over, the CPI (M) winning 4. In Trivandrum District (Table XXV) the CPI (M) won 1 out of the 3 contested seats; in Ernakulam District (Table XXI) 1 out of 3; in Trichur District (Table XX) 2 out of 3; and in Cannanore District (Table XVII) 2 out of 3.

The rout of the rightist communists can be attributed to several interacting factors.

In the first place was the personal factor. The real performing stars of first rank calibre—leaders like E. M. S. Namboodiripad, A. K. Gopalan, Mrs. K. R. Gouri Thomas—were with the rival party and they drew the masses. Although the CPI had in its ranks leaders like M. N. Govindan Nair and the majority of legislators, these men did not generate a mass appeal equal to that of the top leaders of the leftist party.

Secondly, the CPI lost control over large sections of organized labour and kisans because of the Affair Dange. The fact that Dange was associated with the All-India Trade Union Congress had a profound and adverse effect upon the voting of its membership in Kerala.

Third was the organizational factor. While the CPI was in command of the party functionaries and the party apparatus on the upper levels, the middle and the grass-root organizations switched over to the leftist party and unfolded an effective campaign among the masses unhindered by the arrest of the top leaders.

Fourth was the political factor. The policy of close identification of the CPI with the Congress, the concept of co-operation with it and the whole idea of the National Democratic Front made some voters from all communities shift their support from the CPI to the Congress Party.

Five, the same political factor had a contrary effect on some other voters who, because they ceased seeing in the CPI a real
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alternative to the Congress, voted rather for the leftist party. In both instances the rightist party was the loser.

Six, a major role in the debacle of the CPI was played by the communal factor. While the hard-core members of the united party, and the steady non-party followers who had always given their vote to the communists deserted in substantial numbers the CPI for Namboodiripad's party, the decline of the CPI was further compounded by the withdrawal of support which the Ezhava community had in the past extended to the united party.

It has been estimated that in the 1957 general elections this community had contributed some 66 per cent of its vote to the cause of communism. However, by 1963-4 the community came under a serious strain. This had been induced by the factional struggle within the Congress Party where the Chief Minister R. Sankar, himself an Ezhava, came under fire of the majority Nair faction within the Congress, led by G. Nair, who had the support of a large section of the Christian community. Only minority group of the Nair community, under the leadership of P. T. Chacko, supported R. Sankar. This struggle soon spilled beyond the confines of the Congress Party and disturbed the existing communal equilibrium in the state with the result that now a large section of the Ezhavas shifted its allegiance from the Communists to the Congress to support its embattled communal leader, R. Sankar, against the Nairs and the Christians.

The CPI was caught in the cross-fire of communal tensions and shifting allegiances and lost the support of the marginal voters of the Ezhava community. Those who were the hard-core communists, at least their majority, had already joined the left party and thus compounded the plight of Dange's group. The same was true, to some extent, about the shift of marginal vote of the Nair community which transferred its support to the Kerala Congress under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan. Thus it was the CPI which received the rough end of the communal tangle and upheaval in Kerala.

The Congress Party, (Congress). One of the most astonishing facts of the elections was that the Congress Party was able to hold on its mass following in spite of the severe division it had undergone, the separation and then the establishment of the rival Kerala Congress. The Congress won 2.12 million votes, amounting to 33.03 per cent of the electorate, but secured only 36
seats, mere 27.07 per cent. It was the inflexible strategy, the stoic posture, and the lack of electoral adjustments which so seriously reduced the ability of the Congress to give effect to this mass following and translate it into a corresponding number of seats. This defect in the electoral strategy was particularly striking when compared with the effectiveness of the CPI (M), which through suitable adjustments amassed 40 seats (30.08 per cent) with mere 19.55 per cent of votes.

The fortunes of the Congress were extremely spotty. It was almost completely eliminated in Cannanore District (Table XVII), where it secured only 1 seat (7.14 per cent) with 36.63 per cent of votes. Here again the faulty electoral strategy took its toll; the CPI (M) with much less votes, only 30.40, won 50 per cent of seats (7). Worse was the plight of the Congress in Kozhikode District (Table XVIII), where it won no seat at all with a 31.08 per cent vote, while the CPI (M) secured 30 per cent of seats with mere 21.09 per cent of votes. In Palghat District (Table XIX) the party failed again, winning 1 seat (7.14 per cent) with 28.09 per cent of votes. However, the CPI (M) scored remarkably: it won 11 seats, which was full 78.57 per cent, with merely 41.26 per cent of votes. Thus in Malabar the Congress Party was practically eliminated in terms of seats won.

In Trichur District (Table XX) the fortunes of the Congress markedly improved. The party inflicted a stunning defeat upon the forces of the two communist parties in 7 constituencies, winning 7 seats (53.86 per cent) by 40.78 per cent of votes.

In Ernakulam District (Table XXI) the principal adversary of the Congress Party were not the communists but the fraternal Kerala Congress. The battle between the two parties raged over 10 constituencies, each party winning 5 seats. The major difference was, however, that the over-all vote of the Congress was badly split. The party won 33.33 per cent of seats with 37.05 per cent of votes, while the Kerala Congress did not suffer from this handicap and won 33.33 per cent of seats with mere 16.46 per cent of votes.

Even more fierce battle between the two parties was waged in Kottayam District (Table XXII), where they confronted themselves in 13 out of 14 constituencies. The Congress Party was badly defeated in winning merely 1 seat (7.14 per cent) with 23.44 per cent of votes. The Kerala Congress carried the day with
50 per cent of seats (7), won with a surprisingly small electorate of 34.40 per cent.

The Alleppey District (Table XXIII) was another area where the parties badly clashed in 11 constituencies out of 14, the Kerala Congress getting the upper hand over the rival by winning 6 seats (42.86 per cent) with 28.64 votes. The Congress scored 4 seats (28.57 per cent) with 30.00 per cent of votes.

Also the Quilon District (Table XXIV) witnessed the battle royal between the two parties, confronting each other in 11 constituencies out of 15. The spoils were divided almost equally because the Congress won 46.66 per cent of seats (7) with 28.37 per cent of votes, while the rival secured 6 seats (40.00 per cent) with 23.95 per cent of votes. Here the extreme fragmentation of the communist ranks, as in Alleppey District, played directly into the hands of both Congress parties.

In the last district, Trivandrum (Table XXV), it was a Congress show from start to finish, the party winning 71.43 per cent of seats with 44.05 per cent of votes. The Kerala Congress made an extremely poor showing by trailing behind with 5.58 per cent of votes and no seat.

The extremely strong position of the Congress in Trivandrum District was due to several factors.

First, the party was not split to any appreciable extent; the Congress had retained control over the party apparatus and could mount an effective campaign.

Second, the split between the SSP and the PSP deprived both parties of the seats which normally the united PSP had won in the past.

Third, the Congress received some support from the voters who in the past had voted for the united Communist Party. The close identification of the CPI with the Congress made them swing their support directly to the Congress Party.

The strong position of the Congress in other districts of Travancore—like Quilon, Alleppey, Kottayam and Ernakulam—in spite of the fact that it had been competitively engaged by the Kerala Congress, was due mainly to the support received from the Ezhava community. The reasons for the change in the electoral pattern of this community, which in the past had supported the CPI, have been touched above. (Supra, pp. 228-9).

The Kerala Congress (K.C.). The party scored impressive
results by winning 843,970 votes (13.11 per cent), and securing 24 seats (18.04), which demonstrated a better electoral strategy than its sister party.

However, the party was practically non-existent in Malabar. In Cannanore District it registered only 1.20 per cent of votes; in Kozhikode District 1.96 per cent; in Palghat District 1.36 per cent; in Trichur District 3.19 per cent.

The strength of the party was concentrated in the districts of Travancore. The fortunes of the party shot to 16.46 per cent of the electorate in Ernakulam District (Table XXI) where it won 5 seats. In Kottayam District (Table XXII) the party reached its all-time high of 34.40 per cent of the electorate, winning 7 seats, exactly 50 per cent. This impressive record was maintained in Alleppey District (Table XXIII) where the party won only 28.64 per cent of votes but 42.86 per cent of seats (6). Similarly in Quilon District (Table XXIV) the party maintained the high level of performance by winning 23.95 per cent of votes and impressive 40 per cent of seats (6). In Trivandrum District (Table XXV) the party slumbered to mere 5.58 per cent of votes and no seat.

The explanation for the show of strength of the Kerala Congress in Travancore lies in the staunch support it had received from substantial sections of the powerful Nair community and the Christians. These had shifted their allegiance from the Congress to the rival party following the split of the Congress in 1963-64 along the communal lines by the formation of an anti-Ezhava alignment. The Nair community was led to lend its support to the Kerala Congress by a veteran distinguished politician and leader of the Nair Service Society, Mannath Padmanabhan, who had led the liberation struggle against Namboodiripad’s ministry in 1959. The Catholic Church, which in the past had always supported the Congress, was divided in its electoral support because many candidates of the Kerala Congress were leading Catholic laymen. The Church hierarchy had issued a statement warning against the splitting of votes, without however, any explicit indication how the Catholics should vote. Most of the support for the Kerala Congress came from the non-Catholic but Christian communities.

*The Muslim League* (ML). This party suffered a decline of its position mainly due to the fact that a section of its followers
voted for the dissenters, who paraded as independents, and who were supported by the CPI(M). In 1960 the party had won 4.9 per cent of votes and 8.8 per cent of seats (Table XXXVI). In 1965 the position of the party dropped to 3.71 per cent of votes (238,949), and 4.51 per cent of seats (6).

The Muslim League scored its success in the traditional strongholds in Kozhikode District (Table XVIII), where it won 18.21 per cent of votes and all of its 6 seats (30 per cent). It lost in three constituencies to the CPI(M). In Palghat District (Table XIX) it contested four constituencies and lost them all, securing only 7.76 per cent of the vote.

The Muslim League Independents. These 6 candidates were supported by the CPI(M) and won 149,011 votes (2.32 per cent) and 6 seats (4.51 per cent). The latter result was highly significant because these dissenters, with the support of the left communists, won as many seats as the official Muslim League. Another interesting aspect of the electoral co-operation of the dissenters with the CPI (M) was that while only 2 seats (10 per cent) and 5.07 per cent was won in the traditional Kozhikode District (Table XVIII), the remaining four seats were won in constituencies outside of Malabar never contested by any Muslim League candidate. The first 2 seats (14.18 per cent) were won with 7.44 per cent of votes in Cannanore District (Table XVII). The third seat (7.69 per cent) was won with 3.08 per cent of votes in Trichur District (Table XX), and the fourth seat (6.67 per cent) was won with 3.35 per cent of votes in Ernakulam District (Table XXI).

The lesson of disadvantages which the Muslim League had incurred by a direct confrontation with the CPI in the 4 constituencies in Palghat District, and the lesson of advantage which the independent candidates had harvested in co-operation with the CPI (M), was well registered by the Muslim League. In fact, these lessons profoundly influenced the attitude of the whole Muslim League toward the Marxist party, by that time the latter was the dominant political force in Malabar, and were to lead the Muslims of Kerala into a CPI(M)-sponsored united front in the elections of 1957. Apart from considering this power factor—i.e., the Muslim League saw its future in a liaison with a communist-led combination rather than in an alignment led by the Congress—the Muslims of Kerala became attracted to the Marxist
party because of its new approach to the whole communal question while the Congress remained inflexible and operated with assumptions completely outdated.

The Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP). This party tremendously benefited from its co-operation and the electoral adjustment of seats with the CPI(M). And yet, the SSP did not succeed in winning as many votes and seats as the old PSP had done in the last coalition with the Congress in the 1960 mid-term elections. In 1960 the old PSP had won 14.1 per cent of votes and 15.8 per cent of seats (Table XXXVI), while in 1965 the SSP won 8 per cent of votes (514,889) and 9.79 per cent of seats (13). On balance, the alignment with the Congress had benefited the old party in a greater measure than the alignment of the new party with the CPI(M).

The strength of the SSP was in Malabar. It scored well in Cannanore District (Table XVII), where it won 21.44 per cent of seats (5), by a surprisingly low ration of 12.81 per cent of votes. In Kozhikode District (Table XVIII) the results were even better: the party won 25 per cent of seats (5), with 15.07 per cent of votes. The next two seats (14.29 per cent) were won in Palghat District (Table XIX) by 8.19 per cent of votes. The next seat (7.69 per cent) was won in Trichur District (Table XX), with merely 4.48 per cent of votes. In Ernakulam District (Table XXI) the SSP contested 3 constituencies and lost them all by securing over 5.56 per cent of votes. Two constituencies were contested in Kottayam District (Table XXII) and lost with a trifle of 1.84 per cent of votes. In Alleppey District (Table XXIII) the SSP won 4.18 per cent of votes and no seat. In Quilon District the party (Table XXIV) bagged 1 seat (6.67 per cent) with mere 4.06 per cent of votes. In Trivandrum District (Table XXV) the party won again one seat (7.14 per cent) with as much as 14.31 per cent of votes.

The Praja Socialist Party (PSP). The fact that the national leadership of this party had gone into the merger with the Socialist Party in 1964 and then reversed itself early in 1965 sealed the fate of the PSP in Kerala. The call from Banaras to re-establish the party on all levels could not be answered in Kerala, where the party apparatus was firmly in the hands of K. Chandrasekharan, who considered the merger of the two parties final and fiercely resisted all attempts at restoration. Because of
this, the PSP lost all positions in the entire Kerala to the SSP, except in Trivandrum District, where the old and loyal leadership in fact had refused to go into the merger in the first instance and thus saved the local apparatus. But even there the results were negligible and demonstrated that for all practical purposes the party had been liquidated, at least for the time being. In Trivandrum District (Table XXV) the PSP contested 5 seats, in 3 of them confronting its rival with rather disastrous results. In Vilapil Constituency the SSP scored 15,653 votes while PSP trailed behind with 2,576 votes. In Trivandrum I Constituency the SSP stole the show by winning a seat with 14,865 votes, while the PSP won 3,710 votes. A similar large disparity in support was recorded in Trivandrum II Constituency, where the PSP was returned with 3,761 votes while its rival with 14,286. These impressive returns of the SSP were due to the electoral adjustment with the CPI (M) in these constituencies, where the SSP candidates received a substantial support from the communists.

On the whole then the PSP won merely 20,876 votes (0.32 per cent) and no seat at all. This was an unparalleled decline of fortunes of a party which until then had commanded the central position between the Congress and the Communists, determining to a great extent the direction of political developments in Kerala. In 1960 the PSP had won 14.1 per cent of votes and commanded an impressive 15.8 per cent of seats in the house. Almost all of this had been lost to the SSP. In addition, the SSP took this substantial bloc of political capital, 13 seats (almost 10 per cent), into an alignment with the Communists and thus precipitated a new leftward shift in the correlation of forces in the state.

*The Revolutionary Socialist Party* (RSP). This was an electoral ally of the CPI which fared as bad as its sponsor. The party won 83,198 votes (1.30 per cent) and no seat. The party made its strongest stand in Quilon District (Table XXIV), where it won a surprising 49,511 votes (6.44 per cent) by contesting 4 constituencies. In three of them it came pretty close to winning the seats. In Quilon Constituency it won 13,499 votes, losing the seat to the Congress which scored merely 13,749 votes. In Eravipuram Constituency the RSP accumulated 18,458 votes but lost the seat to the Congress which won 19,114 votes. In the last constituency, Karunagapally, the RSP won 17,468 votes while the
Congress topped this by 19,762 votes. In two more districts in which the party put up candidates the results were negligible, in Kottayam District it secured 1,123 votes (0.17 per cent), and in Alleppey District 920 votes (0.13 per cent).

In the three constituencies, in which the party had come close to winning the seats, the voting strength was amassed with the assistance of the CPI. On the whole, the RSP did not derive much benefit from its co-operation with the CPI. In fact, it maintained exactly the same position as in 1960 when it had won also 1.30 per cent of votes cast.

The Karshaka Thozhilali Party (KTP). This party had an electoral adjustment with the CPI (M) and the Malnad Karshaka Union (MKU) and won 76,833 votes (1.19 per cent). It scored an impressive result in Kozhikode District (Table XVIII), where it fielded 1 candidate in Kalpetta Constituency and defeated the two rival Congress candidates by winning 17,549 votes and thus the seat. Another show of strength was made in Ernakulam District where (Table XXI) the party contested 3 constituencies against the two Congress parties and lost them all by winning merely 3.31 per cent of votes. Another major effort was made in Trichur District (Table XX), where the party contested 6 constituencies and scored no seat with 4.64 per cent of votes. In all constituencies in which the party had secured a sizable vote the support of its electoral allies was significant. An interesting aspect of this combination was that the Malnad Karshaka Union (MKU), had predominantly a Catholic membership which co-operated with the leftist communists for some time.

The Forward Bloc. This party won 2,864 votes (0.04 per cent) and no seat. It contested 2 constituencies in Quilon District and lost them.

The Swatantra Party. This party had an electoral adjustment with the Kerala Congress, and it was due to this co-operation that it won one seat in Poonjar Constituency, Kottayam District (Table XXII), with an impressive vote of 21,975, which was 3.35 per cent of the total votes polled in that district. On the whole the party was left with the seat won in Poonjar, but collected a total of 49,858 votes (0.77 per cent) in the rest of the constituencies which it contested.

The Jan Sangh. This party won 34,380 votes (0.56 per cent) and no seat. It concentrated its effort in Malabar. It was most
successful in Kozhikode District, where it won 11,148 votes (1.12 per cent); then in Palghat District, winning there 4,891 votes (0.77 per cent); and in Cannanore, winning 10,553 votes (1.47 per cent).

*The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* (DMK). This party contested two constituencies in Kottayam District, winning 10,996 votes (0.14 per cent) and no seat. In the famous Devicolam Constituency it won 5,656 votes, while in Peermade 5,340 votes.

*The Backward Classes Christian Federation* (BCCF). This group won 10,526 votes (0.16 per cent) and no seat.

*The Republican Party* (RP). This party won 4,654 votes amounting to 0.07 per cent of the total vote cast.

*Independents*. Some 56 candidates contested as independents, without having the backing of any major party. They won 121,295 votes, amounting to 1.88 per cent of the total vote cast.

*Invalid Votes*. There was a surprisingly small number of invalid and spoiled votes, 97,801, representing 1.52 per cent. This reflected the fact that the voter in Kerala had been called to the ballot box very frequently in the past and certainly knew how to handle the ballot sheets.

On the whole, the elections were very orderly, fair, and there were no reports of manipulations of electoral lists, ballot boxes or coercion of voters. It was a functioning democratic procedure at its best.

**Calculus of Power**

The fragmentation of the political parties, the lack of major electoral alliances, the intensive intra-party struggle and the splitting of votes and, finally, the absence of agreements on cooperation after the elections—these resulted in a situation in which no single party, and no combination, could form a new government. However, the situation would have been fundamentally different had not the multiple split weakened the major parties in the state.

Looking at the fortunes of both Communist parties the split cost them dearly. The most disastrous consequences had the rivalry in Quilon District (Table XXIV), where both Communist Parties won an aggregate of 31.70 per cent of votes but only 6.67 per cent of seats, i.e., one seat, losing 5 seats to the Congress.
or Kerala Congress due to the division of the Communist vote. In Punalur Constituency the Communist aggregate of votes was 20,039, and yet the seat was lost to a Congress candidate who won 14,599 votes. In Adoor Constituency the Communist aggregate vote was 22,078 and the seat was lost to the Kerala Congress which won 17,651 votes. In Krishnapuram Constituency the rival candidates of both Communist Parties amassed a formidable 31,528 votes but the seat was lost to a candidate of the Congress Party who won only 19,842 votes. In Kundara Constituency the aggregate vote of the two Communist candidates was 27,136, while the Congress bagged the seat with 20,166 votes. In the last constituency of the Quilon District, Chathannoor, the two Communist candidates received an aggregate of 21,321 votes while the seat went to the Kerala Congress on 17,462 votes.

In Alleppey District (Table XXIII) the rivalry cost the Communist Parties 4 seats. In Sherthalai Constituency the candidate of the Kerala Congress defeated with 15,070 votes 2 Communist candidates who polled an aggregate of 19,741 votes. In Alleppey Constituency the Congress defeated with 13,997 votes a total of 22,561 Communist votes. In Ambalapuzha Constituency the two Communist candidates totalled 18,790 votes and lost to a Congressman who polled 16,657 votes. In Harippad Constituency the combined Communist vote was very high, 52,108 votes, but the seat was lost to the Congress on 23,644 votes.

In Trivandrum District (Table XXV) the division of the Communist ranks cost them 2 seats. In Varkala Constituency the total Communist vote of 23,151 lost to the Congress of 21,092. A similar close race was in Kazhakuttam Constituency, where the two Communist candidates polled 18,820 votes but lost the seat to a Congress candidate who polled 17,379 votes.

In Kottayam District (Table XXII) the rivalry cost the Communists 1 seat in Vaikom Constituency, where a Congress candidate (15,255) defeated two Communists who polled together 21,469 votes. Similarly one seat was lost in Chelakara, a Scheduled Caste Constituency, in Trichur District, where a Congress candidate won a seat with 17,288 votes against the aggregate vote of two Communist candidates of 20,271.

The last seat lost was in Ponani Constituency of Palghat District (Table XIX), where the two Communist candidates
polled 16,891 votes while the seat was lost to the Congress which polled 15,881 votes.

On the whole then, had the Communist Party in Kerala been unified, or at least had the two wings had electoral adjustments to avoid splitting their vote, the united party or the two wings would have won additional 14 seats. Given the 46 seats which the Communist bloc won (see Table XVI), plus 13 seats of the SSP, plus 1 seat of the KTP, plus the 14 seats which could have been secured had not the party been divided, Kerala would have had another Communist government resting upon a comfortable majority of 74 seats in the house of 133. This development was possible, of course, provided the rest of the conditions remained equal, of which the most important was the division of the Congress ranks.

Apart from losing an opportunity of forming a new Communist government in Kerala, the division of the Communist ranks had another disastrous effect. The aggregate vote of both Communist parties, together with their supporters, dropped by an astonishing 16.76 per cent. In 1962 the united party with all its supporters had commanded a formidable popular vote of 47.06 per cent (see Table XXXVI); in 1965 this was reduced to 31.70 per cent. This really meant that the Communist movement in Kerala had lost over 16 per cent of its mass support. This was a decline of magnitude unparalleled for any party in Kerala since independence and, strangely enough, went unnoticed and lost to more eye-catching results.

The principal cause of this decline was the rout of the rightist party, which polled merely 8 per cent of votes for reasons discussed above. Had Dange's party retained its mass following—i.e., the 8.02 per cent of votes won plus those 16.76 per cent lost—plus the 19.55 per cent of votes won by the CPI(M), the aggregate Communist vote in the 1965 elections of 44.33 per cent would have well matched the 47.06 per cent of popular vote in 1962 and the 43.8 per cent in 1960 (Table XXXVI). From this analysis the conclusion follows that the 16.76 per cent loss of popular support was the major reverse for the Communist movement in Kerala, and that had this loss been effectively projected into the number of seats lost, through a flexible strategy of the Congress and suitable electoral arrange-
ments, the total of seats won by the Communist bloc would have been reduced from 46 to some 40 seats.

The main beneficiaries of the rout of Dange's party and the general decline of the mass support of the Communist movement were both Congress groups which absorbed 11.88 per cent of the spoils, and then the Muslim League and its independents which increased the mass following of the League by 4.53 per cent mainly due to the diversion of some CPI (M) votes to the Muslim independents.

Looking at the fortunes of the Congress bloc, the rivalry of the two parties proved even more costly and hurt them even more than the split had cost the Communist camp. While the rivalry cost the Communists 14 seats, the split of the Congress vote deprived the Congress bloc of 16 seats.

A veritable fratricidal war was waged in Kottayam District (Table XXII) over the loyalties of the Christian, Nair and Ezhava communities in 5 constituencies. The Congress bloc had won there anyway 8 seats, and with the 5 seats it could have won it would have bagged 13 out of 14 seats. The costliest division of the Congress ranks was in Puthupally Constituency, where the combined vote of the two Congress parties, amounting to 27,168, lost the seat to the CPI(M) which polled merely 15,571 votes. An equally bad loss the Congress bloc suffered in Kottayam Constituency, where the two Congress candidates polled 27,676 votes and lost the seat to Namboodiripad's party which won only 17,880 votes. The third seat lost was in Udumbanchola Constituency, where Dange's party collected it by winning 17,374 votes against the aggregate vote of the two Congress candidates of 22,245. The fourth seat was gone in Devicolam Constituency, where the Congress forces polled 19,166 votes and lost the seat to the CPI(M) which polled 16,472. The fifth seat was lost in Peermade Constituency to the CPI(M), which polled 12,345 votes against the combined votes of the Congress of 14,894.

In Ernakulam District (Table XXI) the rivalry between the two Congress parties cost them 4 seats. In Vadakkaekara Constituency the Congress forces won 27,822 votes and lost the seat to an independent supported by the CPI (M) and the CPI who collected 25,288 votes. In Palluruthy the CPI (M) won the seat with 22,717 votes against the combined forces of the two Congress candidates who polled 27,698. In Tripunnithura the race
was close; the Congress forces polling 25,464 votes lost the seat to the CPI (M) candidate who polled 24,387 votes. The fourth seat was lost in Perumbavoor to a CPI (M) candidate who polled 21,265 votes against the combined vote of the Congress of 25,437.

In Alleppey District (Table XXIII) 3 seats were lost due to the rivalry of the two Congress parties. The most severe loss was suffered by the Congress forces in Kayamkulam Constituency where the CPI (M) candidate polled merely 17,522 votes and bagged the seat against almost a double vote of the two Congress candidates who had amassed 32,698 votes. The second seat was lost in Pandalam, a Scheduled Caste Constituency, where the CPI (M) candidate annexed the seat with 20,241 votes against 28,371 votes of the combined Congress. The third seat was lost in Aroor to the CPI (M) candidate who scored 19,426 votes against the combined forces of the two Congress groups which polled 25,026 votes.

In Trichur District (Table XX) the rivalry between the two Congress Parties subsided and only 2 seats were lost. One in Ollur Constituency, where the CPI (M) won 20,180 votes against the joint vote of the Congress of 22,285. The second seat in Kodakara Constituency; the Congress parties aggregated 21,497 votes and lost the seat to the CPI (M) which polled 18,775 votes.

In Kozhikode District, Kalpetta Constituency (Table XVIII) the seat was lost to a candidate of the KTP, supported by the CPI(M) and the MKU, who won 17,549 votes while the two Congress rivals secured 21,153 votes.

The very last case of a badly divided vote of the two Congress rivals and the loss of a seat was in Pathanapuram Constituency of Quilon District (Table XXIV), which was a Scheduled Caste area, where the CPI candidate won his seat with 13,948 votes while the rival Congressmen won 23,389 votes.

Thus had the Congress forces gone to the polls as a united party they could have won 16 seats which were lost due to the fragmentation of the Congress vote. Given the 60 seats won by the Congress bloc, plus the 16 possible seats, the Congress could have formed a new government in Kerala by commanding a majority of 76 seats in the State Legislative Assembly. Here again, this calculation holds true only if other conditions remained
equal, particularly if the Communist forces remained divided and went to the polls as two rival parties.

One aspect of the returns of the Congress bloc deserves special attention, i.e., that the aggregate vote of the two Congress parties reached the all-time high of incredible 46.14 per cent. This was a very handsome gain of 11.88 per cent in popular support, from 34.26 per cent in 1962 (Table XXXVI), mainly drawn from the Ezhava community which had deserted Dange's party. With the popular support of such a magnitude the Congress bloc should have emerged a giant in the State Assembly, instead of securing merely 45.11 per cent of seats.

Here again the inflexible posture of the Congress was mainly responsible for its inability to translate this mass following into a maximum number of seats. Had the Congress bloc been able to attain such a concentration of effort through an appropriate electoral strategy as the CPI(M), which had won 30 per cent of seats with a mere 19.55 per cent of votes, the Congress bloc should have bagged with its 46.14 per cent mass following some 80 seats instead of 60. However, this calculus of power the Congress leaders did not understand and thus proved most ineffective in translating the enormous mandate they had received from the people into a new structure of power and a new government which could have stabilized the political situation in the state. The Congress forces lost not because of the lack of popular support, but on tactical grounds.

The final observation on the calculus of power in Kerala in the wake of the 1965 mid-term elections is an estimate of what kind of correlation of forces would have resulted from the contest had the two principal contestants, the Congress bloc and the Communist bloc, gone to the polls as unified parties. Given the rest of conditions unchanged, the Communist bloc would have won 12 seats but lost 18, a net loss of 6 seats, reducing its representation in the house to 40. Conversely, the Congress bloc would have won 18 seats and lost 12, a net gain of 6 seats. Given the 60 seats the Congress bloc had won, plus 1 independent supported by the Swatantra Party, plus the gain of 6 seats, the Congress bloc could have formed a new cabinet supported by 67 deputies in the house of 133.

An interesting aspect of the electoral returns was the way in which both Communist parties of Kerala evaluated them.
BREAKDOWN OF TRADITIONAL ALIGNMENTS

The rout of the rightist party was discussed at a meeting of the Central Committee, held in New Delhi, and the findings were embodied in a resolution of March 22, 1965. It was a frank admission that the assessment of the relative strength of both parties was totally wrong:

...Of the basic Communist mass which has been the common mass of the Party when it was united, only a minority has voted for our candidates this time, while the decisive majority of that mass voted for the candidates of the rival Party. Even when the rival Party did not put up its own candidates but offered its support to the SSP, the same thing happened, contrary to our earlier expectations. Thus, as far as the basic Communist mass is concerned, the election results in Kerala have shown that our assessment of the relative strength of our party vis-a-vis the rival Party among the masses was totally wrong..."

The main cause of the decline of the party was identified by the resolution as the failure to conduct an ideological and political campaign in order to explain the policy of the party and to expose the mistaken policies of its rival.

However, the CPI would not take the blame for the decline of the over-all vote of the Communist bloc and placed it on the shoulders of the leftists. The resolution said that the elections had demonstrated clearly that the CPI had been perfectly right in warning against the dangerous tactics pursued by Namboodiripad and his party in joining hands with the "communal reaction" in the name of fighting the Congress. Although it was true that the CPI (M) had won a considerable number of seats, the over-all result of its electoral strategy was a contribution to the strengthening of the Congress and of the Kerala Congress-Muslim League axis. However, the resolution demanded that Namboodiripad should be given an opportunity to form a cabinet and that the 29 elected deputies of his party in detention should be released for the purpose.

Namboodiripad, on the other hand, was jubilant at the success of his party and offered a more elaborate explanation in which he argued in terms of a major socio-political change in Kerala as responsible for the achievements of his party.

First, said Namboodiripad, was the fact that the Communist
movement in Kerala was a natural product of India's nationalist movement. The Communist movement in Kerala grew out of the general anti-imperialist movement of the whole Indian people and out of a particular class movement, which "is the specific feature of the freedom movement in the Asian and African countries."

Second, in its development the Communist Party in Kerala represented all which had been progressive in the anti-caste and other aspects of the social reform movement. It further represented the spontaneous upsurge of the peasantry which had merged with the "bourgeois democratic freedom movement." It further represented the aspirations of the people of former princely states demanding an end to the autocratic rule and for the establishment of a democratic system of government. Moreover, it was the Communist Party which had fulfilled the longcherished dream of the people for political unification, in the United Kerala, on the national and cultural-linguistic basis. Finally, it was the Communist Party which had led the struggles of the growing working class, which in turn helped the peasantry and the toiling middle class to participate in the general anti-imperialist movement as organized detachments with their own special objectives, slogans and forms of struggle.

It was precisely for these reasons that the party had not only broken through the monopoly of power of the Congress and had established a government of its own in 1957, but had been able to withstand the combined assault of all other parties during the liberation struggle in 1959 and then in the 1960 mid-term elections. These were the main historical factors, according to Namboodiripad, which had provided his party with a large mass base and a staying power and which helped it to weather all storms and attacks upon it.

Third, addressing himself to more recent developments Namboodiripad said that it had been the reactionary policies of the anti-Communist coalition which had disappointed the people. Moreover, the coalition was ridden with internal contradictions which had been kept suppressed under the barrage of an anti-Communist propaganda and as long as the Communist ministry had been in power. These contradictions had also been contained during the electoral campaign in 1960 because there was a real possibility that a new Communist regime might be
elected to power. However, as soon as the new Congress-PSP ministry, supported by the Muslim League, came to power in 1960 and started to "undo the damage done by the Communists the conflict came to the surface." The longer the ministry lasted, said Namboodiripad, the larger the sections of the people, who had originally supported the anti-Communist alliance, defected and realized that the policies of the former Communist government were closer to them than the policies of their own leaders now forming the coalition.

Namboodiripad then cited the example of the Agrarian Relations Bill, which his ministry had passed in 1959, as the major factor which had turned even the Congress masses against their party and had brought a profound realignment of forces in the state. He said that the provisions of the bill had benefited not only those who followed the Communists but also those in the anti-Communist camp, and that it was for these reasons that even the coalition government had pledged to implement it "with some further improvement." However, as soon as the coalition government came to power in 1960 all major provisions of the bill—"fixity of tenure, rent-reduction, right of purchase, ceiling"—had been so watered down that "this created discontent not only in the ranks of the Muslim League and the PSP (who had left the coalition by the time the Congress ministry's amended bill came before the legislature), but even among the Congressmen".

Four, this discontent, said Namboodiripad, had not only manifested itself on the question of the Agrarian Relations Bill but on several concrete peasant issues. First, there was the issue of mass eviction from the high ranges areas. Then there was the issue of the use of temple lands, managed by the Devaswom Board, which had been leased to rich people but in actual practice had been possessed and cultivated by tenants. However the tenants—the peasants who had to be evicted—belonged in their majority to the Catholic community and until that time had participated in the anti-Communist front. The fact that it was the Nair community which had sought to evict the Catholic peasants from that temple land, said Namboodiripad, had started to agitate the Catholic Congressmen against the Nair leaders and the whole issue became a communal problem. In this
situation a section of Catholic peasants had started to look toward the Communists and had initiated fraternization with them. In this Namboodiripad saw the most crucial factor:

...The most significant fact in connection with these developments is that it was the living core of the anti-Communist alliance—the low section of the clergy and laity who had formed the Anti-Communist Front—that started co-operating with the Communists. Nobody could have imagined in 1959-60 that the acknowledged leader of the Anti-Communist Front, Father Vadakkan, would share platform with Communist leader A. K. Gopalan in peasant rallies and demonstrations. That, however, was just what happened in 1961-62. Out of this emerged the predominantly Catholic Malnad (High Range) Karshaka Union which co-operated with the Communist-led Kerala Karshaka Sangham in a large number of mass struggles, including satyagraha, against the Congress proposals for 'improving' the Agrarian Relations Bill...40

This was a major development in the state, observed Namboodiripad. The process of the break-up of the anti-Communist coalition had further been accelerated by demoralization and internal crisis which had set within the Muslim League as a result of its resignation from the coalition government. Also the PSP became restive over the dictatorial methods of their leader and Chief Minister P. Thanu Pillai.

Another major factor in the situation, explained further Namboodiripad, was the sense of frustration within those anti-Communist sections of teachers in the state who had organized the “liberation struggle” in 1959, and who now realized that “their own government was so amending the Education Bill as to put them completely at the mercy of the management of schools in the state.”

The final factor, according to Namboodiripad, was the indignation in all sections of the people—within the ranks of the Congress Party in particular—at the misdeeds of its ministry. The last straw was the manipulation of the Central Government to get out of Kerala the PSP leader Thanu Pillai in order “to clear the Congress Chief Minister Sankar of the serious charges of corruption levelled by no less a person than the KPCC President Govindan Nair.”40
Five, all these factors, said Namboodiripad, had "formed the background against which the Communist Party and the Anti-Communist Front started together on mass issues". And even the Congress then broke up. The dissident Congressmen first started opposing their leaders on single issues but gradually in a more comprehensive way. At first "in a mild way, then very sharply and strongly; at first within their own party and in private, but subsequently in public". While making loud protestations of their loyalty to the Congress leadership in New Delhi "they turned the fire on the corrupt gang which has taken power in Kerala". It was in this way then that the Congress had finally split and the Kerala Congress established, which had brought down the Congress ministry.

After listing the political factors, which according to Namboodiripad had paved the way for the success of his party, he touched finally upon the personal and the communal factor. He said that

... to draw attention to these real political developments is not to deny the existence of personal, group, caste and communal squabbles in the leadership. They did undoubtedly play their part. They, however, could not have done so if the political background had not been favourable for their operation, if the leadership of the anti-Communist alliance was not getting isolated from the aspirations of big chunks of its followers, if from among their ranks were not emerging a new type of anti-Communists—those who would 'fight the vested interests in co-operation with the Communists precisely in order to keep the masses away from the ideology of Communism'...".

Namboodiripad then concluded that the break-up of the anti-Communist combination of 1959-60 had not been accidental. It was the natural result of "real socio-political forces working in Kerala". These were the very forces which had led to the emergence of the Communist government in 1957.

This was Namboodiripad's analysis of the factors and developments which had been responsible for the "success" of the Communist movement in Kerala in the 1965 mid-term elections. The analysis was couched in class terms and attempted to explain that it had been the economic and political factors—but above all the emerging class consciousness among Christian tenants, agricultural labourers, lower clergy and laity—which had broken
away from their former patrons and the coalition, had started to
co-operate with the Communists and thus brought about a
fundamental realignment favourable to the Communists.

This explanation is sharply at variance with the evaluation of
the electoral returns made on the preceding pages.

First, the most important single factor of the returns was the
unprecedented increase of 11.26 per cent of popular vote which
the combined forces of the Congress had secured. It were the
Congress forces which commanded the largest mass support in
Kerala with 46.14 per cent of popular vote. This was a popular
mandate which the Communists could not match by a long shot.

Second, the Communist forces had suffered a profound decline
of their mass base, full 16.75 per cent, which had been reduced
to 31.70 per cent of popular vote. This was a loss which
Namboodiripad as well as the rightist party failed to explain.

Three, Namboodiripad’s party had polled merely 19.55 per
cent of votes. The 30 per cent of seats it had won had not been
the expression of a 30 per cent mass support, but they merely re-
lected the adroitness of the party in maximizing its small follow-
ing by advantageous electoral adjustments.

Four, for Dange’s party the elections proved a disaster. It had
polled merely 8 per cent of votes due to a large scale exodus of
its members to join Namboodiripad and of its supporters to vote
for the Congress.

Five, thus there had been no swing toward the Communist
camp, as Namboodiripad alleged, but away from it and toward
the Congress camp.

Six, the class consciousness and class allegiances played an
insignificant role in the realignment of forces in Kerala during
the elections. These had been a factor, and perhaps not even a
decisive one only in rallying behind Namboodiripad the majority
of the party membership and its following and in deserting
Dange’s group. The working class in Kerala is very small.
Although the number of the trade unions had increased from
323 in 1951 to 1731 in 1965, the number of workers in registered
factories amounted to mere 175,833 in 1963. There is no working
class to speak of in the whole of 16 million people.

Seven, the decisive element which had determined the outcome
of the elections was the communal factor. While the Communists
had applauded the split of the Congress Party along the com-
municipal lines in 1964, it was the Communist camp which had suffered the backlash of this communal tangle, which had decimated the ranks of the rightist party by the loss of the electoral support of the Ezhava community. In fact, the Congress camp had immensely gained from that disturbance of the communal balance of forces and from the shift of the communal allegiances.

Eight, there was no evidence of the "new anti-Communists", as Namboodiripad labelled them, or any appreciable degree of co-operation of the Christians with the Communists, heralded by him, as a factor in the elections. The only co-operation between the Christians and the leftist Communists was in the form of a joint support of the KTP candidates by the Malnad Karshaka Union (MKU), a predominantly Christian group, and the CPI(M). The effect of this combination, which had originated during the joint struggles referred to by Namboodiripad, upon the electoral returns was marginal. The KTP, supported by the MKU and the CPI (M), had won one seat in Kalpetta Constituency of the Kozhikode District by 17,549 votes. On the whole this combination had fielded 10 candidates who together polled 76,833 votes, which was 1.19 per cent of the total votes cast. This, certainly, was not an alignment to speak of.

Nine, there was little substance in Namboodiripad's allegation that the socio-political shift in Kerala had been attained in some measure due to the co-operation of the lower clergy and laity with the Communists. There might have been individual instances of such co-operation, but the two groups in question and the non-Catholic Christians had given their overwhelming support to the Kerala Congress. There was no appreciable shift of their allegiance to the left.

Ten, there had been no significant shift among the teachers, who had organized the liberation struggle in 1959, toward the Communists as Namboodiripad alleges. Here again, disappointments and disillusionment had alienated some of them, but the basic core of the teaching community remained aligned with the democratic camp.

Eleven, Namboodiripad says that there existed a great similarity between the socio-political conditions which had brought to power his government in 1957 and the political climate which had influenced the results of the elections of 1965. Our analysis sees only one main similarity. In 1957 it had been the shift of the
Nair community away from the Congress and in support of the Communists which had been the decisive factor in the success of the CPI and the establishment of its government. In 1960 it had been the shift of the Ezhava community from the Communists and toward the Congress camp which had decimated the Communist ranks and gave the former an overwhelming popular support.

Thus the final conclusion can postulate that it is the communal factor which has been and still does dominate the political process in Kerala, and that it is the shift in the communal equilibrium of forces which determines in the main the political alignments in Kerala and the fortunes of political parties.

Inflexible Congress

The elections in Kerala was a game of lost chances and opportunities in which no party had won a sufficient number of votes to form a government. However, attempts were made for post-electoral combinations to muster even tenuous majorities in the hope of forming a ministry.

As soon as the electoral returns were known Namboodiripad saw the Governor of Kerala, V. V. Giri, on March 7, 1965, requesting him that his party, which controlled the largest bloc of votes in the State Legislative Assembly, should be invited by him to form a ministry. Namboodiripad insisted that in addition to its own 40 members his party had the promise of co-operation of the 13 members of the SSP, 1 deputy of the KTP and of 9 independent deputies who had been elected with the CPI (M) support; this amounted to 63 votes in the house of 133. In addition, said Namboodiripad, some other 30 members of the house had pledged to form a non-Congress government. In order that the consultations for a coalition could be initiated by the CPI(M), Namboodiripad demanded that the 29 deputies of his party who had been elected while under arrest be released from jail.

However, the Governor of Kerala had no jurisdiction over the matter of the detainees, who were now held under the orders of the Central Government. Moreover, New Delhi was in no mood to set them free as the Home Minister Nanda declared in the Lok Sabha on March 10 that they would not be released in spite of being elected.
Next came the attempts of the Kerala Congress at forming another coalition government. The case was presented to V. V. Giri by the President of the Kerala Congress, K. M. George, who claimed that his party and the Muslim League, commanding 30 seats in the house, had the support of additional 37 votes, which included 7 independents and 1 deputy of the Swatantra Party. This combination would amount to 67 votes, a majority of one. The Kerala Congress leader further said that his combination would co-operate with the Congress Party in forming the Ministry, but would not consider any rapprochement with any party of the Communists. In fact, he counted with the support of some 29 deputies of the Congress Party in order to aggregate the 67 votes.

The Congress Party itself maintained its stoic attitude to the bitter end. Its President, K. C. Abraham, declared that his party was in no position to form a government with 30 seats, that it would not enter into any coalition government with any party, but that it would not obstruct the formation of a coalition government composed of any parties except the left Communists.

In view of this attitude, K. M. George from the Kerala Congress, wrote a letter to K. C. Abraham on March 15 in which he offered his party's support to the Congress if this would change its position and decide to form a coalition government. Conversely, and should the Congress Party decline, the letter requested the support of the Congress Party for a coalition which the Kerala Congress might form with the Muslim League.

In order to solve the deadlock V. V. Giri called on March 16 the representatives of the parties for consultations and direct confrontation to reconcile the promises with realities and to extract from the leaders binding commitments.

Namboodiripad stated that he hoped he would be able to form a ministry with the support of the Muslim League. At this stage, however, the spokesman for the League said that his party would not join or support in the assembly a Communist government, or a government formed by the SSP with the support of the Communists. Speaking for the Congress Party K. C. Abraham said that his party would not form a coalition government and would rather function as a responsible and constitutional opposition; however, the party would support in the assembly any non-Congress cabinet only if its policies were in line with those of
the Congress. Speaking for the Kerala Congress K. M. George said that in the absence of the 29 detained deputies of the CPI (M) the working membership of the house would be reduced to 104 members, and that in view of this a coalition of his party with the Muslim League could command a working majority. The SSP had the most ambivalent attitude of all parties. Its representative said that it would not join a Communist government although it would take a responsible attitude toward it, meaning that it would support it in the house. However, the party would not join a coalition government of the Congress or the Kerala Congress and would not even support them in the house.

The direct confrontation of the party leaders presented the Governor of Kerala with a clear picture that no single party, or a combination of several parties, could form a cabinet with a working majority in the house and, in view of this, he recommended that Presidential Rule should be further extended. The Governor submitted a memorandum on the subject to President Radhakrishnan on March 18 which presented the following picture:

First, even if the 29 detainees were released the leftist Communist Party would not be able to muster a working majority mainly because the Muslim League had refused to enter into coalition with it or even support its government in the assembly. Second, the Congress Party had refused to form a government, enter into any government, or support the attempts of any other parties at forming a government. Three, although the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League had declared a desire to form a coalition government, this would not be able to command a working majority in the house without the support of the Congress deputies, or the deputies of the leftist Communist Party; however, both these parties had emphatically declared that they would not support such a government. Four, the SSP government, supported by the leftist Communists and their independent allies, would not be able to command a working majority because the Muslim League would not support any party aligned with the Communists.

As President Radhakrishnan was in London for an eye operation, the recommendation of the Governor of Kerala was dealt with by Vice-President Zakir Hussain, who on March 24,
1965 issued a proclamation which dissolved the newly elected assembly and himself assumed all functions of the State Government of Kerala.

The imposition of new Presidential Rule upon Kerala was criticized by all parties, except the Congress. Before its imposition, Namboodiripad had made the last effort to save the situation by requesting the Central Government that the detainees should be released or tried, or at least be permitted to sit in the assembly. When this request was rejected by the Central Government, Namboodiripad petitioned the President on March 20, 1965 not to abide by the advice of the Governor of Kerala or the Union Cabinet to impose his rule, as this would mean the continuation of the disregard of the verdict of the electorate, shown by the Central Government since 1952, anytime this verdict had gone against the Congress Party.

Thus it was again the inflexible posture of the Congress which in the final analysis ruined the only chance for a non-Communist Government in Kerala. The only possible coalition was the combination of the Kerala Congress with the Muslim League, supported in the house by one Swatantra deputy and some 30 deputies of the Congress Party. Such a co-operation of both Congress parties would have possibly healed the split and unified the party. The Congress leaders, however, were obstinate and narrow-minded as ever and spurned all offers for co-operation. The spokesman for the Kerala Congress in fact declared on March 27 that the prospects of unification of the Congress forces had been very bright, that the Kerala Congress would have liquidated itself and returned to the old fold had such a government been formed. After the inflexible position of the Congress Party had ruined the chance for a non-Communist government, the Kerala Congress hardened up and its representatives indicated that a rapprochement between the two Congress groups became very remote.

The inflexible and in fact suicidal posture of the Congress Party can hardly be justified in any terms. Had a Kerala Congress-Muslim League coalition government been created, with the support of the Congress deputies, and the split in the Congress camp healed, it is most likely that a new and strong democratic alignment could have been formed in Kerala during the next two years until the general elections in 1967, which would have
certainly thwarted the chances of the Communist camp to stage a come-back. The crucial factor was to have the Muslim League aligned with the Congress forces and, above all, to capitalize upon and carry forward the tremendous popular support of 46.14 per cent which the Congress camp had amassed in the elections.

This perspective, however, was completely lost to the Congress leaders with the result that the Muslim League was to go over to the Communist camp, and that Namboodiripad could engineer in the intervening period a left united front of 7 parties which decimated the joint Congress forces in 1967 by reducing them to a trifling 10.53 per cent of seats in the house, although the Congress camp commanded a respectable mass base of 41.53 per cent. However, the next government was a coalition dominated by Namboodiripad's party.

Obviously, the Congress leadership stood on and defended obsolete principles which were no more valid, was out of touch with and stopped to understand the changing political map in Kerala, and learnt nothing of the calculus of power although sitting on the heap of a large popular support. As in the past, the Congress let down the vast majority of people of Kerala committed to democracy, socialism and progress under parliamentary system of government.

This setback of the Congress forces in Kerala had much wider ramifications. It was symptomatic of a general crisis of the Congress Party in all India, which under Nehru had failed to evolve into a modern political party and a combat organization as well as into an agency of progress and political modernization. The Congress Party was some 30 years outdated in its conception of organizational work and intra-party life, and suffered a stunning defeat in 1967 when it lost control in 5 states out of 17 of the Indian Union.

In Kerala the outdated outlook and inflexibility of the Congress Party in 1965 had paved the way for another round of a Communist rule in two years time.

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CHAPTER IX

HUNGER, WAR AND COMMUNISM

One stereotype notion sees almost one-to-one correlation between poverty, hunger and deprivation on the one hand and the rise of communism on the other in the nations of the developing areas. The validity of this notion was badly shattered during 1964-66, when India went through an agony of the worst food famine since 1899, and when the Communists made practically no gains from this classical and a text book case of economic determinism, in which they believe, and of the soil out of which communist revolutions are supposed to grow.

Food Crisis

At the root of the grave food crisis in India had been two very poor harvests in 1962-63 and then in 1963-64. As a result a grave shortage of food had developed from June 1964 in almost all states of the country. The food shortage was so severe that food prices had shot up some 30 per cent compared to those of the previous year.

In many places of the country protest demonstrations and food riots took place. In Ahmedabad 5 people were killed on August 24, 1964, and the life in Bombay and other cities of Maharashtra was paralyzed by a general strike on August 12, 1964. The rightist Communist Party organized a nation-wide satyagraha between August 23-28, during which some 10,000 people were arrested. The demonstrations and protests were peaceful and orderly in all India, except in Lucknow. There a mob attempted to storm the building of the Uttar Pradesh State Legislative Assembly on August 24, 1964. More demonstrations took place at the end of September 1964. In Calcutta a general strike was organized in September 1964, but it was not successful as not many people took part in it. However, on the same day a crowd of demonstrators stormed and looted a warehouse with grain in Bellary, Mysore State, and two people
were killed by the police resisting the siege. Three more people were killed in Guntakal, Andhra Pradesh, when the people stormed and looted grain stores and general food shops on September 27, 1964.

Many explanations had been offered to identify the main reasons responsible for the perennial food shortage in India. First, India has one of the lowest productivity per acre in food crops in the world, except in the Punjab.

Second, there is also practically no reserved land which could be brought under cultivation.

Third, although the production of food-grains had increased from 50 million tons in 1950-51 to 80 million in 1960-61, it stopped growing mainly due to adverse weather conditions except in 1964-65.

Four, the population of India had increased from 361 million in 1951 to some 439 million in a decade, by 1961. This was an increase of some 10 million a year. The increase of the population was not due to the increase of the birth rate, as is generally believed; in fact, the birth rate had gone down one point from about 40 per 1,000 in 1951 to 39 in 1961. The increase of the population was mainly due to the decrease of the death rate and the increase in life expectancy, which are the result of the much improved public health and general sanitation. The death rate had fallen from 27.4 per 1,000 in 1951 to 22.8 in 1961. The life expectancy had increased from 32.5 years during the decade between 1941-51 to 41.2 years between 1951-61.

Five, there has been a major increase of the purchasing power of the people and food was the first item in the shoppers basket.

Six, the food supply was seriously hampered by the fact that some 30 to 40 per cent of grains had been lost due to poor storage and refrigerator facilities.

Seven, the federal system of government in which the states enjoy a great deal of autonomy hindered the development and implementation of a national food policy, as the state governments had been reluctant to introduce food rationing. The states which had normally produced food surplus—like Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Orissa and Punjab—had been reluctant to export food to other states of the Union during the time of crisis.

Eight, it had proved very difficult to change the food habits
of the people, particularly in South India, who are rice eaters.

Nine, while the United States had been the principal supplier of food, it had been chiefly wheat; the Americans could not meet the demand for rice.

Finally, the lack of foreign exchange of the Indian government was a serious handicap for buying grain abroad, paying the freight charges and installing the handling and storage capacity in India's ports.

The main supplier of food to India was the United States. Since 1956 up to June 1965 the American Government had supplied India with 31 million tons of wheat, 1.7 million tons of rice and 800,000 tons of maize and other foodgrains. The total value of these shipments was $2,700,000. This food had been offered under the Food for Peace Programme, or the Public Law 480. To assist in the new crisis the American Government agreed on September 30, 1964 to deliver immediately 4 million tons of wheat, 300,000 tons of rice and 75,000 tons of soya beans.

Two other agreements were signed at the same time as the agreement of September 30, 1964, which set the pattern of the financial and other arrangement of the American food supplies to India. These agreements provided that the bulk of the counterpart-funds in rupees resulting from the sale of grain and other commodities under the Public Law 480 would be loaned to the Indian Government to finance its development projects for 40 years at 4% per cent interest rate. Furthermore, that a sum of rupees 166,000,000 ($34,860,000) which had accumulated under the PL 480 Agreement of 1962, would be given as a loan to the Indian Government. Another aspect of the agreement relating to the counterpart-funds provided that the dollars which would be needed for the shipment of food to India would be made available to the Indian Government in Washington, while the Indian Government would deposit an equivalent sum in rupees in New Delhi. These counterpart-funds deposited in New Delhi, 80 per cent of them, would be drawn upon by the Indian Government as long-term development loans; 10 per cent of these funds could be used to finance joint Indo-American enterprises, and 10 per cent of these funds could be used for the expenses of the American Government in India, including some joint scientific research and publication of textbooks.
Another agreement along similar lines was signed on December 31, 1964 for the delivery of additional 50,000 tons of rice, 130,000 tons of maize and 50,000 tons of tallow. Starting on December 31, 1964 the foodgrains under all these agreements of PL 480 started to arrive in India at the rate of 20,000 tons a day. This was assistance of magnitude which averted a major famine looming over India at the end of 1964.

The Indian Government itself decided for drastic measures to deal with the food crisis. As the first step it established a Food Corporation which started to operate on January 1, 1965. Although the corporation would be government owned and operated, it would function as an autonomous commercial enterprise competing with private traders. However, it would enjoy the monopoly of railway movements of grain, and whenever the government would consider it necessary the corporation would be authorized to take over the stock from the wholesalers of wheat and rice at fixed prices. The government also adopted a series of stringent measures to prosecute and punish speculators in foodgrains and other essential commodities.

At the next step, the Central Government urged the state governments to introduce food rationing in major population centres. It was proposed that a statutory rationing should be introduced in cities with a population over 1 million, in all industrial centres of the country and in Kerala. In addition, an "informal rationing" should be introduced in cities with over 100,000 population, and that the government would introduce "fair prices shops" which would guarantee a minimum supply of food at low prices. Informal rationing meant that each ration card holder could buy minimum food supplies which would be guaranteed for each household but those who could afford it could buy more for higher prices.

The rationing system was introduced immediately in Kerala because the state had been under Presidential Rule and the Central Government could enforce the system at once. Finally, other states agreed to the proposal on November 18, 1964. Under the agreement the states which produced surplus of rice would contribute to a central pool managed by the Union Government in the following way: Andhra Pradesh 800,000 tons; Madhya Pradesh 400,000; Orissa 300,000; the Punjab 250,000; and Madras 200,000 tons. Under the new arrangement the system of food
zones, under which the states with surplus had been supplying the food deficient states according to private agreements, was abandoned. Instead, the Union Government would assess the needs and have the monopoly of movement of foodgrains from state to state. This would ensure a highly centralized and effective movement of food from state to state through the assistance of the federal apparatus. The Central Government would thus be responsible for arresting any local famine through a timely action.

With these food supplies secured from the United States the Indian authorities faced confidently the current food shortage. Moreover, nature was generous and the general harvest of foodgrains in 1964-65, due to abundant rains and other conditions, reached a record level ever attained in India of 88 million tons, including 12.8 million tons of wheat.

However, this favourable outlook was shattered by a drastic failure of the monsoons in 1965, which the Union Minister of Food, Subramaniam, described as a natural calamity of a magnitude unknown in recent times. The rainfall was short from 30 to 40 per cent of the normal, and in September there was no rainfall at all. The winter rains, which are important for the harvest of rabi, were also inadequate. All these adverse effects created a situation in which estimates were made that the total crop for 1965-66 would be only 76 million tons, some 12 million less than the harvest of the previous year. The shortage of food became immediately felt among the people, as there were no old stocks on hand, and on January 21, 1966 Minister Subramaniam declared that some 100 million people suffered from food shortage and that 12 million had reached a state of an acute shortage bordering on starvation and famine. On February 20, 1966 he had to dispel rumours that some 10 million people were expected to die of starvation, and expressed confidence that although India was going through the worst food crisis in the last 70 years this would not be permitted to escalate into a famine and mass starvation.

Estimates were made that much would depend on how much food could be sent to India before July, before the onset of the monsoons would complicate the local transportation and distribution. The government estimated that it needed from 10 to 11 million tons of foodgrains, and that the handling capacity
of its five main ports was such that they could unload between 1.2 to 1.5 million tons a month. Although some press printed reports bordering on hysteria, the government handled the crisis coolly, intelligently and with confidence, which offset the tendencies toward panic and run on the market and thus prevented the food shortage from degenerating into a major social upheaval.

To deal with the crisis of these dimensions the Committee of Food State Ministers recommended on August 1, 1965 that rice and wheat should be rationed in all towns with a population of 100,000, and that informal rationing should be introduced in all other urban areas with a population over 5,000. This proposal was not accepted, and the Chief Ministers of the states decided on August 6 that a statutory rationing should be limited to cities with over 1 million of people, which meant Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Cawnpore. It should be also introduced in certain industrial areas. It should be further introduced in cities with over 300,000 people, and then in those with 100,000 inhabitants. The committee estimated that to create an adequate administrative machinery to implement this plan would take some two years.

The Union Minister of Food could not wait so long and in view of the acute food shortage urged on August 9, 1965 that a statutory rationing should start immediately in all cities with population over 100,000 and not as had been proposed by the Chief Ministers. Moreover, he said that all state governments had already been instructed to prepare the ration cards and the supporting administrative machinery. To speed up the matter the Minister demanded that the rationing system should come into force in cities with over a million of people not later than on January 1, 1966, and in cities of 100,000 people by May 1966. According to his proposal the rationing was introduced in Madras in November and in New Delhi on December 8, 1965. However, many states were reluctant to introduce the rationing so fast.

As the next measure the government decided for an aggressive agricultural policy. The Union Minister of Food declared in Lok Sabha on December 7, 1965 that the government would make a determined effort at attaining self-sufficiency in food by 1971, at the end of the Fourth Five-Year Plan. The production of food would be given almost the same priorities in expendi-
ture as the national defence for the next five years, the major improvement to be attained through an extensive use of fertilizers and improved quality of seeds. The target of production of foodgrains for 1971 would be raised to 125 million tons. Moreover, the government allocated Rs. 200 million in foreign exchange for importation of fertilizers in 1966-67, and decided that fertilizer factories would be set up both in the public and private sector of the economy. Further, the government would allocate 82.5 million acres of land for intensive farming methods and better quality of seeds would be introduced. This, it was expected, would increase the yields four-times.\(^1\)

While these far-reaching plans were laid, expected to yield results within next two-three years, India needed an immediate assistance with foodgrains to bridge the gap. Availing themselves of the provisions of PL 480—which authorized shipment of food to meet shortages resulting from droughts, floods and other natural disasters and which are donated and not sold and for which the United States even pays the shipping charges—the Indian authorities appealed to Washington on December 8, 1965 requesting assistance under the emergency provisions of that law. Responding to this request President Johnson ordered on December 9 an immediate shipment of 1.5 million tons of wheat to India and authorized a loan of $50 million for India to purchase fertilizers. Furthermore, India herself planned to spend a similar sum from her own foreign exchange reserves for the purchase of the fertilizers, which was expected to increase her production of foodgrains by 3 to 4 million tons in the following year.

To pursue a vigorous food diplomacy the Union Minister of Food, Subramaniam, met President Johnson in Washington and Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman on December 20, 1965. It was reported that the President had promised that the United States would see India through her food difficulties and that he would authorize shipments of foodgrains during 1966 amounting up to 15 million tons. The shipments would be executed as an emergency aid and moved on "war footing", meaning war on hunger. To implement that plan President Johnson authorized on February 4, 1966 a shipment of additional 2 million tons of wheat and 1 million tons of maize. The first shipments under this emergency operation became unloaded in Bombay on
February 9, 1966, and 42 ships carrying about 0.75 million tons of foodgrains had left the United States for India during the first three weeks of March.

Other nations rushed to aid India in her grave crisis. Australia announced on February 18, 1966 that she would donate India some 120,000 tons of wheat and other foodstuffs valued at $8 million. The Austrian Government donated $1 million worth of foodstuffs. Canada provided in December 1965 $15 million in wheat, and promised to ship additional $10 million worth of food in 1966. France offered in March 1966 some $3 million worth of food. The Government of Formosa contributed in March 1966, 100,000 kilograms of high quality rice seeds. West Germany promised to set up a fertilizer factory.

Greece promised during March 1966 to send 5,000 tons of wheat as a gift.

Italy announced on February 21, 1966 that she would grant to India a long-term loan of $2 million to purchase food in Italy. Pope Paul VI himself contributed $100,000. President of Italy Saragat made an appeal to the nation which netted some £3 million in February 1966. Japan donated 10,000 tons of rice and 8,000 tons of fertilizers worth $2 million. Kuwait gave 300,000 dinars during March 1966. The Government of Netherlands promised assistance to the value of Rs 1.33 million to improve agricultural projects, and additional gift of milk powder valued at Rs. 135,000.

New Zealand contributed a gift of 1,000 tons of milk powder valued at £100,000. The Government of Norway passed a bill on March 4, 1966 allocating to the aid of India $350,000. The Swedish Government announced on January 12, 1966 that it would send to India food worth $1.4 million, in addition to a previously announced aid of $2.4 million. The Swiss Government decided to donate Swiss made grain elevators for handling the food shipments.

The British Government announced in January 18, 1966 that it had offered to India an interest free loan of £7.5 million for 25 years. This would be a part of assistance of £30 million offered for 1965-66.

The final appeal for assistance to India was made by U Thant and B. R. Sen, Director General of the F.A.O. on February 11, 1966. It was estimated, said the appeal, that India’s needs
amounted to 11.14 million tons of food grains and 130,000 dried milk powder. The assistance requested could be given in the form of foodgrains, milk powder, animal and vegetable oils, fertilizers, financial aid to meet the shipping cost, and as the grain handling equipment. The F.A.O. itself announced on January 16, 1966 that the organization would supply 54,000 tons of wheat and 7,300 tons of powder milk.

While the countries of the western world rushed to assist India in her terrible predicament and committed large quantities of foodgrains, foodstuffs and financial resources to her aid, there was a conspicuous absence of offers of aid from the countries of the Communist bloc. The only assistance offered in this crisis was from the Soviet Union which offered experimentation in some model farms to improve the quality of seeds, 1,000 tons of milk powder and 6,000 tons of vegetable oil and some vitamin tablets.

The countries of the Communist bloc abstained from aiding India in this particular crisis on three main groups.

First were the doctrinal considerations. While treating the delegations of the Indian Government arriving in the communist capitals with baby kissing, gorgeous flowers, namaste greetings, and applauding them in the banquet halls over Caucasian wines, the dominant outlook of the Soviet Union and her allies saw the Indian Government primarily in class terms. It was a government of the national bourgeoisie, dominated by the landlord element of the Congress Party and based upon the feudal and semi-feudal agrarian relations. The food crisis was not seen primarily the product of the adverse elements of nature, although these had certainly contributed, but as being rooted in the feudal structure of India's agriculture, the strong and reactionary zamindari system which had exploited the landless peasant, in the absentee landlordism, food speculation and hoarding and other abuses of the feudal and semi-feudal elements dominating the Congress Party and the government. Assistance in this situation would have only helped this "rotten system" to recover and survive. In such a situation assistance must be denied to let the agrarian crisis to get the full circle, mature into a full-fledged agrarian revolution and destroy the feudal system. The Soviet Union and her allies could not have been interested in the preservation of this system but in its destruction.
Of course, the Soviet Union and her allies had been extending assistance to India but only to the state sector of the industrial sphere and as an integral part of the strategy of the non-capitalist path of development, which was to set India upon a road of peaceful transition to communism.

Second was the political consideration. Both Communist parties of India had in their programmes formulations to the effect that the Indian revolution is essentially agrarian in nature and that the peasantry, under the leadership of the proletariat and in alliance with it, constitutes the main revolutionary force in the country. In fact, both parties saw a deterministic and causal relationship between the "feudal structure" of Indian agrarian economy and the rise of a powerful and revolutionary peasant movement which would eventually destroy it. The food crisis and the unrest both in the cities and the countryside were expected to generate a broadly based mass movement which the Communists must lead and then structure into a National Democratic Front led by Dange's group, and into the People's Democratic Front led by the Marxist Party. The food shortage would not only hit the peasant but agitate the urban middle class, government employees, petty traders, school teachers and other low salaried intelligentsia, which all could be brought into the two united fronts on the basis of common united actions organized on the platform of the struggle for food. In this context any assistance from the Soviet Union to alleviate the agrarian crisis would have undercut the revolutionary ferment and potential of this mass movement and thwarted the possibility for the Communists to build their united fronts.

The third factor was economic. Even if the Soviet Union and her allies wished to offer assistance to India with food, this was a commodity pretty scarce within the Communist bloc. In fact, it had been on the food front, apart from the sphere of civil rights and liberties, that the Communist system had suffered its most devastating defeat. After some 40 years of collectivization of farming the Soviet Union had difficulties in feeding her people and had to import foodgrains in vast quantities, although the Tsarist Russia before 1913 had been one of the largest grain exporters in the world.

The magnitude of the collapse of Soviet agriculture became evident from a report given by First Secretary of the Communist
Party, Leonid Brezhnev, to the plenary meeting of the party on March 24, 1965. While it had been planned that the agricultural production would increase by 70 per cent between 1959-65, the actual increase for the six years of this seven-year period had been only 10 per cent. The main cause of this disaster, he said, had been the failure to implement properly "the economic laws governing the development of the socialist economy". Thus it had not been the adverse weather conditions as in India, but a man-made crisis created by policies based upon doctrinal considerations and not on farmer's commonsense and experience, which had ruined Soviet agriculture. The official statistical yearbook for 1963, published on February 28, 1965, disclosed for the first time the magnitude of the collapse of Soviet farming in 1963. The average yield of grain per hectare had dropped to 0.83 metric tons, which was lowest since 1954 when the yield had been 0.77 metric tons. The 1963 production of grain had been 107.5 million tons, plus 3.2 million of dry grain. This left an enormous gap which had to be covered by imports of foodgrain and wheat in that year totalling 12 million tons from Canada, United States and Australia.

The admission that the Soviet system had been defeated on the food front was made when the Soviet Union signed agreements with Canada on February 28, 1956, then on April 26, 1960 and then on September 16, 1963, to run until April 17, 1966, for import of foodgrains. Under the agreement of 1963 the Soviet Union had purchased from Canada 5.3 million tons of wheat and 575,000 tons of flour to be shipped by July 1964. In addition, the Soviet Union purchased 0.5 million tons of wheat and flour for delivery in 1965-66. The total of food imported from Canada during 1963-64 period was 6.5 million tons. The sale of 5.3 million tons of grain in 1963 was the largest single sale in Canadian history, and amounted to some 500 million dollars. The Soviet Union made another major purchase of foodgrains from Australia in September 1963, amounting to 1.5 million tons of wheat and wheat flour. In October 1963 the Soviet Union purchased from the United States 4 million tons of wheat worth $250 million. Also other Western countries agreed to sell food to the Soviet Union, and the countries of East Central Europe during 1963, to the tune of 10-15 million tons.
In August 1965 the Soviet Union purchased on the cash basis 4.6 million tons of foodgrains from Canada, and 400,000 tons of wheat flour. This was the second largest transaction since the 6.5 million tons in 1963. On August 11, 1965 the Soviet Union purchased 1 million tons of foodgrains in Argentina, and 1 million in exchange for crude oil deliveries.

A rough estimate of the total purchases of foodgrains by the Soviet Union between 1963-66 was to the tune of 19 million tons of wheat and some 1.5 million tons of wheat flour. During the same period other countries of the Communist bloc purchased from 11 to 12 million tons of foodgrains from various western producers.

The dismal failure of the Communist systems to produce enough food for their people was also evident from the purchases of foodgrains by the People's Republic of China.

China and Canada had concluded the first major agreement on the sale of foodgrains in 1963. Under its provisions Canada had shipped to China from August 1, 1963 to July 31, 1966, 2.2 million tons of grain. A new agreement was signed in October 1965 which provided for shipments of grain to China between August 1, 1966 and July 31, 1969 of a minimum of 4.5 million tons and maximum of 7.5 million tons within the three years of the operation of the contract. Moreover, the contract had a provision that it could be extended for two more years in which the total purchases would reach a maximum of 12 million tons. The total value of the sale of the 12 million tons was estimated at $1 billion. From Australia China had purchased on November 8, 1965, 0.5 million tons of foodgrains; in 1964 Peking had purchased 1.18 million tons.

Thus the Soviet experience in the sector of the economy most important for the developing countries like India—food production—was totally irrelevant and in fact should have served as a warning against attempts to emulate Soviet agricultural methods. Serious reporting about the collapse of Soviet agriculture were mainly absent from Indian press, and the common man in Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay was more impressed by reports about Soviet sputniks in the sky, completely oblivious of the failure in solving the agricultural problem. Conversely, the Americans, who had really saved India in her food crisis in 1965-6, gained no political mileage from their magnanimity. There was
a scant reporting upon the magnitude of the food aid from the United States, the Indian authorities proved rather shy in giving a generous and public credit to the Americans for fear of offending the Russians, and the food was eaten and the American effort by and large forgotten.

Had the Russians been in the position to offer food supplies of the magnitude reaching India from America during 1965-66, their propaganda machinery operating in India would have extracted every ounce of political capital from the food-grains, while the Communist movement would have organized a campaign of gratitude which would have greatly enhanced their chances of building the united fronts with the left wing of the Congress Party and the government because of the aid extended by the Soviet Government.

The discussion of the grim food situation in the Communist bloc could perhaps be ended on a lighter note by a joke widely enjoyed in Czechoslovakia, which suffered a great food shortage during that time. The over-emphasis on heavy and machine tool industry, mainly insisted upon by the Soviet Union as the "socialist division of labour", and the resulting imbalance in the economy had reduced the food production in Czechoslovakia to the level of 1938. The Czechs thus depended on the food supplies upon the Soviet Union to a large degree and knew well that the food shipped from Russia had been purchased mainly in Canada.

As the story goes, a high-level meeting of the Communist strategists in Moscow decided for a surprise revolutionary move to communize all countries of the world. The Czech delegation agreed but insisted that Canada must be left untouched "for where would the Soviet Union get the food from should Canada be brought under a Soviet system and her agriculture ruined". Moreover, the meeting passed a resolution calling upon the leader of the Canadian Communists, Tim Buck, to desist from undermining the Canadian economy and instead organize Sunday brigades of his followers to work on the farms and make sure that the high level performance of his country's agriculture was maintained to serve as the main food supply base for the socialist world.

As the Krokodil, the famous satirical magazine in the Soviet Union which from time to time takes a mild pot-shot at Soviet
bureaucracy and shortcomings in food and other commodities, maintains, political satire is an expression of real under-currents in a society. In Prague this undercurrent, evident not only among the common people but above all the top liberal Communist leadership, became in 1968 a real national liberation movement from Soviet political domination and economic exploitation in which the manipulation of food, oil, and other commodities had been the principal instrumentalities of Soviet neo-colonialism. Dubcek, however, lost the battle, let down his best friends and permitted the Russians to bring his country under a direct military occupation in August 1968 in which the last vestiges of liberal reforms, pioneered by Ota Sik, Josef Smrkovsky, Jaroslav Hajek, Jiri Pelikan, Emil Zatopek and others, had been lost. It has been estimated that Soviet neo-colonialism had taken out from its allies in East Central Europe some $12.7 billion as net profit in underpaying deliveries from them and overcharging deliveries to them between 1955-64. This was an exploitation of a magnitude which had impoverished the people of East Central Europe, and, driving them against Soviet tanks in East Germany in 1953, Poland and Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968.2

Lenin certainly was a great genius in understanding and manipulating political power when he had stormed the Winter Palace in Petrograd in November 1917 and seized power with merely 5,000 sailors and militia under the banner of “bread, peace and land to the tillers”. The 50-year-long history of Soviet agriculture proves him an equally great utopian because he had visualized a money-less economy and free distribution of bread and the basic commodities in the Soviet Union. The flooding of the world with free food, and the superior performance of a Communist economy, would not only outproduce the dying capitalism but bury it under the avalanche of free food and grain. His long-term perspective visualized that it would be the food to the starving two-thirds of humanity which would be the ultimate weapon in the establishment of a Communist order the world over.

The history of half-a-century performance of Soviet agriculture rather strongly hints that the Russians would never make it on this front. However, there exist real possibilities for significant advances of Communism, by entirely different methods and techniques, as this study demonstrates on the case of Kerala.
Another development which not only subdued but practically annulled the impact of American food relief operation, and of other countries, upon India's political scene was the fighting which broke out between India and Pakistan over the Rann of Kutch just about the time when the first shipments of foodgrains started to arrive. The millions of tons of food were all forgotten as soon as stories and pictures appeared in the press showing American tanks being used by Pakistan in the fighting.

The Rann of Kutch is about 84,000 square miles large area of desert which in the past had been a lake. It is located in the frontier area of the State of Gujarat on the Indian side and the Sind Province of West Pakistan. While the Indian Government claims the whole area, Pakistan insists that some 3,500 square miles belong to her. As several border incidents had strained the Indo-Pakistan relation it had been agreed in 1956 to demarcate the border between the two countries. While an agreement had been reached on the Punjab-West Pakistan border in 1960, the Kutch-Sind boundary dispute remained unsettled. Further data had to be collected to pave the way for the settlement and further talks, but no progress had been made.

On January 25, 1965 the Indian border police, according to Indian sources, discovered that the Pakistan border forces had been using a new road inside Indian territory, and as a result the Government in New Delhi lodged a protest with Rawalpindi on February 12, 1965. In March, however, the Pakistan forces established a defence post in an old fort at Kanjarkot, some 1,000 yards within Indian territory, and another at Ding, a mile inside India. The Indian forces in turn established a fortified post at Sardar, some 1,000 yards off Ding, and another at Vigokot in addition to the existing post at Chhad Bet.

Although further notes had been exchanged between the two governments, two Pakistan army battalions, according to Indian sources, advanced on April 9, 1965 into Indian territory and attacked the Sardar Post but were repulsed after a 14-hour long battle in which 34 Pakistanis and 5 Indians were killed. The Government of Pakistan, however, claimed that it had been the Indians who had started the trouble. Fresh fighting started on April 12 and sporadic fire continued for the next 18 days.
Although some attempts had been made at cease-fire, heavy fighting started on April 23 when according to Indian sources Pakistan had employed some 25,000 infantry, supported by tanks and heavy artillery and attacked along a 60-mile front from Ding in the west to Chhad Bet in the east. The Indian forces offered a stiff resistance, particularly at Point 84, contained the Pakistani penetration with the result that a de facto cease-fire was concluded on April 30, 1965. The Government of Pakistan issued a statement on April 29, 1965 that some 20 of its troops had been killed, while it was announced in New Delhi on May 18 that India had lost 15 killed, 41 wounded and 37 missing.

While this was the end of the military fighting, a major political battle developed in India as a result of the photographs released by the Indian Ministry of Defence on April 28, 1965. These pictures had been taken by Flying Officer Utpal Barbara on April 26 between Biar and Point 84, which showed 45-ton American made Patton tanks used by the Pakistanis in the operation. The pictures were immediately dispatched to the American Government with a protest against the use of American weapons against India. The Government of Pakistan, on the other hand, denied on April 29, 1965 that tank forces had been used in the operation in the Rann of Kutch, and counter-charged by alleging that in the captured Indian positions the Pakistanis had found an American manufactured ammunition. The Indian Government took this charge seriously and invited an American Military Mission for an inspection of its positions. On the basis of its findings a declaration was made in Delhi by an Indian spokesman on May 14, 1965 to the effect that the American observers who had visited the Indian side of the border had found no evidence of American made equipment with Indian troops.

Millions of tons of American food were all forgotten as soon as the reports about the use of the Patton tanks by the Pakistanis against India hit the headlines. Although Minister Nanda stated on May 14, 1965 that the Indian Government had received to some extent a satisfactory answer to its protest to the United States against the use of American arms against India, and although the American Embassy in New Delhi confirmed on May 22 that Washington had launched a strong protest with Rawalpindi, the incident exploded sky-high.
The debate on the war in the Rann of Kutch was opened by Premier Lal Bahadur Shastri in the Lok Sabha on April 28, 1965. The Premier said that the plan of the attack had in fact been prepared, according to captured documents and interrogations, in the second week of March and the orders for attack had been issued on April 7. The troops of Pakistan had attacked India's posts from 6 to 8 miles within India's territory. In the debate which followed voices were raised demanding an instant retaliation against Pakistan on other sections of the common border. However, the strongest voices attacked the United States for arming Pakistan and for permitting American equipment, which was supposed to be used only against China, being employed against India. The attack upon the United States was led by H. N. Mukherjee, leader of Dange's party in the house, who alleged that in fact the attack of Pakistan upon India had been facilitated by the arms supplied by the United States, because Britain and the United States had never forgiven India for attempting to pursue an independent foreign and economic policy.

From the Congress Party benches came an attack upon the United States from Raghunath Singh, who demanded that the Indian Government should insist that the United States and Britain should stop immediately the supply of arms to Pakistan: should they refuse this request India should retaliate by leaving immediately the Commonwealth. The leader of the Praja Socialist Party, S. N. Dwiwedi, alleged that it was China which had instigated Pakistan's attack in which the recent visit of Chou En-lai in Pakistan had played the key role, with the connivance of the United States. He charged that the United States had said no word of condemnation of Pakistan's use of American weapons, although Washington had imposed conditions and restrictions upon American arms supplied to India.

The next Congress speaker, Krishna Menon, urged that India should tell the United States in very strong terms that the arms it had supplied to Pakistan to fight Communism had been used against India. He reminded the house that the late John Foster Dulles had assured him that should Pakistan use American weapons against India the supplies would be immediately stopped.

While the debate and public excitement over the Rann of
Kutch was slowly dying down 'new serious complications developed between India and Pakistan over the old issue of Kashmir. On August 5, 1965 a large number of armed infiltrators crossed the cease-fire line in Kashmir from Pakistan into Indian territory. The number of infiltrators from the area known as the Azad Kashmir (area of Kashmir held by Pakistan) was estimated up to 5,000 men. They had civilian clothes, and had been sent into India to foment an uprising in the Indian part of Kashmir against Delhi and for its incorporation into Pakistan. Rawalpindi claimed that a popular uprising had broken out in Kashmir, and on August 8 a radio which called itself "The Voice of Kashmir" started broadcasting alleging that an armed revolt was in full swing in Kashmir, that a Revolutionary Council had been established to lead the revolt, and that all Kashmiris must support it.

The Indian authorities had, however, the situation well in hand as there had been no uprising, except the trouble and sabotage created by the infiltrators. The rebel radio was in fact broadcasting from the capital of Pakistani part of Kashmir, Muzaffarabad. That there was no uprising in Kashmir was confirmed by Western correspondents who visited Kashmir to find out about the alleged rebellion. The correspondent of The New York Times stated that the reporters who "were in Kashmir at the time saw no evidence of an internal rebellion."³

The Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan, Kewal Singh, lodged a strong protest against the infiltration to Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bhutto on August 10, 1965. Bhutto, however, rejected the protest and on August 12 declared in a press statement that Pakistan could not be responsible for the "uprising" in Kashmir.

As the infiltration continued, the Indian troops crossed the cease-fire line in the Kargil sector on August 16 in order to prevent the Pakistani forces to cut the Srinagar-Leh strategic road, and in the process occupied two Pakistani posts. Fire continued to be exchanged in the area of Chhamb, Mendhar, Poonch, Uri and Tithwal. The Pakistani troops shelled the town of Poonch on August 19, 26, and 28, while the Indians retaliated and shelled a village in West Pakistan on August 25. Indian troops further occupied two posts in the Tithwal sector on August 24 and another post on 25.
Minister of Defence, Chavan, declared on August 25 in the Lok Sabha that the purpose of those operations had been to prevent further infiltration and to cut the retreat routes of the infiltrators. In order further to secure the areas from which the infiltrators had come across to Kashmir, Indian troops crossed on August 26 the cease-fire line in the areas of Uri and Poonch, which is a hilly area projecting itself some 30-40 miles into Indian territory, and which had been used by the infiltrators as their supply base and staging area. Minister Chavan said in the Lok Sabha on August 30 that the area had to be secured because it was from there that the infiltrators had been penetrating towards Gulmarg and the Srinagar Valley. The Indian troops, he said, had occupied the Hajji Pir Pass, 8,660 feet high, which was the main route for the infiltrators, then the Bedore Hill (12,600 feet) and some seven more hill features. To consolidate the administration of the occupied areas a member of the Government of Kashmir, G. R. Kar, visited the 14 villages of the occupied Uri-Poonch bulge on August 30 and declared that Indian civil administration would be introduced there and that India would retain the control over the area to prevent further infiltration.

Pakistan now enlarged the hostilities by attacking Bimber sector of the Chamb area on September 1. The attack was mounted by a heavy artillery fire, with infantry crossing the cease-fire line supported by aircraft and some 70 American Patton tanks. This area of flat terrain had been selected to give advantage to American heavy equipment.

To justify the enlargement of the conflict President Ayub Khan said on September 1 that the war had been forced upon his country, that the people of Kashmir had risen in an open rebellion against India, that Pakistan supported this rebellion of people who merely had exercised their right of self-determination. He was confident that in this hour of trial the people of Kashmir would rise like one man against “India’s aggression.” Premier Shastri replied on September 3. He said that India had been able to deal successfully with hundreds of infiltrators, and that as a measure of self-defence India had occupied the staging areas from which the infiltrations had been mounted. It was a myth created by the Pakistan Government that there was a
popular uprising in Kashmir; the trouble had been created by
the infiltrators who had come from the outside for the purpose.

Now India enlarged the conflict by mounting an attack on
September 5 across the Punjab to Western Pakistan. The attack
was in retaliation for bombing of an Indian Airfield near
Amritsar by the Pakistani aircraft on September 5. The Pakistanis
responded and soon the conflict escalated into a full-fledged war
on several fronts. There was the Lahore Front, Sialkot Front,
Rajasthan Front; the war was further enlarged by air activity,
paratroop operations, naval operations and minor operations on
the East Pakistan frontiers. The United Nations intervened and
cease fire came into effect on September 23, 1965.

On September 7, 1965 Pakistan appealed for assistance to the
CENTO allies but both Americans and the British maintained
neutrality and emphasized their peace-making efforts. It had
been indicated that the request would be turned down, because
the CENTO alliance would come into operation only against an
aggression from a Communist power. In view of this Pakistan
withdrew her request for support on the same day.

The toll of the war was terrible for both sides, although both
made exaggerated claims of damages inflicted upon the enemy.
A spokesman for the Indian Defence Ministry declared on
September 25 that India had suffered these losses: 1,333 men
killed; 128 tanks lost; and 35 aircraft destroyed. He further esti-
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475 tanks destroyed or captured; and 73 aircraft lost.
Further details were given on November 5, which alleged that
197 Pakistani tanks had been captured, 115 destroyed and 100
badly damaged. The Pakistani side failed to give much details of
the losses. A statement made in Rawalpindi on September 24
said that Pakistan had lost 830 men killed, while India had lost
7,000 men. No details were given on the losses in tanks and
aircraft.

When more detailed figures became available Minister Chavan
gave the following picture to the Lok Sabha on December 8,
1965. He said the estimates which had been made by the Insti-
tute of Strategic Studies, London, to the effect that both sides had
suffered almost equal casualties was not based upon facts. Accord-
ing to the Minister, India's losses were the following: 2,759
officers and men killed; 80 tanks lost and 48 seriously damaged
but serviceable after repair; 28 aircraft lost in the air; however, he did not say how many had been lost through bombing on the ground. He estimated that Pakistan had suffered these losses: 5,800 men and officers killed; 475 tanks lost, including 30 captured by India and serviceable; and 73 aircraft lost.

Here again, as in the conflict over the Rann of Kutch, the fact that the Pakistani had used American weapons had badly damaged the public image of the United States and rumours started in New Delhi about the inferior quality of American weapons, and that India better orient herself on the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc as the principal supplier of her military equipment.

Indian public opinion was jubilant at the losses inflicted by Indian forces particularly upon the number of the Patton tanks. Even competent military observers admitted that the highly complicated Patton tanks had proved practically useless in the war:

... It is almost impossible to make a judgment on which army performed better. Each side, it seems, over-estimated the other. Many Pakistanis felt that the much larger Indian forces of 825,000 would crush the Pakistani Army of about 200,000. When it did not, observers in Pakistan interpreted this alone as a major Pakistani victory. In turn, many Indians felt that the Pakistanis, armed with Pattons and F-68 Sabre jets, might walk through their army, which is equipped with much lighter and older weapons.

In fact, the opposing forces were much more evenly matched than imagined by either side. India could not mass her superior numbers in the West because so many were committed elsewhere—along the Chinese border, in Ladakh and Sikkim, in rebellious Nagaland and along the East Pakistan border. In turn, the importance of the more modern Pakistani weapons apparently was over-emphasized. In the hands of the relatively uneducated Pakistani soldiers the highly complicated Patton tanks were virtually useless.

During the war, on September 3, 1965, the Indian Ambassador in Washington, B. K. Nehru, lodged a strong protest with Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, against the use by the Pakistani of American equipment. This included Patton tanks, F-86 Sabre
jets, and F-104 supersonic fighters. He said that this violated the assurances which had been given by President Eisenhower in 1954 that the arms supplied to Pakistan would not be used against India. A spokesman for the Indian Government in New Delhi alleged that the United States Mission in Pakistan had been refused permission to visit the Chhamb sector to check on the presence of American tanks. He further said that in fact without American tanks and planes Pakistan would not have dared to launch the attack upon India.

On September 6 it was reported in New Delhi that American observers who had visited the Indian side of the Jammu front had reported to Washington that Pakistan had made an extensive use of American weapons against India. Following these developments, Secretary Rusk informed the Congress on September 8 that all American military aid to Pakistan and India had been stopped, and that no further economic aid would be granted until the Congress would make a new decision. The plight of the Americans was compounded by a statement made by Sardar Swaran Singh in the Lok Sabha on September 20, 1965, that the American Government had more or less confessed its inability to do anything about its assurance that weapons which had been supplied to Pakistan would not be used against India.

Also Great Britain came for a strong criticism of her conduct during the war. Prime Minister Harold Wilson announced on September 6 that he had been disturbed specially by the news "that Indian forces have today attacked Pakistan territory across the international frontier in the Punjab." This was a distressing response, he said, to the resolution adopted by the Security Council on September 4, calling for cease-fire. He informed all governments of the Commonwealth to wait for the results of the United Nations efforts before the Commonwealth countries would initiate any action. In view of this, the British Government imposed a ban on shipment of arms to India on September 8, 1965. Pakistan was not affected as it had not been receiving any arms from Britain.

On September 13 the Indian Government appealed to the United States with a request to make sure that American weapons would not reach Pakistan through Turkey and Persia. A similar request was made to the Soviet Union to make sure that no Soviet arms reached Pakistan from Indonesia, where Moscow had been
the principal supplier. It was reported that Britain had already requested Turkey and Persia not to take any steps which might hamper the peacemaking efforts of the United Nations.

The attacks upon the United States and Great Britain for their conduct during the Indo-Pakistan war continued on the floor of the Lok Sabha, when the debate on the fortunes of war was opened on September 24, 1965. A Congressman, Bhagwat Jha Azad, led the attack by proposing a resolution which demanded the withdrawal of India from the Commonwealth, and in retaliation for the embargo on British arms he demanded the nationalization of all British assets in India. Mrs. Vijayalaxmi Pandit joined in criticising the British by stating that they cannot run the Commonwealth as they had used the empire. The demand for the withdrawal from the Commonwealth was supported by all political parties, although some members advised that first consultations should be held with the partners from Africa and other Asian members. The attacks upon the United States concerned the main issue, i.e., the use of American arms by Pakistan. Washington was censured in very strong terms by many deputies for its failure to implement President Eisenhower's guarantees that America would take a strong action against Pakistan should she use American weapons against India.

Also in Pakistan the United States, and other Western powers, came under sharp attack. Violent anti-western and anti-American demonstrations burst out in Karachi on September 21, where a mob of some 30,000 students and other people attacked the American Information Service, destroyed the British Information Service Library, attacked American Embassy, the Canadian High Commission and the Indian High Commission. The mood of the mob was best seen from the large portraits of Chou En-lai, which the demonstrators paraded in the streets.

A public tribute to China was given by President Ayub Khan on September 22, in a broadcast, in which he thanked China for her moral support. He said that the moral support which the Chinese government had extended to Pakistan so willingly and generously would "for ever" remain enshrined in the hearts of the people. He also thanked Indonesia, Persia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria for moral support.

While the United States and Britain had suffered the main brunt of criticism and blame for the war and losses, the Soviet
Union carefully started to lay the foundations to a move which soon turned into a diplomatic triumph of first magnitude which made Moscow the principal gainer of the Indo-Pakistan war. It was a delicate operation with a primary target of courting Pakistan to detach it from Peking and the United States. The price called for abandoning Moscow's former strong position of an unqualified support of India on the Kashmir issue and a shift to an in-between position to lure Pakistan.

The first move was made by Prime Minister Kosygin in a letter of August 20, 1965 to Premier Shastri and President Ayub Khan, asking them not to take any drastic steps which would lead to a major conflict. His second letter of September 4 called for an immediate cease-fire, withdrawal of troops and opening of peace negotiations for which he offered the good offices if acceptable. In almost identical letters to Premier Shastri and Ayub Khan, the key sentence showed a slight pro-Pakistan bias. To Premier Shastri he said that India had proved time and again in the past its adherence to a policy of peace and peaceful co-existence. This gave the Soviet Union grounds to believe, in connection with the hostilities and the Kashmir issue, that wise and prudent statesmanship would be demonstrated. To Ayub, Kosygin wrote that the Government of Pakistan had sought, especially of late, to direct its attention to the maintenance of world peace and that this warranted his hopes that Ayub would make every effort in connection with the existing problem and the Kashmir issue to solve them peacefully.

At this stage of the conflict both sides declined to entertain the offer. When the anti-American and anti-British campaign mounted both in Karachi and New Delhi, which excluded any possibility of mediation by these countries, Kosygin made a master move on September 17 by inviting Shastri and Ayub Khan for a meeting in Tashkent for negotiations, offering himself personally as a mediator. Indian Premier announced in the Lok Sabha on September 22 that India had accepted the Soviet offer, while in Rawalpindi it was announced that such a meeting would be premature.

In the meantime the Russians pushed their initiative and invited Foreign Minister Bhutto to Moscow for talks to indicate that the Soviet Union was ready for a change in her relations with Pakistan and what this would involve in her stand on the
Kashmir issue. Bhutto was impressed and on November 23 declared at a press conference that Pakistan had unconditionally accepted the Soviet offer of good offices, that the chances for the Indian and Pakistan leaders meeting in Russia were good, and that Pakistan had accepted the proposal of Shastri that the total relationship of the two countries should be discussed. This then paved the way for a simultaneous announcement in Moscow, Delhi and Rawalpindi that the meeting would be held in Tashkent, starting on January 4, 1966, in which the Soviet Prime Minister would take part according to the wishes of both parties.

The meeting took place as scheduled and lasted until January 10. The main result of the conference was a 9-point Tashkent Declaration, signed on January 10, 1966, which in fact attained only one main objective: the liquidation of the results of the war and restoration of normal relations between the two countries.

However it failed, and was retrogressive in the sense that it did not deal with the central problem of Indo-Pakistan relations—the Kashmir issue—on which a far more advanced position, in fact almost a solution, had been attained during the negotiations for a Continental Defence following China's attack upon India in October 1962. It was a too heavy price to pay for India to go to Tashkent only to settle the aftermath of the war, which could have been settled anywhere. India suffered another great loss when her Premier died of heart attack after signing the declaration.

The main gainer was the Soviet Union, which established a rapport with Pakistan. Kosygin spent more time in private talks with Ayub Khan than with Shastri to explain the new posture, which in 1965 was to lead to an economic and then in 1966 a military Soviet aid to Rawalpindi. Moreover, Moscow emerged the arbiter and guardian of the balance of power on the Indian subcontinent, carefully marshalling it into an anti-China combination in defence of her own strategic interests. Moscow also gained because it had excluded the British and the Americans from the dominant influence upon the subcontinent, laying the foundations to her own hegemony over the area.

In combination with Moscow's forward policy in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, the Tashkent conclave was a diplomatic triumph of a Bismarckian calibre. The re-assurance treaties with the Tsarist Russia on the one hand and the secret
treaties with Austria on the other had permitted Bismarck to keep both powers in check, dominate and keep peace on the eastern flank of Europe while addressing himself to the problems in the west, to deal with France. The Tashkent combination was directed to the east, to contain China, by keeping the balance of power between India and Pakistan and peace on the southern flank of Russian empire so that it could pursue an active policy both against Europe in the West and China in the East at the same time. In fact, while Kosygin made every effort to keep the Kashmir issue out of the talks as the main topic he warmed it up during his private talks with Shastri and Ayub to placate them both by reaffirming the unchanged Soviet support to India's position while filling Ayub's ears with prospects of a new Soviet stand. Any direct confrontation between the three on this issue would have called off Kosygin's bluff and wrecked his concept of the continental hegemony. This aspect of the Tashkent meeting was completely lost to the Indian leaders.

The second main gainer was Pakistan. It certainly was a high priority target of Soviet diplomacy to establish a rapport with Rawalpindi because Pakistan had a lot to offer. Rawalpindi was the chartered member of the two western defence systems operating in the Middle East and the Far East—CENTO and SEATO—and it functioned as a connecting link bridging these two. Pakistan by then also had been rapidly developing a rapport and co-operation with Peking, which had created a new alignment on the crucial southern flank of the Soviet Union. By establishing rapport with Moscow, Pakistan would add a new dimension to her already exceptionally active diplomacy and flexible posture to extricate maximum advantages from either the Western, Chinese, Russian, or Indian combinations. The rapport with Russia was essential for Pakistan primarily in order to weaken the Soviet-Indian ties, affect a change in Soviet posture on the Kashmir issue and in Soviet military supplies to India.

The calculations of the Pakistani strategists proved right about the value of Pakistan's friendship for Moscow and the concessions they could gain from the Russians. The area of cooperation under the Tashkent Agreement was soon enlarged by cultural and trade contacts, and soon led to an outright Soviet economic aid to Pakistan and then to her military build up
even against the protests of India. In fact, the co-operation had started already during the conflict, when it was announced in Rawalpindi on October 24, 1965 that the Soviet Union would assist Pakistan with $30 million for her Third Five-Year Plan. And on January 28, 1966 it was announced in Moscow that the Soviet Union had agreed to supply arms to Pakistan. The actual delivery of an unknown number of Soviet MIG-19 was reported on September 22, 1966, with deliveries of tanks and other weapons to follow.

India was the greatest loser of the Tashkent deal. She could offer nothing comparable to Pakistan’s versatility, her foreign policy posture had been long emasculated by following the Soviet strategic lead on China, and her responses were generally so inflexible and slow that Moscow could initiate the rapport with Pakistan directly at Tashkent without unduly alarming New Delhi. India was not a bargaining partner at Tashkent.

The significance of the Tashkent Agreement is badly overrated in India, for apart from liquidating the aftermath of the war and the restoration of normal relations between the two countries it failed to grapple with the crux of the Indo-Pakistani difference—the Kashmir problem. In this respect Tashkent was retrogressive, as has been said, from the gains which had been attained on the solution of this problem in the fall of 1962 under the concept of the Continental Defence. Perhaps a brief review of the development of this concept would place the results of the Tashkent meeting into their proper perspective.

The concept of the Continental Defence had emerged out of the far-sighted efforts of Nehru and Ayub Khan to solve the outstanding problems between India and Pakistan and develop a co-ordinated system of political co-operation and defence which could protect the whole continent. The first move had been made on November 27, 1962 by the arrival from New Delhi to Rawalpindi of Duncan Sandly, and then on November 28 of Averell Harriman to New Delhi to pave the way for the rapprochement between India and Pakistan. Harriman in fact made arrangements for the supply of American arms to India, and to dispel the fears of Pakistan and declared that the arms given to India would also protect Pakistan. Moreover, he said the weapons given to India would not be used against Pakistan. Maximum unity and co-ordination between the two
countries must be developed, which is needed for a continental defence.

As a result of Sandy's and Harriman's efforts a special courier was flown between Delhi and Rawalpindi with a text of a joint Nehru-Ayub communiqué, which was released on November 29, 1962. The main point of the document said that new efforts must be made to solve all outstanding differences between the two countries, in particular the Kashmir problem.

Then actual negotiations took place on the ministerial level between Swaran Singh and Bhutto on December 27, 1962, January 16, 1963, February 8 and 11, 1963. Although no agreement had been signed the positions of both parties had been defined and narrowed down. Pakistan had abandoned her demand for a plebiscite in Kashmir, but reserved the right to raise it if the talks failed. Both parties then agreed to the partition of Kashmir as the only solution, and the talks defined the exact areas to be allocated to each party. The Srinagar Valley would remain in India, while the Azad Kashmir in Pakistan. The Kashmir Valley would be divided. Pakistan demanded the districts of Riasi, Mizpur and Poonch.

The major problem was Pakistan's demand for Kargil which controlled the road from India to Leh and which was the only supply line for India's troops facing China in Ladakh. The fourth meeting was held in Calcutta on March 12, 1963, but no progress was attained on the delineation of the areas. The last meeting was held on April 3, 1963. It was proposed that Kashmir should be divided in the manner in which India would retain the Srinagar Valley and give up the Chenab Valley and a part of the Kashmir Valley. Pakistan would retain the Azad Kashmir then under her control. While agreement on the division along these lines could have been attained, with some modifications, the main problem now became Kargil and the road to Leh. On this issue Pakistan was not willing to compromise and as a solution offered that it would lease the road to India which could make a free use of it as the main military supply line. This, of course, a lease of such an important artery, was totally unacceptable to India.

The last effort to save the situation and the concept of the Continental Defence was made on April 5, 1963 by the arrival in New Delhi of Presidential Advisor W. W. Rostow, who had
arrived from his talks from Karachi. He said that the partition agreed upon by both parties in principle was the only realistic solution and reiterated the tentative agreement of the two parties that the Kashmir Valley north of Srinagar should be divided. The southern part, Kargil and the Leh road should remain under India's control for defence reasons and as the main access road to Ladakh. In fact, it transpired that the United States had been already assisting India to build this vital connecting link and therefore supported India's position.

This was not acceptable to Pakistan and the country went on a rampage with strong anti-American feelings because "America was siding with India" on the Kashmir issue. Pakistan in fact started to resent American arms aid to India and on April 30, 1963 strongly protested at the CENTO meeting. Pakistan objected to arms to India from the United States and Britain until the Kashmir problem was solved. However, both the American and the British gave assurances to Premier Nehru that their arms supplies would be arriving even if the Kashmir problem remained unsolved. This was the end of the efforts of the Western powers to assist India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.

From this moment on the United States continued to give an increasing support to India's position and to arm her in spite of the protests of Pakistan. In fact, on September 12, 1963 President J. F. Kennedy declared that the military support to India would be continued although it might adversely affect the balance of power and military capability of Pakistan.

Another aspect of the problem was the divergent assessment of China by India and Pakistan. The rapid rapprochement between China and Pakistan resulted in an agreement on December 23, 1962 to delineate the frontiers of the Pakistan part of Kashmir in the Karakorum mountains. The frontier was delineated and an agreement signed on March 2, 1963. India objected to this move on the ground that while the negotiations with India had been in progress to settle the Kashmir issue, as the whole Kashmir was discussed, Pakistan should not have negotiated an agreement with China over a territory which it controlled de facto but to which it had not received a de jure recognition in the form of a joint Indo-Pakistan over-all agreement on Kashmir. This co-operation of Pakistan with China was carried further on March 26, 1965 when both countries
signed a Boundary Protocol delineating in details the arrangements agreed upon in 1963. The Indian Government again lodged a strong protest with Rawalpindi and Peking on April 7, 1965, as the Pakistani had no right to write off any territory of the disputed Jammu and Kashmir before the final settlement with India.

In addition, Peking issued an ultimatum to India on September 17, 1965 demanding the dismantling of military structures which had been allegedly created on the Chinese side of the Sikkim-Chinese border. Another note of September 19 extended the ultimatum to the midnight of September 22. India rejected both notes and the ultimatum on September 21. Soon after the ultimatum of September 17 Chinese troops started a movement toward Indian border from Tibet to the Demchok area of Ladakh and toward Sikkim, some 800 miles apart. On September 20 the Chinese fired some provocative shots in a number of places both in Ladakh and Sikkim.

This was a significant factor which cast a cloud of doubt on the sincerity of the Pakistanis in the eyes of India during the negotiations. Pakistan could have waited until the whole issue with India had been settled.

The very last meeting between India and Pakistan took place on May 15-16, 1963. India hoped that Peking's pressure and its aggressive posture would make Pakistan see the danger to the continent and in this light would be willing to make concessions. Pakistan, however, maintained that China posed no danger to the continent, that she had friendly relations with Peking which she would continue developing.

It was a touch of irony in these negotiations, as in 1954 it had been the Pakistanis who had been attempting to convince India that China was a menace while explaining their move to join the SEATO and CENTO. At that time India had refused to believe that China posed and would pose any danger to her. However, almost a decade had been dividing these two developments, demonstrating what a profound transformation of the alignments of forces had taken place during the intervening time in Asia.

Thus 1965 was a year of great challenges to both Communist parties of India. It was only in October and December of 1964
that the separation had been formalized at their Seventh Party Congresses in Calcutta and Bombay, which necessitated the restructuring of their apparatus and other changes. The food crisis and the war with Pakistan which dominated the political scene in India in 1965 contributed additional complications to their difficulties which had arisen from their split.

Patriotic Posture of the CPI

The war with Pakistan and the food crisis provided the CPI with an opportunity: for advancing its objectives along two lines which on the surface appeared contradictory but which in fact formed a dialectical unity of the opposites. This was the policy of "uniting with and fighting against" the Congress and the Government, which had been developed by Namboodiripad in 1953 in the era of the united party.

During 1965 the dominant aspect of this dual policy was the "uniting with" and not the "fighting against". The reason was the decision of the VII Congress of the CPI, held in Bombay the previous December, to the effect that the party must give priority to winning the Congressmen as well as the whole units of the Congress Party for its National Democratic Front. This would lead to the establishment of the Government of National Democracy, which meant a government of all leftist and democratic parties, plus the Congress Party, but "minus its reactionary wing."

The war with Pakistan in 1965 was another excellent opportunity for the CPI, like the war with China in 1962, to strengthen its image of a national and patriotic force and thus pave the way for co-operation with the Congress Party and the government, which were the key to the National Democratic Front. Because of this target the national aspect—the emphasis upon "the unity with"—overshadowed the aspect of "fighting against" during the period. For this reason the CPI won another epithet from its rival describing the policy of a strong identification with the Congress and the Government on the Pakistan issue as "tailism" for tailing behind them, and as "national chauvinism" for not taking the class stand but following the national bourgeoisie. However, even on this issue the CPI made no gains because even during the fighting the Soviet Union started to build bridges
toward Pakistan, to court on strategic considerations, which took much out of the anti-Pakistani and patriotic posture of the CPI.

The year of 1965 started for the CPI by a visit of its Chairman Dange to Moscow to assess with the Soviet leaders the final split of the Communist movement in India, develop a common stand and interpretation of the policies of the rival party as formulated at its VII Congress in Calcutta and on the mass arrest of its leadership by the government, and develop an electoral strategy for Kerala.

The concerted policy of Moscow and the CPI became evident from an article written by Dange and published in the first week of February 1965 in the New Age, in which formulations also other members of the CPI Secretariat had participated. The article started with a disapproval of the arrests of the left Communists because this represented a step backward from the level of democratic rights and liberties which had been available for the operations of the Communist movement in India. This careful formulation was significantly different from the outright condemnations of the arrests which had been made by the CPI and its leaders only a few weeks before. Now Dange refrained even from using the word “release” and merely said that the detainees could be tried in an open court, calling at the same time for the withdrawal of the Defence of India Rules.

Dange then analyzed the decisions and policies of the CPI(M) as formulated at Calcutta, and his conclusions went a long way in giving an ample support to the Government’s interpretations of the CPI(M) policies upon which the arrest of its leaders had been predicated in December 1964. Dange further said that the splitter’s congress had not been the end of their nefarious activities, and that soon after the arrest of their leaders the group became divided by new tendencies into sub-groups in which those in jail had started to label those left free as representing another brand of modern revisionism. In fact, said the article, some of these arrested leaders had secretly denounced Jyoti Basu as being responsible for their arrest. Obviously, Dange took a great comfort from the strategy of the Home Ministry in not arresting some of the top leaders of the party in order to induce a polarization which would divide the CPI(M) into sub-groups, isolate the extremists and bring to the old fold the moderates. Following this line of reasoning the article hit at
Basu and Namboodiripad by posing the question in what category then the Political Bureau of the CPI(M) and the Chinese should place these two top leaders not arrested.

Dange then quoted from the *People's Daily*, in which Peking had condemned the arrests, and then defended the action of the Indian authorities on the ground that India was not ruled by fascists of the Chiang Kai-shek type. The country was ruled by a free-elected government which was at the same time using anti-democratic methods against the people. However, even this government must retreat anytime the people show unified strength. The Communist Party of China could never force upon Chiang Kai-shek any reforms by democratic mass actions. Nehru had never been Chiang Kai-shek, nor was Shastri and Home Minister Nanda at present. In fact, said Dange, the Chinese leadership was doing a great harm to the Indian revolution by trying to impose its own theories valid in China, but not in India, upon its followers. The revolution in India had its own specific way of development, concluded Dange.

The next meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the CPI took place in Trichur where a resolution was adopted on February 20, 1965 on the linguistic policy of the party.

The census of 1961 shows that less than 7 per cent of India’s 439 million people knew any other Indian language in addition to their own. Even in this 7 per cent bi-lingualism, which covered some 30 million people, the actual number of people who had a perfect command and fluency in speaking, reading and writing two languages was far less.

English, however, had a strong position. The figures on bi-lingualism indicated that some 11 million people, which was merely 2.8 per cent, knew English. In fact, English thus became the most widely known second language in India and was spoken by more people, as the second language, than Hindi which was spoken only by 9.36 million people against 11 million speaking English.

The statistics further revealed that the 14 languages which are mentioned in the Constitution as state languages were spoken by 380 million people, which was 87 per cent. The distribution of these languages was as follows: Hindi 30.4 per cent; Telugu 8.6 per cent; Bengali 7.7 per cent; Marathi 7.6 per cent; Tamil 7.0 per cent; Urdu 5.3 per cent; Gujarati 4.6 per cent; Kannada
4.0 per cent; Malayalam 3.9 per cent; Oriya 3.6 per cent; Punjabi 2.5 per cent; Assamese 1.6 per cent; Kashmiri 0.4 per cent; other languages 12.8 per cent.

As Hindi was supposed to be the unifying official language, the analysis of the position of Hindi in the non-Hindi speaking areas was the following. Maharashtra had the largest number of people knowing Hindi as the second language, which was 8.91 per cent. West Bengal had 6.67 per cent. Assam 6.62 per cent. Gujarat 3.48 per cent. Orissa had 1.78 per cent. The high percentage attained in Maharashtra was due to the fact that Hindi and Marathi used the same script. In the southern states of India the picture was far from satisfactory. In Mysore 1.28 per cent knew Hindi as the second language; in Andhra Pradesh 1.21 per cent; in Kerala 0.21 per cent; and in Madras 0.2 per cent.

In spite of this rather rich language diversity, Article 343 of the Constitution of India provided that on January 26, 1965, the 15th Anniversary of the Constitution coming into force, Hindi should replace English as the official language of the country. The Official Language Act, passed in 1963, provided, however, that English might continue to be used for official purposes in addition to Hindi even after it became the official language of the land.

In order to make the transition to Hindi easy the Home Ministry urged in 1963 the state governments to enact laws which would make it possible for the optional use of English during the period of transition. In all non-Hindi speaking states such laws had been enacted. In Kerala, which was under Presidential Rule, the optional use of English had been made in January 1965.

The adoption of Hindi as the official language in January 1965 led to mass demonstrations in all South India. In Madras the DMK and the Tamilnad Students' Anti-Hindi Agitation Council organized demonstrations on a vast scale. Four southern patriots in Madras, like protesters in Vietnam and Prague, burned themselves on January 26 and 27 in protest against the "imposition of Hindi". Several thousand people were arrested including Annadurai, leader of the DMK.

On February 10-12, 1965 the demonstrations in Madras were renewed and reached proportions comparable to those of the Quit India Movement of 1942. The police arrested thou-
sands of people, and opened fire in 21 towns killing over 50. It was estimated that some 10,000 people had been arrested during January and February, and that damage to state property amounted to some $2.5 million.

The student participation in the linguistic riots had been explained by the fear that the introduction of Hindi as the official language would jeopardize their careers in the Union Government Service where they would be at a great disadvantage against the Hindi speaking candidates. The real issue was a proposal that from September 1965 the examination papers for the Union Public Service Commission (U.P.S.C.) might be answered either in Hindi or English, instead of in English as until then. This was suspected would give an unfair advantage to the Hindi speaking candidates. The fear was justified, because a very high percentage of the highly placed Union Civil Service personnel came from Madras. The state of Madras accounted for some 8 per cent of the total population of India but had been supplying over 18 per cent of candidates for the high administrative positions of the Union since 1947.

From Madras the agitation spread to Andhra, Mysore and Kerala. In Kerala a complete hartal had been observed in almost all cities on February 18, 1965.

It was against this background, and also in view of the coming mid-term elections, that the Central Executive Committee of the CPI met in Trichur on February 20, 1965 to define its language policy. An adopted resolution proposed the following formula:

(1) English should continue as an associate language along with Hindi until the state legislatures would accept Hindi as the single language at the Center; (2) regional languages should replace English in due time as the medium of administration, law courts, and education on all levels, including universities; (3) the Central Government should grant more funds for the development of regional languages on an equal basis; (4) in Lok Sabha and in the State Legislative Assemblies every member should have the right to use his own language. Simultaneous translation of all parliamentary procedures should be done in all state language; (5) all competitive examinations for the Union services should be conducted in English as well as in the 16
languages listed in the Constitution. Quotas might be fixed for different states for the positions in the Central Services.

The "official" language of the CPI is English, all major documents must be translated into English and the procedures and discussions in all party congresses and conferences must be conducted in that language. The Third International, Comintern, for example had been using German as the official language until its dissolution in 1943. In fact, it is the English language that unifies the various state committees of the CPI, making them into an all-India party.

Dange then led a delegation of the CPI to attend the Consultative Meeting of the Communist Parties held in Moscow. However, the rout of his party in the elections in Kerala in 1965 must have been a point of serious exchanges between the Indians and the Russians in the Kremlin. New postures of the CPI were developed in the decisions of the National Council, which met in Delhi from April 5 to 11, 1965, upon Dange's return.

Dange first reported upon the unity talks between Moscow and Peking and referred to Kosygin's visit in Peking, to meet Chou En-lai on February 5, 1965 on his way to Vietnam, by saying that the Chinese leaders had indicated that the unity in the Communist camp could be restored only if war broke out.

The National Council then adopted a resolution on the language question in which it recalled the assurance of the late Premier Nehru to the effect that the English language should be continued to be used for administrative purposes.

The next resolution dealt with Kerala, and demanded an immediate release of all detained Communist leaders, the withdrawal of the emergency, and the cancellation of the Defence of India Rules. It also called for the immediate withdrawal of Presidential Rule imposed upon Kerala in order to give an opportunity to the democratic processes to operate. The resolution further explained that the party would start a major mass campaign, in co-operation with other left and democratic parties, for democratic liberties and in defence of parliamentary democracy.

The political resolution, issued on April 11, 1965 the last day of the meeting, summarized the developments since the last party congress in Bombay. The document said that during the last
four months some of the reactionary policies of the government had been intensified. Although the basic positive policies had not been altogether abandoned, certain adverse shifts had taken place within the broad framework of these positive policies. For example, under the pressure of imperialism and the domestic right reaction some vacillation in foreign policy became evident. In the internal policies there had been further yielding and giving concessions to foreign capitalists and local monopolists. As another manifestation of the anti-democratic and retrogressive tendencies of the government the resolution cited the 'increasing attacks' upon democratic rights and civil liberties in order to weaken the mass movement which the party led.

However, there existed a real and imminent danger of the shift to the right, which the CPI hoped could be arrested by a joint action of the left forces of the country. The united political intervention on a national scale was the supreme need of the hour which would arrest the adverse trends. To lay the foundations to such a united action the party would appeal to all left and democratic parties and individuals to get together during a special week, starting on May 10, to initiate the united mobilization of forces. Such a mobilization would not only arrest the adverse trends but affect a significant shift to the left in the government policies.

The last part of the political resolution protested against the supply of arms by the United States to Pakistan and accused America with instigating Pakistan to fight India. As evidence, the resolution said that American arms had been used freely by Pakistan in the fighting in the Rann of Kutch which had started recently.

A much firmer posture the CPI took on May 8, 1965 when the fighting in the Rann of Kutch intensified. The statement of the CPI said that the growing anti-Indian collusion between Pakistan and China, and the continued refusal of China to settle the Sino-Indian border dispute, was increasingly used by the imperialist powers to force India to abandon her policy of non-alignment and accept the nuclear umbrella from the United States. The statement of the CPI demanded that the government reject the proposals of the British for a settlement with Pakistan. No cease-fire must be accepted as long as the Pakistanis were using American made weapons.
The CPI took a super-nationalist position in a statement which said that the Indian people are deeply perturbed by the "failure of the Indian Government" to fight back and defeat the pressure from the Anglo-American imperialists on the most crucial question of the defence of India's territorial integrity. The statement further warned that a settlement under the aegis of Britain and the United States must be viewed with the greatest suspicion because the anti-Indian bias of these countries was well known. The CPI was, obviously, paving the way for a settlement under the Soviet aegis.

An important advance in the development of Indo-Soviet ties was made during the visit of Premier Shastri to Moscow from May 12 to 19, 1965. Shastri spoke in glowing terms about the Soviet Union, the significance of the Indo-Soviet ties for the rest of Asia, and paid tribute to the contribution which Moscow had been making to the national liberation movement in the developing world.

It was at a luncheon on May 13, given by Shastri in honour of Kosygin, that Shastri almost developed a concept of Indo-Soviet continental defence, paving thus the way for Tashkent. Premier Shastri said that the combined will of some 700 million people of Soviet Union and India constituted a powerful influence for the establishment of peace and amity in the world. The world was going through a serious crisis at the present moment and the situation in Asia was particularly tense. Both governments, said Shastri, had been deeply concerned over the developments in this area, and it was their hope that the threat to peace hanging over it might be warded off by efforts to resolve the existing difficulties by negotiations and not the use of force.

He paid a glowing tribute to the Soviet Union for her role in ending colonialism and for her support of the national liberation movements without, however, realizing that in fact he had been endorsing Soviet operations in his own country aiming to depose him from power. Premier Shastri said that the Soviet Union had been playing a very important role in supporting the national liberation struggle in Asia and in assisting the newly independent countries to develop their backward economies. It was for this reason, emphasized Shastri, that the future and independence of Asia can to a large extent be assisted and strengthened by closer co-operation between the Soviet Union
and the countries of Asia. Our own record of co-operation with the Soviet Union both in political and economic fields was significant and impressive, he said.

Obviously, Shastri knew very little about the fact that according to the Soviet leadership the national liberation struggle continued even after winning independence, that the target of that struggle became the nationalist and indigenous regimes like his own, and that in endorsing the Soviet support of such a struggle he was freely signing the death warrant of his own regime. He also knew little about the strategy of peaceful transition to communism and the non-capitalist path of development through which the Soviet Union had been attempting to set India upon a course to communism when he praised the Soviet economic assistance to his country. And of course, he freely advertised this policy for other countries of Asia. Against the background of the food crisis in India and the commitments with food and economic assistance from the Western countries, his oration on the "special significance" of the Soviet aid appeared a bit out of proportion. Even as a guest who should speak pleasantly to his host, he went too much out of his way and instead propagandized Soviet revolutionary theories.

The nationalist theme in the policy postures of the CPI became fully evident in the decisions and resolutions of the National Council, which was in session in New Delhi from August 19 to 24, 1965.

The resolution on Kashmir opened with a strong patriotic statement to the effect that the CPI congratulated the Indian army, the Government and the people of Kashmir for successfully resisting the invaders and foiling the capture of Srinagar. The CPI joined the rest of the nation

... in expressing its pride at the courage and patriotism displayed by the ordinary citizens of Kashmir in defending their motherland against the aggressors.

The Communist Party, however, warns the people against any sense of complacency in regard to the situation in Kashmir. It must constantly be borne in mind that behind the infiltrators stands the Ayub dictatorship, which had always had the support of the US and British Imperialists in regard to its aggressive activities in Kashmir.
Despite repeated warnings by the Communist Party and other democratic forces in the country, the Government of India had failed to resist and fight back the constant blackmail and pressure exercised on it by the US and British Imperialists on the issue of the Indo-Pakistani relations. On the contrary, the Government of India has repeatedly succumbed to these pressures and made concessions on a number of issues.

It is these concessions which have encouraged the British imperialism to back the Ayub dictatorship in last attack on India’s sovereignty and integrity... it is ultimately the US and British Imperialists who will exercise pressure on the Indian Government to enter into a dishonourable “settlement” with Pakistan...

While the CPI took a more patriotic position in the fighting in Kashmir than the Indian Government had, and in fact, made it responsible for the hostilities because of its “concessions to the imperialists,” the CPI praised the noble role which the Soviet Union had been playing on the Kashmir issue. The resolution said that

... in this situation the reiteration by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries of their stand that Kashmir is an integral part of India has been a significant act of friendship.

The Indian people knew that it has been the Soviet Union which again and again in the UN Security Council prevented the US and British Imperialists from adopting anti-Indian resolutions and decisions on Kashmir.

The continued support by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries for India’s efforts to build up its independent defence potential, had also been of special assistance to our people, in defending the nation’s territorial integrity and independence and our policy of non-alignment...

The Indian people are aghast at the fact that so many armed infiltrators could cross the cease-fire line without the knowledge of India’s intelligence services. The functioning of our Central Intelligence Services on the border had to be properly examined...

The National Council of the CPI, in referring to the reiteration of the Soviet stand on the Kashmir question, obviously
referred to the statement of Pravda of August 24, 1965 to the effect that Kashmir was an integral part of India, and hoped that the settlement of the existing conflicts would be brought about by peaceful means. It appeared in the form of an editorial in Pravda signed merely by an "Observer". The CPI obviously read too much into this statement, which was not made explicitly by the Soviet Government, because Moscow by that time had engaged in rapprochement with Rawalpindi.

In taking this super-national and patriotic posture the CPI was aiming at its own objective; a government-sponsored national mass mobilization, in which the CPI would participate, and which would provide for the party a recruiting ground as well as a vast united action from which a National Democratic Front could emerge. The resolution said the Government of India should "take positive steps to mobilize the active support of the masses of the Indian people in the defence of the country and to give effect to the appeals for national unity made by the President and Prime Minister". A widespread campaign should be organized by all secular and democratic forces for communal amity, and communal unity conferences and conventions should be held.

As the final point the resolution noted a leftward shift in Pakistan's foreign policy outlook, which the CPI attributed to the pressure of the "democratic forces" upon Ayub's government. The resolution said that the Indian people are happy at the fact that the growing democratic forces in Pakistan are raising their voices against the pro-imperialist policies of the government and against the participation of Pakistan in imperialist military pacts. This praise was, of course, an indirect reference to the rapprochement between Rawalpindi and Peking, which the CPI could not have applauded under its proper name.

While the National Council of the CPI by its Resolution on Kashmir attempted to implement the "uniting with" phase of its policy, the resolution entitled "The Food Crisis" attempted to implement the "fighting against" phase of that policy.

The resolution opened with a statement that the food situation in the country had reached the most critical stage at a time when the country's territorial integrity had been threatened. "Defence of the country," said the CPI, "the supreme need of the hour, makes it incumbent upon the government to solve the
food situation quickly and effectively." It is precisely in this sphere that the government had completely failed and exposed its bankruptcy, said the CPI. The resolution then made an astounding statement that

...the responsibility for making the people of our country victims of serious food crisis rests squarely on the shoulders of the Government of India and state governments. This crisis is caused not by lack of foodgrains but by government's prohoarder policies and half-hearted measures which have enabled the hoarders and landlords to get hold of stocks and push up the prices...9

The only remedy in the situation the CPI saw in the government assuming its complete monopoly in the procurement and distribution of foodstuffs. Not a word about the failure of the crops and the attempts of the government to secure supplies from Canada, United States and other western countries.

The CPI had, however, its own plan how to solve the food crisis, and again an important element of this plan was an effort to organize united mass action to lay the foundations to the left-wing of the National Democratic Front. The right-wing of this front would be organized on the bases of mass actions with the national bourgeoisie and in defence of India against Pakistan.

The plan started with an accusation that the government stands clearly on the side of the hoarders and not of the people. In order to take this "growing people's movement forward and compel the government to change its prohoarders policies", it was urgently necessary that all patriotic and progressive people, irrespective of their political affiliation, unite behind a common programme of getting food.

National Council offered this solution. First, the government monopoly purchase of foodgrains through the Food Corporation of India. Second, statutory rationing in big cities and towns with over 100,000 people, and in heavily food-deficit areas like Kerala; unofficial rationing in small towns. Three, the areas in which famine had broken out must be declared famine areas, with an intensive relief work started. Ample credit for irrigation must be provided. Four, heavy fines and imprisonment on food speculators. Five, end of all deliveries under the PL-480 by making the country self-sufficient. This should be done along the following
lines; (a) all fallow land should be distributed to agricultural labourers and poor peasants. Agrarian reform should be implemented by amending the Ceiling Act in favour of the peasants, by granting occupancy rights to tenants-at-will and share-croppers, by securing minimum wages and house sites for agricultural labourers, by providing debt relief to the agricultural labourers and peasants; (b) all banks should be nationalized to supply ample credit to the peasants at good rates; advance to the peasants the money for foodgrains to be purchased from him when the crop is ripe, i.e., forward purchases of foodgrains directly from the peasants.

With this solution of the food crisis in the country outlined the National Council planned to go to the people and mobilize mass support for its implementation. The CPI appealed to all left parties, mass organizations, Congressmen and other non-party individuals

...to come together at this hour of grave food situation and build up a united powerful mass movement which can compel the government to reverse its prohoarder and weak-kneed policies.

While launching and developing the people's movement for food, we shall always keep in mind the claims of defence of India and discharge our duty towards our people.

The National Council of the Communist Party of India decides to launch an all-India Food Movement from September 10 to 21, 1965. The State Councils have to adjust their programme of food movement to this time-table of all-India movement...

The resolution then explained the nature of various forms of action which the movement would organize. First, all forms of action would be used by them from satyagraha to mass rallies and demonstrations. The party units would be guided by the plan of action drafted by the respective State Councils. Second, the movement would have to be co-ordinated with the all-India action of the workers to be launched under the leadership of the Rashtriya Sangram Samiti in order to make the campaign a complete success. Three, in places in which the statutory or informal rationing is introduced, the activity of the party units would concentrate upon making sure that the people got their
rations, and upon removing the defects of the rationing system. Four, these activities would be carried out in alliance with other parties and individuals wherever possible. In places in which it would not be possible to have an alliance, the CPI itself would carry out this plan of action.

In its final resolution the National Council demanded the release of all those who had been arrested in many places of India in connection with the agitation on the language issue, for food, and for the release of the detained leaders of the CPI(M). The resolutions said that some 3,000 people had been arrested, among them Yogindra Sharma, member of the Central Secretariat of the CPI; Sunil Mukherjee, MLA; Indradeep Sinha, MLC; Chandrasekhar Singh, MLA; Ramavtar Shastri; Ramavtar Sharma; Tejnarayan Jha; MLA; Rajkumar Purbey, MLA; Krishna Chandra Chowdhury; Ratan Roy, Secretary Bihar TUC.

The resolution said that practically most of the State Council and district level leaders of the CPI had been arrested. The CPI pleaded also on behalf of Ram Manohar Lohia, member of the Lok Sabha and the leader of the SSP, and other leaders of the SSP like Karpuri Thakur, Bhola Prasad, Ramanand Tiwari, Kapildeo Singh. The CPI pleaded further for the release of the members of Students’ Federation, the Youth Federation, and of 100 leading members of the state government non-gazetted employees. Finally came the pleas on behalf of the Communist leaders like Mrs. Renu Chakravarty, Indrajit Gupta, and S. M. Joshi, Chairman of the SSP, who had been served with orders not to enter Patna.

Special plea was made on behalf of A. K. Gopalan and B. T. Ranadive, who had gone on a hunger strike in jail and whose conditions were rapidly deteriorating. These two should be released immediately and unconditionally, said the CPI.

The decisions of the meeting of the National Council of the CPI, held from August 19 to 24, 1965, outlined a two-pronged plan of mass mobilization. Under one prong the CPI hoped to organize extensive mass actions on the patriotic platform in cooperation with the Congress and Government, while under the other prong the mass actions would be organized against the government to compel it to yield on the food front and other economic issues. Although both mass campaigns had to be coordinated, the campaign on the food front was clearly sub-
ordained to the former by a rider which specified that "while launching and developing the people's movement for food, we shall always keep in mind the claims of the defence of India and discharge our duty towards our people."\(^{11}\)

In the existing situation it was only reasonable to soft-pedal the campaign on the food front because the government had dealt effectively with the rioters and had contained the spread of the agitation and its escalation into a nation-wide upheaval. To push along this line of advance would have much hurt the party. Moreover, in the mass action on the patriotic platform the CPI smelled a greater political capital in terms of its target of the National Democratic Front and the Government of National Democracy. The emergency which had been created by the war with Pakistan, the magnificent response of the country, and the resulting upsurge of national unity, were the blocks which could be fitted into building such a front.

This line of analysis was evident in the resolutions of the Central Executive Committee of the CPI, held in New Delhi from September 24 to 27, 1965. The resolution on the "Present Situation and our Tasks" in fact spoke in terms of the arrival of a new stage in the political development of India.

The resolution opened with a statement that the Central Executive Committee wished to draw the attention of the entire party and the people of the country to a new stage in the political development in the country, which had arrived as a result of the glorious defence of India against the aggressor. The new stage was characterized by a significant change in the consciousness of the entire people and the political parties. The main features of the new stage were summarized as follows:

...An upsurge of national unity and secularism to defend the motherland against aggression, the like of which the country has never seen since the attainment of independence.

National pride that, based on our indigenous defence equipment produced (the Gnat, etc.), and the skill and valour of our jawans and pilots, India has been able to give a telling blow to the Pakistan military machine built up by the Anglo-American powers (American Patton tanks, Sabre jets and F-104s) under a system of aggressive military pacts and alliances;
HUNGER, WAR AND COMMUNISM

Rousing of anti-imperialist feeling and consciousness on a scale never seen till now; this is expressed in the anger against the British imperialists as seen in the demand for quitting the Commonwealth being raised from all sections of rising discontent against the US imperialists as well.

Feeling that the Soviet Union is the only sincere friend that has stood firmly by India throughout this period of crisis...

The Central Executive Committee then congratulated itself that it had steered correctly the party through the changing situation and that it had taken steps to "orient the party activities so as to make the national defence the key and overall task". The party moved the people on the slogans:

... All out for national defence;
National Unity for national defence;
Against Anglo-American intrigues and conspiracies;
For communal harmony;
For safeguarding people's interests.

The Party's intervention met with widespread popular support...

Under the title "The National Defence in New Period—For an Independent National Defence Policy", the Central Executive Committee stressed that the coming period would be one of protracted and complicated political and diplomatic battles, of armed truce and armed tensions, with possibilities of new fighting breaking out. In view of this the CPI demanded a complete reorientation of India's defence policy. The war had sharply exposed "the danger of a policy of continuing to rely mainly on the Anglo-American powers in the matter of national defence. A radical break has to be made with this policy."

The CPI advocated that India should develop an independent national policy of building a self-reliant defence potential. Urgent steps must be taken to enlarge the defence industries. All possibilities should be explored

... in the fullest measure to secure the help which the Soviet Union and other friendly socialist and anti-imperialist nations are prepared to give us in regard to the urgently needed defence equipment and training of personnel and for build-
ing up our own independent defence industries. Both the immediate needs, as well as the long-term needs, will have to be separately planned for on the above basis.

Under no conditions must India agree to accept any kind of ‘air umbrella’ the imperialist powers may propose or any other form of involvement with the imperialist powers.

The monopolists and their political spokesmen have already raised the demand that the private sector be allowed to enter the field of defence production. This must be firmly resisted and the effective state control over defence production must in no case be relaxed or weakened.  

Thus while the CPI advocated an “independent defence policy”, this had to be attained with the assistance of the Soviet Union. Also the “reorientation of the defence policy” had to be executed in the direction of Moscow.

The magnitude of change in the general political climate in the country was so great, assessed the Central Executive Committee, that the basic reorientation in the economic policy of the country became feasible and must be carried out.

The resolution defined the reorientation in the economic field in these terms. First, oil must be nationalized. To leave this field in the hands of Anglo-American monopolies meant the gravest risk to the national security, as the experience in the war had recently demonstrated. Second, all export-import trade must be nationalized. This was needed to prevent the “loot of scarce foreign exchange by the Indian and foreign monopolies” in the situation in which the maximum squeeze against India had been applied by the imperialists. Three, all industries under British control must be nationalized. Four, the trade with the Soviet Union, other socialist states, with the states of Asia and Africa and the Arab world, must be developed to its maximum. Five, the public sector in the Fourth Five Year Plan must not be cut. No reduction in the physical and financial targets in the sphere of heavy industries. Six, the main levers of economy must not be left in the hands of the monopolists. Strict control must be introduced on all strategic materials. Seven, immediate steps must be taken for the introduction of “democratic control of the public sector with full and unfettered participation of the trade unions”.  

Only thus can be the present bureaucratic corrup-
tion, waste and inefficiency ended and the output increased. Eight, the question of increasing the food production and holding the price line was the key to the reorientation of the economy as a whole. Nine, in this connection the policy of relying upon the continued PL-480 supplies of food from the United States was fraught with the gravest danger. The Americans would be "making use of this as one of their most powerful weapons of blackmail against India in order to pressurise and browbeat us to yield to their dictates".17

The Central Executive Committee then outlined the strategy of a mass political campaign, which must be based upon the following elements: (1) explanatory campaign on Kashmir; (2) defence of India's territorial integrity; (3) concrete exposures of the intrigues and conspiracies of the Anglo-American powers; immediate organization of campaign on the "Quit Commonwealth" slogan; (4) concrete exposure of the opportunist and incendiary role of China in the recent developments; (5) concrete exposure of the slogans and intrigues of right reaction; (6) for increasing co-operation of India with the Soviet Union, friendly socialist countries and the Arab and the Afro-Asian world; (7) for civil liberties and democratic and trade union rights; (8) for communal harmony; (9) for the defence of the interests of the people.

The CPI made an important assessment of the fact that during the war with Pakistan the communal harmony had been maintained. The resolution said that the fact that the armed infiltrators had not obtained support among the people of Kashmir and that the Muslims had not remained behind others in deeds of heroism and sacrifice in resisting the aggressor, had brought about a new atmosphere of Hindu-Muslim unity. This achievement must be preserved and carried forward.

An equally important was the perspective of the CPI on the Indo-Pakistan relations. The resolution reviewed the past and stated that it was the policy of the Anglo-American imperialists on Kashmir which had aimed at fostering a conflict between India and Pakistan in order to keep them both weak. Now China was attempting to play this policy. In this situation "our perspective is that while taking all steps to safeguard the security and territorial integrity of our country, India should work towards a peaceful settlement of our disputes with Pakistan as a
first step towards co-operation between the two countries. To that end India had offered to Pakistan a no-war pact, which had always been rejected. The CPI believed that such a pact could be effective only if Pakistan had left all aggressive military pacts and alignments. "A policy of mutual help and co-operation between India and Pakistan can become effective only on the basis of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence."\textsuperscript{18}

The resolution on the present political situation concluded with an observation that new opportunities had opened up for building "the widest possible national democratic campaign around the anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly and popular demands". The CPI must keep this perspective in view and develop united actions and united campaigns as wide as possible. Obviously, the ultimate target was the hope that the foundations to the National Democratic Front could be laid through all these mass actions.

Another resolution adopted called for India to leave the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{19} The next one was entitled "Salute to Our Armed Forces and Our People".\textsuperscript{20}

The next resolution, on "Secular Unity", was an important document which dealt with the problem of communal relations. The resolution said that the rulers of Pakistan and also the Anglo-American imperialists "had counted on India being engulfed by communal riots and bloodshed following the war with Pakistan".\textsuperscript{21} Through provocative propaganda and other means they had "tried to foment communal conflict in India in order to disrupt our rear and weaken our defences. They also sought to exploit the agitation for "Punjabi Suba" in the vain hope of weakening the loyalty of the Sikh Community to our Motherland".\textsuperscript{22}

The Indian people, said the resolution, had defeated these sinister designs in a decisive manner. The blood of our jawans and officers belonging to all communities mingled in a common stream on the battlefields of Kashmir, Punjab and Rajasthan. Also in the rear the people of all communities stood together. All these demonstrations of valour and loyalty had defeated the disruptive propaganda of the Jana Sangh, the RSS and other communal organizations that the Indian Muslims, as a community, were anti-national and cannot be trusted. While the Muslim soldiers had been dying for India in the battlefields, these
groups had carried on a hate campaign against the Muslim community through false rumours. However, all these had been proved wrong and the national unity which had been attained must be preserved.

In this connection, said the resolution, the CPI "notes with concern the arrest and detention of many Indian Muslims in different parts of the country on suspicion of being potential Pakistani agents or for allegedly harbouring pro-Pakistan sentiments". The reports received from the states indicated, said the resolution, that the arrests had been carried out by local officials in an indiscriminatory manner, in many cases on flimsy grounds and on the basis of information supplied by communally biased individuals. It is a fact, said the resolution, that amongst the arrested and detained were Muslims of unquestionable patriotic past, including some active members of the CPI, who "possibly cannot have pro-Pakistan sympathies". The CPI protested against such arrests and demanded that all cases should be reviewed, and those who had been arrested on flimsy grounds immediately released. The review should not be left in the hands of the local authorities but the Central Government should set up a machinery to carry it out.

No figures are available on the number of the Muslims arrested or detained during the war with Pakistan. The census of 1961 indicated that the Muslim community was the second largest in the country having 46.9 million people, which was 10.70 per cent of the total population, after the Hindus who accounted for 366 million, or 83.5 per cent.

The position of the CPI taken on the arrests, and in general towards the Muslims, was an important departure from the past assessment of the Muslim community by the party. It had a profound effect upon the political alignments in Kerala and facilitated the entry of the Muslim League into the united front of seven parties, with CPI and the CPI(M), in the 1967 elections. In this respect the CPI stopped seeing in the Muslim League in Kerala only a communal organization and followed the lead of the CPI(M) on this issue.

Class Posture of the CPI(M)

While the CPI had been developing nationalistic postures toward the main problems of 1965, i.e., the food crisis and the
war with Pakistan, the rival party, the CPI(M), headed into the opposite direction by developing class positions on the issues involved. The origin of these antagonistic positions goes far back into the history of the United party. At that time the antagonism had expressed itself in the form of internal discussions between the two wings of the party, but led to the split, the establishment of the two parties in 1964 and, finally, the definition of two programmes at the Calcutta and Bombay congresses in 1965.

While the CPI enjoyed a completely free hand and freedom of action during 1965, the rival party laboured under extremely difficult conditions in developing its policies based upon class orientation. The main problem was that not only its top leadership, but also the middle echelons of its apparatus, were under arrest since the big swoop of December 1964. The arrest had destroyed the entire policy-making machinery of the party and no collective decisions of the Politbureau, the Central Committee, the Plenum of the Central Committee, and the State and District Committees, could be taken. Only a few individuals who had been left free, like E.M.S. Namboodiripad and Jyoti Basu, spoke for the party which in actual practice did not exist.

Another great disadvantage was the loss of the party press, the weekly organ the *New Age*, which remained under the control of Dange, and which prevented the spokesmen for the CPI(M) to carry on the fight against the rival party on the ideological as well as organizational fronts.

It was only on June 26, 1965 that the CPI(M) was in the position to start publishing its own weekly organ, the *People's Democracy*, under the editorship of Namboodiripad. The battle against the rival party was waged mainly on the ideological front, developing the main formulations of the Calcutta Congress and differentiating the central points of the programmes of the two parties. The battle was waged singlehandedly by Namboodiripad, who in a series of brilliant articles carried forward the formulations of the VII Congress and developed new positions on a number of issues which emerged during 1965.24

An important factor which enabled Namboodiripad and his few colleagues to hold their ground against the rival party under such adverse conditions was the decisive victory of the CPI(M) and the practical liquidation of the rightist party on the battle field in Kerala early in 1965, which had indicated that the
CPI(M) had a much larger mass following than assessed by Dange. The electoral debacle in Kerala had greatly unnerved the Dange group, making it uncertain about its actual strength and mass following in other states of India. The defeat in Kerala demonstrated that the loyalty of the top leadership in a state did not necessarily mean that the CPI commanded an equally proportionate mass support. Also the Communist groups in other states carefully watched the outcome of the Kerala contest, concluded that Namboodiripad's party was not a "handful of individuals without a mass base", and that negotiations for reunification must start on an equal footing and soon.

The very first attempt to unify the two parties was made at a conference of the Communist Unity Committee, held in Calcutta from June 6 to 9, 1965. The committee consisted of a centrist group of the West Bengal Communists, who in a resolution demanded the removal of Dange from the Chairmanship of the CPI in order to facilitate the process of unification of the two factions of the party. The resolution said that Dange had become the main stumbling block in the way toward the unity of the party and that his removal became an urgent need to that end. The resolution said that the committee had welcomed the considerable progress which had been made by the leaders of both factions in forming united fronts in West Bengal, Gujarat, Andhra and other states, in spite of the presence of forces of disruptions evident in both wings. In order to further the prospects of unity, the resolution called upon the leaders of both factions to meet more frequently and start jointly movements and actions on common problems of everyday life. In order to expedite the co-operation, liaison committees should be formed. The conference decided not to join any of the two wings and continue its separate existence until the party reunified. However, this did not mean that the group would wish to grow into another Communist Party of India, said the resolution.

Feeling the pressure and competitiveness of the CPI(M), the rival party opened the question of the unification of both groups. Speaking to the newsmen on July 10, 1965 C. Rajeshwar Rao, General Secretary of the rightist party, said that the Central Executive Committee had studied the whole question and came to the conclusion that it was a bit too premature to think now in terms of a reunion with the leftist party.
However, this did not mean that both parties should not co-operate. He said that his party would favour a joint front with the rival party on all issues of mass agitation and during the electoral battles. Obviously, the lesson of the Kerala debacle—the break-up of the united front of the leftists by his party and its liquidation—motivated the new stand of the CPI on co-operation with the CPI(M). Rao said that while the ideological controversies between the two parties might continue, it would be bad for all progressive forces in the country if the two parties failed to come together on all issues affecting the common man and during the electoral battles. He said that his party would adopt a resolution on the problem of unity.

As an example, he said that the ideological differences had not been standing in the way of his party seeking joint actions on many issues with the SSP and the PSP. There was no reason why this experience should not be enlarged to include joint actions with the brotherly party. In fact, said Rao, there already had been contacts between the top leadership of the two parties to seek an agreement in united mass actions.

Obviously referring to the resolution of the centrist group of West Bengal, Rao made a surprising statement, a climb-down from an over-confident position, that the Central Executive Committee of his party had concluded that the mass of the Communist membership had not really been divided into rigid rival camps, although some individuals might lean toward one or other wing. That the general membership did not wish to repeat the confrontation as in Kerala, implied Rao, had been evident from co-operation in West Bengal and Gujarat.

Namboodiripad replied to Rao on August 6, 1965 in a statement in which he emphasized that it was impossible to think of unity between the two parties at the present moment. The reasons were the sharp ideological differences dividing the two rivals. One concerned the assessment of the Congress Party and the government. The other main difference related to the posture of the two parties on the China issue. He said that the CPI’s policies on China had made the rightist party a “tail of the ruling Congress Party”. This had had the most disastrous consequences for the entire Communist movement in India, and had been the biggest single obstacle in any attempts at the unification of that movement. Namboodiripad referred to the efforts of the Soviet
Union at the solution of the Sino-Soviet problems, which had been made at the March meeting in Moscow, and said that although the Russians had expressed a more sober approach to the problem the CPI leaders were yet unwilling to draw the necessary conclusions and make the necessary adjustments.

He then addressed himself to the problem of bringing together the two Communist parties of India. A memorandum on this topic had been delivered to the rightist party on behalf of the CPI(M) earlier, and Namboodiripad restated that position. He said that theoretically it was possible to have an agreement if for the moment the big international questions were left out and discussions centered upon internal issues. The unity of action was possible particularly in relation to the problems like food, bonus, growing tax burden, limitation of civil rights and liberties and attacks upon corruption. He was certain that on these practical issues not only the two Communist parties could be brought together in a common mass movement, but that this would be joined by the SSP, RSP and a large number of other organizations, groups and individuals. He said that attempts for such united actions had already been made, and that this process would be stepped up as soon as parliament convened within a few days. He attached a great significance to such joint actions for he believed that they would help to forge a united front of the left parties in order to fight jointly the Congress in the coming elections.

In this connection Namboodiripad explained that his concept of a united front of the left forces was much different from that proposed by the SSP leader Lohia, and also from that of the CPI. While Lohia had hoped to form a front consisting of all anti-Congress parties, the CPI had advocated a front to fight both the Congress and the rightist reaction at the same time. Thus CPI was still holding to the strategy it had advocated for the elections in Kerala in 1965, i.e., an equal struggle on two fronts. Obviously, in explaining the stand of the CPI Namboodiripad based himself upon fresh information which he had gathered from his recent talks with the Secretary General of the rival party, Rajeshwar Rao, about the possibility of uniting the two parties.

As the conflict with Pakistan escalated and the assistance of China to the latter became more obvious, the CPI hoped that
Peking's action would polarize the rival party by strong anti-Chinese sentiments. This line of hope was expressed by Dr. Z. A. Ahmed, member of the National Secretariat of the CPI, in Lucknow on October 1, 1965. He alleged that because of the support of Pakistan by China the CPI(M) was going through a serious crisis, in which there was a great deal of re-thinking on the whole posture toward Peking. He said that the "shameless" support of China had shocked a good number of the left Communists and had exposed their pro-Chinese policy as incorrect.

This charge was answered by Namboodiripad on October 15, 1965 in a letter sent to all leftist parties which had gathered in New Delhi on the next day to chart a common course of action. He said that the stand of his party was that negotiations between India and China should be initiated on the basis of recognizing Chinese suzerainty over Tibet and accommodating her in the Aksai Chin area.

Regarding the existing fighting between India and Pakistan Namboodiripad said that also a settlement of relations between these two countries should be sought on the basis of a realistic stand, which means recognizing that Kashmir was a part of India with a special status. In his letter to the left parties he said that he knew that those who would take such a stand would be immediately denounced as unpatriotic and would invite hostility of the government. In spite of this, continued the letter, he considered it important to state these views of his party. The reason was his fear that the consequences of the continued state of war would lead to a militarization of the country and such a strain on the economy that the people would suffer greatly.

The Indo-Pakistan war in the fall of 1965 created especially difficult problems for Namboodiripad and his colleagues who managed the affairs of the party while the members of its policy-making bodies were in jail and no collective decisions could be taken. This was evident from a statement issued by Namboodiripad on behalf of the Central Committee on November 8, in which he developed the party's position on the issue of the war.

Namboodiripad said that he was issuing the statement on behalf of the Central Committee, which set out the conclusions which had been arrived at after the assimilation of various points of views from the available leaders. He admitted that there had
been certain "divergence" in approach and emphasis in the statements which had been lately made by various party members and party organs, obviously referring to the allegation of Z. A. Ahmed, of October 1, to the effect that the support of Peking to Pakistan had strained the CPI(M) and that the party was falling apart. Namboodiripad said that he had to issue the statement on behalf of the Central Committee because the overwhelming majority of the leaders of the party was not available for collective discussions, and that those colleagues who had been running the journal of the party, the *People's Democracy* and those who managed the organizations of the party in various states, had been very busy in handling the local situations.

The statement called upon the people of India to refuse to be swayed by the war hysteria and to work for a peaceful settlement of the disputes not only with Pakistan but with China. The Statement said that it was totally unrealistic to argue, as the spokesmen for the government had been doing, that the State of Jammu and Kashmir was in no way different from any other state of India. These arguments run counter to the reality demonstrated by the fact that on a number of occasions India and Pakistan had been negotiating on this problem and had recognized that it had existed. The statement said that it was in fact India which had taken the question to the United Nations, and even the resolution of the Security Council of September 20, 1965 had visualized political negotiations after the ceasefire and withdrawals. No useful purpose would be served, emphasized Namboodiripad, by repeating *ad nauseam* that there was no Kashmir problem, as the leaders of the ruling party had done.

Namboodiripad said that while his party was extending support to the government's efforts to throw out the infiltrators from Jammu and Kashmir, the party considered that the defence of Indian territory against Pakistan should be combined with serious efforts to settle the Indo-Pakistani problems, and the Kashmir problem in particular, through peaceful negotiations.

Namboodiripad then drew the attention to the consequences which the failure to have a political settlement with Pakistan would have upon the structure of the economy and the welfare of the people and to the implications of preparing the country for a prolonged war with its two neighbours. He said that production, distribution, transport and communications, and all
other spheres of activity, would have to be adjusted to the needs of the huge war machine required to face the well-trained and well-equipped armies of the two neighbouring countries. He emphasized that the Prime Minister and the Planning Commission had already given the defence orientation to the Fourth Year Plan.25

This class position taken by the CPI(M) on the Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Chinese problems had a telling impact upon the meeting of the National Council of the CPI, held in New Delhi from January 7 to 15, 1966, which in fact resolved to call for the initiative of India on the border problem with China.

In a resolution entitled “Campaigns” the CPI seized upon the Tashkent Declaration in order to mobilize on its basis a large mass movement called a “united popular intervention”. This was a concept which visualized that the campaign would be so broadly based and reach such a stage of effectiveness that it could intervene, and force upon the government, still closer orientation of its foreign policy upon the Soviet Union.26

The resolution continued to say that in the wake of the great success at Tashkent, which had heightened India's prestige and generally improved the climate for peaceful approach to the border problems, the CPI felt that regardless of the wholly negative attitude of China and her provocations during the war with Pakistan, India should take a fresh initiative on the Sino-Indian border problem. Some friendly powers should be asked to mediate. The resolution then echoed Namboodiripad’s view that such a settlement was necessary in view of the impact which a contrary course would have upon the national development.

An interesting aspect of this meeting of the National Council was its inability to arrive at an agreement upon a political resolution because its draft was not acceptable to many members. The main issue contested was the assessment of the Congress Party and its government, and drawing the practical policy conclusions from such an evaluation. The controversy was bitter and prolonged, and many arguments were borrowed from the assessments made on these problems by Namboodiripad and his party while fighting on the ideological front. The meeting finally came to the conclusion that in spite of dangerous concessions to the domestic and foreign monopolies the basic approach of the CPI to the government needed no change. When the Central
Secretariat prepared a report on the discussion, this was rejected by the majority of members who felt that it had failed to reflect the views and proposals which had been expressed at the meeting. Instead, a decision was made that the new assessment should be put forth as a political resolution and approved by the meeting. When the leadership prepared a draft of such a political resolution, also this was rejected as failing to reflect the new approaches and proposals. Dange, obviously, had a firm hold over the party machinery in resisting proposals for changes.

The meeting further discussed the strategy for the next general elections, to be held in February 1967. It decided that while the party would work for a united front of the leftists, the CPI would enter into it only on the basis of a common programme which must be agreed upon by all participating parties.

Speaking to the newsmen on January 8, 1965 about the decisions of the National Council, Dange pleaded with the Indian Government to deal with China in the spirit of Tashkent. However, he was reminded of a resolution just adopted by the National Council which had accused China of wanting to wreck the Tashkent meeting by supporting Pakistan. Dange made a significant statement indicating an important shift in his stand on the problem when he said that he believed that the Chinese had acted in that matter only in the context of their own controversy with the Soviet Union, meaning that it had not been an expression of hostility toward India herself. Because of this, he saw no reason why India and China should not be able to find a solution to their problems. The CPI had ruled out, however, that Moscow could serve as a mediator in this matter; it would have to be some other friendly power in Asia or Europe which could break-up the deadlock.

Dange's statement reflected the impact which Namboodiripad's offensive and its class stand on the issues of the day had upon the rival party, and could not conceal the grave polarization within the CPI itself. In fact, during the meeting of the National Council, Dange came under fire for reducing the party to a mere appendage of the Congress and thus to functioning as a corrective and reformist and not a revolutionary force.

That Dange's party was in trouble became evident soon from the fact that Moscow invited P. Sundarayya, General Secretary
of the CPI(M), who had been released in the meantime from jail, for discussions. Whether this was a plot of the Indian authorities to release Sundarayya and permit him to go to Moscow in the hope that the Kremlin leaders would be able to emasculate his party in the fashion of the CPI, remains a matter of speculation.\textsuperscript{27}

It was reported at the beginning of February 1966 that Sundarayya was in Moscow, and that he had written a letter to his colleagues in India about his talks with M. Suslov and other Soviet leaders. This alleged letter had been circulating secretly in the country in the name of "Friends of Harkishen Singh Surjeet", a prominent leader of the CPI(M) from the Punjab, who was still in detention. It was alleged that the letter contained several critical references to the CPI and its Chairman Dange, which had been made by the chief Soviet theoretician Suslov to Sundarayya. Many members of the CPI doubted the genuineness of the letter.

Moscow, obviously, had recognized from the elections in Kerala and the general conduct of the CPI(M) during 1965 that it was this party which had the mass following, and that in view of the forthcoming general elections in 1967 the Kremlin must have a workable relationship with it. The electoral results of the Kerala contest clearly proved that the strategy of the CPI(M) had been correct, and that the possibility of winning power and establishing another communist government in Kerala had slipped away because of the withdrawal of Dange's party from the final phase of the negotiations for the united front. This mistake must not be permitted to be repeated in the next general elections. In view of this, it was imperative that the CPI(M) received recognition from Moscow as an equal partner of the CPI, and that an effort must be made if not for the reunification of the party then at least to pave the way for co-operation of the two parties during the coming elections.

It was against this background that the CPI, on the occasion of celebrating its 40th anniversary, had extended an invitation to the rival party on February 6, 1966 to join in organizing common mass actions and set aside the ideological debates which had been widening the gap between them.

The invitation was extended by Secretary General, C. Rajeshwar Rao, who said that although the party was not think-
ing in terms of an immediate merger, the experience had shown that the ranks of the Communist movement had closed anytime joint mass actions had been organized. Such unity of action with the other party would be in accordance to the decisions of the VII Congress held in Bombay in December 1964, and could attain a Leninist unity of the ranks which by its force could change and mould the events in the country. Asked about the Soviet intervention in this matter, Rao said that he was not aware of any order from Suslov addressed to the two Communist parties of India that they should merge into one party. Rao said that it was for the Secretary of the CPI(M), Sundarayya, to speak about the letter which had been circulating in his name among the Communist ranks in India. According to Rao, the international communist movement had passed the stage in which any party could be ordered around, particularly since the death of Stalin.

However, the Soviet Union had sent a message of congratulations on the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the party, which was addressed to the CPI. This gesture, perhaps, did not matter much to the CPI(M) which had won a far more significant recognition from Moscow in the field of electoral strategy, which really meant the road to communist power.

The CPI(M) also did not participate in XXIII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held from March 23 to April 8, 1966. After the Congress the CPI had bilateral talks with Soviet leaders from April 23 to 30, in which the following participated: S. A. Dange, C. Rajeshwar Rao, Bhupesh Gupta, N. K. Krishnan, Yogindra Sharma, Avtar Singh Malhotra, Bhowani Sen, and C. Achutha Menon. An interesting aspect of the Joint Communique was the wish of good luck of the Soviet leaders to the CPI in its struggle for the unity of ranks in the Communist and democratic movement in India. The communique itself is a dullest document to read. It signified the low ebb of fortunes of Dange's party in the eyes of the Kremlin strategists who looked toward the next general elections in India a bit doubtful about the ability of their protégé to put up a stiff fight. They perhaps saw in the CPI(M) the rising star over India.

These developments in the early months of 1966 closed an era of the aftermath of the war with Pakistan and of the food
crisis, during which both parties had developed divergent policies tending to national chauvinism in the case of the CPI and the extremely narrow class interest in the case of the CPI(M). The CPI(M) worked under a great handicap during the time but had demonstrated its ability to survive as a political organization against really great odds. Soon, however, the emergency regulations were to be lifted by the Indian government, which released hundreds of its leaders, with the result that in May 1966 the regular functioning of the party organs could be renewed.

It was an extraordinary sight to observe the vigorous drive for the establishment of an effective party apparatus on all levels and the zeal with which the leaders flexed their muscles for the next electoral battle, laying the foundations for new and even more significant victories.

REFERENCES

1 The Annual Report of the Ministry of Agriculture for 1967-8 indicated that the expectation of self-sufficiency in food was well on the way of attaining. The report said that in 1967-68 a record level of agricultural production of 95.6 million tons had been attained. There was a virtual "wheat revolution", with production touching a record level of 16.6 million tons. Impressive increases had also been attained in production of oilseeds, jute and cotton.

The report noted that the response of the farmers to the adaptation of new technology had been satisfactory. The target of 21 million acres to be covered under the high yielding varieties had been attained. The Central and State Reserves of foodgrains which at the beginning of 1968 had reached an all time low—barely sufficient for a fortnight's requirements—stood at 3.8 million tons at the beginning of 1969. The import of foodgrains had fallen from 8.7 million tons in 1967 to 5.7 million tons in 1968. The record harvest had stabilized the prices of foodgrains considerably. Information Service of India, Singapore, SIN/ISI/188/69, April 9, 1969.


6 Resolutions of the National Council of the Communist Party of India,

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8 Ibid., p. 7.
9 Ibid., p. 10; italics supplied.
10 Ibid., pp. 12-3.
11 Ibid., p. 13.
13 Ibid., p. 2.
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15 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
16 Ibid., p. 9.
17 Loc. cit.
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CHAPTER X

THE DIALECTICS OF UNITY AND CONFLICT

In the past, the target of the united Communist Party of India, in applying the technique known as the unity with and struggle against, had been the Congress Party as well as the leftist parties. During 1966 this technique was applied by both rival Communist parties against each other with a consummate skill. The technique produced a highly complicated pattern ranging over a wide area of relationships between the two parties, from complete co-operation in some situations, through intermediate positions, up to implacable hostility.

For the CPI (M), 1966 was a year of complete rehabilitation. In the early months of that year the government released its leaders from jail, after which a frantic organizational activity was mounted to revive the party organizations all over India. Hand in hand with this activity went a bitter campaign against the rival party for its infamous conduct during the detention of the CPI (M) leaders, for its policy of class collaboration and as an agent of the Congress government. The campaign at times reached such extreme positions in which the CPI (M) saw in the rival party its main enemy who must be destroyed first, even before the party would turn its fire against the Congress. In view of this, the CPI (M) was driving hard to structure a united front of the leftists, not only because of the decisions of its VII Congress of December 1964, but above all as a pre-emptive operation to isolate the rival party from the left allies while this was toying with the vision of a National Democratic Front based upon the CPI-Congress alignment.

For the rightist party 1966 was a year of a profound crisis of its policies because: (1) the Indian government failed to carry forward the Tashkent spirit into a firmer alignment with the Soviet Union, which would have established Soviet hegemony over the sub-continent and involved both Pakistan and India
into an anti-Chinese combination; (2) contrary to the expectations, the ties and co-operation between India and the United States recorded a marked improvement; (3) at home, the government had effectively dealt with the food riots and other unrests fomented by both Communist parties and other left groups which, as a result, failed to escalate into revolutionary movement; (4) the CPI failed to carry forward the spirit of nationalism and co-operation with the Congress and the left parties, generated during the Kashmir war, into a broadest national movement which could force upon the government fundamental structural changes in its composition and take it much closer to the Soviet Union. The expectation to the contrary on all these elements, as will be recalled, had formed the basic policy outlook of the CPI. In the early months of 1966 this perspective lay in ruins.

Also for the Soviet Union these developments presented a serious setback. The Soviet leaders believed that at Tashkent they had laid the foundation to a new alignment on the sub-continent, which would not only submit to the general Soviet leaders to the exclusion of other powers, particularly the Americans, but would essentially strengthen Moscow's defence posture against China. These hopes were now frustrated. As a result, the Kremlin became impatient with the lukewarmness of the Indian government and estimated that a point had been reached at which the balance of benefits, to be derived from friendship with it or a tough policy against it, had tilted in favour of the latter. Because the existing government in India could no longer promote the most urgent strategic needs of the Soviet Union, the men in the Kremlin decided that it must be restructured.

To that end, a strong delegation of the CPI was invited to Moscow for consultations at the end of April 1966. The Indian Communists were told that the Kremlin was disappointed by the performance of both the Indian government as well as the CPI. The party must adopt a new policy line which would give-up for the moment the hope in the possibility of a joint CPI-left Congress co-operation to change the policy of the government in the progressive direction. Instead, the CPI must move to the left in order to build a left united front which, through its sweep at the polls in 1967, would force fundamental changes upon the
“nature of state” in India. First, however, the CPI must seek co-operation with the rival party in order to lay the foundation for such a front. These directives were put into effect by the National Council of the CPI in Hyderabad in June 1966, where a new policy line was adopted, and a call issued for the resignation of Mrs. Gandhi’s government. The Kremlin was impatient with India and in Hyderabad let its protégé to unleash its wrath.

While the CPI was fast adjusting its policies to the leftward course of the Hyderabad line, in the middle of 1966 a significant development took place which for a while revived the hopes that perhaps the strategy just discarded, which had been adopted at the VII Congress in December 1964, might find some application. This strategy was essentially rightist and, as will be recalled, was based upon the expectation that the CPI would be able to draw an increasingly larger number of Congressmen as well as Congress organizations into building a National Democratic Front. This front would replace the Congress governments in many states and thus pave the way for a coalition government at the center consisting of the CPI and the left wing of the Congress and other left and “democratic” parties.

This perspective was now revived as a result of the rapid disintegration of the Congress Party, which resulted in the separation of strong groups of dissidents in seven states and their establishment as independent political parties to contest the elections against the maternal organization and in alliance with other opposition parties.

The most prominent of these dissident groups was the Bangla Congress Party, established in West Bengal in July 1966. Although the dissident groups aimed at the return to the values and traditions of pre-independence Congress and were not really leftist in outlook, there was every possibility that their bitterness against the maternal organization would make them cooperate with the CPI, which would finally have a partner for the national democratic front.

Another perspective which agitated the minds of the leaders of the CPI was the possibility that the separation of the left, center and right dissident groups from the Congress would substantially weaken that party, and that in order to survive it would be willing to enter into coalitions with the CPI in those states in which the collapse of its control was imminent. While
it was expected that at this stage the Congress would not invite the CPI for co-operation on the federal level, there was every possibility that such coalitions, or merely throwing the CPI votes behind the Congress candidates, would eventually pave the way for a coalition at the center as the general crisis of the Congress deepened. It was with this perspective in mind that the Soviet leaders invited President of the Congress, K. Kamaraj, for a visit to Moscow for party-to-party talks, at the end of July 1966, to convince him that the CPI was a potential ally which could assist the Congress and the government to arrest their decline and fight off the attacks of the rightist parties as well as of the 
CPI (M) from the left.¹

Both these perspectives were frustrated when the Congress dissenters, except in West Bengal, refused to co-operate with the CPI and when Kamaraj would not entertain the invitation for a CPI-Congress co-operation to bail out the latter and buttress its declining strength. As a result, the CPI returned to the Hyderabad line, abandoned both these perspectives and moved to the left after a period of excitement, toward the CPI (M), in search for a united front of the leftists in order to escape the danger of being isolated on the eve of the elections.

While the Hyderabad line made it possible for the CPI to enter into formal relations with the rival party in order to lay the foundations to a left electoral front, both parties had already been co-operating in organizing the so-called bandhs. Bandh is a Hindi word which has several meanings pertaining to “gathering”, “unity”, “collectivity”, but also meaning a “dike” and “barrier”, to stop an unwanted overflow of water or contain undesirable developments.

During 1965 and 1966 the usage of bandh developed into a political term, a technical expression, denoting mass gatherings and united actions organized by political parties to put a stop to the “anti-people policies” of the government, to fight administrative abuses, food shortage, high prices and other difficulties of everyday life.

The year of 1966 was particularly rich in bandhs. Both Communist parties had organized them as the basic raw material out of which would grow the unity of the left forces. First only a unity on specific issues and on an ad hoc basis, later to be institutionalized in the form of permanent bandh committees
which, ultimately, could be transformed into committees of the left united front.

While the bandhs had been very successful in forging the unity of the left forces on issues relating to economic problems, it proved impossible to use them as a cement for carrying further the unity from the economic to the political plane. The only significant result of the bandhs in the political sphere was the establishment of the Consultative Committee of the Left Opposition Parties in the fall of 1965, which attempted to carry forward this left unity into the electoral battle field by agreeing on some general principles of co-operation among 7 left parties for the coming elections.

The reason for the failure of the left parties to form an all-India united front of the "left and democratic parties" was the inability of the two Communist rivals, which had to function as its rallying points and pillars, to arrive at a comprehensive agreement on electoral co-operation.

While it had been comparatively easy to agree upon the general principles of co-operation between the two Communist parties, the main obstacle in translating this into reality was the problem of evolving a formula for the allocation of seats to be contested by them. As this depended upon the assessment of strength of each party in each constituency of each state, for which no objective and dependable criterion could be evolved an agreement on co-operation on the all-India level could not be attained. However, prolonged and acrimonious negotiations between the state committees of both parties continued and produced three different results.

In Andhra Pradesh, a Communist stronghold since the Telengana days, both parties combated each other to the bitter end over the allocation of seats as no agreement could be concluded. Both parties went into the elections on their own, fighting each other instead of the Congress Party in a veritable fratricidal war with disastrous results.

In West Bengal the negotiations for a united front of the left not only progressed well, but included the Bangla Congress. This was the first instance of a rebel Congress group willing to co-operate with both Communist parties to bring down the parental organization, heralding thus a new stage in the development of political alignments in India. The CPI not only
claimed full credit for the feat of bringing the Bangla Congress into the left alliance but insisted that the event confirmed the correctness of its general strategy and policies, and that if repeated on the all-India scale it would surely propel the Communists into power in the majority of states as well as at the centre through this type of coalition. This vista spinned the heads of the leaders of the rightist party who put an increasing pressure upon their rival to demonstrate the superiority of their policy and who, together with the leaders of the Bangla Congress, teamed up against the leftist party in negotiating the allocation of seats for each partner of the left alliance.

The CPI felt that the leftist alliance must be dominated by a coalition of the CPI-Bangla Congress, which would isolate the CPI (M) and relegate it to a subordinate position, and in negotiating the allocation of seats it favoured the Bangla Congress at the expense of the rival party.

The leadership of the CPI (M) believed, on the other hand, that the left alliance must be dominated by a coalition of the CPI (M) with other leftist groups at the expense of the CPI-Bangla Congress alignment. In fact, at its VII Congress, the CPI (M) had been on the record that it would not admit any Congress element into a left united front, but would merely co-operate on individual issues. The new posture, the decision to admit the Bangla Congress into a left front, was a major departure from policies announced at its VII Congress.

Thus the negotiations for the left alliance in West Bengal became in fact a kaleidoscope which faithfully reflected the conflict between the fundamental strategies of the two Communist parties regarding the road to power. Would the ascent to power be carried out through a left alliance under the hegemony of the CPI-Congress alignment, in which alliance the CPI(M) and other leftist parties would play a subordinate role; or would it take place through a left alliance under the hegemony of the CPI (M) and other left parties, which would reduce the CPI-Congress combination to a subordinate role.

The heat produced by this conflict over the principle was so great that the negotiations for a left alliance soon collapsed. The CPI (M) felt so strong in West Bengal that its leaders decided not to abdicate the hegemony of their party in that state and terminated the negotiations. As a result, two united fronts of the
leftists were formed to contest the elections. The CPI (M) led one front under its exclusive hegemony, while the second front was led by the CPI-Bangla Congress, under the hegemony of the latter. In spite of this division both fronts mobilized sufficient strength to rout the Congress Party; the victory brought them together to form a joint coalition government after the elections.

The third type of relationship between the two Communist rivals was exhibited in Kerala. In that state the hegemony of the CPI (M) over the left forces, and its superiority over the CPI, had been established already during the 1965 state elections. This in turn paved the way for the formation of the left electoral alliance in which the rightist party had to accept a subordinate status. An important feature of this alliance was the participation of the Muslim League. The alliance routed the Congress and established a CPI (M)-led coalition government, exactly ten years after the first Namboodiripad's government of the then united party had been inaugurated.

Limited success were scored in other states of the Indian Union or territories in which the two Communist parties co-operated on the formation of left united fronts, as in the Punjab and Tripura, and in other places.

Thus mere two years after the split of the unified party, and in the face of the first general elections to be fought independently, the two rival parties had evolved three major types of relationship, the significance of which for the future of Communism in India can hardly be overestimated.

*Rehabilitation of the CPI(M)*

A new phase in the development of the policies and growth of the CPI (M) was inaugurated as soon as its leaders had been released from jail.

A pressure for the release of persons detained under the State of Emergency regulations had been mounting from all sides during 1965 and 1966. Not only the opposition parties demanded that the emergency be lifted, but also a section of the Congress Party itself which alleged that the State Governments had been frequently abusing their powers of preventive detention under the Defence of India Rules in order to eliminate from the political scene opponents for reasons which had not been connected with internal security but local political infighting.
The abuse of the Defence of India Rules had also been strongly criticized by the Supreme Court on February 16, 1966, when the court ordered the release of one detainee on the ground that his detention had been 'clearly and plainly mala fide'.

As a consequence of these developments, Home Minister G. L. Nanda announced in the Lok Sabha on April 27, 1966 that although the State of Emergency which had been proclaimed after the Chinese attack in October 1962 would not be revoked for the moment, the Defence of India Rules would be used in the future only in certain border areas, and special legislations would be enacted to restrict their application to these areas.

As a result of this change of the government policy the great majority of the persons who had been detained under the Defence of India Rules were released in April and May 1966. While on January 1, 1966 there had been some 3,030 persons under detention, it was announced on May 11 that only 418 persons were still detained. The distribution was as follows: 267 in Kashmir; 82 in Assam; 27 in Uttar Pradesh; 14 in North-East Frontier Agency; 9 in the Punjab; 4 in Gujarat; 4 in Maharashtra; 3 in Tripura; 2 in Madras; and 1 in Andhra Pradesh.

On May 5, 1966 the Home Minister told the Lok Sabha that all, except 11, of the 153 persons who had been detained under the orders of the Central Government had been released, and that several State Governments had already released all their detainees.

The full restoration of civil rights and liberties was accomplished on May 31, 1966, when the Central Government had notified all State Governments that they must first obtain a previous approval from New Delhi before taking any action under the Defence of India Rules. However, this notification did not apply to the border states and territories of Assam, Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura.

The CPI (M) welcomed the release of its leaders in an editorial in the People's Democracy on May 8, 1966. The editorial said that an overwhelming majority of the Communist detenus in various states had been released by them. Among the released were 8 of 9 members of the Politbureau of the party and majority of members of the Central Committee. The editorial in particular welcomed the release of B. T. Ranadive, and other
comrades from Maharashtra, who had been in detention since November 7, 1962.

The withdrawal of the warrants had been completed in Kerala, Tamilnad, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, the Punjab, Bihar and Orissa. There still remained in detention 81 members of the party in West Bengal, a few in Assam, 2 in Tripura, and 2 in Jammu and Kashmir.

The CPI (M) said that the detention of over 1,000 leaders and activities of the party for over 16 months was "an act of political vendetta, an attempt to exterminate political opponents, a blatant use of the Emergency and Defence of India Rules in the partisan interests of the ruling Congress Party."

The editorial demanded the release of all detainees, in particular in West Bengal, where the Chief Minister P. C. Sen had insisted that they remained in jail because his state was a border area and because he considered the detainees "a specially dangerous and violent group. How bogus all this is evident from the fact that the Home Minister had ordered the detention of the Communists in December 1964 on the same grounds". "Today", concluded the editorial, "the blackness that fills his 'White Paper', the lies and slander that fill its pages, are all too evident. Yet, P. C. Sen wants to stick to the tattered pages of this black document."

The party sprung into a vigorous activity by the first meeting of its Politbureau, which was held in Calcutta from May 7 to 10, 1966; it was the very first meeting since its election at the VII Congress in Calcutta in November 1964. The meeting, which had been convened in Trichur on December 29, 1964, could not be held because the members assembled in that city had been arrested the very day. To bring the party back to life the CPI (M) organized on May 10 a mammoth gathering at Calcutta Maidan, with B. T. Ranadive as the main speaker, who set the pace for the reactivation of the party with a blistering attack upon the policies of the government.

The meeting of the Politbureau adopted a number of resolutions. The first, entitled "Carry on the Battle", congratulated the members on their conduct during the detention. It said that over 2,000 comrades had been detained, which meant in fact the entire leadership "at all-India, State, District and even
Taluq levels." It said that the policies of the party adopted at the VII Congress were correct, and that the party had gained and grew even during the period of terror against it. Other resolutions demanded the release of those still under detention. A special congratulatory message was sent to the people of Kerala who had routed the Congress Party in the mid-term elections of 1965 and returned the CPI (M) as the first party in the state.

A resolution entitled "Agrarian Reforms in Favour of the Actual Tiller is the Only Solution of the Food Problem" took a class stand on the origin of the food shortage in India. This was in sharp contrast with the position taken on this issue by the rightist party, which in its resolution had blamed only the hoarders, and not the feudal agrarian relations for the food crisis.

The Politbureau of the CPI (M) said that the drought had not been the cause of the food shortage, but...

...the class policies pursued by the Congress rulers since independence have led to a situation where the country does not produce enough food to feed the people. The drought this year and the lack of rainfall have intensified the problem. But the crisis has not been created by the drought and rainfall. They have only brought to the surface the permanent crisis of Indian agriculture which is a creation of the Congress Government's vested interests...

The resolution then charged the government with "bartering away of freedom" under the PL 480 deliveries, and with permitting to set up fertilizer factories with American capital and in private sector. Thus in the name of getting foodgrains to meet the scarcity, and starting the production of fertilizers to increase food production, "the country's freedom is being bartered away."

The Politbureau then recommended the following programmes: (1) introduce radical agrarian reforms and give credit and other facilities to the cultivating peasants and a remunerative price to the producer; (2) introduce a State Trading in foodgrains; (3) procure all available stock, exempting the lower strata of the peasantry and ensuring that the middle-strata is not harassed; (4) arrange for the equitable distribution of procured stocks and reduce the price of rationed foodgrains where they
have been increased as in West Bengal and Kerala; (5) stop all revenue collections in scarcity-affected areas, start fast relief works to alleviate the suffering of the people; (6) free distribution of food to those who cannot work.

Another resolution of the Politbureau called for donations to raise Rs. 100,000 in support of the activities of the party. The resolution said that the donations called for at the VII Congress had financed the 1965 elections in Kerala. In 1965 the Central Committee had called again for funds, which had been used to finance the publishing of the People's Democracy in English and Swadhinata in Hindi. The funds which would be collected now would assist in organizing the campaign for 1967 elections.8

As another decision, the meeting resolved to shift the headquarters of the party from New Delhi to Calcutta.

The discussion was lively, as it was for the first time since the VII Congress held at the end of 1964 that an open exchange of views could be held. On the question of the electoral strategy for 1967 three views appeared. The first group, whose main spokesman was Promode Dasgupta of West Bengal, believed that their party was so strong that it could challenge the Congress single-handed. In view of this, there was no need for the party to go for any major alliances with other parties. But some adjustments could be made with some like-minded parties. He, however, ruled out any alliance with the rightist CPI, or even an electoral adjustment with it. The CPI must be fought as the main enemy and eliminated from the political scene. The mid-term elections of 1965 in Kerala had been a fine preview of this possibility. His policy, in fact, reflected the strategy which had been defined in the Party Letter of the West Bengal State Committee of the CPI(M), circulated amongst the cadres.

The second group, represented by P. Ramamurthy from Tamilnad, supported the position taken by Dasgupta. However, for his own state Ramamurthy advocated an alliance with the DMK; this party, in his opinion, had been moving toward new and progressive policies. The position that alliances and adjustments would have to be made with the leftist and other progressive parties was supported by Jyoti Basu for West Bengal and Namboodiripad for Kerala.

The third view was represented by B. T. Ranadive for Maharashtra, Harkishen Singh Surjeet for Punjab, and P. Sunda-
rayya for Andhra. They all believed that no rigid line should be taken either way at this time.

Further polarization was evident when M. Basavapunniah for Andhra backed the views of Dasgupta, while A. K. Gopalan sided with Namboodiripad.

After the discussion a general consensus prevailed that all democratic parties should come together in order to defeat the misrule of the Congress. However, no specific decision was made whether it should be a type of a front as in Kerala and West Bengal, or of any other type.

During the meeting a strong plea was made by B. T. Ranadive and Promode Dasgupta for an intensive ideological discussion. While Ranadive, who was supported by Sundarayya and Surjeet Singh, wanted to criticize some policies of the Communist Party of China, Promode Dasgupta, supported by Ramamurthy and Basavapunniah, demanded that the CPI (M) should give a clear-cut support to the policies of the Communist Party of China. Both groups argued that without taking a clear ideological line the CPI (M) could not work properly and would face great difficulties. However, the demand for a full-scale ideological discussion was put aside when Namboodiripad and Jyoti Basu pointed out that practical difficulties would arise if such a public debate were conducted, particularly in view of the forthcoming general elections.

To summarize the discussion, Namboodiripad and Jyoti Basu were entrusted with preparing a Political-Organizational Report to be presented to the next meeting of the Central Committee. Surjeet Singh was put in charge of drafting the outline of the strategy which the CPI(M) should apply in the general elections.

Another highly controversial matter was the question of the position of the party toward the XXVII Session of the All-India Trade Union Congress, to be held in Bombay, which had been Dange's preserve. As no common policy could be formulated, it was agreed that the final attitude of the party toward the AITUC would be left in the hands of the CPI (M) delegates who would be attending the meeting in Bombay.

Thus all important and controversial matters had been left to be decided by the Central Committee, which would be convened early in June in Andhra.7

The meeting was actually held in Tenali from June 12 to 19,
1966, a historical city from the point of view of the party, because there CPI (M) had decided for its independent existence as a Marxist party. The resolutions adopted demonstrated that the issues and controversies which had agitated the last meeting of the Politbureau in Calcutta were solved and that concerted policies were evolved on a number of questions.

The analysis and evaluation of the developments since the VII Congress was expressed in the Political-Organizational Report which said that the committee was satisfied with the performance of the party organizations during the period of crisis. The country-wide arrests on December 29-30, 1964 had created an extremely difficult situation "for those comrades who had to shoulder" the responsibility for managing the affairs of the party. The resolution said

... that the leaders of the ruling Congress Party had nourished illusions that the Communist movement in the country had become weakened and disrupted by the class-collaborationist policies and practices of the revisionists and that, therefore, the militant Communists who fought and broke with revisionism could be easily isolated and suppressed.

The unity on the basis of the Programme and the Resolutions of the Calcutta Congress was a clear proof that the overwhelming majority of the Communist Party of India would take the path of firm opposition to, and determined struggle against, the bourgeois-landlord government... That was why the Congress Government decided to strike before the newly-elected Central Committee of our party started to elaborate and implement the broad policies worked out by the Congress. The Government hoped that the arrests would so demoralize and disrupt the Party's work that it would be easy to push through its anti-people policies without effective opposition...³

The Central Committee then thanked all those party committees which had joined the electoral struggle in Kerala, and who had sent funds to that end. Particularly was appreciated the assistance from the committees from the Tamilnad and Karnataka to fight the elections; these two had sent cadres and vehicles and took charge of work in certain constituencies. All this assistance was in contrast with the shameful conduct of the
revisionist party, said the Central Committee, which had assisted the Congress Party by breaking up the electoral alliance and supplying the propaganda material which became the heaviest ammunition of the Congress against the CPI (M) during the Kerala campaign. The resolution congratulated the party activists for forging relations and fraternal co-operation with other parties, organizations and individuals to develop united struggles. Such initiative in mobilizing the party's own independent strength and forging united fronts with other parties helped in unleashing and developing mass struggles which had defeated the attempts of the government to isolate the party.

The resolution took a shot at the rival party by saying that the united actions had been built in spite of the "defeatist tactics of revisionists who have all along tried to disrupt the unity of mass organizations and even to bring down the tempo of, and sabotage, the mass struggles after joining them because of the mass mood."9

The resolution then analyzed the developments connected with the war with Pakistan and endorsed the positions taken by Namboodiripad in his Statement of November 8, 1965, which he had issued on behalf of the Central Committee. That statement, said the resolution, "represented the collective will of, and united the entire party, behind it". Referring to the stand taken in November 1965 the resolutions said that

...it is to the credit of the party that it had in this period boldly campaigned for a peaceful solution of the dispute not only with Pakistan but with China as well. ...10

The party had to face an extremely difficult situation, said the resolution. It was virtually alone among the democratic opposition parties in taking a stand that went "against the current of national chauvinism". The party, however, refused to bow down before the attacks and bravely faced unpopularity for having undertaken this campaign. The result was that within a few weeks larger and larger sections of the people began to see the wisdom and correctness of the course suggested by the party.

...This was the biggest political defeat suffered by the ruling Congress Party. Its hopes of 'exposing' our Party as 'traitors' and as Chinese agents were completely shattered. The slogan of a negotiated settlement with China came to be
accepted by all responsible men. So was the futility of the boastful claim of forcibly retaking Aksai Chin and other areas under the actual possession of China.

All this had its impact on the revisionists also. The revisionists, though still trying to spread the ideology of the ruling classes in the working class movement, have been forced to speak in a different language, though not changing the basic understanding contained in their programme...

When Smt. Indira Gandhi formed the new government the revisionists acclaimed her as capable of implementing what is 'progressive' in Congress policies. Today they have to demand the resignation of her government for betraying the nation. A year-and-a-half ago they disrupted the united election front in Kerala saying that they would not tolerate even adjustments with the Muslim League with regard to a few seats to be contested by independents. Today they have to publicly express willingness to join the Muslim League in a united front to fight the Congress. No political party had, in such a short period, to make such a volte face in regard to all its earlier pronouncements...

After this tongue-lashing at the rival party the resolution embarked upon self-criticism of its own party. The resolution said that the committee was conscious that while in the difficult period the party had attained creditable achievements, some shortcomings in its work must be mentioned. It was due to these shortcomings that the party had failed to rise to the occasion in developing and strengthening the mass organizations. On some issues, like Vietnam, Indo-American relations and others, the party had failed to develop a powerful mass movement for which the objective conditions had existed. New methods of work would be evolved to improve the effectiveness of the party. These methods would be applied also to ensure the collective functioning of the party organs and the evolution of a political line for the party even on questions on which there existed differences within them.

The second major resolution adopted was "On Ideological Discussion". The resolution opened with affirming that the Calcutta Congress had directed the Central Committee to conduct an inter-party discussion on the ideological controversy.
between Moscow and Peking. However, since the entire leadership of the party had been arrested before the first meeting of the Central Committee, the task could not be discharged.

In the existing situation the party was facing a number of more pressing problems—food crisis, famine, high prices, and the Fourth General Elections in 1967. In view of this, a serious ideological discussion could not be undertaken at this moment and the Central Committee resolved to postpone it.

But while doing so, said the resolution, the Central Committee had carefully considered the fact that during the past 18 months since the VII Congress divergent views had been expressed by some fraternal parties of various countries about the situation and changes in India. The analysis of these views had led the Central Committee to reiterate that the evaluation of the Indian situation in the resolutions adopted at that Congress had been "proved amply correct and sound". In view of this, the Central Committee directed that the entire activity of the party should be "guided by the Programme as the only correct application of Marxism-Leninism to the Indian situation while rejecting all views expressed either divergent to or deviating from".12 Namboodiripad received another handsome recognition for his foresight when the resolution continued and said that "the same attitude should be applied to the Central Committee Statement issued in November 1965 which is the collectively-evolved line of the Party".13

While the Central Committee felt that it was not desirable to open any discussion on the issues which had been deferred, it was at the same time necessary to familiarize the party members with the viewpoints of other fraternal parties. In view of this, authoritative statements of policy and pronouncements of the fraternal parties would be published without, however, committing the party to any specific position. Care must be taken that the published material must not be used by the enemies to "undermine the faith in the socialist system".

A resolution on "Government Employees" expressed a sense of solidarity with and support for the Central and State Government employees who had been forced to resort to various forms of direct actions, including strikes.

A resolution on "Naga and Mizo Problems" demanded that the government stop the military operations in these areas and
initiate talks with the representatives of their people. The Central Government "should concede the demand for the formation of a separate Assam and Hills Peoples' State."

A resolution "On Devaluation" said that the Central Committee considered the sudden devaluation of the rupee by the government, after repeated protestation and solemn assurances to the contrary, "to be an act of gross betrayal of national interests to appease India's creditors—the American Government and the World Bank dominated by it. One more outpost of economic sovereignty has been surrendered by the government without the least compunction." 14

A resolution "On Food Crisis" restated the previously announced positions of the party with one important modification, i.e., that people's committees should be formed to supervise the procurement and distribution of foodgrains.

A resolution "On Orissa Famine" demanded that free kitchens should be opened in every village of the affected area, and then made several other proposals to give an immediate relief to the people.

The electoral strategy for the forthcoming general elections was formulated in a resolution "On General Elections". The resolution opened on a strong note that the Fourth General Elections would be held in the midst of a deep economic crisis and a perilous situation which had been created by the growing American domination of India's economic and political life. Moreover, the failure to settle with Pakistan and China had led to a monstrous increase in defence expenditures which had added to the suffering of the people.

In these circumstances, said the resolution, the party had a tremendous responsibility in shaping the results of the forthcoming General Elections.

...It must adopt such tactics, keeping in view the single-member constituencies and the absence of a system of proportional representation, as would foil the machinations and manoeuvres of the Congress Party, lead to the breaking of its monopoly of power and secure the following results:

(1) the reduction of the Congress Party into a minority and the formation of alternative governments wherever possible;
(2) its defeat in as many constituencies as possible and
decision in the number of its members in all legislatures
and Parliament;
(3) enhanced representation of the Communist Party and
strenthening of the democratic opposition in Parliament and
State Legislatures.

For this purpose the party will strive generally for electoral
adjustments with opposition parties so that the opposition
votes may not get split and the defeat of the Congress party
may be ensured in the maximum number of constituencies.

In the States, particularly where the Communist Party is
the leading opposition force, and there is a possibility of the
Congress Party being defeated, the party will strive for elec-
toral alliances with all those parties that are willing to shed
their anti-communism and fight the Congress Party jointly
with the CPI(M). For forging such electoral alliances, the Party
will join with other democratic parties to evolve a common
minimum programme of immediate relief to the people while
popularizing its own programme. Such alliances are necessary
not only for defeating the Congress at the polls but also for
forming and maintaining non-Congress democratic govern-
ments. Experience had shown that the Congress will do its
utmost to prevent the formation of non-Congress democratic
governments...

Against the background of the growing crisis the Central
Committee considers it the paramount duty of the Party to
run the election campaign as the biggest political campaign
against the Congress Government, as the main enemy of the
people, and against its basic policies—both home and foreign.
The Party will also expose parties like the Jan Sangh and
Swatantra which advocate variants of these policies. ...15

The resolution concluded that the party would mobilize the
people on the biggest scale for its own policies and programme
of People's Democracy, as the only alternative to the path of the
capitalist development implemented by the Congress. The
Central Committee then directed all the State Committees of the
party to work out their electoral tactics in the light of the above
general line.

The resolution on the electoral strategy of the CPI (M) said
not a word about the prospects of its co-operation with the rightist party. This had to wait until the CPI itself would define its own electoral strategy, which was soon to come.

The meeting of the Central Committee of the CPI(M) in Tenali, and the adoption of several major resolutions defining its position on the main issues of the day, had rehabilitated the party in every respect.

Kremlin's Impatience over India

The optimistic assessments of the CPI about the onset of a "new era" in politics of India and about possibilities of building a mass movement which would be able "actively to intervene" in the policy-making process of the government, failed to come through. These optimistic perspectives had been outlined in the Resolutions of the Central Executive Committee of the CPI at its meeting held from September 24 to 27, 1965, and then in the resolutions of the National Council held from January 7 to 15, 1966. By hoping to exploit the climate of patriotism and national unity which had emerged in the country in the wake of the Indo-Pakistan war on the one hand, and the food crisis on the other, the CPI had believed that it would be able to build a broad mass movement, spanning over wide reaches and including the Congressmen on the right and radical elements on the left. Such a front could force upon the Government important structural changes within its leadership by the elimination of the "rightist" elements from the cabinet. Such a progressive government in India was necessary not only to further the internal goals of the CPI, but above all in order to permit the Soviet Union to carry further its rapprochement with Pakistan by bargaining off Moscow's support to India's position on Kashmir, and thus promote the establishment of Soviet hegemony over the sub-continent and meet Kremlin's strategic requirements vis-a-vis China.

These expectations of the CPI had failed to go through for several reasons. First, the authorities, by extensive and effective use of the police force, had handled well the food riots fomented by the Communist and leftist parties, which in turn had not escalated into a mass movement, panic, and chaos leading to a major social upheaval in the country. Second, the timely arrival
of foodgrains from the United States and other assisting countries was an important factor which had strengthened the hand of the government in dealing with the food crisis. Third, the relations between India and the United States had much improved since the Kashmir war, and prospects were good for an intensive economic co-operation between them in order to assist India in her over-all economic development, primarily in food producing industries, agriculture and in the manufacture of fertilizers. Moreover, voices appeared in India suspecting that the deal with Pakistan in Tashkent had been made at the expense of India, that the Kremlin was secretly building Pakistan’s military strength and that India should not permit herself to be involved in promoting Soviet hegemony over the sub-continent.

The Soviet leadership was much upset by these developments because they had adversely affected the drive of the Kremlin toward building a strong anti-China combination in which India would play the pivotal role. The supreme need of the hour was to have a government in India which would be willing unreservedly to promote Soviet hegemony on the sub-continent, accept Pakistan as an equal partner and sink its differences with the latter to that end. Because the existing government in India was dragging its feet and in general was reluctant to play the role of the pivot of Soviet policies and be deeply involved in the Sino-Soviet struggle, it was the task of the CPI and its allies to make a supreme effort in order to affect the needed changes in the governmental structure.

The Soviet leaders were not only impatient with the Indian government but highly critical of the failure of their protégé, the CPI, to carry forward the momentum of the Tashkent spirit in order to force upon the government the needed structural changes. In view of this, a strong delegation of the CPI was invited to Moscow to attend the XXIII Congress of the Soviet party, and for consultations in order to impress upon the Indian communists the requirements of Soviet strategy and devise policies which could promote them in India. The consultations were held from April 23 to 30, 1966, and resulted in a document entitled the State of National Democracy and the Non-capitalist Path of Development. According to this document, the CPI must stop attacking Pakistan and demand an early settlement of the Kashmir problem. The CPI must be prepared for a basic shift
in the Kremlin's posture towards India, because the Soviet Union can afford no longer to be identified with India, which was situated in the midst of the Muslim world. Such an identification had created anti-Soviet feelings in the Arab and Muslim world. The Indo-Pakistan conflict must be settled because it had provided an opportunity for the United States and China to penetrate the sub-continent.

Moreover, the stage had been reached in which fundamental structural changes "in the nature of the state" must be carried out without delay. In view of this, the CPI must stop compromising with the Congress and playing into its hand in the hope to win it over for a combination which could affect such changes. Instead, the CPI must steer a leftward course, compose its differences with the rival CPI(M), and build a strong left united front for the coming elections. Every effort must be made to defeat the Congress in as many states as possible, for it would be the tremendous sweep of this front which would force the structural changes upon the state in India.

Obviously, Sundarayya's visit to Moscow a few weeks earlier, and the different reading of the Indian situation by his party, had played a crucial role in the development of this new strategy of the Kremlin toward India, and in the resulting need of the CPI to move to the left.

The first evidence of the changing mood of the CPI, inaugurating its shift towards the strategy of the left united front based upon co-operation with the CPI(M), appeared even before the CPI delegation returned from Moscow, in the form of an attack upon Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The attack was mounted in the New Age on April 24, 1966, which criticized her for the views expressed in the first formal press interview, held on April 16, 1966, upon her election by the Congress High Command as the new Prime Minister of India. The attack was entitled Self-Reliance is Dead: Long Live the Dollar. Indira Government's New Philosophy Unfolds Itself.

The attacks against the government intensified upon the return from Washington of Minister of Planning, Asoka Mehta, who had gone to the United States to negotiate further assistance and work out a machinery for its implementation. The attack on Mehta in the New Age, written by P. V. Parakal, charged that he had returned empty-handed and that the Americans had
demanded a total surrender of India as the condition for aid. Indrajit Gupta continued the attack by an article which said that the policies of India “are being now made in Washington”. Mehta came under fire from Bhupesh Gupta who said that the Minister for Planning should have hung his head in shame in Parliament instead of venturing to make there a statement on his visit to America; his performance there had been a disgrace. This was the first time since planning had started 15 years ago, continued Gupta, “that a Planning Minister has so failed in his duties and exhibited his inability to draw up the plan without guidance and advice from the Americans”.

The fact that the government had not carried further the alignment with the Soviet Union, as had been expected after the Tashkent meeting, and its rapprochement with the United States in the field of economic co-operation, dashed all hopes which the CPI had placed in the possibility of building a National Democratic Front with the left-wing of the Congress and individual Congress Committees. In view of this, and according to the April consultations in Moscow, the CPI had to execute a shift to the left and orient its policies upon building the united front of the left forces, which was soon to effect itself the formulation of its electoral strategy.

This reorientation was expressed by Secretary-General of the CPI, C. Rajeshwar Rao, in a statement made in Hyderabad on May 29, 1966, in which he outlined the electoral strategy of his party for the next general elections in 1967. He said that the main aim of his party was to defeat the Congress through an alliance of the left parties. He said that the next meeting of the National Council would formulate the strategy in detail, and that the left parties would be holding a meeting in New Delhi in June in order to explore the possibility of forming such a front.

The main problem, he said, was the fact that CPI(M) had not come out for such a front, and that the statements made by some of its leaders had belittled the importance of a left alliance. He said that such an attitude of confrontation between the two Communist parties would not create confidence amongst the masses, and that in fact it had helped the Congress to maintain its monopoly of power. The CPI then appealed to its rival to ponder over that question.
I call upon them to join the CPI in the effort to build a progressive alternative to the Congress in the coming elections on the basis of a minimum programme combined with flexible tactics towards other parties... In the process of building the left alliance, the crucial significance has the unity between the CPI and the CPI(M). The CPI would do its best to build such unity of action...  

Rao then complained that some top leaders of the CPI(M) had again started a “disruptive chorus” against his own party by alleging that it had been and still was collaborating with the Congress Party. He challenged the CPI(M) to cite even one struggle of the toilers in the recent period “which had not been initiated or participated by the CPI. Will they outline what more revolutionary forms and aims of struggle they want?”, he asked. Moreover, he continued questioning the CPI(M) whether the concentration of its fire against his party had helped in any way in the struggle against the monopoly of power of the Congress. Any failure to answer these questions by the CPI(M), said Rao, would mean that it wanted to use the gross slander to cover up the bankruptcy of its policies. Rao made then a strong appeal to the CPI(M) “to shed prejudices, give up slander and unite with us in mighty struggles to further the cause of the people and inflict a heavy defeat on the Congress in the coming elections”. 

Rao also reported on the bilateral talks between the leaders of the CPI and the Soviet leadership. He defended the Russians by saying that they also had been much disturbed by the “offensive of American imperialism and domestic reaction upon the Indian economy and certain nationally accepted policies”. He said that although the Russians had been anxious about that offensive

...against India and the Indian Government’s drift to the right, the Soviet policy of friendship and aid to India would continue as there has been no fundamental changes despite the beginning of serious weakening of the basic policies and serious concessions given to American monopolists...  

The main elements of the new Soviet policy of toughness toward India, and the need to put pressure upon her government, were embodied into a new policy platform of the CPI at the
meeting of its National Council held in Hyderabad from June 9 to 15, 1966. The highlight of the meeting was an unprecedented move put forth in a resolution entitled "Demand for Resignation of the Central Government". The resolution said that the National Council

...demands the immediate resignation of the Central Government headed by Indira Gandhi because it has proved itself wholly unworthy of any national trust and thereby forfeited its moral and political right to be placed at the helm of the national affairs...\(^{21}\)

The pressure of Moscow upon the CPI was really telling.

Other resolutions adopted dealt with the mass actions, war in Vietnam, Indo-American Educational Foundation, emergency rules, food situation and other topics.

An important resolution was "On the Problem of the Nagas, Mizos and of the Other Tribes in the Border Areas of Assam". The resolution set out the policy of the party on these sensitive issues in terms which reflected its anxiety over the efforts of the Chinese to exploit these tribal tensions for building a revolutionary base in these strategically important areas. Revolution of this type, and under the sponsorship of Peking was definitely not on the agenda for the CPI, oriented on Moscow as it was. In view of this, the resolution said that the party welcomed the cessation of the military operations in the Naga Hills and the continuation of the talks between the underground Naga leaders and the government. These talks could lead to a stable solution "only if the Government of India pursues a bold and firm policy based on principles of respecting the wishes and interests of the tribal people and of strengthening India's national integration.\(^{22}\) While the government should demand of the underground Naga leaders that they should ensure that all hostilities and sabotage activities would cease completely, the government at the same time should assure them that a "union statehood of the independent, democratic Republic of India has conferred on the Naga people as a whole the right to have a government of their own choice and has made them masters of their own destiny."\(^{23}\)

If the underground Naga leaders are prepared to join with the rest of the Naga people to accept loyally the basic obligations of the union statehood, the government should show its readiness
to grant the Nagaland further extension of autonomy and status than is provided for in the constitution.

The problem of the Mizo Tribes could be solved along similar lines, by granting them a union statehood. The Garos and the united Khasi-Jaintia Hill tribes would have to be granted soon a separate autonomous region, or a union statehood. The problem of the other tribes of Assam, like the North Cachar and Mikir Hill people, could be solved by granting them regional autonomy by enlarging the powers of the existing district councils.

In the places of the existing set-up where the NEFA tribes are governed by bureaucracy alone, a political status with regional autonomy must be granted to them. In this new political and administrative set-up, the Assam State would have to be reorganized, the main divisions being the Brahmaputra Valley, Cachar District and the autonomous district of North Cachar and Mikir Hills. In the reorganized state and its autonomous regions the rights of the interested linguistic minorities must be protected. Another resolution which dealt with the national question demanded that certain areas in Tripura should be declared Scheduled Areas.

The central document adopted at the Hyderabad meeting of the National Council was a resolution on "The Present Political Situation", which spelled out in details the terms of Moscow's consultations. It developed a long argument which attempted to show on specific cases how the policies of the government had significantly shifted to the right under the impact of concessions:

... The new concessions are qualitatively different in the sense that they not only weaken, but also undermine, the very basic policies of non-alignment and independent economic development and raise the danger of eventual reversal of these policies. They in fact constitute a danger to the very independence of our country...

The resolution then gave an account of the various mass actions which had been organized to stop that drift. It described the bandhs in Bihar, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal; general strike of the Bombay textile workers for bonus; growing united action of the left parties in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Bangalore, Madhya Pradesh; one-day general strike of 250,000
government employees in the Punjab and a similar strike in Uttar Pradesh.25

All these mass actions had signified the emergence of "a new stage" in the development of the democratic mass movement, a new stage in which the united action of the left parties had played the key role, said the resolution.

The National Council placed a great hope in the potential of these mass actions, which it believed could lay the foundations to the local committees of the National Democratic Front:

...Given correct forms, orientation and slogans, these movements exert powerful impact on the Congress masses under the Congress influence, drawing sections of these into the current of the struggle as happened in West Bengal, Kerala, Maharashtra and Bihar...26

In West Bengal, continued the assessment of the National Council, the bandh movement against the food policy and the local government, for food and kerosene had,

...almost reached the character of a national upsurge, uniting citizens' committees springing up in several localities in the course of the movements bearing the embryonic nature of committees of the national democratic front. The people's militancy and anti-government anger could not be cowed down by savage measures of repression used against the movement, including over 80 persons being shot dead and the army being called out to enforce curfew and 'law and order'...27

The National Council then congratulated the party for taking the initiative and playing the leading role in organizing the bandh movements and in forging the left unity. However, said the resolution, it must be admitted that

...the unity forged so far remained confined mainly to economic issues, while on key political issues disunity and differences persist. It is this political weakness and disarray of the left and democratic forces that is being fully utilized by imperialists and forces of reaction to push through their offensive...28

In view of this, the resolution outlined a programme of mass mobilization which would be organized on the basis of a "demo-
cratic platform”. The central task of the party in the coming period would be to “lift the movement to the level of a political battle against American imperialist blackmail, monopoly pressure and the Congress Government’s policies of yielding step-by-step”. As a climax to such battles the National Council decided to organize a “mighty mass demonstration” before Parliament in Delhi on September 1, 1966.

The key section of the political resolution dealt with the problem of the electoral strategy. The resolution said that the task of overcoming the

...present political disarray of the left and democratic forces, lifting the movement to the level of a national political battle for new policies can be discharged by the party only if it simultaneously combines two tasks. On the one hand, it has to carry forward the left unity already achieved in forging mass struggles against the anti-people policies of the Congress Government. On the other hand, it has to carry on, from its independent platform as well as in unity with allies wherever possible, big mass struggles on local, state or national scale on burning issues affecting and agitating the masses and an intense political campaign of popularization of the democratic platform; and at the same time, start a friendly dialogue with other left parties as well as progressive Congressmen at all levels. Only by combining the above two tasks can the party influence left and democratic forces in the country to come together on a political plane and thus build up step-by-step democratic political unity in action...

The resolution then said that the preparation for the coming general elections and the campaign of the party would be based upon this central political task. The CPI was confident that this would enable the masses to differentiate between right-reactionary opposition to the Congress and the progressive-democratic opposition to that party. Through such

...a clear cut and sharp political campaign alone can the party prepare the ground for breaking Congress monopoly of power in as many states as possible at the coming general elections and put in its place progressive democratic ministries, strengthen the democratic opposition everywhere and in Lok
Sasha, as well as prepare ground for a new alignment at the
centre which will halt the present trend and make possible
decisive policy shifts towards the left...30

This was a flexible and realistic strategy which placed more
emphasis upon the need for a united front of the left forces than
upon the hope of drawing the Congressmen into co-operation to
build the National Democratic Front. This strategy fully reflected
the main terms of the accord between the Kremlin leaders and
the delegation of the CPI, reached in Moscow during the last week
of April, and was to pave the way for the co-operation of the two
rival parties on the formation of the left united front. However,
the CPI(M) scored an important point over its rival who had
been told by its sponsors in Kremlin to move to the left as a
result of Sundarayya's visit in Moscow.

The CPI under Retreat:

Sundarayya's visit to Moscow to explain the policies of his
party, and the public shift of CPI to the left as result, had created
an atmosphere in which initial contacts for exploring the possi-
bility of co-operation in the coming elections were initiated. As
the first step, both parties suspended the violent ideological dis-
cussion after the Tenali meeting of the Central Committee of the
CPI(M), held from June 12 to 19, 1966, and after the meeting
of the National Council of the CPI, held in Hyderabad from
June 9 to 15, 1966. Now the conflict shifted to the plane of practi-
cal politics, and concerned itself with the question of electoral
strategy, the conditions under which both parties could co-
operate on the formation of the united front of the left forces,
what kind of a united front this should be, and under whose
hegemony would it operate.

The dialogue was opened by Namboodiripad by analyzing the
political resolution of the rival party adopted by its National
Council in Hyderabad. Namboodiripad immediately spotted the
basic contradiction between the programme of the CPI as adopted
at its VII Congress in Bombay in December 1964, and the
political resolution adopted in Hyderabad in 1966. He said that
"the revisionist party" had not given up its basic ideological
political position, which was a National Democratic Front under
the joint leadership of the working class and the non-monopolistic
national bourgeoisie. But he noted that a new posture had been adopted at Hyderabad under the justification that the situation had changed.

Namboodiripad first defined the basic position of the CPI adopted at its VII Congress:

...The crux of these central political tasks... is forging of a National Democratic Front—a class alliance in which the working class and the bourgeoisie share leadership (in this class alliance the exclusive leadership of the bourgeoisie no longer exists though the leadership of the working class is not established).

Here is a contradiction between the basic programmatic slogan outlined, (at the VII Congress, ed.) and the assessment of the developing situation made by the revisionists (in Hyderabad, ed.). The programmatic slogan is a class alliance under the joint leadership of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The assessment of the developing situation, on the other hand, is that the policy of the bourgeoisie (the class which is a partner in the leadership of the alliance) has been proved and is increasingly being proved 'utterly bankrupt'.

This contradiction is so profound that the revisionist leadership will have to choose between one of the two things:

Either take the assessment of the situation seriously and abandon the basic programmatic slogan (which, after all, has been proved as 'utterly bankrupt' as the class policy of the Congress itself);

Or stick to the basic programmatic slogan and abandon the assessment of the situation. It would be, obviously, difficult for them to adopt the second course...[31]

Namboodiripad believed that the CPI in Hyderabad in fact had initiated a shift away from its basic approach of the National Democratic Front and had turned left to seek friends and allies in the leftist front.

...One is led to hope, that such a shift in the approach of the revisionist leadership has, in fact, taken place. For, the operative political slogan which emerges out of their political analysis is the unity of the Left—and even the non-Left democratic—forces...[32]
Namboodiripad then referred to that section of the political resolution of the CPI which had outlined the electoral strategy and which had visualized the formation of the united front of the left parties. Such a formulation of the immediate tasks, said he, if seriously implemented, could help in the process of building the unity of all democratic forces against the Congress regime. It would enable his own party to have unity of action with the CPI—unity in relation to the trade unions, peasants and other mass struggles as well as political actions like general elections. However, the unity of action on the basis of such understanding of the current situation "does not and cannot bridge the gulf which separates the revisionists from us... Our struggle against their programme and basic strategy should continue."33

Even regarding the unity in action, warned Namboodiripad, it should be pointed out that there was a difference between the conception of his and of the rival party:

...our ideal of unity in relation to the forthcoming general elections, for instance, is avoidance of multi-lateral contests which would help the Congress, combined with united front on the basis of a minimum programme in such States as have the possibility of forming non-Congress democratic governments. The revisionists, on the other hand, want a programmatic unity of the left parties to fight the coming elections.

Anybody could see that this is a completely unrealistic slogan... Our party, for its part, cannot accept this position...34

The reason given by Namboodiripad for the impossibility of forming a "programmatic unity of the left parties" was that on issues like China and other international and internal problems, it would be impossible to arrive at concerted views.

As an alternative to the CPI's position Namboodiripad advanced the following points on which the unity of the left forces could be realistically built. First, an agreement on the all-India scale among all left parties in order to avoid such bi-lateral and multi-lateral contests among the opposition parties as would help the Congress in the elections. Second, an agreement among the left as well as non-left democratic forces—"in such states where there was the possibility of a democratic non-Congress government coming to power"—on a minimum programme of an immediate relief to the people which could be
carried out through the administration of such a non-Congress government. Three, the evolution of a charter of demands of the people—demands around which mass struggles could be developed. These and other forms of unity of action would completely transform the situation and enable all left and democratic forces to come together on a more lasting basis.

The CPI did not take lightly the charge of Namboodiripad that there existed a contradiction between its programme of the National Democratic Front on the one hand and its recent assessment of the political situation on the other, and that in fact the CPI had shifted to the left. This interpretation was vigorously challenged by Mohit Sen in an ably argued essay "Has the Communist Party Changed Its Line?", who in turn charged the CPI(M) for a policy of revolution based upon despair. Sen said that his party had never reconciled itself, as the rival party had done, to the

... pernicious theory that it is all to the good if there is famine, all to the good if the US imperialists rule the roost in India, all to the good if democracy is murdered since all this will 'expose' the Congress and 'automatically' bring the masses to the position of revolution.

The CPI...condemns this 'theory' as the ideological-political disarming of the masses, as outright surrender to anarchist expectations of catastrophe and chaos as the way towards deliverance of the masses by a chosen band. It condemns this 'theory' as preaching sheer economism and political passivity... 35

While both Communist parties articulated their independent postures toward the problem of the left united front in their weekly organs New Age and People's Democracy, serious negotiations had been in progress for some time without publicity. The negotiations grew out of the contacts and co-operation which had evolved out of the necessity to co-ordinate the bandh movement in various states of India.

Negotiations Initiated

The bandhs, which started in 1965, had generated a mass movement of magnitude unknown in India since the days of
the struggle for independence. They were organized in Bihar and Maharashtra on the food platform, in Calcutta against the increase of the street-car fares, in Ahmedabad and Bombay for bonus and other trade union demands, in Kerala a bandh was organized on the food issue in January 1966, in West Bengal a protracted bandh on various issues lasted from February to April 1966, another bandh was held in Uttar Pradesh in July 1966.

These bandhs, and other united actions at local and state levels, had been co-ordinated at the all-India level by periodical meetings of the representatives of the leftist parties. Between September 1965 and July 1966 some 6 meetings had been held. The exchanges of views revealed that in spite of the differences on various questions of policy relating to the international and national issues, the parties which had come together had a common approach to the problem of the mass movement and joint struggle. Several resolutions had been adopted at these meetings which agreed upon a common basis on which to organize and co-ordinate these joint activities in various parts of the country.

However, while it proved possible to attain an agreement on the united actions and a common approach to the mass agitation organized mainly on the economic issues, the question remained whether it would be possible to raise this unity to a higher level and carry it forward into the political domain. As Namboodiripad put it, the question was:

...will the parties who have hammered out a common line for practical action at the level of local and state-wide mass struggles undertake the task of and succeed in evolving a plan of joint political action; will they join their separate forces and develop such an electoral force as can effectively challenge the Congress at the forthcoming general elections?...36

While the left parties participating in the co-ordinating meetings had recognized this need, the continuous discussions revealed that it was not an easy matter because each of them had its own idea on the methods through which a united electoral strategy of the left and other opposition parties could be forged.

First was the question whether there should be a full-fledged united front or mere adjustments of seats to avoid splitting the opposition vote. Second was the question whether there should
be a minimum programme subscribed to by all parties and groups which would jointly fight the elections in an attempt to defeat the Congress. Third, differences appeared also on the approach to be taken toward the parties which were really not leftist in character. These differences were acute particularly at the meetings in February and April 1966, giving an impression that the extreme limit had been reached and that no further progress were possible.

However, a major break-through was attained at the meeting held in New Delhi from July 24 to 27, 1966, where all these differences were resolved and a common policy expressed in a resolution of The Consultative Committees of the Left Opposition Parties. The resolution was hammered out by E. M. S. Namboodiripad for the CPI(M), Dr. G. Adhikari for the CPI, and Madhu Limaye for the SSP. The following signed the resolution for their respective parties: Dr. G. Adhikari and Bhupesh Gupta for the CPI; P. Sundarayya and E. M. S. Namboodiripad for the CPI(M); Madhu Limaye and Deben Sen for the SSP; Tridib Chaudhary and Kesho Prashad Sharma for RSP; Chitta Basu for the Forward Bloc; Brahmananda Mishra for Bharatiya Samajwadi Parishad; and Indulal Yagnik for the Maha-Gujarat Parishad. The leadership of the PSP had not participated in these talks and therefore was not a party to the agreement.

The resolution said that

... the coming elections provide the people with an opportunity to break the Congress stranglehold on the Government, increase Opposition representation and even replace the Congress administration by non-Congress popular governments.

We declare that in order to defeat the Congress which is running the country by its reactionary and anti-people policies we have agreed to achieve electoral adjustments with a view to avoiding mutual contest. We will also try to co-ordinate our election campaigns on the basis of mutual support to each other's candidates.

We are further agreed that outside of the seats conceded to one another, these parties will be free to seek, if they so desire, adjustments with other parties which are not party to this agreement.
THE DIALECTICS OF UNITY AND CONFLICT

We give solemn assurance to the people that should the electorate throw the Congress out, we shall provide alternative, popular governments and will see to it that stable legislative majorities are created for these non-Congress, popular governments.

We are agreed that while the parties would approach the electorate on the basis of their own manifestoes and programmes, discussions would be initiated right now for drawing up the outline of Governmental programmes to be implemented by the alternative governments. In view of the prospects of alternative governments we are alive to the needs of acceptable programmes for these governments. We realize that these programmes have to be specific and concrete. We shall hold consultations among ourselves and evolve an effective mechanism for conducting these discussions, with popular participation, for formulating these programmes.37

Thus the central question of whether to have a united front or merely electoral adjustments, which had brought the talks to an impasse, was now solved in favour of adjustments. Obviously, it was impossible to agree upon an electoral united front based upon a common programmatic platform covering all complicated issues of internal and international policies. There was, however, a commitment on the part of all parties to the agreement that they would attempt to co-ordinate their election campaigns on the basis of mutual support to each other's candidates. This meant that the arrangement had envisaged something more than mere adjustments of seats as generally understood. The agreement had committed the partners to assist each other to win as many seats as possible.

Another important aspect of the agreement was that the parties had promised to hold consultations amongst themselves in order to evolve an effective mechanism to outline a common programme of action, to be implemented by any government which might come to power as a result of the agreement. While this was short of an agreement on a common programme to fight the elections, this provision went far beyond the mere adjustments of seats. In fact, it had committed the parties to agree upon a common programme of action after the elections, should the united front win in any state, on which basis an
alternative government could be formed to replace the Congress.

Commenting upon the agreement Namboodiripad said that it signified the first step of elevating the unity of the left forces to a political level. He said that it was a "good beginning" which might lead not only to the defeat of the Congress in many places but to "evolving and implementing programmes of a political-administrative nature by the alternative government." He was most pleased, however, with that provision which had given a free hand to its partners to have adjustments with other parties outside the agreement. This was of great practical importance, he said, as had been evident from the mid-term elections of 1965 in Kerala, where

... the revisionists and the RSP broke with our Party, the SSP and others on the ground that we had adjustments of seats with the Muslim League. The freedom which we asked for and which was denied to us then has now been given to all the parties to the agreement. . . .38

He then said that the significance of this provision can be seen only when put against the background of two other developments. First were the discussions already in progress on a bilateral basis in several states, particularly in West Bengal and Kerala, where the left and other opposition parties, like the Bangla Congress in West Bengal and the Muslim League in Kerala, had been striving to unite their forces to replace the Congress by alternative governments. Secondly, it was the unity which had been forged on the floor of the Lok Sabha during the session which had opened on July 25, 1966. That unity was so strong and effective, said Namboodiripad, that the government had to retreat on two major issues: (a) postpone the debate on the economic situation till after the no-confidence motion had been debated; (b) postpone Bhoothalingam's appointment as India's Ambassador to the European Common Market. Namboodiripad was confident that the unity of the left forces which had been attained by the agreement would be preserved, although it would be seriously strained by a public debate of some issues on which no agreement at all was possible. He warned the parties to the agreement to approach the debate with prudence and in a sober manner.

The conduct of the CPI(M) delegates to the consultative meet-
ing of the left parties, which had produced the united front, was approved by the Politbureau during its session from August 1 to 3, 1966. The communiqué issued endorsed the statement of the left parties and noted that the efforts in this direction had already started in a number of states. The State Committees of the CPI(M) had been attempting to arrive at a fair allocation of seats on the "sound principle of the constituencies being allocated to that Party which is strongest there." However, said the communiqué, "it is distressing to note that the revisionists do not accept this sound principle." The Politbureau expressed a hope that this difficulty would be soon solved and directed the State Committees of the party to continue these efforts and do their utmost to reach electoral agreements with other parties. Obviously, the CPI(M) hoped that the rival party could be won for co-operation if it were first isolated and then confronted by a front of other parties in which the CPI(M) would be playing the dominant role.

The Politbureau also heard the report of A. K. Gopalan on the recent meeting of the Central Kisan Council and expressed its satisfaction at the efforts to revive and reactivate the All-India Kisan Sabha as the united mass organization of Indian peasantry. The meeting then decided that a draft of the election manifesto of the party would be made and placed for approval before the Central Committee in the first week in October. In order to prepare the electoral campaign it was decided that a number of pamphlets on various topics would be brought out. The topics would be The Failure of the Plans, Foreign Collaboration, Congress and Labour, Congress and Democracy, Foreign Policy of the Government, Food and Agriculture Under Congress Rule, Taxation Policy of the Government, and others. A Central Party School would conduct classes on the programme of the Party.

The CPI replied to the communiqué of the CPI(M) at a press conference held by C. Rajeshwar Rao, Bhupesh Gupta and N. K. Krishnan on September 15, 1966. The reply was published under the headline Who is the Main Enemy—CPI or Congress Government. They strongly objected to the campaign of "slander and distortions" which the rival had mounted.
Bargaining for Strength

While it had been comparatively easy to agree in general terms that the parties of the left would enter into electoral adjustments to form a united front, the real difficulties started when the two pillars of that front—the two rival Communist parties—opened the bargaining talks about the principle to be used in allocating the seats between them, and about the assessment of the relative strength of each party in each constituency to be contested by one of them.

Namboodiripad opened the battle with an article asking "Will Messieurs the Revisionists Further Strengthen the Unity?" on August 28, 1966. He said that not long ago the rival party had been advocating the policy "of defeating the Right reactionary and communal parties at all cost—in co-operation with the Congress if necessary". The high-water mark of this policy, said Namboodiripad, had been attained in Tamilnad where the CPI and the Congress had made a joint list of candidates for the municipal elections and where several leaders of the CPI publicly had canvassed for the Congress Party.

However, the CPI had abandoned that policy and conceded that the main task of all progressive parties was to defeat the Congress and replace it by alternative governments wherever possible. He welcomed this change in the policies of the CPI, which in turn had necessitated a change of its posture toward the Muslim League and the DMK. In Kerala the CPI had completely reversed itself, while in Tamilnad the CPI would no more "insist on the DMK breaking with the Swatantra and the Muslim League as the pre-requisite for their understanding with the DMK."

Namboodiripad then went right into the heart of the whole problem of the relative strength of both parties. He said that the CPI had made such tall claims that they cannot be taken seriously. The question was whether this was a part of the "notorious tactics" of opening a bargain by a formal demand for several times more seats than one would wish to have, or would it be a "calculated move to sabotage the talks" in practice while formally negotiating for a united front? He said that bargaining from that position would not be good for anyone. He was quite firm on the principle that the only basis on which
any adjustments of seats were possible was the allocation according to the political and organizational strength of each party in the constituency in question, with the possibility of marginal accommodations.

According to him, it was relatively easy to allocate the seats between the two Communist parties on the one hand and the other partners of the united front on the other. The real difficulty would be only with regard to the allocation of seats between the two Communist rivals. But also here

...it is possible, through a variety of methods (such as a check-up on people's mobilizations in rallies and demonstrations organized by the two parties; assessment of the roles played by the two parties in the mass struggles; examination of the circulation of the party organs and literature, etc.) to find out which of the two parties is stronger in any particular area. Can there be a fairer, more equitable distribution of seats than the assessment of the strength of the two parties?

The revisionists, however, refuse to accept this principle. They, on the other hand, harp on another 'principle'—that all the sitting MLAs (Members of the State Legislative Assemblies, ed.) and MPs (Members of the Lok Sabha, ed.), should be allowed to contest this time also. The falsity of this 'principle' was completely exposed in Kerala where a number of the sitting MLAs belonging to the revisionist party contested on this 'principle', but lost their deposits...\textsuperscript{42}

Namboodiripad then said that he was not advancing the principle of the assessment of the relative strength of both parties as a "rigid dogma". Exceptions would have to be made in several specific cases.

Intimately connected with the problem of assessing the relative strength of the rivals in the states and constituencies was the question of strength which each party commanded in the trade union and peasant movements and other mass organizations of the all-India nature. While admitting that in the All-India Trade Union Congress Dange and his party commanded the majority in its leading organs, Namboodiripad insisted that in the Kisan movement it was his party which had the upper hand. He complained of unfair tactics of the rival party and accused
its leaders for having “a double standard” in their attitude to
the mass organizations:

...Our leaders in the AITUC bitterly fought the incorrect
political and organizational line pursued by the revisionist
'majority', but when we were defeated we continued to work
in the same AITUC. The revisionist leaders in the Central
Kisan Council, however, refuse to loyally accept and carry out
the organizational decisions of the Central Kisan Council...

The revisionists are obviously applying double standards—
one standard for the Kisan Sabha where they are in a minority,
and another standard in the AITUC where they have created
a majority for themselves. They are ‘against disruption’ in the
AITUC, while they are ‘for unity and understanding’ in the
AIKS (All-India Kisan Sabha, ed.). They are exploiting the
loyalty of our trade union functionaries to perpetuate them-
selves in the offices of the AITUC. They are at the same time
exploiting our anxiety to preserve the unity of the AIKS to
bring out unwarranted changes in its organizational set-up at
an inopportune moment...

We would insist on the democratic functioning of the
AITUC, while we would practice it in the AIKS. We would
remain and loyally function within the AITUC, even while
fighting the bureaucratism of the AITUC leadership. We
would also insist on the revisionist minority in the AIKS
loyally carrying out the decisions of the CKC and other bodies
of the AIKS...43

Bhupesh Gupta published a strong reply to Nambodiripad
on the pages of the New Age on October 2, 1966.44 He took all
Nambodiripad’s charges one by one and restated his party’s
position on the central issues disputed by the rivals. He said
it was not true that his party had “insisted” that before any
left united front could be formed and even adjustments
contemplated the parties of the front must first agree upon a
common programmatic platform applicable on the all-India
level. It was not true that his party had made tall claims. In
fact, he argued that his party had not claimed any seat where its
strength and influence would not justify the claim. The truth is
...that our Party had made it clear that its general policy is only to claim those seats in which it can be demonstrably proved that we have better chances than any other Left party of defeating the Congress and to cement unity on the most effective basis to defeat the Congress...

Gupta then defended the so-called 'sitting principle' which his party had been advocating as a guide for the allocation of seats among the two rivals.

...What is wrong then if our Party has suggested that the seats held by different democratic parties, including the ones now in possession of the two Communist Parties, not be disturbed as a rule? We have had the experience of the three general elections and is it not a fact that the 'sitting principle' has not only been insisted upon in the past but generally observed? Does EMS really think that the Left parties can get anywhere near a united front, or even avoid ruinous mutual contests, if the 'sitting principle' in the first instance is not respected? Why should EMS be interested more in unseating us than all of us together unseating the Congress on a massive scale? ...

Gupta then refused for his party to accept the charge, the 'ultimatum', that unless "we do what he (EMS ed.) directs us to do, we shall be guilty of breaking the united front". He also replied to Namboodiripad's assessment of strength in the AITUC and the AIKS. He said that the CPI (M) had hardly mustered the support for 25 per cent of the leading positions at the XXVII AITUC Session held in Bombay, while his own party had the support to elect 75 per cent of the leaders. In the All-India Kisan Sabha the position of the CPI (M) was also not so glorious, as it controlled 15 seats in the Central Council while his own party had 12 seats. Gupta concluded by calling upon the rival party to give up the "virulent political animus against our party" and to close the left ranks.

Thus it was the contradiction between the agreement on the adjustment of seats on the one hand, and the inability to agree upon the criterion to be used for the allocation of seats to be contested on the other, which generated a tremendous heat in the fall of 1966. During that time the relations between the two parties
became highly complicated and ranged over a broad spectrum from implacable hostility, through limited co-operation, up to complete accord. Three basic types of relationship developed.

In Andhra both parties waged a fratricidal war to the point of mutual annihilation, which spread over a wide area. In West Bengal the co-operation led to the establishment of a united front, and although this collapsed in the very last stage and each party went to the polls at the head of its own coalition, the area of conflict was substantially reduced. In this pattern, the balance of advantages derived from limited co-operation and disadvantages incurred as a result of limited conflict favoured the former. In Kerala, where the third type of relationship evolved, both parties fully co-operated on the establishment of the united front and went to the polls as partners.

*Implacable Hostility in Andhra*

The war over the assessment of strength of the two rival parties in Andhra had not only its root in the ideological differences but stemmed from personal hostility between the two key figures of each party—Rajeshwar Rao and P. Sundarayya. Both these leaders hailed from Andhra, and each commanded the position of General Secretary of his party.

The debate had been initiated by M. Basavapunniah, member of the Politbureau of the CPI(M) in an article written in the Telugu weekly magazine of his party the *Janasakthi* on June 8, 1966. In that article Basavapunniah had claimed that the CPI(M) was the strongest party in the state and that it would unite and lead all left forces into the electoral battle.

The article was answered by N. Rajashekhar Reddy on the pages of the *New Age* on July 17 by a rejoinder entitled "Tall Claims of the Marxist CPI in Andhra". Reddy said that the CPI(M) had exaggerated claims and had refused to co-operate on a realistic basis with the CPI on the distribution of seats. He said that his party was not going to ask anybody for permission to contest seats. It knows where it could and would contest. On the other hand, it would not contest a single seat where the CPI(M) or any other left party was stronger. It was with this approach to the problem, said Reddy, that the State Committee of the CPI had tentatively decided on May 17, 1966 that it would
contest 80 seats to the State Assembly and 12 seats to the Lok Sabha. This announcement, said Reddy, had "sent Basavapunniah into jitters". The claim to the number of seats to be contested was based upon the assessment of the actual strength of the party, said Reddy. In Andhra his party had an organized network of members and a large Kisan following in the villages. In the majority of districts it was stronger than the CPI(M). Reddy rejected as invalid any comparison of strength of the two parties in Andhra and Kerala. He said that the victory of the CPI(M) in Kerala had caused such dizziness to the leaders of the CPI(M) that they fondly hoped that Kerala could be repeated in Andhra. But, said Reddy,

...Andhra is not Kerala. Here the CPI(M) is not as strong as in Kerala. Here they are much weaker than the CPI in the trade union movement and, except in three to four towns, they are much weaker in towns in general. There are huge stretches, some taluks and districts, where they are either non-existent or only have a skeleton organization.

Andhra is not Kerala for another reason. Here the CPI(M) does not have a Muslim League to contribute one or two lakh votes in the marginal seats.

If Basavapunniah prefers to ignore all these facts and thinks that his party can work out election tactics on the basis of Kerala election results he is indulging in self-deception. He should also learn some lessons from the Andhra by-elections...48

The formula of the CPI to contest 80 seats was based upon the experience of the 1962 elections in which the united party had contested 145 seats. Reddy said that if his party would contest 80 of these seats, as had been decided, the CPI(M) would be able to contest the remaining 65 old seats. This, said Reddy, "roughly indicates the ratio of strength of the two parties also",49 which was 60:40. Unless fantastic and unreasonable claims were made it would not be difficult to determine which party was stronger in each constituency. This could be done in almost all constituencies, said Reddy. Naturally, in marginal constituencies there would be some difficulties, and claims and counter-claims would have to be discussed to find a solution. If in any of the 80 constituencies the CPI (M) would wish to contest it would have

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to make convincing cases with facts and reasonable arguments and not merely advance boastful claims; the CPI would be prepared to consider them.

Reddy concluded that in Andhra Pradesh the CPI and the CPI(M) could win far more seats than before only if they united. Both parties formed the main pillars of the democratic opposition in the state. The unity between them could rally the smaller parties and all opposition would benefit from their co-operation.

Basavapunniah replied to Reddy on August 28, 1966 in *People's Democracy*. He said that the Andhra State Committee of the CPI(M), which met in Hyderabad from June 22 to 28, 1966, had not only reiterated its stand on the electoral unity and adjustments of seats with the CPI, but also had laid down the correct guiding principle that the constituencies should be allocated to different parties on the basis of the mass following each party commanded in the respective constituency. What his party was worrying about was "whether the revisionists, with their fantastic demand of seats based upon a bogus assessment of their strength", are not going to wreck the electoral agreement and thus objectively save the Congress Party. He said that such tall claims had been made by the CPI also in other places. In Tamilnad the CPI had announced that it would contest 80 State Assembly seats and 17 seats to the Lok Sabha; on the all-India level the CPI hoped to contest 700 State Assembly seats and 100 seats to the Lok Sabha.

Basavapunniah then analyzed the returns of the by-elections in the Mahabubabad Constituency and then in the Warangal District to refute the charges that his party was weak there. He reminded Reddy that the by-elections had taken place when some 250 party leaders in Andhra, and some 20 in Warangal, had been under detention while the leaders of the rival party had been free.

In the final portion of his article Basavapunniah called upon the rival party to "abandon the advocacy of the existing seat formula" and abide by the principle of allocation of seats on the basis of each party's strength in the constituency in question. He warned that otherwise the CPI would have to make the same self-criticism as after the elections in Kerala, where the CPI had fatally misread the relative strength of both parties.
In order to get the negotiations for co-operation off the ground the State Committee of the CPI(M) in Andhra decided, at its meeting held in Vijayawada from September 4 to 8, 1966, that a big bandh should be organized to bring together all opposition parties. The plan was further promoted at a meeting of all left opposition parties, held on September 26, and then launched on October 29. During seven days, until November 4, the life in the state stopped as there was no bus service, trains were halted, shops were closed and students, trade unions and other sections of the people demonstrated in thousands.50

In spite of the great success of the bandh, the unity in action attained in the mass movement could not be elevated to political level, and negotiations for the adjustment of seats between the two rival parties broke down. In the early stage of the negotiations the CPI (M) had claimed only 65 seats, of which 45 were located in the strongholds of this party in six central districts of the state. An equal number of seats 65, was conceded to the rival party, of which 25 were located in the six central districts. The CPI demanded, however, additional 23 seats out of the CPI (M)’s share and the negotiations broke down.

In view of this, the State Committee of the CPI (M) announced on November 26 in Hyderabad a list of its own candidates for the coming elections. The statement said that it was a preliminary list, in which the party decided to contest 70 State Assembly, and 10 Lok Sabha, seats. Ten more state assembly seats were under consideration, and the total number to be contested would ultimately depend upon further developments. The second list would be much smaller, perhaps not exceeding 20 seats, and its size would depend upon the possibility of adjustments with other opposition parties, particularly the CPI and the SSP. The list gave only the names of the constituencies to be contested, as the names of the candidates had been sent to the Politbureau for approval and would be announced later.

The statement said that the number of seats contested was actually very small, compared to the number contested by the united party in 1962 and considering the existing strength of the party in the state. This was not for propaganda purposes, but to provide the other opposition parties a greater opportunity to contest. In this connection the announcement complained about the experience which the party had gained in negotiating with
the rival party on the adjustment of seats, because the latter repeatedly had made unreasonable demands. In order to forestall the negotiations, the CPI had published in the press a claim to 80 state assembly and 12 parliamentary seats, leaving for the CPI (M) 50-60 seats.\textsuperscript{51}

The leadership of the CPI reacted violently and announced on December 11 that the chances of an understanding between the two parties had received a severe shock by the unilateral announcement by the CPI(M) of the list of 70 constituencies to be contested, with an additional list to come. Particularly regrettable was the fact that the list had been released in spite of the request of the negotiating team of the CPI to postpone its publication until the State Council had a chance to consider it. The election tactics of the CPI(M) in Andhra, like in West Bengal,

are apparently oriented more towards reducing the representation of the CPI in the legislature and Parliament by the defeat of as many of its candidates as possible than defeating the Congress.

The CPI(M) leaders have even invented a theory to justify this conduct of theirs. It is that in those states where alternative non-Congress democratic government is not a possibility, unity of the left forces is not essential.\textsuperscript{52}

A week later the CPI complained that its rival not only had put forth an exaggerated claim, but that it planned further to widen the area of conflict between the two parties.\textsuperscript{53}

In the meantime, the CPI(M) went ahead with its own preparations, and its State Committee announced on December 15, 1966 a new list of its candidates. The list gave the names of 75 constituencies, considered another 16 for the state assembly, and listed 10 candidates for the Lok Sabha. When the final date for the nominations expired the conflict escalated to the following line-up. The CPI(M) contested 84 out of 287 assembly seats and supported 22 independent candidates; for the Lok Sabha it contested 11 out of 41 total seats. The rival contested 104 assembly and 20 Lok Sabha seats. The area of conflict in which the candidates of both parties and their allies would confront each other was quite wide, including 75 assembly constituencies,
(53 Communist candidates plus 22 Communist supported candidates) and 11 Lok Sabha constituencies.54

Commenting upon this suicidal line-up on the eve of the elections, the CPI placed all blame at the door of the rival party. It quoted P. Sundarayya to the effect that the CPI(M) had really not been interested in co-operating with the CPI because "in 1967 we will annihilate the revisionists and in 1972 we will defeat the Congress".55

Although the ranks of the Congress Party were also divided, 45 dissenters contested against the Congress, the direct combat of the rival Communist parties, raging over 75 constituencies, spelled ruins to both of them.

Two Fronts in West Bengal

Second type of relations between the two rival parties developed in West Bengal. The key element in the situation was the fact that the Bangla Congress, a group of dissidents who had established themselves as an independent party, was willing to co-operate with both Communist parties on the defeat of the Congress Party at the polls.

The process of dissolution of the Congress Party, which became substantially accelerated during 1966, and the willingness of the dissenters to enter into formal coalition to end the rule of the Congress Party in West Bengal, confirmed the feasibility of the strategic concept of the CPI, adopted at the VII Congress in Bombay in December 1964. While in the rest of India this strategy could not be applied because the dissidents refused to co-operate with the Communists and the CPI had to execute a move to the left to seek co-operation with the leftist parties primarily, in West Bengal it was the rival party which had to shift to the right in view of the new emerging alignment of forces.

Although the VII Congress of the CPI(M), held in Calcutta in October 1964, had ruled out against any dissident elements of Congress qualified for participation in the People's Democratic Front, the Calcutta policy at the same time had permitted the party to co-operate with these elements on individual issues and on an ad hoc basis. This formula, and the fact that it would be merely an aggregate of the "left and democratic opposition parties", set up for electoral purposes only, and not a People's
Democratic Front in terms of the VII Congress, opened the way for the CPI(M) to enter into direct negotiations with the Bangla Congress for an electoral adjustment. This, however, was not an easy matter because of the determination of the rival party to structure a left front under the hegemony of the CPI-Bangla Congress combination, which would then confront the CPI(M) and relegate it to a subordinate position.

The manoeuvre to isolate the CPI (M) did not succeed and negotiations for an electoral front broke down. By that time, however, a sufficiently large area of agreement on the allocation of seats among the prospective partners of the electoral front had been reached, and although the two Communist parties went to the polls at the head of two rival fronts, their direct contest was minimized with the result that the Congress Party suffered a shattering defeat.

Thus while the struggle for hegemony between the two rivals in Andhra would take place in the form of a direct and merciless confrontation raging over a wide area, in West Bengal the area of conflict would be limited to decide at the polls which of the two parties had the real mandate.

It was the dissolution of the Congress Party in West Bengal which paved the way for the development of the second pattern of relations between the two rival parties, characterized by limited co-operation and conflict.

The dissidents formally separated themselves at a two-day session of the Executive Committee of their new party, held in Calcutta from July 14 to 15, 1966. The new party became known as the Bangla Congress, and was led by former President of the Congress Party in West Bengal, Ajoy Mukherjee. The committee adopted a constitution which declared that the sole objective of the party was the establishment of democratic socialism in the country. The preamble of the constitution said that the Bangla Congress stood for an active and honest people's government for West Bengal in order to replace the existing "corrupt Congress regime". The meeting further decided that the party would contest the next elections against the rival Congress, and that steps would be taken with the Electoral Commission to secure recognition as an independent party for the purpose. The meeting elected Mukherjee as President of the new party, who said that
many Congressmen in the state would rally to its flag to fight for an option to the old regime of the Congress. The split of the Congress Party was not confined to West Bengal, and during the rest of 1966 independent organizations of dissidents functioned in seven states of India. In order to coordinate their activities and structure a rival party not only on the state but an all-India level, a convention of dissidents was held in New Delhi on December 6, 1966 to establish a new political party, the Jana Congress. The convention was chaired by a veteran Gandhian leader Acharya J. B. Kripalani, who said that the aim of the new party would be to revive the basic values of pre-independence Congress Party.

The convention set up a seven-member committee to draft the constitution of the new party and to take steps with the Electoral Commission of India to launch the party as a new political entity of India’s political scene. The committee consisted of representatives of seven states in which the dissident groups had already established themselves as independent parties: (1) the Kerala Congress was represented by K. M. George; (2) the Bangla Congress of West Bengal by Humayun Kabir; (3) Orissa Jana Congress by Hare Krishna Mahatab; (4) the Maharashtra Republican Congress by Anandrao Kalamkar; (5) Madhya Pradesh Jana Congress by Mohanlal Bakliwal; (6) the Assam Jana Congress by Bansi Ram Das; (7) the Freedom Fighter’s Association of Uttar Pradesh by M. P. Saxena.

The programme of the new party was explained by Kabir, former minister in federal cabinet, who said that the party would revive the pre-independence ethos and honesty of the Congress and modify its programme in the light of experience gained in the past twenty years. A statement issued by the convention said that the existing misery of the Indian people was due to the progressive deviation of the country from the ideas and policies laid down by Mahatma Gandhi. It noted the general deterioration in the standards of public life and in the leadership of the Congress Party, as well as its growing disintegration through internal dissensions and corroding effects of corruption. The new party must bring practice into conformity with professions, and restore honesty and integrity in public life. It must combine the demands for social justice and welfare with respect for individual freedom, liberty and personal initiative. It must also seek
solutions which would reconcile regional interests with larger
loyalties to India.

The next day, on December 7, 1966 the party announced the
guiding principles of its policy. The party believed that while the
basic industries must be "under national regulation", it was
opposed to monopoly either in the private or public sector, and
therefore would encourage competition at every level. The pur-
pose of this competition would be to ensure efficiency in produc-
tion and fair prices. The remuneration in public sector would be
linked to profits. In order to enlarge employment, the party
would seek expansion especially of the medium, small and cottage
industries, and for the purpose would seek the reorientation of
national planning. The party believed that sufficiency in food
could be attained within five years, provided certain realistic
policies were followed. These included: (1) greater attention to
small and medium-scale irrigation; (2) fixation of ceilings and
floor on individual holdings of land; (3) consolidation of econo-
metrically weak holdings into co-operative or state farms; (4) secu-
ritv of tenure, encouragement and incentive through special
facilities to joint stock companies to undertake farming. The
party had a special appeal to the minorities. It would attempt to
promote their legitimate interests, and to ensure equal oppor-
tunities in employment, industry and trade, and if necessary,
through constitutional amendments.

Although the Bangla Congress was dedicated to a noble
purpose of reviving the old values of the Congress, in practical
policy its leaders mounted a course which in West Bengal proved
not only fatal to the Congress but suicidal to itself. The hatred
of the old organization had blinded the leaders of the Bangla
Congress into co-operation with both Communist parties in the
elections of 1967, which eliminated the Congress as an effective
political force in that state. And when this democratic center,
whatever its shortcomings, had been defeated, the Bangla Con-
gress itself split and became a virtual prisoner of the Communist
parties in the next elections, held in 1969, being reduced into
their appendix. Thus in West Bengal was enacted the old story in
which a democratic group allies itself with a Communist Party
in order to attain a short-term objective, in the process the center
forces are destroyed, which in turn paves the way for the liquid-
atation of the group itself in the second stage.
The involvement of the Bangla Congress in the process of destruction of the Congress Party was initiated by the CPI early in June 1966, when the State Committee of the CPI in West Bengal sent letters to all prospective partners of a united front, inviting them for consultations. The talks were started in the second half of June, as soon as the West Bengal leaders had returned from the meeting of the National Council, held in Hyderabad from June 9 to 15, 1966. Separate talks were held with the CPI(M), the Revolutionary Socialist Party, the Forward Bloc and the Bangla Congress. The CPI negotiators took a position that a full-fledged electoral front should be concluded on the basis of a joint programme, in which the parties would pledge themselves to co-operation after the elections on the formation of an alternative government. During the talks tentative claims were put forth by the parties regarding the number of constituencies to be contested by each of them.56

Also the CPI(M) was active and negotiations had been opened with the RSP, Revolutionary Communist Party of India, the SSP and other left groups. Although a resolution passed by the State Committee early in February 1966 had declared that there would be no electoral unity with the "Dange clique", the party in the meantime shifted its position and entered into the talks with its rival. Negotiations had also been opened with the Bangla Congress, both to checkmate the efforts of the CPI to monopolize the relationship with these Congress dissenters and minimize the claim that its co-operation with them had fully confirmed the correctness of its general line, as well as to fulfill the mandate of the VII Congress permitting co-operation with the Congress and its dissenters on individual issues.

The negotiations with the left parties had been initiated early in 1966, and in fact were the outgrowth of the United Front of Left Parties which had organized jointly the great bandhs and other mass movements in West Bengal in the spring of that year. These bandhs and other united actions then brought both Communist parties together and paved the way for the electoral unity talks. Another posture of the CPI(M) was developed by the publication, in Jugantar on May 28, 1966, of a statement of Promode Das Gupta to the effect that for his party a full-fledged united front of the left parties to fight the elections, and the alternative government of the left parties after the elections, were not on
the agenda. In view of this posture the CPI(M) negotiators argued that in order to defeat the Congress Party only an electoral adjustment, or a loose electoral alliance, would be needed; there was no need for a full-fledged united front based upon a common programme. In view of this, the question of the formation of the alternative government should be left open until after the election.57

While both Communist parties paid lip service to the need for an electoral unity, the negotiations proved not easy. The disagreement was not only over the general strategy whether to have a full-fledged united front based upon a common programme or a mere adjustment of seats, but the negotiations ran into almost unsurmountable difficulties over the assessment of strength and the allocation of seats to be contested. The rightist party, in order to reduce the CPI(M) which really was much stronger, colluded with the Bangla Congress in supporting mutually their claims against the claims of the CPI(M). At the outset of the negotiations the CPI claimed for itself 110 seats out of 280 to be contested, but later reduced this to 52, abdicating 60 seats to the Bangla Congress while allocating to the CPI(M) 72 seats.58

The CPI(M), considering itself the strongest party in the state, saw through the stratagem and decided to strike for an independent posture at the meeting of its State Committee, held in Calcutta from October 4 to 8, 1966. The meeting heard the reports of the negotiating teams about the attempt of the CPI-Bangla Congress combination to isolate the party and then defined the electoral strategy: the aim of the CPI(M) would be to defeat the Congress Party through a strong democratic and anti-Congress electoral unity. In view of this general policy, seats to each participating party should be allocated on the basis of actual strength each commanded in each constituency. A party should contest a seat only there, compared to any other aligned party, where it can mobilize the largest number of people. The CPI(M) was, however, aware that it might not be possible to observe this principle of organizational strength in every case. Some departures would be necessary for the sake of unity and adjustments. But, warned the meeting, "departure from this salutary principle in too many seats will defeat the very purpose of adjustment and unity, because it will weaken the chances
of defeating the Congress, and of building a united mass movement". 59

The CPI(M), said the meeting further, had consistently followed this flexible and principled stand in order to forge the electoral unity. As the major opposition party the CPI(M) had not claimed, during the negotiations, any seats in which it could not demonstrate the strongest organization and influence. On the other hand, it had agreed to concede many seats to other parties for the sake of unity, even though it is stronger than them in those constituencies.

The State Committee of the CPI(M) noted with regret that the problem of electoral unity had not been solved during the current negotiations, because some parties had not followed the same policy in their relations with other parties, particularly with the CPI(M).

While the Committee expressed a faint hope that the electoral unity still might be attained, it was decided to take steps in order to safeguard the interest of the party. Considering the strength of the party and the concessions which it had already made, the meeting then drew a new list of constituencies in which its candidates would contest. The Committee also assessed the strength of other prospective partners of the electoral unity in various constituencies, which had been done on the basis of the discussions with them as well as its own study of the actual situation. Moreover, in addition to preparing the list of the constituencies in which the CPI(M) would contest, the Committee drew lists for other political parties indicating the constituencies in which they should contest. Because the Congress Party had already published the list of its candidates and mounted the electoral campaign, the meeting decided that the prepared lists would be sent to political parties for consideration and further negotiations.

These decisions of the State Committee of the CPI(M) terminated the period of preliminary negotiations during which the party had heard and assessed the claims of other parties. Reports appeared that the negotiations had already agreed on the allocation of 200 out of 280 seats, and that the final agreement would be concluded on October 16. These expectations received a serious blow with the publication of the decisions of the CPI(M) State Council, and then particularly on October 12

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when the partners of the electoral front received the lists allocating to them constituencies according to the assessment of their strength by the CPI(M).

The CPI (M) allocated the 280 seats of the state assembly in the following manner: CPI(M) 122; CPI 35; the Bangla Congress 34; the SSP 25; the Forward Bloc 20; the RSP 15; the SUC 7; the Lok Sevak Sangh 5; the Marxist Forward Bloc 3; the Workers' Party 2; the Gorkha League 2; the RCPI 1; and Independents 8.

Thus there was a virtual abyss between the mutual assessment of strength by the two Communist Parties: the CPI claimed for itself 52 seats and for the Bangla Congress 60 seats, while allocating to the CPI(M) 72 seats. The rival party claimed for itself 122 seats, allocating to the CPI 35 and the Bangla Congress 34.

The CPI responded to the proposals of its rival at the meeting of the State Council of the CPI, held in Calcutta from October 17 to 19, 1966. The decisions were announced to the press on October 19 by Bhowani Sen, Secretary of the State Council, and Somnath Lahiri, leader of the party in the state assembly. While the CPI expressed its concern over the slow pace of negotiations, drafting a joint election programme, and adjustment of seats among the parties of the left, the party would make every effort to save the prospects of co-operation of the opposition parties. Particularly regrettable was the fact that the CPI(M) had confronted these parties with its own list of constituencies to be contested by each party. This unilateral move had retarded the progress so far attained and created fresh complications. Such a list, obviously, can never be expected to serve as a basis of agreement. Moreover, the list was silent about the claims of the CPI(M) to the seats for the Lok Sabha, which might be even taller. In view of this, the State Council of the CPI was of the opinion that the talks on the assembly and the Lok Sabha seats must go on simultaneously, and an agreement must cover both. In this respect, the allocation of seats which had been suggested by the Bangla Congress on October 16 was much better and more realistic. The meeting of the State Council appreciated the Bangla Congress's attitude of drastically reducing its own claim for the sake of unity. Therefore, though Mukherjee's list has reduced our claim by nearly
55 per cent and also reduced its claim to Lok Sabha seats, the CPI could accept it with minor adjustments if all other parties accept it.  

The CPI(M) replied in a press statement of its State Committee issued on October 20, 1966, which refuted the charges of disrupting the negotiations and defended its claims. The statement said that as the major opposition party the CPI(M) could have claimed more than 122 seats but that it had abstained from doing so in the interests of electoral unity. However, both the CPI and the Bangla Congress were making claims which could not be justified. The prospects of electoral unity had really been disrupted by the mischievous statement of the CPI of October 19, which justified the proposal of the Bangla Congress which had allocated to the CPI(M) only 72 seats while claiming for the Bangla Congress 50 seats and the CPI 52 seats.  

The position of the negotiators of the CPI(M) in West Bengal further hardened as a result of the meeting of the Central Committee of the party, held in Narmahal, Punjab, from October 21 to 27, 1966, which called for a tough policy in dealing with the rival party. The committee approved the conduct of the negotiations in Kerala and West Bengal, and directed the State Committees to expedite the talks by concluding firm arrangements with other parties as early as possible. The names of candidates should be submitted to the Politbureau by November for approval and announcement.  

This line was reflected in the last meeting of the negotiators of the two parties, held in Calcutta on October 31, 1966. By that time the conflict of claims of the two parties had been reduced to 46 constituencies and, in order to eliminate it completely so that their candidates would not confront each other at the polls, the CPI proposed to withdraw its claim to 22 seats if the rival would withdraw from 24 seats. However, the representatives of the CPI(M) would not even consider the proposal and declared that it was no more necessary to continue the talks. The request not to terminate the talks was spurned. The final break between the two parties took place after the meeting of the State Secretariat of the CPI(M), held early in November, after which the CPI was informed over the telephone that the former would not attend any further talks.
After terminating the bi-lateral talks with the rival party the CPI(M) negotiators applied the hard line at the last meeting of the 13 opposition parties which conducted the multi-lateral negotiations in order to form an electoral front. The meeting was held in Calcutta on November 5, and was told that because there were so many parties involved in so many ties in the disputed constituencies it would be better to recognize the reality and give up the attempt. However, the CPI and other parties insisted upon continuation, and in order to find a solution to the impasse the meeting elected a team of three representatives of the SSP, the RSP and the Forward Bloc. However, the CPI(M) could not be moved and the final meeting of the 13 parties dissolved without an agreement on November 9, 1966.

The CPI considered this serious development at the meeting of its State Executive Committee on November 11, 1966, and decided to continue the efforts to build the united front with any party willing to co-operate. The party was willing to make further sacrifices and surrender further claims in the hope that reciprocal moves would follow from the CPI(M). However, the party would not be bullied and blackmailed.83

The CPI(M) took its final stand at the meeting of its State Committee, held in Calcutta from November 14 to 17, 1966. A resolution on General Elections and Electoral Unity said that the party had made many concessions for the sake of electoral unity, which had not been reciprocated by other parties, particularly the rival. Any further concessions to the CPI would be a surrender of strength, which in fact would only assist the Congress Party, because in many claimed constituencies the candidates of the CPI would surely be defeated by the Congress. There was a limit beyond which the CPI(M) could not go in accommodating its rival for the sake of unity, for under the guise of promoting unity with the CPI many seats would be in fact lost to the Congress.

There were also other considerations involved. First, the cooperation with the Bangla Congress would be of uncertain nature. This party had come into existence only recently, and so far it does not speak against the basic policies of the Congress Party and the central government. Its role in the mass struggle, and the mass following it could command, have to be yet tested in actual combat. Secondly, the relationship between the CPI
and the Bangla Congress was highly suspected. The programme of the CPI was revisionist and subservient to the bourgeoisie. The CPI sees "progressive" elements among the big bourgeois leadership of the Congress, and general line of its advance is predicated upon co-operation with this "progressive" group. Three, the CPI had been hostile and slandered the CPI(M), worse than the Home Minister, Nanda, when its leaders were in jail. Four, the Forward Bloc was a lukewarm ally; it had failed to join the mass struggles which had been organized by the left parties early in 1966, and had lost no opportunity in the past to attack the CPI(M).

In spite of all this the CPI(M), declared the meeting, had honestly hoped in co-operation with these parties. However, the claims put forth by the CPI and the Bangla Congress which aimed at isolating the CPI(M) had to be rejected. Considering all this the committee came to the conclusion that an electoral unity could not be reached, and therefore directed the State Secretariat to publish a list of all constituencies which the party would contest.

At the press conference which followed the meeting of the State Committee a list of candidates was released, which indicated that the party would contest 122 assembly seats by its own candidates and support 5 independents; the lists also named 3 candidates of the Forward Bloc (Marxist). The list contained the names of 20 of its candidates to contest the seats for the Lok Sabha, and 1 independent candidate to be supported by the party. The statement said that an additional list of independent candidates for assembly seats, to be supported by the party, would be released soon.64

After this announcement, events started to move rapidly to a climax by the statement of the State Committee of the CPI which published a list of candidates which the party would contest. The list indicated that the party would contest 55 assembly and 12 Lok Sabha seats.

A statement issued at the same time declared that the CPI had made a major effort to save the unity of the left forces and to that end had reduced its claim from 76 to 55 seats. Moreover, the party would not contest in any constituency in which a seat was at present occupied by a deputy of any opposition party. Regarding the list of the seats for the Lok Sabha, this included
19 constituencies, out of 20, because there had been practically no negotiations on this issue. Regarding the assembly seats, a complete agreement on the adjustment had been reached between the candidates of the CPI and the Bangla Congress, the Forward Bloc, the SUC, the RCPI, the Bolshevik Party and the Workers’ Party. However, the CPI would confront the RSP in one constituency and the SSP in another. The most significant aspect of the statement was the assessment that the area of conflict with the candidates of the CPI(M) had further been reduced to a straight fight in 27 constituencies. Direct struggle between the candidates of the two parties for the Lok Sabha seats would take place in 8 constituencies. The statement concluded that the last meeting of the State Council had directed the Secretariat to continue making efforts for left electoral unity.  

While the publication of two separate lists of candidates by the rival parties terminated all hopes in the possibility of their co-operation, both parties continued effort at salvaging as much as possible from the agreements on the adjustment of seats with other political parties. By this time, the bi-lateral and multi-lateral negotiation had substantially reduced the area of conflict between each Communist party and its principal allies, and while it had proved impossible to form one major electoral system prospects were good that two sub-systems could be created.

Initiative in this direction was taken by the CPI(M), which rallied seven parties of West Bengal around itself to form a new electoral alignment at a meeting on December 6, 1966. The parties attending the meeting were the original members of the United Left Front, which had been organizing the bandhs and other mass actions in West Bengal during 1966: the CPI(M), the SSP, the RSP, the Socialist Unity Centre (SUC), the Forward Bloc (Marxist), the Workers’ Party of India, and the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI). Although the CPI had also been a member of the United Left Front, said a statement issued after the meeting, this party would be kept away from the alignment because it had all along been sabotaging all attempts at an electoral unity by its exaggerated claims. Anyway, continued the statement, reports appeared which indicated that the CPI had already reached an agreement on the formation of its own alignment with the Bangla Congress and the Forward Bloc; the two latter parties had not been the constituents of the
United Left Front. Obviously, because of this, the alignment formed by the CPI would not be able to use the name of the Left United Front, and would have to go into the electoral battle under a different name.66

The seven parties issued a joint statement at a press conference held on December 8, 1966, in which they declared that they had decided to continue the United Left Front, which had fought the great mass struggles of February-March-April and September of the year, in order to form a left electoral alliance. They had further agreed to draft a joint programme for a United Left Government in West Bengal, should the front succeed in defeating the Congress at the polls. In the meantime each party of the electoral alliance would be free to approach the electorate on the basis of its own election manifesto and political programme.

A list of 191 assembly constituencies to be contested by the parties of the United Left Front, given out at the press conference, showed the following distribution: the CPI(M) 119; Independents supported by the CPI(M) 7; the RSP 19; the SSP 30; the SUC 9; the Forward Bloc (Marxist) 3; the Workers' Party of India 2; and the RCPI 2. Thus three parties (SUC, RCPI, the Workers' Party) had deserted the alignment with the CPI, and accepted the leadership of the CPI(M).

Regarding the 29 seats for the Lok Sabha which the United Left Front would contest, the distribution was the following: CPI(M) 16; Independents supported by the CPI(M) 2; the RSP 2; the SSP 7; and the SUC 2.

The spokesman for the front said that the list indicated that the adjustment of the seats to be contested by the front covered only 191 constituencies out of the total of 280. The rest, 89, would not be contested by the front because these had been pre-empted by other parties during the multi-lateral negotiations. The decision not to contest these seats was the best evidence that the parties of the front would honour the commitments they had made during the negotiations. The spokesman further said that should the Congress be defeated, all other opposition parties would be invited to participate in the formation of a new government; a joint minimum programme for such a government would be prepared.67

In the meantime, the CPI and the Bangla Congress had com-
pleted their own alignment, to be known as the People's United Left Front (PULF), and announced on December 12 that the front would contest 180 parliamentary and 25 Lok Sabha seats, to be distributed as follows: the Bangla Congress 78; the CPI 54; the Forward Bloc 37; the Bolshevik Party 4 and Independents 7. The distribution of the seats to be contested showed the eagerness of the CPI to preserve its alignment with the Bangla Congress at all cost, and its willingness to offer concessions and accept a subordinate status to that end.

The rival united front, the ULF, took a very strong exception to the list of candidates of the PULF charging it with enlarging the area of conflict by wanting to contest in constituencies which had not been claimed by the four parties of the PULF during the negotiations, and which in fact had been conceded to other parties. On October 15 the CPI, the Bangla Congress and the Forward Bloc had claimed only 146 seats, while by December 12 they had enlarged the area of conflict to 180 constituencies. The statement of the ULF said further that so far the parties of the ULF had restrained themselves to the positions which had been agreed upon during the negotiations, but in view of the determination of the rival front to enlarge the area of conflict the parties of the ULF would have to consider suitable adjustments to protect themselves against the violations of their right. The statement said that although the CPI(M) could have contested in 167 constituencies, the party decided to contest only in 122, leaving 45 to other parties. This now, in view of the recent developments, would have to be reconsidered.68

Thus at the end of 1966 the area of conflict between the two rival fronts in West Bengal widened, mainly due to the escalation initiated by the PULF, which on January 15, 1967 announced a new list claiming to contest 184 assembly and 25 Lok Sabha constituencies. The list also said that the two fronts confronted each other in 105 assembly and 18 Lok Sabha constituencies.69

In its final assessment of the electoral prospects the CPI was highly optimistic, predicting the defeat of the Congress. This assessment was based upon the estimates of the Congressmen themselves; the pessimists expected that their party could get hardly 60-70 out of 280 assembly seats, while the optimists expected it to win some 110 seats.

The leaders of the CPI believed that in spite of the fact that
the two left fronts would confront themselves at the polls, the Congress could be defeated if two conditions were observed. First, the area of conflict between the two fronts must not be enlarged. The mutual contests must be frozen and confined to the constituencies as originally announced by the two fronts. If the number of such direct fights were further reduced at this late hour, the Congress would suffer even greater losses. Second, in the constituencies in which there would be only one candidate of either the PULF or the ULF, both fronts must join hands and support him. About 189 out of 280 constituencies would have only one candidate of either left front, and the straight fight would be between him and a candidate of the Congress, but only if the original lists were observed.70

Thus in spite of the division of the left ranks, prospects were good on the eve of the elections that the Congress Party could be defeated by a co-ordinated attack of the two electoral alignments. After a protracted bargaining the two Communist parties went to the polls at the head of their own alignments to decide the question of the hegemony over the Communist movement in West Bengal. Both of them remained faithful to the general line of advance as defined by their VII Congresses in 1964, which for the CPI had placed emphasis upon co-operation with the Congress and for the rival party with the leftist elements.

One Front in Kerala

In Kerala both Communist parties exhibited the most advanced type of mutual relationship which resulted in the formation of one united front to contest the general elections.

Two main factors were responsible for this development. One, in Kerala the struggle for the hegemony of the Communist movement had been fought in the 1965 by-elections and decisively won by the CPI (M). In view of this, the rival party had to reconcile itself to playing a subordinate role and accept the general leadership of the CPI (M) in united front matters. Second, the Muslim League fundamentally changed its attitude toward the Communist parties and adopted a policy permitting a direct entry into any electoral alliances with them.

The negotiations for a united front in Kerala were initiated quite early, being preceded by co-operation of the two parties
in a series of mass actions organized during 1965. In order to break the political stalemate in Kerala following the imposition of Presidential Rule upon the state in 1965, and to touch-off the mass movement, the CPI organized a *padayatra* across the state. This gathered a tremendous momentum and culminated in a mass *satyagraha* before the State Secretariat in Trivandrum and government buildings in district capitals of the state in July-August 1965.

In July 1965 the left parties met in Quilon and established a Samara Samiti, or a Committee for Joint Struggle, which consisted of representatives of the following parties and groups: the CPI(M), the CPI, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), the Karshaka Thozhilali Party (Peasants' and Workers' Party), the All-India Trade Union Congress, the United Trade Union Congress, the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, and the Kerala Kisan Sangham.\(^7\)

The object of the Samara Samiti was to organize mass actions on various issues: shortage of food, release of political prisoners, ending of Presidential Rule, and others. However, the most important task was to organize bandhs demanding a rapid improvement in the supply of foodstuffs. To that end, the Samara Samiti called for a general strike and hartal in the state, to be held on September 28, 1965. While vigorous preparations were being made, the war with Pakistan broke out on September 1, and in view of this the agitation was switched in the direction of defence preparations, the general strike was cancelled, and instead a big demonstration was held on September 28 in defence of India and against Pakistan.

While after the cease-fire the situation returned to normal, a new impetus to the activities of the Samara Samiti was given by the announcement of the Government of Kerala, on January 9, 1966, that the supply of foodstuffs would be reduced from the existing ration of 160 grammes of rice and 160 grammes of wheat per day per adult to the same quantity of wheat but to 120 grammes of rice. As a result, a great wave of indignation and unrest swept the state. In view of this new situation the Samara Samiti met again on January 18, 1966 and decided to call a general strike on February 1. While the Samiti met on January 18 in Trivandrum, a Co-ordinating Committee of Trade Unions met in Cochin on the same day, representing some 40
unions in the Cochin-Ernakulam-Alwaye area, and called for a general strike on the issue of the reduction of food supplies on February 3.

The temper of the people was so high that even the Congress Party could not remain idle and on January 22 a meeting of its Executive Committee, held in Alwaye, called for a protest week from January 27, one day state-wide hartal, and in addition sent a strong delegation to the Jaipur Session of the Congress High Command to demand remedies. While the meeting in Alwaye had not fixed the date for the hartal, the President was authorized to fix such a date after consulting with other political parties. This was an unprecedented decision of the Congress Party, which was now prepared to take a strong anti-government stand in co-operation with the leftist parties and other organizations. These hoped that there was a good possibility that the joint action would strain the loyalties of many Congressmen who, as a result, would be amiable to further co-operation with the leftist parties even on issues affecting the forthcoming elections.

The decisions of the trade unions and the Congress Party paved the way for a joint meeting of all parties and organizations, which decided to hold a Kerala Bandh on January 28, after the former two had adjusted their plans to the new date. It is true that in the end the Congress Party and the Samiti could not form a united action council for conducting the joint struggle; nevertheless, separate calls were issued for joint action. The only party which did not participate officially in the preparations for the Kerala Bandh was the Kerala Congress, the organization of dissident Congressmen, who had separated themselves after the disciplinary action against them in the aftermath of the fall of Sankar’s ministry.

The Kerala Bandh was a great success, although in the following days it degenerated into violence, lawlessness and street fighting in which the police and government authorities took a strong stand. Another issue which further cemented the ties among the groups participating in these struggles, particularly of the left parties, was the mass action which the Samara Samiti organized in support of the general strike of some 36,000 plantation workers in April. There was also a strike of government employees which drew support from the Samiti. It was also this
unity of the left forces, forged in the course of mass actions, which gave an unprecedented sweep to the demonstrations organized against Mrs. Indira Gandhi while attending the Cochin meeting of the Congress High Command on September 23, 1965.

It was the CPI who first appreciated that the unity of action attained under the sponsorship of the Samara Samiti should be promoted into political co-operation to pave the way for an electoral united front. The State Council of the party dealt with this matter at a meeting held in Ernakulam from March 21 to 22, 1966. The meeting discussed the electoral prospects for 1967 and concluded that a joint front should be formed of all left parties and individuals, on the basis of a minimum democratic programme, well ahead of time. It was the view of the CPI that only those parties and individuals who participated in the Samara Samiti should be the constituents of such a front. Such parties as the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League should not be admitted into the front. The meeting appointed a 5-member committee to open negotiations with other parties and report back.72

A similar position was adopted by the two-day session of the State Council of the CPI, held in Trivandrum in the last week of April. The meeting declared that "our party does not conceive the need and necessity for an alliance either with the Kerala Congress or the Muslim League". However, said the resolution, from the declarations of the CPI(M) and the SSP it appears that both these parties think differently. Both follow an identical policy which does not attach importance to the united front of the left parties. Their main line is to seek ways, understanding and alliances, even with the "non-Congress reactionary parties".73

Soon, however, this position of the CPI was untenable, and had to be abandoned. The reason was that the next main event, which added a new dimension to prospect for a united electoral front, was the new attitude which the Muslim League assumed toward the co-operation with both Communist parties. The Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League adopted on April 30, 1966 a resolution which stated that the League would have no truck with the Congress Party in any form, and that it was prepared to co-operate with all non-Congress oppo-
sition parties, including the Communists, on the basis of a minimum programme in order to set up non-Congress governments wherever possible in the next elections.

The leadership of the CPI welcomed this new posture of the Muslim League and evaluated its meaning in terms of the formation of a united electoral front at the meeting of its Executive Committee, held in Trivandrum from May 31 to June 1, 1966. The adopted resolution first settled some old accounts with the League. It said that leaders of the Congress Party, and even ministers of the central government, had been active in Kerala in order to win back the Muslim League for co-operation in the next elections. However, it was true that in the past the Muslim League leaders had never expressed willingness to co-operate with the left parties on a minimum programme in order to defeat the Congress and form an alternative government. Moreover, they would not even tolerate or support a government of the left parties. In fact, in the past they had supported and saved the Congress Party in critical and crucial situations in spite of the covert or overt understanding which they had with other parties, including the left parties. In spite of this, the change of the attitude of the Muslim League must be welcomed because it opened up and increased the possibility of defeating the Congress and forming a non-Congress government in Kerala. The Executive Committee proposed that the opposition parties should get together as soon as possible to open negotiations and that the minimum programme which had been evolved in the elections of 1965 should serve as a basis for talks.74

This was a significant departure from the policies adopted by the State Council of the CPI on March 22, 1966, which excluded the possibility of the Muslim League participating in the united front. There was a great residue of hostility between the two parties mainly due to the fact that the CPI had followed the lead of the Congress Party on this issue and treated the Muslim League as a reactionary and communal organization. The CPI(M) had adopted a more flexible posture and co-operated with the League's dissenter in the elections of 1965; in fact, the negotiations between the two Communist parties for a united front had been wrecked precisely over the "sectarian" position of the CPI toward the League at that time.

The change in the attitude of the CPI toward the Muslim
League offered a welcome opportunity for the rival party to settle some old scores. The CPI was taken to task by Namboodiripad who commented with a great sense of satisfaction on June 11, 1966 that the "revisionists" had completely reversed their attitude to the League and openly welcomed its participation in a democratic front in order to contest jointly the coming elections. The revisionists, said Namboodiripad, had at the time of the 1965 mid-term elections broken the united front of the left parties on the ground that the CPI(M) in some constituencies had adjustments with the League. They could not tolerate the setting up of a few independent candidates acceptable to the CPI(M) and the League. Calling this "an opportunistic compromise with a communal-reactionary party", the CPI had decided to terminate the negotiations for co-operation with the CPI(M).

While in 1965 the CPI and other left parties had rejected a full-fledged alliance with the Muslim League, to be founded on the basis of a common programme, but permitted the individual parties to conclude electoral adjustments in individual constituencies with the League, this policy would be no more viable for the next elections, said Namboodiripad. In fact, the need for change had been discussed by the State Committee of the CPI(M) in January 1966, when a decision had been made that even the non-left parties, including the Muslim League, should be eligible for participation in the electoral front. Namboodiripad then reviewed the past policies of the two rival parties toward the Muslim League and concluded that his own party had a much better and accurate understanding of the evolution of the present posture of the League; in fact, the CPI (M) had anticipated such a trend as inevitable.75

Having defined their positions on the question of electoral strategy, the political parties entered into bi-lateral and multi-lateral talks which were concluded at a session of their representatives held in Ernakulam from September 16 to 17, 1966. The meeting agreed upon a minimum programme on the basis of which the administration of the state would be carried out by the non-Congress government, to be formed by the united front of the opposition parties. The document was entitled the Guiding Lines of Policy for Non-Congress Government (Appendix II), and it was signed by the CPI(M), the CPI, the
SSP, the RSP, KSP, the Karshaka Thozhilali Party and the Muslim League. In framing this minimum programme, to serve as a basis for the formation of a united front, a good use was made of the minimum programme which had been drafted for the mid-term elections of 1965. To test the strength of this alliance a mass demonstration was organized in Cochin and Ernakulam on September 23, 1966 against the meeting of the Congress Party High Command and in demanding a second shipyard for Cochin.

While in Andhra and West Bengal the main stumbling bloc to electoral unity had been the intensive competition of the two rival parties and their inability to agree upon the mutual assessment of strength and the allocation of seats, Kerala did not have this problem. The reason was that the problem of the relative strength of the two parties had been settled in the 1965 elections overwhelmingly in favour of the CPI(M), and that during the negotiations in 1966 the CPI(M) insisted that the electoral returns should serve as a basis for the allocation of seats to the parties of the front.

However, during the negotiations the CPI had repeatedly pointed out that it was wrong to take the 1965 elections as a yardstick, because this would deny even one seat to the party in three districts of Malabar: Cannanore, Kozhikode, and Palghat. The elections in these three districts had been fought under exceptionally difficult and complex circumstances, under which the CPI had to fight singlehanded the combined strength of the CPI(M), the Muslim League and the SSP, and therefore had suffered heavy losses. Now the situation was changed and the party should be allocated some seats there.

The CPI(M) argued, on the other hand, that the rival party had foolishly challenged the CPI(M) through an open and fratricidal combat, and had lost either to the CPI(M) or its allies in those districts. The verdict of the electorate must be observed. Moreover, the CPI(M) as the largest party dominated the negotiations and with the assistance of its allies from the 1965 days, the SSP and the RSP, isolated the CPI, who all agreed with the stand of the CPI(M).

There was no course open for the CPI but to accept a subordinate position, although it was a painful process.
The situation today is changed radically. And therefore this yardstick should be discarded. But, unfortunately, the other parties also agreed with the 'Marxists' that the 1965 results should be the basis because it helped to inflate the strength of all three of them. Finally the allocations of seats took place on that wrong premise and we had to accept it for the sake of the supreme need of the hour—unity.

There is no gainsaying the fact that this allocation of seats, resulting in the effacing of the CPI from the three districts of Kerala, has caused considerable heartburning among our party members and our mass following. But the delegation which took part in the negotiations accepted this allocation and thus carried out the mandate of the State Council of our Party that on no ground should we be a party to, or be responsible for, endlessly dragging and prolonging the allocation of seats.76

The dominant position which the CPI(M) enjoyed, and the isolation of the rival party, thus paved the way for relatively smooth negotiations on the allocation of seats, which needed only two sessions. On November 20, 1966 an agreement was reached to the effect that the united front would contest all 133 parliamentary and all 19 Lok Sabha seats, and on the allocation of almost all constituencies to the seven parties of the front. Only two constituencies for the Lok Sabha remained to be settled among the CPI(M), the SSP and the Muslim League.

The two disputed constituencies were resolved at the next meeting of the seven parties, held in Calicut from December 7 to 8, 1966. A statement issued indicated the following line up for the assembly seats: the CPI(M) 61; the CPI 24; the SSP 23; the Muslim League 15; the RSP 6; the KTP 3; and the KSP 1. The following was the distribution of constituencies to be contested for the Lok Sabha: the CPI(M) 9; the CPI 3; the SSP 3; the Muslim League 2; the RSP 1; and the KTP 1.

The statement further said that the seven parties had agreed to differ on ideological issues and certain national and international questions. However, they had agreed to co-operate on the defeat of the Congress, and the setting up of their government. All differences and ideological questions must be subordinated to this supreme need. Moreover, the seven parties of the united
front further agreed to set up a 12-member co-ordinating committee for the joint conduct of the elections. The committee would meet on December 15 to chalk out the campaign.77

While the negotiations for the united front appeared on the surface to be an integrative process, they had serious divisive by-products. The reason is that the dominant leaderships of the constituent parties had committed them to the united front against a strong opposition of vocal minority faction, which in many cases split away and established themselves as separate political entities. The leaders of these groups feared that once their parties entered the united front with the Communists and their government, they would be increasingly drawn into their orbits and go ultimately to pieces, because “the history of all such fronts has shown that the Communists succeeded in splitting these parties and absorbing them piecemeal”.78 These leaders opposed the entry of their parties into the “unholy alliance” with the Communists for the sake of “getting a share of power”. All five non-Communist parties of the united front—the Muslim League, the SSP, the RSP, the KSP, and the KTP—split over the issue.

The Muslim League was first to crack. The fissure, long simmering, came to a head on February 16, 1966, when K. K. Sathakathulla Moulvi, President of the Kerala Jamayat-ul-Ulema, at a public meeting in Calicut, called upon the Muslims to vote for the Congress Party. He said that in 1960 the President of the Kerala State Muslim League, Syed Abdur Rahiman Baffaki Thangal, had himself introduced a resolution at the meeting of the Kerala Jamayat-ul-Ulema, which appealed to the Muslims not to vote for the Communists. He was surprised now that he would change his attitude and lead the Muslim League into the alliance with the left front and the Communists. Another prominent leader, K. Mohammad Naha, who had been leading the League in Malabar for thirty years, had resigned from it in protest over the alliance with the left front. At the same meeting he appealed to the members of the League to vote for the Congress Party to save religious freedom and democracy.

A virtual rebellion broke out at the meeting of the Muslim League, held in Calicut on January 8, 1967, at which the dissenters attacked “this cursed alliance with the Communists”.79 The split in the League posed a serious threat to the united
front, and it was expected that in 8 constituencies a substantial number of voters would cast their ballot for the Congress Party. In some constituencies, like in Kunnamangalam, the united front committees collapsed, and some dissenters would contest on the ticket of Samastha Kerala Muslim League.

While one section of the Muslim community was urged to vote for the Congress Party, another section was exhorted to vote for the Samastha Kerala Muslim League, which had split away from the League in 1956. The party, under the leadership of P.M.A. Fangal, campaigned under the slogan that while the League in the past had sustained itself by rallying the Muslims by crying that Islam was in danger, now it entered the road of self-liquidation through its co-operation with the left front, particularly the Communists. The party mobilized Muslim scholars and religious leaders who preached that the co-operation of the League with the Communists was a deadly sin because their atheism was against the basic tenets of Islam. In order to demonstrate that the League entered upon the road of self-liquidation they pointed out that while in the 1956 elections the CPI(M) had merely split the League by supporting its rebellious left wing to contest against the parental organization, in 1967 they enticed it completely in their scheme. At this rate, the League would not last long as an independent organization as it would be increasingly manipulated by the Communists, ultimately to be reduced to their tool. The party was active in Malabar, particularly in the districts of Calicut and Cannanore. The party contested six seats: 5 seats in Malabar and 1 seat in Mattancherry, Ernakulam District.

The Kerala Socialist Party (KSP) was the second member of the united front which split on the eve of the elections. The dissenters were led by two founder-members of that party, A. P. Pillai and K. Sadananda Sastry. Their followers denounced the leadership of the party for taking it into the alliance with the Communists. The opposition was particularly strong in Chalakudy and Calicut. Apart from this difference in principle, the KSP was also strained over the allocation of seats and reports were rampant that it might leave left front. The dispute was over the KSP candidate in the Marai constituency, Cannanore District, where the existing seat was occupied by the CPI(M) and where the KSP was rather weak. The local CPI(M) refused
to surrender that constituency, and Namboodiripad suggested that the KSP candidate should contest as an independent. The KSP refused and argued that in such a case the party would leave the front, as that constituency was the only seat contested, after which the CPI(M) yielded.\textsuperscript{80}

In the meantime, the party rebels established a rival organization called that Central Secretariat of the Kerala Socialist Party, which at its meeting in Trivandrum on February 16, 1967 adopted a resolution which exhorted members to “rise to the occasion and work for the success of the Congress Party in the coming elections for safeguarding the interests of the country”.\textsuperscript{81} The resolution severely attacked the CPI(M) for its pro-China policies.

"The third member of the front in trouble on the eve of the elections was the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP). The Ernakulam District Organising Committee decided on February 16, 1967 to dissolve itself in protest against the party’s Central Committee’s decision to join the "reactionary forces of seven party United Front for the sake of a few Assembly seats and a membership of Parliament". The meeting also decided that the party members in the district should carry on their political activity under the name of the Socialist Workers’ Party, which was the affiliate of Trotsky’s Fourth International".\textsuperscript{82}

The rebellion within the fourth partner of the front, the Karshaka Thozhilali Party, broke out in Trichur in December 1966 when some 75 party members held a protest meeting and expressed their want of confidence in the leadership which took their party into the alliance with the Communists.\textsuperscript{83}

The fifth member of the front, the SSP, had trouble in Parur Constituency, Ernakulam District, where a score of members was expelled from the party for challenging the policy of the united front with the Communists. The dissenters decided to campaign for an independent candidate against the official candidate of the SSP. Another source of internal tension within the SSP was the conflict with other partners of the front over the allocation of seats, in Koothuparamba constituency in North Malabar, and in some constituencies of Trivandrum District.\textsuperscript{84}

The approaching elections strained even the largest partner of the united front, the CPI(M), which was plunged into an intensive internal power struggle in December 1966, in which three
wings contested for control. The internal conflict, long dormant, was exacerbated by the dispute over the selection of candidates to run on the party's ticket in the next elections. At the root of the conflict was the disciplinary action against some 15 leaders, which had been recommended by the Disciplinary Commission of the party over their conduct in Trivandrum Central Jail at the time of the Indo-Pakistan war in the fall of 1965. Some of them were found guilty of supporting India's war effort by donating blood and money, while others were guilty of the violation of the party's discipline by bringing into the open an inner-party controversy over India's relations with China and Pakistan. These leaders were considered right-wing, came from Trivandrum, Quilon and Alleppey districts, and the commission had recommended that some of them should be expelled, some suspended, while others warned.

The issue came to a head in the middle of December 1966, when the left extremists, in order to win control over the party, demanded that the decisions of the Commission be carried out and the right-wing leaders purged. Although the extremists were opposed to the current parliamentary strategy and advocated openly revolution as the only means to attain the goals of the party, the elimination of the right-wing elements from the controlling posts by denying them candidacy would greatly strengthen their own hand over the apparatus. The moderate centrist elements would be then at their mercy. The leftists made a bid in the State Committee of the party to have the disciplinary decisions carried out, which in turn would have meant that none of the punished men could contest, and outvoted the moderates who wanted to postpone the execution. After the meeting it appeared that the State Committee would not endorse their candidacy.

However, the affected men decided to appeal over the heads of the State Committee to their own District Committees in order to fight it out. Most members, hit by this decision belonged to Trivandrum and Alleppey districts, and the more prominent among them were K. Anirudhan from Trivandrum District, and V. S. Achuthanandan from Alleppey District. In Trivandrum, the committee was convened to meet on December 26, where Anirudhan would attempt to win the endorsement of his candidacy against the decision of the State Committee. The
result was not, however, certain as the rival factions commanded about an equal strength. Within the Alleppey District Committee the situation was different, because the group led by Achuthanandan was stronger and would certainly support him against the State Committee.

The crisis was about to split the party, when a solution was found during the last day of the meeting of the State Council, held in Tellicherry from December 21 to 25, 1966. The meeting passed a disciplinary resolution against the erring members and thus satisfied and gave effect to the standing order of the Politbureau that they should be punished. But to prevent the escalation of the internal conflict the meeting decided, following the adopting of the disciplinary resolution, that even the punished members would be permitted to contest in the constituencies in which they had contested in 1965.85

While an open split was averted for the moment, further polarization took place. First, two former party members who had been expelled from the party for similar offences some time before, V. A. Kurian and P. Stanley, had formed a new Centralist Communist Party, which became very active in the high ranges of Kottayam District.86

However, a more serious was the polarization on the left of those dissenters who would not agree with the current united front policy of the party, and who established an underground organization of the Maoists. On February 14, 1967, a printed wall newspaper, the Kerala Red Guard, appeared on the walls in different parts of Trivandrum. The Malayalam text printed in red and headlined "Throw Out the Revisionists", contained a virulent attack against Namboodiripad, calling him "an agent of the bourgeoisie, rich peasants and decadent reactionaries". The paper attacked the party for following the policy of the united front, and accused Namboodiripad of being in alliance with "the reactionary and revisionist Dangeists, corrupt and anti-socialist Samyukta Socialist Party and fanatic Muslim League". The paper listed several names of the CPI(M) leaders from Kerala as real revolutionaries, and concluded that "the working class can never hope to capture absolute power except through armed revolution".87

Another important development on the eve of the elections was the decision of the CPI(M) to organize a "volunteer corps", 389
in order to meet any emergency which the government of the united front might face as soon as placed in power. The leaders of the CPI (M) feared that the opposition parties might not take lightly the victory of the united front, and attempts might be made to depose its government by a liberation struggle as in 1959. The plan for such a force was discussed at the meeting of the CPI(M) leaders in Channur, Alleppey District, on February 3, 1967. The meeting decided that such a force should be organized all over the state, and its purpose would be to prevent, and resist, any attempts at the formation of another Vimo-chana Samaram, or the liberation struggle, once the government of the united front were installed. As a fore-runner of the corps the meeting decided to recruit volunteers to keep vigil near the polling stations. They should be in a position to rush to assist any party worker should there be a need. Should an emergency arise, they would take action in defence of the interests of the party, and according to directions which would be issued to them.⁸⁸

The rival party responded immediately and decided to organize its own militia. A circular issued by the State Council of the CPI and addressed to the district committees said that the CPI(M) was planning to form a volunteer corps, similar to the Red Guards of China, which would be used against the central government as well as the CPI. In view of this, said the circular, "this move has to be resisted as the Marxists consider us to be the greatest enemy in the United Front and they are likely to play foul with us. We must also have a secret organization to counteract it".⁸⁹ The circular further said that the State Council would be informing the District Committees about the nature of the organization to be set up by the party. Moreover, the two parties were divided over the internal and international approach. Unless the party leaders understood this well and adopted "an effective line of action like the Marxists, we will become extinct after the elections". It was expected that the CPI(M) would experience a serious split of its membership after the elections, and that defections would be mounting. However, the CPI should not expect the dissenters to join its ranks immediately; they would need to be organized on an intermediate platform, and for the purpose the existing "unity center", func-
tioning in Devicolam, and set up by a group of dissenters, would be useful.

On the other side of the political spectrum, the PSP hoped that it would improve its position. Prem Bhasin, General Secretary of the party, said in Coimbatore on December 20, 1966 that in spite of the two splits of his party since 1962, it still had to play a definite role on the political map of India, because of its distinct ideology and spirit of self-reliance. On this basis, hoped Bhasin, the party would make further progress. He did not place much hope into the efforts of building an anti-Congress front in Kerala, for such effort to him appeared more artificial than real. Instead, he wanted the opposition parties of the united front to co-operate on avoiding multi-angular contests, not to help the Congress Party. In Kerala the PSP would contest from 15 to 20 seats, and no Lok Sabha constituency. However, some electoral adjustments would be made with the Kerala Congress; there would be no co-operation at all with the United Left Front and its constituent parties.90

The Congress Party itself was very optimistic about its chances in the coming elections. General Secretary of the party, K. M. Chandy, told the press on February 5, 1967 that there was a big swing toward his party evident among the Christians in Travancore. This was noticeable particularly among the Marthomites and Jacobite Syrian Christians. The reason for this swing was the support which his party had received from the church hierarchy. Bishops of Kottayam, Palai, and Trivandrum, and the Archbishop of Trivandrum, Ernakulam and Varapuzha, had openly indicated their support for the Congress Party. However, some other church leaders adopted an ambiguous position because of the difficulties which they had with the opponents of the Congress Party in their dioceses. Regarding the prospects of the rival Kerala Congress Party, Chandy said that he suspected that an understanding existed between that party and the CPI(M). He rated very low the chances of the Kerala Congress, and said that in the meantime it had been reduced in strength even in those constituencies in which it had won in 1965. He said that the main factor responsible for this development was the shift in the support of the Nair Service Society away from the Kerala Congress to his party, as a result of the appeal of Mannath Padmanabhan calling upon its members to vote for
the Congress in the interest of political stability and democracy in the state. He said that he was hopeful that his party would win back from the Kerala Congress most of the 24 seats which that party had won in 1965, and the 15 seats it had lost to the Communists in 1965 because of the then split vote. The position of his party had been improving, particularly in Malabar. It was hoped that the party would win there in at least 15 constituencies, which it had lost in 1965 by a margin of less than 2,000 votes.\(^{91}\)

The leadership of the Kerala Congress was well aware that an open confrontation between the two Congress parties, which had such a disastrous result upon their returns in 1965, must be avoided in 1967, and that they should have at least an electoral adjustment if not a common front with the Muslim League and the PSP. In order to explore the possibility of cooperation between the two parties K. M. George, President of the Kerala Congress, met Mrs. Indira Gandhi in Shastrinagar on September 26, 1966, at his own request. He explained to the Prime Minister that without a democratic alliance between the Congress Party, the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League, “democracy cannot be saved in Kerala and the Communists defeated”.\(^{92}\) The Prime Minister was cool to the proposal and reiterated that her party would not change its previous decision that it would have no alliance with the Kerala Congress. In view of this, and also because the Muslim League had joined the united front of the left parties, the attempts of the Kerala Congress at a democratic alliance were frustrated. However, the party would have some adjustments with the PSP and the Swatantra Party.

The assessment of the electoral prospects of the Kerala Congress was made by K. M. George, who spoke to the press in Palai on February 5, 1967. He insisted that his party would not only retain the seats it had won in 1965, but would win another 15 seats. In view of this he was confident that there would be a democratic government in Kerala, that the united front had no chance of winning and that Kerala would never again be ruled by a government headed by Namboodiripad.\(^{93}\)

An attempt to avoid a fratricidal war between the two Congress parties was made by the establishment of a “Save Democracy Front”, under the aegis of the Bishop of Quilon in order to consolidate the democratic Christian vote against the United Left
A statement issued by this organization in Quilon advised the people not to split the democratic votes and cast their ballots in support of only those Congress or Kerala Congress candidates who had maximum winning chances. A similar statement had been issued by four bishops of the Catholic Church in Quilon, Alleppey, Cochin, and Trichur. Their statement was interpreting the position of Valerian Cardinal Gracias, which had been released by the Bishop's Conclave held at Agra. The statement of the 4 bishops in Kerala did not specify either the Congress or the Kerala Congress by name, nor the constituencies in which the candidates of either party had better winning chances. However, the "Save Democracy Front" had analyzed the areas of strength of the two parties according to the return of 1965. Based upon this data a conclusion was made that the Congress Party had better chances in 36 constituencies, and the rival party in 25. The statements of the "Save Democracy Front" and of the 4 bishops were widely publicized by the local offices of the Kerala Congress. However, in spite of these efforts to prevent the split of votes between the two parties no unity in the Christian community could be attained because, as has been mentioned, the following church leaders had called for an outright support of the Congress Party: Bishops of Palai, Trivandrum, Kottayam, Ernakulam and Verapoly.

However, just one week before the polls reports emanating from the leadership of both parties indicated that some kind of an unwritten détente might be worked out between them to avoid a direct confrontation and thus to minimize the chances of the left front to grow at their expense.

An important assessment of the shift in the balance of communal forces was made by some leaders of the Kerala Congress, who realistically admitted that their party would lose some votes due to the appeal of Mannath Padmanabhan to the Nairs to switch their support from the Kerala Congress to the Congress Party. However, given the communal nature of political process in Kerala the net gain of this shift in favour of the Congress was uncertain because the Nairs would drive away from that party the Ezhavas, who had shifted their support in 1965 from the Communists, and who would now return and vote for the Communists.65

Apart from the leaders of the political parties, who optimisti-
cally flexed their muscles, the man in the street was in general pessimistic about the possibility of any new government, whether of the Congress Party or the United Left Front, to solve the main problem of the state: the chronic shortage of food. As one observer said, hardly any section of the population in Kerala, where almost every educated person reads a newspaper, expected that the Communists, if returned to power, could really improve the supply of food. Even the less educated, the farmers, wondered from where any new government could bring food into the state, which needed every year some 50 per cent of foodstuffs to be supplied by other states. In view of this, the attacks of the Communists upon the Congress and the government that they had failed to solve the food crisis in the last 20 years since independence, stirred no emotions. This type of propaganda was further deflected by the electoral campaign of the Union Minister of State for Food and Agriculture, P. Govinda Menon, who pointed out that “even 50 years after the revolution the Soviet Union is still short of food and has to buy it from the Western countries”. All Communist systems failed to solve their food problems.96

Even Namboodiripad was sober about the possibility of his government, if elected, to do much about the food problem. Addressing a public meeting in Nilambur on January 30, 1967, he said that such a government would not be able to solve the food shortage because Kerala depended upon other states and the centre for the supply of foodstuffs.97 Only if Kerala followed a policy of independence from the centre would it be possible to solve the food shortage. This was for the first time that he mentioned publicly the possibility of an independent Kerala, although the topic had been discussed in the state for some time. The argument was that Kerala, as the biggest foreign exchange earner of India, could support its independent posture by these earnings, which at the moment were being used by the central government with no special benefit to Kerala. Food could be purchased for the hard currency earned in Kerala.

All other parties of the united front were sober about the possibility of breaking through the inertia and launch Kerala upon a course of vigorous growth. The minimum programme of the united front, which was not much different from the programme of the Congress Party, was the best indication of this
general helplessness. Thus the elections were not fought over two imaginative programmes of alternative courses of action—the campaign was uninspiring and dull—but over the spoils of power and in brutal Hobbesian terms. In this context the power-machine, built by Namboodiripad specially for the purpose, had not only a better but in fact an unprecedented chance to make a short work of the divided forces opposing it. The stunning success of the front proved all assessments wrong within days, and surpassed by 13 seats even Gopalan’s most optimistic expectation that the United Left Front would win in 100 constituencies out of 133.

If such a power-machine could be built in other states of India, Namboodiripad was confident “of a non-Congress Government at the Centre after the 1972 elections.”

NOTES

5 Loc. cit.
6 Loc. cit.
9 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
10 Loc. cit.
11 Loc. cit.
13 Loc. cit.
14 Ibid., p. 11.
15 Ibid., p. 13.
18 Ibid., pp. 2, 12.
20 Loc. cit.

The change in the Soviet attitude toward India was evident during the visit of Premier Mrs. Gandhi to Moscow in July 1966. The Kremlin leaders played down the reception for her, compared with the treatment her father had received some 11 years before. During the talks with Kosygin, there was some anxiety over reported supply of arms to Pakistan by the Soviet Union and the decline of Moscow's support on Kashmir. Mrs. Gandhi reciprocated by refusing to condemn the Americans over Vietnam in the joint communiqué. "Soviet Appreciation of India's Policy", *The Hindu*, July 27, 1966.


23 *Loc. cit.*


26 *Loc. cit.*

27 *Loc. cit.*

28 *Loc. cit.*


32 *Loc. cit.*

33 *Loc. cit.*

34 *Loc. cit.*


38 *Loc. cit.*


46 *Loc. cit.*


49 *Loc. cit.*


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79 The Hindu, January 18; February 15, 18, 1967.
81 The Hindu, February 18, 1967.
82 Ibid.
84 The Hindu, February 15, 1967.
85 The Hindu, December 18, 27, 28, 1966; February 14, 16, 1967.
86 The Hindu, December 27, 1966.
87 The Hindu, February 16, 1967.
89 The Hindu, February 16, 1967.
90 The Hindu, December 21, 1966.
91 The Hindu, February 7, 1967.
92 The Hindu, September 26, 1966.
93 The Hindu, February 17, 1967.
94 The Hindu, February 16, 1967.
95 The Hindu, February 15, 1967.
96 The Hindu, February 14, 1967.
97 The Hindu, February 1, 1967.
98 Ibid.
CHAPTER XI

FOURTH GENERAL ELECTIONS: 1967

Era of Coalitions Begins

The Fourth General Elections, held in India from February 15 to 28, 1967, were the test of strength for political parties operating in the largest and most complex system of parliamentary democracy in the world. The magnitude of the problem is evident from the fact that over 251 million people cast votes, for which purpose the government had to provide 1.3 million ballot boxes at 370,000 polling stations, and print half a billion ballot papers.

The results proved a serious blow to the Congress Party which, while retaining the control of the Lok Sabha by a majority of mere 52 votes, lost control over the local governments in 8 states out of 16. The states in which the Congress was reduced to a minority party were Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Madras, Kerala, Punjab and Rajasthan. Only in 4 of these 8 states the opposition parties proved strong enough to form non-Congress governments: in Kerala and West Bengal of the left united fronts; in Orissa the Swatantra and the Jana Congress formed a coalition; and in Madras the DMK formed its own government. In 4 states no party had a majority to provide leadership and form a government.

While the Congress retained the control of the Lok Sabha, the comfortable majority of 219 votes which it had commanded in 1962 was reduced to mere 52 in 1967. In fact, the position of the Congress in the Lok Sabha has been steadily declining during the past decade. In 1957 the Congress had commanded 371 seats, in 1962 this was reduced to 358, and in 1967 this dropped to 282.

The losses which the Congress suffered in 1967 were distributed on both ends of political spectrum, the parties on the right from the Congress gaining far more than those on the left. The 520 seats of the Lok Sabha were distributed among the major parties
as follows, the figures in the brackets indicating the position in 1962: the Congress 282 (361); the Swatantra 44 (18); Jana Sangh 35 (14); Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam 25 (7); the SSP 23 (6); the CPI 23 and the CPI (M) 19 (the united party in 1962 had 29 seats); the PSP 12 (12); the Bangla Congress of West Bengal 5; Akali Dal of Punjab 3; the Muslim League 3 (in Kerala 2, Madras 1); the RSP 2 (Kerala 1 and West Bengal 1); Forward Bloc (West Bengal) 2; All-Party Hill Leaders’ Conference (Assam) 1; Republican Party (Uttar Pradesh) 1; Lok Sevak Sangh (West Bengal) 1; the Socialist Unity Centre (West Bengal) 1; United Goans 1; and the National Conference of Kashmir 1.

Thus while the Congress Party stood at the centre with its 282 votes, the parties to its right (the Swatantra, the Jana Sangh and the DMK) have improved their position from 39 seats in 1962 to 104 in 1967, the left wing (the CPI, the CPI(M), the SSP, and associated parties) increased their position from 35 seats in 1962 to 77 in 1967.

This general trend exhibited in the Lok Sabha, i.e., that the declining strength of the Congress is channelled more into the parties on the right than on the left, was also evident from the returns for the state assemblies. Taking the decade from 1957 to 1967, the strength of the Congress Party in the state assemblies steadily declined. In 1957 the Congress had won in all states of India 1,893 seats; in 1962 this was reduced to 1,759, and in 1967 dropped to 1,551 out of 3,262 seats.

On the other hand, the strength of the opposition parties in the state assemblies grew at the expense of the Congress, the parties on the right recording a much bigger growth than the left parties. Between 1957 and 1967 the position of the Jana Sangh, the greatest gainer, shot from 115 seats to 285. Another rapid grower was the Swatantra Party, which appeared on the political scene only in 1962 by winning 166 seats, and which secured 256 seats in 1967. On the left side of the spectrum the combined strength of the two Communist parties increased since 1962 from 153 seats to 243. However, the SSP proved growing at a much faster rate; it shot from 59 seats in 1962 to 175 in 1967.

The electoral returns ended an era of Indian politics during which the general direction of the country and its internal stability had been given and guaranteed by a strong central government, resting upon a massive Congress majority in the
Lok Sabha and the Congress control of the state governments. The new era of Indian politics would be marked by a weak central government, pitched against an increasing number of non-Congress state governments and engaged in a war of attrition over their clamouring for decentralization, more power and larger state autonomy.

Because the elections ended the twenty-year old hegemony of the Congress Party, and because it became obvious that the Congress would be no more able to function as the unifying and leading force holding the country together, two major schools of thought appeared which argued that India had entered into an era of coalition politics.

The first school, represented by the much respected founder of the Swatantra Party, C. Rajagopalachari, saw the future of India secured only through the formation of a coalition government at the centre. He felt that the Congress should not attempt to form a government with such a slender majority, and instead should co-operate with the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Swatantra and the Jana Sangh on the formation of a coalition. According to him, there was not much difference in the programmes of the last three parties, and they should work toward a merger one day.¹

The theory of a coalition government at the centre received a strong support from the Sarvodaya leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, who said that a coalition with other parties would much broaden the base of the central government and provide the country with a great deal of political stability and confidence. However, he would not suggest which parties should form the coalition as this was for the Congress to decide. Commenting upon the declining strength of the Congress Party Narayan believed that the main disease was the "practice of the crossing of the floor", both in the state assemblies and in the Lok Sabha. While in the state assemblies the practice of changing the sides might be tolerated for a while, at the centre this might have serious consequences. The main reason was that while on the state level the parties might come together to form a government, which is of "municipal nature", this was rather difficult at the centre where the matters of defence, foreign policy and economic strategy are the main issues on which a compromise is very difficult.

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Narayan was particularly fearful of the fall of the government at the centre, which would lead to Presidential Rule and then mid-term elections to the Lok Sabha. However, should the parties receive a similar vote as in 1967 without any of them winning a commanding majority, then the whole process would have to be repeated. In such a situation, if there were no other constitutional or political alternatives to ensure stability in the country, "it occurs to me that there is only one organized force which can fill the gap—Army.

"I am not suggesting that the Army should do it. I will regret such a situation being created. But if political parties do not have enough sense to prevent such a situation from arising, I would not blame the Army for stepping in. After all, our jawans and officers are patriotic people and cannot see the country going to pieces. But the intervention of the Army could also be up to the limit within the Constitution. In other words, Parliament may be locked up but the President may continue. May be even in the States some Governments may continue."  

While Rajagopalachari saw the future of India secured through the centre-right coalition, the Congress Party functioning as a centre, a prominent leader of the left wing of the Congress Party, K. D. Malaviya, representing the second school, saw the future of the country lying in the combination of the Congress Party with the left parties and groups. Malaviya, former Union Minister who had lost his Lok Sabha seat, believed that the Congress Party should not assume the responsibility for forming governments in those states in which it commanded less than the majority of seats in their state assemblies. In an attempt to form governments in such states, it would be wrong to invite Independents for the purpose, as this would swell the ranks of the party. Also the party should give up any idea of breaking up any existing alliances or groups of parties, as this would only harm it in the long run. Instead,

"The Congress in the present circumstances should have an alliance of political collaboration with the left parties like the Communists, Samyukta Socialists and the Praja Socialists."  

And this was exactly the policy which the CPI has been advocating for a long time as its road to power.
Thus shortly after the elections it was obvious that the political future of India would be decided, given the continued deterioration of the Congress, not by the faster growth of the rightist parties than of the parties on the left, but by the Congress Party moving to the right or left in order to form coalition governments first on the state level and then at the centre.

An important factor which would have a significant bearing upon the decision of the Congress Party to move to the right or left in selecting its prospective coalition partners would be, among other things, their ability to demonstrate who could structure a more rapidly and effectively a viable alternative to the Congress power. And in this respect the parties on the left are the obvious winners, judged by their performance in the 1967 elections. While it is true that in the number of votes and seats won the parties on the right are growing more rapidly than their left rivals, it is the latter which have developed the technique of building an electoral machinery which could transform a smaller popular following into a relatively larger number of seats. Thus while the increase of the votes and seats won by the parties on the right is spotty and uneven, the coalition machineries built by the left rivals can attain such a concentration of effort that their victory is almost certain, at least in some states.

In this respect, the effectiveness of coalition politics, as evident in the electoral returns in Kerala and West Bengal, is highly instructive.

*Kerala Shows the Way*

While it is doubtful that E.M.S. Namboodiripad has ever read Riker's work on the *Theory of Political Coalitions*, he certainly has developed the art of coalition politics in Kerala to a great perfection and confirmed once again an old dictum that politics is an art of the possible.

The effectiveness of the winning combination built by him is best evident from the fact that while the Congress Party won more votes in 1967 (34.22 per cent) than in 1965 (33.03 per cent), the number of seats it could secure dropped from 36 in 1965 to 9 in 1967. On the other hand, the CPI(M) secured with about the same number of votes polled as in 1965 a disproportionately
large dividend in terms of seats won. In 1965 the CPI(M) had won 19.55 per cent of votes and 40 seats, while in 1967 it secured a slightly increased poll of 22.62 per cent of votes, but bagged 52 seats, an increase of 12. (Tables XVI and XXVI).

However, the over-all effectiveness of the coalition is best evident from the fact that the united front won with only 49.21 per cent of votes 113 seats (84.96 per cent) in the house of 133, while both Congress Parties won with 41.53 per cent of votes merely 14 seats (10.55 per cent).

While the individual parties of the united front polled about the same percentage of votes as in 1965, the coalition paid off handsome dividends through elimination of mutual contests, and each party substantially increased the number of seats won. The CPI(M) in 1965 had won 19.55 per cent of votes and 40 seats (30.08 per cent), and in 1967 it won 22.62 per cent of popular vote and 52 seats (39.09 per cent); this was a net increase of 12 seats. The CPI in 1965 had won 8.02 per cent of votes and mere 3 seats (2.25), while in 1967 it won the same percentage of votes (8.24) but 19 seats (14.29): an increase of 16 seats, or 600 per cent. The SSP in 1965 had won 8.10 per cent of votes and 13 seats (9.79 per cent), while in 1967 it won the same percentage of votes (8.08), but increased the seats to 19 (14.29 per cent). The RSP in 1965 had won 1.30 per cent of votes and no seat at all, while in 1967 it won 2.61 per cent of votes and 6 seats. The Muslim vote (the Muslim League and the Muslim League Independents) in 1965 had won 6.21 per cent of votes and 12 seats (9.02 per cent), and in 1967 won 6.51 per cent of votes but 19 seats (14.29 per cent). The KTP in 1965 had won 1.19 per cent of votes and 1 seat, while in 1967 it won only 0.65 per cent of votes but 2 seats (1.50 per cent). The last partner of the coalition, the KSP, which had been insignificant in 1965, won 0.51 per cent of votes and 1 seat in 1967. Of the 6 independent candidates elected, 2 joined the CPI(M), one the CPI, and one the SSP.

Thus the greatest gainer was the CPI, which was rescued from political grave by submitting to the leadership of the rival party in negotiating the electoral alliance with it. The SSP was the second principal gainer, bagging additional 6 seats on the same percentage of votes won. The Muslim League gained only 0.30 per cent of votes and 7 seats from her co-operation with the left
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front, which was no gain at all compared with the increased fortunes of other partners of the united front.

Another interesting aspect of the returns was the decline of the Kerala Congress. While in 1965 this party had won 13.11 per cent of votes and 24 seats (18.04 per cent), in 1967 it was reduced to 7.31 per cent of votes and 5 seats (3.76 per cent). This decline of fortunes of the Kerala Congress was due to the shift of support of the Nair Service Society, which after an appeal of Mannath Padmanabhan once again changed its allegiance to the Congress Party.

The fortunes of both Congress parties suffered not only because their candidates faced the combined forces of the united front, but in several constituencies they combated themselves and the PSP. The battle raged in 20 constituencies which were lost to the parties of the left front. In Trichur District (Table XXX) 2 constituencies were lost due to the confrontation of the two Congress parties: Trichur to the CPI(M); and Guruvayoor to the CPI. In Ernakulam District (Table XXXI) 5 constituencies were lost: Ankamali to the CPI(M); Narakkal to CPI(M); Palluruthy to the CPI(M); Thrippunithura to CPI(M); Muvattupuzha to the CPI; and Karimannoor to the KTP. In Kottayam District (Table XXXII), 4 constituencies were lost: Vazhoor to the CPI; Changanacherry to the CPI; Puthupally to the CPI(M); and Ettumanoor to the SSP. In Alleppey District (Table XXXIII) 5 constituencies were lost: Kuttanad to the SSP; Haripad, where the vote was split by the PSP candidate, to the CPI(M); Thiruvalla to the SSP; Aranmula to the SSP; and Chengannur to the CPI(M). In Quilon District (Table XXXIV) 2 constituencies were lost: Ranni to the CPI; and Kottarakara to the CPI. In Trivandrum District (Table XXV) 1 constituency was lost, due to the RSP competition, to the Muslim League.

In 13 of these 20 constituencies the Congress Party proved stronger and the Kerala Congress should not have contested in 11 and the PSP in 2 constituencies; the reverse was true in 7 constituencies, where the Kerala Congress was stronger. Had the two Congress groups and the PSP arrived at least at an electoral adjustment and saved these seats, they would have won 41.63 per cent of votes and respectable 34 seats.

The giant united front almost obliterated the PSP, which had been once a strong political force in the state, holding the
balance between the Congress and the then united CPI. In 1967 it dwindled to 13,991 votes (0.21) and no seat. The Samastha Muslim League met a similar fate. The Swatantra and the Jana Sangh found it a difficult going, and each polled some 13,000 votes and no seats. An interesting feature of the 1967 elections was also the elimination of several smaller parties, and substantial reduction of independent candidates, who contested in 1965. Thus the political spectrum in Kerala was pruned and simplified, being reduced to a coalition of 7 parties, two Congress groups engaged in a merciless mutual struggle, and a few small parties and splinter groups on the periphery of political process.

As soon as the elections were over it took only a few days to Namboodiripad to set up a new government, almost exactly on the tenth anniversary of his assumption of power in April 1957. The cabinet of 13 members was sworn in on March 6, 1967, the portfolios allocated in the following manner: the CPI(M) 4; the CPI 2; the SSP 2; the Muslim League 2; the Revolutionary Socialist Party 1; the Karshaka Thozhilali Party 1, and the Kerala Socialist Party 1. The hegemony of the CPI(M) over the Communist movement in Kerala was clearly evident from the subordinate position to which the CPI was assigned, being placed on the same footing in the allocation of ministries as the SSP and the Muslim League.

The final observation about the establishment of the second Namboodiripad government must emphasize that the victory of the left front was due solely to the effectiveness of that coalition and not to any significant shift in the mass following in favour of the Communist parties. And even hunger—the veritable famine which hit Kerala early in 1966 and the food riots—was only tangentially related to the victory of Namboodiripad's combination. Here again, as in the past, the elections of 1967 demonstrated that a textbook Marxism has no place in Kerala.

Table XXXVII shows that the principal political parties in Kerala had been rather consistent in mobilizing their mass support, and that while the Congress Party had increased its popular vote from 33.03 per cent in 1965 to 34.22 in 1967, the CPI(M) had registered a decline from 31.70 per cent in 1965 to 30.86 per cent in 1967. Similarly was consistent the vote of the Muslim League. In 1965 the Muslim vote (the Muslim League and the left dissenters) polled 6.21 per cent of votes, while the
united party in 1967 polled 6.51 per cent. Also the vote of the SSP was consistent with the mass support which its predecessor, the PSP, had been receiving. In 1962, before the split and transformation of the PSP into the SSP, the PSP had commanded 9.1 per cent of the electorate. In 1965 the combined vote of the two rival parties had been 8.30 per cent (the SSP 8.00 per cent and the PSP 0.32), while in 1967 the SSP captured 8.08 per cent, and the PSP 0.21 per cent, total 8.29 per cent.

Thus in the final analysis the defeat of the Congress Party in Kerala must be seen in its inability to revive and pay the price for the electoral alliance of 1960 with the Muslim League and the PSP, and its inflexible posture toward the Kerala Congress. If the two Communist rivals, where the cleavage is much bigger, can compose their differences in order to evolve a common electoral strategy, there is little justification for the Congress parties not to do likewise. Particularly in view of the fact that the elections in Kerala are no more fought on ideological grounds and meaningful alternative programmes of development, but are reduced to struggle for power in its grosser form in which the victory falls into the hands of those who understand the art of coalition politics.

The perspective for the future is that while the Congress Party and its sister organization would be continuously commanding between 35 to 40 per cent of the electorate, the state would be ruled by a coalition of the left parties in one or other form because of the inability of the Congress to translate this still formidable mass support into effective political power in terms of seats won. In this situation the single seat constituency electoral system would perpetuate the minority government, in terms of votes polled, of the left united front.

It is doubtful that the Congress would be able to break the left coalition by detaching from it the Muslim League and even less so the SSP. One reason is that the Congress is far behind the Communists in operating the coalition politics, which is best evident from the fact that it had permitted the grand alliance of 1960 to lapse. The second reason, which is far more important, is that the CPI(M) has been gradually restructuring its partners since 1967 so that even if any of them would wish to leave the coalition it would split over the issue, its core remaining faithful to the partnership. The CPI(M) is applying Rakosi's Salami Tactics to
emasculate its allies, in which process the rival party appears to be the first victim to be parcelled out and the spoils absorbed by other partners of the alliance to strengthen the bond.

Another reason why the Congress Party would not be able to replace the second Namboodiripad government is that this time his regime is making every effort to stay in power, particularly by compromises, concessions and by a conserve programme to avoid any pretext for the centre to intervene. Unlike his first government, which had attempted to carry out a peaceful transformation discussed earlier, his second government places the premium upon staying in power in order to initiate the next stage of the strategy of the CPI(M), in co-operation with the united front government of West Bengal, i.e., to weaken the authority of the centre preliminary to militant operations. This then gives a new dimension to the policies and operations of the CPI(M), which is called the centre-state relations, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this study.

Victory in West Bengal

The division of the ranks of the Congress Party by the separation of the Bangla Congress, and the fact that the Congress came under concentrated fire of two left fronts, reduced it in West Bengal to a minority party and paved the way for the formation of the first non-Congress government in that state.

Out of 280 assembly seats the Congress Party won only 127 seats, as against 154 which this party had held in the previous assembly of 252 seats. Of 40 seats to the Lok Sabha the Congress Party won 14.5

Next came the United Left Front, which won 66 seats distributed as follows: the CPI(M) contested 133 seats and won only 43; the SSP contested 25 and won 7; the RSP contested 16 and won 6; the SUC contested 8 and won 4; the Workers' Party contested 2 and won 2; the Forward Bloc (Marxist) contested 3 and won 1; independent candidates supported by the ULF won 3 seats. The exaggerated claim of the CPI(M) in contesting 133 seats was substantially deflated by the electoral results.

The rival front, the PULF, won 62 seats: the Bangla Congress contested 82 seats and won 34; the CPI contested 61 and won merely 16; and the Forward Bloc contested 42 and won 12.
Of political parties which fought the elections without an alignment with any of the left fronts and on their own, the PSP won 7 seats, the Lok Sevak Sangh 5, the Gorkha League 2, the Jan Sangh 1, the Swatantra 1, and independents 10.

One important aspect of the returns is to consider how costly proved the competition between the two fronts in those constituencies in which there was a triangular contest with the Congress Party. The returns show that the Congress would have lost additional 39 seats had the two fronts agreed on the adjustment of seats all along the way; it would have been reduced to 88 seats. With these additional 39 seats such a front would have commanded 167 votes in the house of 280, a comfortable majority to form a government.

The division of votes in these 39 constituencies was as follows: in 24 constituencies, in which the ULF and the PULF had been involved in triangular contests with the Congress Party, and where the combined vote of the two fronts was higher than the vote of the Congress, the ULF emerged stronger than the PULF but lost to the Congress due to the division of the left vote. In these 24 constituencies the Congress Party polled 429,249 votes, the ULF 358,889, and the PULF 192,908. In these constituencies the ULF was about twice stronger than the PULF.

On the other hand, in 15 constituencies in which the two fronts had been contesting in a triangle against each other and the Congress, and where their combined vote was higher than that of the Congress, it was the PULF which emerged stronger than the rival front, but lost 15 seats to the Congress due to the split of the left vote. In these 15 constituencies the Congress vote was 270,660, of the PULF 217,461, and of the ULF 113, 474.

The front led by the CPI(M) proved also stronger in those 41 constituencies in which the candidates of the two fronts had a straight fight: the ULF won 24 such constituencies, while the PULF 17.

Of 13 constituencies in which the candidates of the CPI(M) and the CPI had confrontation, the CPI(M) candidates won in 9 constituencies, defeating the candidates both of the CPI and the Congress, while in 4 constituencies the candidates of the CPI defeated both the CPI(M) and the Congress. Due to the division of votes between the two Communist parties, the CPI(M) lost 7 constituencies, while the CPI 5.
The results thus settled the question of relative strength of the two rivals, an issue which had divided the rivals during the negotiation before the elections, in favour of the CPI(M), giving it a 65:35 lead over the CPI.

While the two left fronts scored a significant victory in terms of seats won, their results in terms of popular vote were less impressive. The Congress Party polled 5,197,127 votes, which was 41.2 per cent, against 47.29 per cent in 1962. The CPI(M) won 2,304,510 votes, amounting to 18.27 per cent. The CPI polled 836,875 votes, or 6.62 per cent. The Bangla Congress polled 1,271,441 votes, or 10.08 per cent.

It is an astonishing fact that the combined vote of the two Congress parties, which amounted to 51.28 per cent, surpassed the vote which the united Congress Party had won in 1962, which came only to 47.29 per cent. Another astonishing fact showed the combined popular vote of the two Communist parties amounting merely to 24.99 per cent, less than the vote polled by the united party in 1962, which had been 29.9 per cent.

Thus a conclusion is inescapable that the defeat of the Congress was not the consequence of any appreciable shift in public sentiments toward the Communist parties and the left in general, but was mainly due to the defection and then a suicidal course followed by the Bangla Congress, and the adroitness of the Communist leaders in structuring the two leftist alliances which minimized the area of conflict among themselves but exposed the Congress to their concerted attack.

In fact, the Congress stood rather well its ground and, if not deserted by the Bangla Congress, it would have restricted both Communist parties to the positions appropriately reflecting their small mass following expressed through the polls. It seems, however, that the Congress dissenters in West Bengal learnt nothing and permitted themselves to be involved in a pattern so well tested in Kerala, which laid the foundations to a united front government in their state.

As the Congress, with its 127 seats in the house of 280, was reduced to a minority party and could not form a government, negotiations were initiated between the two fronts for such a government as soon as the returns became known. However, as both united fronts commanded only 128 seats, feverish bargaining with other opposition parties took place to secure the
additional 13 seats for a simple majority of 141 in the house. Here, A. K. Mukherjee, President of the Bangla Congress, displayed a great skill, assisted by the rush of some parties to jump on the wagon, and on March 25, 1967 announced that he had forged an alignment of 151 votes, to be known as the United Front, which would form the new government. It was a brilliant move on the part of both Communist parties to place the premiership in the hands of Mukherjee, for only he, as former Congress President in West Bengal, could have won the co-operation of other opposition parties. It was a sad day for the Congress Party because it stood alone and isolated, and for nothing in the world could it win anyone for co-operation to muster those 14 remaining seats needed for the formation of its own government.

Chief Minister Mukherjee and 5 ministers were sworn on March 2, 10 ministers on March 5, one on March 10, and one more on March 18, 1967. The following was the distribution of 18 portfolios among the participating parties: the Bangla Congress 3; the CPI(M) 3; the CPI 2; 1 independent Congress dissident; the Forward Bloc (Marxist) 1; the Forward Bloc 1; the Workers’ Party 1; the RSP 1; the SUC 1; the SSP 1; the Gorkha League 1; PSP 1; and Lok Sevak Sangh 1. The government adopted an 18-point minimum programme, based upon an action programme which had been drafted by the United Left Front on the eve of the elections.

Thus in West Bengal, as in Kerala, it was not the ideological appeal of Communism or a profound mass movement, but the art of coalition politics which placed the state power into the hands of the non-Congress government. And as in Kerala, it was the malady of the ruling Congress Party and not the innate strength of the Communist parties, which permitted them to structure a winning combination.

The new government was seventh since independence but first non-Congress government in West Bengal in 20 years. One highly important feature of the new government was the fact that another former prominent leader of the Congress Party, Dr. P. C. Ghosh, in fact Chief Minister of the first government, accepted the portfolio of Food, Supply and Agriculture as an independent.
The fact that Mukherjee could forge such an anti-Congress coalition on the one hand, and secure participation of another former Chief Minister and Congress dissenter on the other, was well appreciated by the leadership of the CPI:

What is of even greater historical significance is that under his leadership (Mukherjee, ed.) the Bangla Congress has provided the much-needed bridge between the traditional organized Left movement and the vast disillusioned Congress masses. At the time when the Congress is disintegrating the profound significance of this can hardly be exaggerated. Let us not forget that the absence of such a bridge made it impossible to dislodge the Congress in the first three general elections.6

In this development—to use the Congress dissidents as a bridge between the Communists and the vast masses of the Congress Party in order to detach this mass support from the latter—the CPI rightly saw a confirmation of the feasibility of its general strategy aiming at communizing India with the assistance of the Congress splinter groups. Thus it would be the dissident Congress-CPI combination, drawing upon the vast reservoir of social forces released as a consequence of the dissolution of the Congress Party, which would rally and then anchor them into a new structure of power. The CPI(M) would play a subordinate role in this new alignment, which would determine the future of India in decades to come. This was essentially the strategy of peaceful transition.

This outlook was fundamentally at variance with the strategy followed by the CPI(M), and although the party co-operated in the new government of the United Front the strains became soon apparent. The Maoist wing of the CPI(M) in the Darjeeling District and the CPI(M) Committee in Siliguri, who disagreed with the party’s policy of entering into the coalition governments in West Bengal because it was against the general line of the VII Congress of the party, organized a revolt of the tribal Adivasi people in the Naxalbari area near Siliguri in March 1967.

This revolutionary activity received an increasing support and encouragement from Radio Peking in its special broadcasts to India, which urged the movement to adopt Mao’s theories of
revolutionary warfare as the only correct path to power. As a result, the CPI(M) in West Bengal split and its Maoist wing started to function as a state unit of a new Communist party.

_Disaster in Andhra_

The electoral returns in Andhra represent one of the best examples demonstrating the magnitude of disaster, almost liquidation, which an unmitigated conflict of the two rival parties can inflict upon the fortunes of the Communist movement in India. While both Communist parties had been well aware that their struggle raging over a wide area would adversely affect their returns, none of them visualized the disaster which the split would inflict upon their positions both in the state legislative assembly and the Lok Sabha.

The Congress Party was the main benefactor of the factional war of the two Communist rivals. In the state assembly the Congress won 165 seats out of a total of 287, which majority entitled it to set up a new government. Similarly in the Lok Sabha it scored a significant success by winning 35 seats out of 41. In addition, a group of rebel Congressmen capitalized upon the division of the Communist ranks and won 45 state assembly seats.

For the Communist movement the results were a serious setback, comparable to that suffered in the 1965 mid-term elections. While in the 1962 general elections the united party had won 56 assembly and 8 Lok Sabha seats, in 1967 the CPI(M) won 9 assembly and no Lok Sabha seat, and the CPI won 10 assembly and 1 Lok Sabha seat. Both Communist rivals thus commanded only 19 assembly and one Lok Sabha seat; in terms of assembly seats it was a drop of 66 per cent.

This poor showing of both Communist parties sharply contrasted with the impressive results scored by the Swatantra Party. While in 1962 it had won 19 assembly and 2 Lok Sabha seats, in 1967 it bagged 28 assembly and 3 Lok Sabha seats.

While the lack of electoral adjustments and the straight fight between the candidates of the two parties were responsible for their decline in the assembly, the most discouraging were the result in terms of the actual number of votes polled. Here the analysis of the returns shows a decline of popular appeal, and that the
combined mass support dropped by 4.35 per cent. While the unified CPI had won 19.65 per cent of popular vote in 1962, the combined vote of both parties in 1967 was reduced to 15.30, the CPI(M) winning 7.9 per cent and the CPI 7.4 per cent. Thus the so bitterly contested hegemony over the Communist movement in Andhra was decided by the polls in favour of no one; the returns placed both parties on an equal footing as far as the mass following was concerned.

Here again, the Congress maintained its strength at 45.7 per cent of popular vote, which was slightly reduced from 47 per cent attained in 1962, due to the challenge of the dissenters.

The extent of damage inflicted by the two Communist rivals upon each other is evident only from a closer examination of the returns in those constituencies in which they confronted each other.

Out of 25 such constituencies the CPI(M) candidates lost to the Congress, the Jana Sangh and the CPI in 16 constituencies because the CPI candidates split the left vote, polling far less than the candidates of the CPI(M). In these constituencies the CPI(M) was stronger than the rival party, which should not have contested. Had not the Communist vote been divided these 16 seats could have been saved. Moreover, the CPI(M) lost in 3 additional constituencies (Kanagiri, Gannavaram, and Kankipadu) because there the CPI, not having candidates of its own, directed its supporters to oppose the candidates of the rival party and vote for the Congress. Conversely, the CPI lost 9 seats to the Congress due to the triangular contest with the CPI(M), in which the position of the CPI(M) candidates was weaker and therefore they should not have contested.

However, the main battle between the two rivals raged in 9 central districts of Andhra, the real stronghold of the Communist movement in the state since the days of the Telengana uprising in 1946-51. The strength of this bastion is best demonstrated by the fact that in 1962 the united party had won there 50 out of its total 56 seats. These districts are: Guntur, Krishna, Nalgonda, Khammam, West Godavari, Warangal, Anantapur, Visakhapatnam and Chittoor. It was in these districts that no agreement on adjustments could be reached and mutual slaughter took place: the CPI(M) contested 66 seats and won 8, while the CPI contested 70 and won only 4 seats. This was a ratio of
66:34 in favour of the CPI(M). Also in terms of mass following a similar ratio in favour of the CPI(M) prevailed. The CPI(M) scored in these 9 districts 912,640 votes, while the rival party 633,079 votes, giving a ratio of 60:40.

While the CPI(M) proved its point and established its supremacy in the heartland of Andhra, the rival party proved stronger in the outlying areas, in which it won 6 additional seats, while the rival party won only 1 seat. These electoral successes of the CPI thus levelled out the disparity between the two rivals both in terms of seats and votes won.

Looking now over the returns in all Andhra, the CPI(M) scored less seats, 9, and more votes, 1,126,138 (7.9 per cent), while the rival party won 10 seats and less votes 1,034,528 (7.4 per cent).

There was little consolation for the rival parties in the fact that on the whole they were almost equal in Andhra, for in the long run it would have been better for both of them had one emerged dominant. The reason is that the battle royal for the hegemony in Andhra will be fought over again with such a consuming passion and bitterness as in 1967, until one of them emerges on the top to provide a general sense of direction to the whole Communist movement, as in Kerala and West Bengal.

At the moment, there does not seem to exist any middle ground for both parties to meet. In fact, the strains of the battle have polarized even the CPI(M) in its stronghold, and led to the separation of a Maoist wing in July 1968 and its establishment as a new, Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of India, determined to fight it out with rifle in hand.

The returns of the Fourth General Elections in 1967 clearly indicated the significant growth which the Communist movement in India has recorded in the course of one decade since the Second General Elections of 1957, when the party had won the state power only in Kerala. In 1967, in spite of the divided ranks, the Communist movement was in control in two states of the Indian Union, with much improved over-all strength in the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies.

However, the most significant aspect of the returns of 1967 was the fact that in spite of their ideological differences both Communist parties had evolved a complicated pattern of relationships which reduced the area of conflict as far as the electoral contest was concerned in order to maximize their gains in terms
of seats won. Only in Andhra the conflict between them was undisciplined and raged over a wider area with disastrous consequences for both of them.

Thus in two out of three most important test cases discussed in this chapter the rivalry had been confined to the ideological sphere while in the realm of actual power a great degree of cooperation predominated. It was around this co-operation then that the winning coalitions had been built, which Namboodiripad described with some justification as "the vanguard of emerging alternative" to the rule of the Congress Party.

NOTES

1 "Coalition Government at the Centre: Suggestion by Rajaji", The Hindu, February 27, 1967.
3 "Election Results End Stagnation: Masani", The Hindu, March 1, 1967.
5 Figures from "West Bengal: Congress Reduced to Minority", People’s Democracy, Vol. 3, No. 9-10, March 5, 1967, pp. 4-5.
CHAPTER XII

BARREL OF GUN AND POLITICAL POWER

Maoist Party Established

Up to the Fourth General Elections in February 1967 the Communist movement in India has been rejecting, as not applicable in that country, Mao Tse-tung's dictum that political power grows out of the barrel of gun.

The reason was that for both Communist parties political power has been growing out of their legal existence, identification with the national and social aspirations of the Indian people, their organizational strength, and out of their ability to exploit and manipulate the readily available sources of social power in the form of the existing political parties, communal organizations, trade unions and the kisans, and out of the electoral battles for which they have successfully marshalled suitable alliances and alignments.

However, shortly after the Fourth General Elections there appeared on the Indian scene a new Communist movement which rejected all this experience as a road to power, and which adopted Mao's theory that political power grows out of the barrel of gun and the agrarian armed uprising.

This revolutionary movement draws upon two main sources of social power of a tremendous potential.

The first source is the dynamism of the national aspirations and sub-nationalism of various national, tribal, cultural, communal, religious, and linguistic groups in India. The possibility of harnessing this dynamism to the promotion of power aspirations of a political party in India resembles closely Lenin's strategy of generating support for his own party in 1917.

During the first stage, the Bolshevik Party had identified itself closely with the manifestations of local nationalism against the Tsarist centralism and national oppression. In this connection it is worthwhile to re-read the famous memorandum of Parvus, the
circumstances of Lenin’s return to Russia in April 1917, and his support of various national groups in order to dismember the empire through the exploitation of the national question.¹

During the second stage, after the seizure of power and the establishment of Lenin’s regime in Moscow, the Soviet Government initiated a centralistic move during which the Bolshevik sections of the nationalist movements in the independent republics and autonomous regions had “applied” to Moscow for unification with Russia, “voluntary surrendering” of independence and autonomy, and for a “federal arrangement” with Russia.

Needless to say, the government in Moscow obliged and sent troops to effect the unification. This move was fiercely resisted and resulted in a terrible civil war and the wholesale decimation of the leadership of the republican governments and the nationalist movements in the Ukraine, Caucasus, Central Asia and Siberia between 1918 and 1920. The theoretical shibboleth which justified the extermination of the republican governments by the intervention from Moscow was a formula that only the proletariat, represented by the Bolsheviks, and not the “national bourgeoisie”, had the mandate to exercise the right of national self-determination, which in this case called for surrender of the freshly won independence and autonomy.

Thus the Russian Empire had been first dismembered by Lenin in his drive for power by harnessing to the growth of his own party the nationalistic and centrifugal forces interested in weakening the central control. And when he was in power, the empire was reconstituted by the use of the central organs of the state which then liquidated the independent republican regimes. It was not the class appeal demanding the distribution of land which had been the main driving force of Lenin’s party, but the exploitation of sentiments for ending the war and for peace, and of the national and centrifugal forces, which provided the main supporting base of Lenin’s revolutionary movement.

While this is not to say that Lenin’s strategy would be applicable in India—the historical and social conditions of these two countries are entirely different—nevertheless the above is alluded to in order to demonstrate that the exploitation of the dynamism of the national question could be a source of political power which could be purposefully canalized and structured for the attainment of power aspiration of a political party.
While in India this had been recognized early by the Congress Party, which then effectively structured these sentiments into the nationalist movement to win independence and thereafter into its political hegemony, within the Communist ranks Namboodiripad was first to give a close attention to this problem. In 1952 he published a study on the national question in Kerala and then made a good use of it to promote the movement for the United Kerala which played a significant role in catapulting his party to power in 1957. In 1966 he published a study of the national question in all India, in which he appreciated its dynamism and the possibility of its exploitation as a source of political power for his own party. In fact, it was this insight which had assisted his party to develop a new attitude toward the Muslim League in Kerala, and which then helped in bringing the League into the electoral coalition in 1966.

While his party, and for the time being, would not make any other use of the potential of the national question except for harnessing it to the coalition politics, the new Communist movement is bent upon exploiting its dynamism, particularly the tribal sentiments, for the promotion of a revolutionary warfare. In this connection it is useful to remember the role of the tribal and national factor in the war in Vietnam, in the insurgency in Burma, and in the unfolding insurgency in Thailand. India, with her unsettled tribal question particularly in the border areas, is seriously vulnerable to the possibility of exploiting the dynamism of tribal, national and sub-national sentiments for a guerrilla type of warfare.

Another factor which has an important bearing upon the possibility of exploiting the revolutionary potential of the national question in India is the fact that most of the troubled tribal and national areas are on the border with China, which is eminently interested in fomenting and promoting this unrest into a revolutionary movement. This movement thus enjoys an "effective sanctuary", which is one of the key preconditions for the success of any guerrilla warfare. Anyway, the Nagas, who are not at this moment part of this new Communist movement, make full use of this sanctuary, receive military and other supplies from China and go there for training via Burma.

A similar manifestation of this phenomenon—of a latent sub-nationalism in India—has been the recent drive for the formation
of states on the linguistic principle, for the Tamilnadu, Vishala Andhra, separation of Haryana from Punjab, the Gujerati-Maharashtrian conflict, border trouble of Mysore, the Kashmir issue, and now the demand for a separate Telengana state. The dynamism of these aspirations, and of parochial, community, caste and linguistic sentiments is being tapped by political parties and groups as a source of social and political power. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam rode to power in Madras State in the 1967 general elections on the crest of separatist sentiments demanding the formation of the Tamilnadu.

The second source of social power of the new revolutionary movement which has burst out into the open early in 1967 is the dynamism of the agrarian question. The slow progress of India to carry out a major agrarian reform, the hardship and exploitation of landless peasants and agricultural workers, the system of usury and money lending, coupled with oppressive features of the caste system—all these represent factors upon which a truly formidable revolutionary movement could be built by a party determined to harness these forces to the promotion of its power aspirations. And this is exactly what the new party is bent upon, and which has been rejected in the past by its two sister parties.

Thus the dynamisms of the national question on the one hand, and of the agrarian question on the other, are the twin driving forces upon which the new Communist party is building its own revolutionary movement.

In the border areas close to China, Nepal, Pakistan and Burma—in Assam, NEFA, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Kashmir—which are predominantly inhabited by tribal people, the new Communist party is exploiting primarily the tribal sentiments and aspiration of sub-nationalism for building a revolutionary upsurge. In the interior of India, like in Andhra Pradesh, although also there the unrest is based upon the tribal factor, the new party is exploiting the potential of the agrarian question for building a revolutionary movement.

This is as far as the power base of the new revolutionary movement is concerned. In its strategy and tactics, however, the new party draws upon the great wealth of theoretical and practical experience of Mao Tse-tung, and his techniques of organizing guerrilla warfare and establishing liberated areas.
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The ease and speed with which the armed rebellion has been spreading all over the country in the middle of 1969 indicates a truly significant potential of the new movement which, undoubtedly, will inaugurate an era of violent upheavals and thus strain the resources of the central government to the utmost. Given the centrifugal drive of the two Communist dominated governments in West Bengal and Kerala, bent upon emasculating the police and military powers of the central government in New Delhi, and the pressure which both Kremlin and Peking are able to put upon the centre through their proteges, the forecast of India's future appears not too optimistic.

Origin of New Radicalism

Several factors lay at the root of the emergence of new left radicalism within the Communist movement in India in early months of 1967, which finally led to the split of the CPI(M) and the establishment of a new party devoted to Mao's revolutionary theories and strategy.

First, there always has been a strong left wing within the united CPI, which eventually formed itself into the CPI(M) in 1964 in the hope that the new party would return to the programme of revolution.

Second, by 1967 the CPI(M) have moved appreciably to the right. Its co-operation with the CPI and, above all, the entry into the coalition government with the Bangla Congress in West Bengal, were considered by its left wing as deviations from the policies adopted at the VII Congress in December 1965.

Three, this shift to the right was formalized into a completely new political thesis by the meeting of the Central Committee, held in Calcutta from April 10 to 16, 1967, as a consequence of the spectacular electoral results which made its leaders "dizzy with success". The key section of the adopted resolution emphasized that the party must be prepared to play a new role in the political process in the country because of its ability not only to forge the winning electoral combinations but provide the guiding policies to their governments. In view of this, "new opportunities are open for us to set the tone for several non-Congress Ministries" and to bring about an entirely new political alignment in the country. The resolution further said that
the country was on the verge of a major political crisis, for which the party must be ready. One aspect of the crisis was the so-called "Centre-State Relations", which meant that the non-Congress governments would be putting an increasing pressure upon the centre to win more power and decentralization and thus reinforce regional autonomy. This would open entirely new prospects for the party.

One of the main departures from the policies of the VII Congress was seen in the formulation which by giving preference to building united fronts with "different democratic classes", which meant with the Congress dissenters and other parties even on the right, seriously underplayed the significance of the unity of the left forces. Another formulation which came under criticism was the justification for co-operation in the coalition governments to the effect that "such participation is one specific form of struggle to win more and more people, and more and more allies for the proletariat and its allies, in the struggle for the cause of People's Democracy, and at a later stage for socialism". This formulation was criticised as smacking too much of parliamentarism and opportunism, of holding on cabinet seats, which would seriously limit the freedom of action of the party.

Four, during its gigantic ideological combat with the rival party between 1964 and 1967, particularly after the appearance of its organ, the People's Democracy, in June 1955, the CPI(M) had drawn exclusively upon the Chinese theories and concepts to fight both the rival party and the Soviet "revisionists". This, however, had greatly conditioned its membership. During this period, and in the name of fighting modern revisionism and defending Marxism-Leninism, admits the CPI(M), "every syllable coming from the Chinese Communist press had become to be swallowed as an infallible piece of Marxism-Leninism, as used to be the case with most of us in regard to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for a long time". The theories of revolutionary war, that political power grows out of the barrel of gun, had been reproduced in party publications, translated into local languages and thus received widest circulation. The CPI(M) press had eagerly published extensive reports of the Viet Cong on the techniques of organizing guerrilla armies, and the establishment and administration of the "liberated areas". These now came very handy to the Indian Maoists.
Five, within the party units where the membership consisted of peasant strata, Mao’s theory of agrarian revolution had a particularly strong appeal.

Six, this appeal was much reinforced in Andhra, where an agrarian revolution had been organized on the basis of Mao’s theories from 1947 to 1951 in the Telengana area.

Seven, there really existed a deep substratum of unrest, particularly in the tribal areas, where the people had not been absorbed into the process of political socialization and modernization and where they suffered from a twin curse of tribal inequality and economic exploitation. These two then provided the main driving force, particularly the national and tribal sentiments, to the new upsurge of revolutionary activity evident in the border areas of India in 1967.

Eight, in West Bengal the Maoist wing of the CPI(M), which opposed the entry of the party into the coalition government with the CPI and the Bangla Congress, started to organize the tribal people in the Naxalbari area for an armed struggle in March 1967.

Nine, the final polarization and split of the CPI(M) came when Peking mounted criticism of the policies of the party for its co-operating in the coalitions in Kerala and West Bengal, and gave an open support to the revolutionary line as applied by the Maoists in Andhra and the Naxalbari region of West Bengal between March and September 1967. The ideological ammunition was again provided by Peking’s mills, as in the past against the CPI. Now, however, the CPI(M) was at the receiving end.

Ten, the final break came in September 1967, when Peking attacked Namboodiripad personally as a “revisionist”.

*Impact of Peking*

The trigger which touched off the polarization within the CPI(M) and the formation of its Maoist wing into an independent party was provided by the opposition of the radicals against the entry of the CPI(M) into the coalition government in West Bengal. The Maoists argued that the party had adopted a “neo-revisionist” line, that such a policy was “parliamentary cretence”, and that all parliamentary work should be stopped, all
elections boycotted and, instead, a people's war organized. In order to implement their new line, and as a form of protest against the current revisionist course of their party, the radicals started to organize the tribal people of the Naxalbari area for militant activities.

The area involved—some 25 square miles around three small towns of Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidawa—is of greatest strategic importance because it lies in the narrow strip of Indian territory situated between East Pakistan and Nepal, which forms the only link between India and Assam. Naxalbari itself is 4 miles from the Tibetan border. The first incident took place on March 2, 1967, the very day the government of the United Front was sworn in in Calcutta. Although it was essentially an agrarian uprising, its main driving forces were the pent-up tribal sentiments, in which the peasants seized government-owned and private land, forcibly expelled the owners, harvested the crops, seized arms, ammunition and money, established people's courts to try the class enemies and set up a parallel government.

These militant activities placed a tremendous strain upon the CPI(M) and the coalition government of West Bengal, but at this stage the priorities of the party were quite clear, particularly in view of the new policies adopted by the Central Committee in April 1967 which had defined its new role. Obviously, the fact that the party was already in power in two states out of 16, although as a coalition partner, was a significant advance which the insurgency could not hope to match soon. Moreover, prospects were good that similar coalitions would be formed in other states of India, given the advanced stage of dissolution of the Congress Party. And from there the CPI(M) had a clear perspective of the road to power at the centre. In other words, the party must not endorse the Naxalbari movement, as this surely would bring about the collapse of the coalitions in West Bengal and Kerala. In view of this, the State Committee of the party had dissolved the Darjeeling District Committee and the Siliguri Committee and decided to expel the leaders of the revolt from the party, which decisions were approved by the Political Bureau on June 16, 1967.

In the meantime, Peking had mounted its offensive against the coalition governments and, although it attacked only Dange and his party because of its policy of peaceful transition and pro-
Soviet posture, the criticism of the CPI(M) was not too far off. An assault upon Dange appeared on the pages of the *Peking Review* on June 9, 1967. The article praised the revolutionary activities of the Nagas, the Mizo tribesmen and other unrests evident in the frontier areas of India, and urged them to go on fighting. The non-Congress governments in West Bengal and Kerala came under criticism—the Communists should not have participated in them—because both governments "are component parts of the state apparatus of the Indian big bourgeoisie", and were under the direct control of the central government which could depose them any time, as it had happened in Kerala in 1959. Moreover, the Dange clique was advertising the "Kerala Path" as the only road to power in India, and called for the united front with the "Indian Communist Party" in order to promote the peaceful transition in the country. This, however, was a fallacy as power could be won only through armed struggle.

Here it is important to note that the CPI(M) was designated as the authentic Communist Party of India, and that no direct criticism was made of its participation in the two coalitions. Obviously, the article had been written before the CPI(M) rejected the Naxalbari strategy and expelled its leaders.

However, this benevolent attitude of China changed as soon as it became known in Peking that the CPI(M) had turned its back on the Naxalbari movement and continued to participate in the government which mounted activities designed to suppress that insurgency. The new line to guide the revolutionary movement unfolding in India was laid down by the *People's Daily* on July 5 and 11, 1967. The two articles insisted that the Indian revolution must take the road of relying on the peasants, establishing liberated areas in the countryside, persist in protracted armed struggle and use the countryside to encircle the cities. This was Mao Tse-tung's road. The armed struggle was the only correct road of the Indian revolution. Both the CPI and CPI(M) were then attacked for participating in the coalition government of West Bengal which was suppressing the armed uprising of the peasants in the Naxalbari area.

This was an outline of an alternative strategy to replace the policies of not only of the CPI but also the CPI(M). A more clearly perceptible shift in this direction was evident from the
report on the revolutionary upsurge in India, published in the Peking Review on July 28, 1967, in which the CPI(M) was overlooked and references made only to the activities of its Maoist wing, called the "Revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party". Encouraged by the armed uprising of the peasants in the Darjeeling District, said the article, which is led by the Revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party, "the oppressed and exploited Indian peasants are rising in rebellion against the reactionary government of big landlords. Dozens of Naxalbaris have appeared in all parts of the country". The unrest in the following areas is then cited as evidence of the rising revolutionary spirit of Indian peasants: Dhammatia, Tufanganj subdivision of Cooch Behar District of West Bengal, and in the Sitalkuchi region of the same district; Nagrakata District on the Bhutan border; Tiljala, some 20 miles from Calcutta; Hoogly District; Sonarpur area of the 24-Parghanas District; Midnapore and Birbhum Districts; Kalathoor area in Kerala; Tripura; Nalgonda District of Andhra.

The final break-up between Peking and the CPI(M) came on September 8, 1967, when the Peking Review attacked Namboodiripad personally in an article entitled "Indian Revisionists in Kerala Serving the Reactionaries". As members of the Kerala state government, "Namboodiripad and other revisionists in the Indian Communist Party" are faithfully adhering to the "reactionary and traitorous policies of the Congress-ruled central government". Moreover, they speak about the parliamentary road and peaceful transition to communism,

but the facts show that the Kerala state government set up within the framework of bourgeois 'parliamentary democracy' is in no way a 'people's government' and that without smashing the state machinery ... there can be no people's power of any sort.

Namboodiripad and his party are accused of having interest only in high government offices, being afraid of peasant revolution, and seeking themselves to be elected. To that end they had formed a government in 1957, and in March 1967 they formed again a government in alliance with the "Dange revisionist clique and other reactionary parties", in which Namboodiripad again served as Chief Minister. Particularly disturbing for
Peking was the Minimum Programme of the Kerala Government, in which the Chinese leaders saw the complete abandonment of Communist ideas, and Namboodiripad's attitude toward free enterprise in Kerala. Peking rejects his restraint upon the policies of his party and government because they function within a federal set up, and criticizes him for saying that "After all,... we are only a state government.... Our Government is bound to carry out the same policies as is laid down by the Indian central government".

The most serious accusation against Namboodiripad is made for the suppression of the local agrarian unrest by his government:

There are many facts to show that the Kerala state government which enforces the fascist rule of the central government is part of the state machine operating in the interests of the landlords and bureaucrat-compradore bourgeoisie. Namboodiripad has dispatched police units to suppress the peasants' struggle to seize land: The state's minister has forbidden the workers to take part in struggles to besiege capitalists and has sent police to suppress them.

Kerala suffers from acute grain shortage. The broad masses demand a real land reform. But, instead of a fundamental change in the system of land ownership, Namboodiripad's method of solving the food problem is to beg for help from the central government.

Namboodiripad had openly declared that so long as the planning of the Indian central government has "more progressive content", it is possible gradually to take the country towards socialist objectives. This fallacy is nothing but the worn-out wares of the old-line revisionist Kautsky who said that it was necessary only to perfect the political apparatus of the bourgeoisie, not to create a new one.

Kerala government also flirts with U.S. imperialism. Its food minister brazenly announced that she would like to have rice "even though it is from the U.S.A. that is bombing Vietnam".... Revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party and the revolutionary masses have resolutely opposed Namboodiripad and others who are following revisionist line and betraying the revolutionary cause of the Indian people.... Disseminating
the great thought and views of Mao Tse-tung... on the Indian revolution, they have published bulletins which carried translations from *Hongqi* and *Renmin Ribao* articles. All this has served to expose Namboodiripad and other revisionists in their true colours and increased their isolation.⁹

Another form of support to the Maoist wing of the CPI(M) was evident from a series of four articles published in the *Peking Review* on September 22, 1967, under the title "The Indian Food Crisis and Armed Revolution". As an example to follow, the article recalls the agrarian armed uprising in Telengana between 1946-51, where "one million acres of land" had been seized and distributed among the rebels and the "Red Area" established. However, the revolution had been "betrayed by the revisionist leadership of the Communist Party of India" and its fruits lost. The main lesson to be learnt from the betrayal of the Telengana uprising is that the revolution must not stop half way but must be pursued to the victorious end, otherwise a ruthless class vengeance from the enemy follows. This lesson must be borne in mind by the Indian peasant masses, which had at last taken up arms to wage revolutionary struggle. The peasants are the main force of the Indian revolution and the most trusted ally of the proletariat. The Indian revolution cannot triumph without reliance on the peasants, without armed agrarian revolution and without establishment of rural revolutionary base areas. The revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party have realized this.... They have begun to go deep into the countryside to arouse and organize the peasant masses and unfold armed struggle. This is an important development of the Indian revolution.¹⁰

Thus by September 1967 the posture of Peking became quite clear. It continued labelling the CPI a "renegade Dange clique of revisionists", continued recognizing the CPI(M) as the Communist Party of India which had gone revisionist, applauded the militant activities of the "revolutionaries" within the CPI(M), and outlined for them a perspective which called for an agrarian armed uprising as the main form of the Indian revolution. In Marxist parlance, the Chinese comrades started to promote a "splittist activity" within the CPI(M).
The leadership of the CPI(M) read with greatest anguish the reports, and listened to the radio broadcasts, which gradually unfolded Peking's hostile stance. To deal with this new situation, the Central Committee of the party met in Madurai from August 18 to 27, 1967 to defend the policies of the party. The meeting found that the recent writings in the Chinese press and the broadcasts by Radio Peking regarding the political developments in India and the current policies of the CPI(M) had clearly revealed that divergent views and serious differences prevailed between the party and the Chinese comrades on a number of fundamental issues connected with the understanding of the Indian revolution. A careful study of these writings, broadcasts and other steps of the Chinese leaders by the Politbureau, continued the Central Committee, had compelled it to arrive at a conclusion that these differences covered a wide range of fundamental questions and must be carefully examined.

We are of the opinion that the Chinese Communist Party has practically come to the conclusion: (a) that our Party Programme is fundamentally wrong in certain vital aspects; (b) that the entire assessment of the country's political situation made by our Party and the political-tactical line worked out accordingly is wrong and reformist; (c) that our Party is not a genuine Communist Party while the extremist rebels who are expelled from our Party and all those who rally around them are the real revolutionaries; (d) and that our Party's political line is to be publicly denounced as revisionist. This, no doubt, is a grave development as far as the Party and the revolutionary movement of our country are concerned. But there is no escape from this unpleasant reality and it would be grievously wrong on the part of our Party either to gloss over these differences or hush them up.11

The Central Committee then restated and defended the policies of the party as adopted at its VII Congress in December 1965, and rejected the notion that these had been abandoned in favour of a shift to the right by the April 1967 meeting of the Central Committee and as a result of the dizziness with success following the Fourth General Elections in March 1967. The April 1967 meeting of the Central Committee, while faithful to the basic policies of the party as adopted by the VII Congress, "had
reassessed and reviewed the entire political situation in the country that had come to exist after the Fourth General Elections and incorporated its conclusions in the document entitled the New Situation and Party's Tasks for the current period. There was no trend toward revisionism evident in this document, insisted the Central Committee.

However, continued the Central Committee, this estimation of the current situation "is totally opposed" by the Chinese leaders, who hail those who had been expelled from the party as real revolutionaries. The Central Committee then rejected the articles in the People's Daily of July 5 and 11, 1967, which had criticized the CPI(M) as a revisionist group for its co-operation in the suppression of people's struggles in West Bengal and Kerala, and which had outlined Mao's strategy of agrarian revolution for India.12

The Central Committee took particularly hard the fact that the Chinese had failed to take up these differences with the CPI(M) first on the party-to-party level and had gone into a direct and public attack. "The point to be specially noted in this connection is that the Chinese comrades did not deem it their elemental duty" to do so. What led them to this "extraordinary procedure" is difficult to discern, and yet the facts are such as to "stun any Communist".13

Moreover, the Central Committee was dismayed at the stand of the Chinese regarding the equality of the Communist Parties and the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs, which Peking had so bravely defended against Moscow in the past.

Now the comrades of the CPC, contrary to everything so eloquently expounded as regarding the equality and independence among the fraternal parties, have chosen to openly denounce our Party, and its political line through their press and radio. These comrades, who vehemently protested against the interference of any party in the internal affairs of another party and detested the imposition of one's own political line upon other parties against their will and all attempts at dictating to others, have thought it proper to grossly interfere in our party's internal affairs and to dictate to and impose
on us a programme and political line which they have worked out for our country and Party.\textsuperscript{14}

Furthermore, said the Central Committee, it was amazing to learn that the Chinese press and radio had gone for an open attack upon the leaders of the CPI(M), calling them "the revisionist chieftains of the Indian Communist Party", and that some leaders had been singled out and denounced by their names. This, obviously, was a reference to the attack on Namboodiripad. Such methods were wrong, insisted the Central Committee, because they strike at the very root of the fraternal relations of the Communist Parties, and no party could permit its leaders to be denounced if it were to maintain its independence.

Similarly, laments the Central Committee, the practice of upholding and encouraging certain individuals and groups against whom disciplinary actions are taken for their anti-party activities, is highly objectionable and disruptive.

Chinese comrades are applauding the expelled extremists of Naxalbari as real revolutionaries belonging to our party and thus lend their support to their activities against our Party. Such support to the splinter groups and the reliance placed on them for leading the Indian revolution cannot be justified in terms of any Marxist-Leninist organizational principle.\textsuperscript{15}

The Central Committee then decided upon the following course of action. First, the struggle against modern revisionism, as evident in the policies of the rival CPI party, would continue. Second, the attack upon the party from the left, from sectarian and dogmatic positions, would be repulsed. The battle would be based upon Marxism-Leninism and its concrete application to Indian conditions, because the deviation on the left cannot be fought with the aid of a deviation on the right. Three, no quarters would be given to the "unprincipled concept of the equidistance" between the rightist revisionism and the leftist sectarianism, as this would surely disorientate the party from its moorings and reduce it to baneful practices of pragmatism and centrism.

This exchange between Peking and the CPI(M) was a good indication of the compulsions under which the Peking leadership had mounted an attack upon a fraternal party and an ally who does not perform to its expectations, and in order to bring
it under control it structured a new group which would more faithfully promote its interests. Obviously, the vicissitudes of the Sino-Soviet conflict had dictated Peking’s move against the CPI(M). The victory of the two left fronts in the general elections had clearly indicated the feasibility of Moscow-sponsored peaceful road to power, to which position now even the CPI(M) had moved in its resolution of April 1967. Moreover, the magnitude of the bandh movement in 1966 and 1967 had indicated the existence of a deep unrest in India, which was further confirmed by the case with which the militant activities of the tribal people and peasants in general had been organized by the Maoists early in 1967. Obviously, the CPI(M) became a victim of its own effectiveness in organizing and leading the bandh movement which clearly demonstrated their truly great revolutionary potential.

So far so good, and up to this point, since 1964 Peking had been endorsing the policies of the CPI(M). However, the main disagreement came when the CPI(M) had settled for giving effect to this movement in terms of political power through merely building the left coalitions and through the electoral process, while Peking hoped that the bandhs would escalate into a militant revolutionary movement. Peking hoped that the bandhs would broaden their base, spill over into the rural areas in order to involve the peasant masses which, through direct actions, would start to implement the land reforms and solve the food crisis by seizing land and establishing “liberated areas”.

Thus while Peking recognized the value of the two united front governments established in Kerala and West Bengal by the initiative of the CPI(M) and as a result of the united action which had been forged during the bandhs, it felt that it was too high a price to pay. The reason was that the Communists in these two governments would not only have their hands tied down but would have to participate in the suppression by the two state governments of any further mass movement. Thus the bandhs, the real revolutionary weapon, had been sold down the river for a dubious advantage of cabinet seats.

The correct course for the Communists to follow was to ride on the crest of the bandhs up to the elections to translate their sweep into political power in terms of seats won, and then combine this parliamentary strategy with an extra-parliamentary
one by enlarging the base of the bandhs and their militancy through organizing the Naxalbari type of uprisings. If the coalitions would break up as a result of this double-pronged strategy of the Communists, then the CPI(M) deputies would separate themselves from the state assemblies and establish "dual power" on the liberated areas to give revolutionary legality to the essentially agrarian revolutionary upsurge. The road to power at the centre is seen through riding on the crest of this revolutionary movement for which, believe the Peking leaders from the evident unrest, objective conditions exist in India. The CPI(M) had sold down this long-term revolutionary perspective for a short-term gain of a few cabinet seats by its policy of April 1967.

The CPI(M), however, saw the road to power at the centre by the application of the strategy of coalition politics on the Kerala and West Bengal pattern, by winning power in as many states as possible through this strategy, by mounting their policies which would weaken the centre and paralyse its ability for an effective police and military intervention in the states, and only after the centre had been sufficiently emasculated a militant revolutionary action would be mounted from the states under the leadership of the Communists.

However, the CPI(M) was to graduate to this formulation, that militant operations would be mounted only in the last stage, at its VIII Congress, held in Cochin from December 23 to 29, 1968. The Congress declared that the "fatal blow to the existing regime will be delivered not in the parliamentary arena but in the arena of direct revolutionary mass struggle".16

For the moment, however, the CPI(M) was determined to keep the coalition governments functioning, refused to endorse the Naxalbari movement as this would surely jeopardize their existence, and in theory justified its participation in them by a formula that such a participation would win new allies for the struggle, and at a later stage, for socialism. However, the nature of this later stage struggle was not spelled out in 1967. The VIII Congress was to provide the answer in 1968.

*The Burdwan Plenum*

The correctness of the estimate of Peking that in India there
really existed a ferment of real revolutionary potential was to
a great extent confirmed by the split of the CPI(M) and by the
number of its leaders willing to accept and apply Mao’s strategy
in their country.

As the Madurai meeting of the Central Committee in August
1967, reeling under the impact of Peking’s line, had decided
that the party would fight it out against both the right revisionists
and the left dogmatists, the Central Committee now prepared
a draft of an Ideological Resolution which defined the stand of
the party on all theoretical issues concerning the Sino-Soviet
schism as well as the course of the Indian revolution, and distribut-
ed it to the party units in the states. Anyway, the party had been
committed to conducting such an ideological discussion since
April 1965, when its leaders had been released from jail and
the party renewed its activities, but the debate was later post-
poned in view of the impending general elections, to be held
in February 1967.

It was with a rude shock that the leadership of the CPI(M)
realized what a profound impact Mao’s line had upon the cadres
of the party between April and September 1967, when the draft
of the Ideological Resolution was presented for discussion
within the state units. Particularly astonishing was the fact that in
April the Central Committee had approved the new line without
any obvious opposition, while in September the party lay para-
lysed by a deep split and the central leadership faced with a
revolt demanding the adoption of Mao’s policies.

The largest defection to the Maoist line appeared in Andhra,
where the revolutionary tradition of an agrarian uprising was
deeply rooted among its leaders, many of whom had organized
the Telengana revolution between 1946-51, during which some
4,000 Communist guerrilla fighters had been lost.

Another phase of militant activity was inaugurated in 1959,
when the then united CPI had started organizing the tribal
people into militia formations called Girijan Sanghams, particu-
larly in a locality called Palakonda. By the end of 1967 the
movement had generated enough momentum and sweep to seize
some 2,000 acres of land from the landlords. Moreover, some
5,000 acres of fallow land had also been occupied by the tribal
people and distributed by the CPI amongst them. The actual
armed struggle started in Srikakulam District on October 31, 1967,
when some landlords resisted the seizure of their land and other property and shot two Communists who led the tribal militants, in Levidi village. This was the turning point of the whole movement, which soon escalated into militant activities in which the tribals seized property, land and money, and the Girijan Sanghams started to function as Soviets, settling the problems of the seized property and providing new administrative machinery for this "liberated area".

The extent of the defections became evident only when the State Committee of the CPI(M) in Andhra debated in September 1967 the draft of the Ideological Resolution, presented by the Central Committee. By a majority of 9 to 6 the State Committee rejected the draft and demanded that a new procedure should be adopted to ascertain the real temper of the ranks of the party, arguing that their majority was really in favour of Mao's line. In order to make sure that the Central Committee would not be able to suppress the call for a new general line of the party, the Andhra State Committee demanded that the leaders of higher party bodies should be permitted to express their disagreement with the policies of the Central Committee directly at the meetings of lower bodies of the party. This would then ensure a free flow of information unhampered by the centralistic powers of the Central Committee, and guarantee that the new party line would be arrived at through a thorough and democratic procedure.

The impact of Mao's line upon the cadres in Andhra became even more evident when the draft of the Central Committee was presented to the State Plenum of the party. The plenum was attended by 231 delegates from all Andhra who represented the entire party amounting to 15,876 members. The Central Committee suffered a stunning defeat when its policies and draft was defeated by 158 votes against 52 with 8 abstaining. Moreover, the State Plenum demanded that the existing line of the party be jettisoned, and that the Central Plenum of the whole party should prepare a draft of a new line for the party, which should be based upon the strategic concepts developed by the Chinese leadership in its famous Letter of June 14, 1968, On the General Line for the International Communist Movement. The major attack against the current policies of the CPI(M) was led by Nagi Reddy, Pulla Reddy, and others. Nagi Reddy presented the Andhra Plenum with an outline of the Maoist policies, and
it was decided that the Central Plenum of the party should also consult this when preparing a draft of the Maoist strategy for India.

The next major defections were evident in Kerala. The discussion of the draft of the Central Committee in this state was held at the level of the District Plenums, as well as at a plenary meeting for the whole state. The entire party participated in the discussions, having 15,561 members and 4,465 candidates. At the State Plenum in Trivandrum a small group of Maoists challenged the draft, and a resolution was passed demanding its revision. A proposal to postpone the debate was, however, defeated by 227 votes against 67 with 9 remaining neutral. The position of the Central Committee was further enhanced when the meeting rejected by 193 votes against 68 an amendment which wanted to brand the Soviet Union as an ally of American imperialism. Finally, the meeting approved the draft by 225 votes against 25.

In Madras State Plenum, the 132 delegates represented 10,000 members and 2,500 candidates. The draft of the Central Committee was adopted after some key amendments had been rejected. The main attack, demanding that the whole document should be redrafted, was rejected by 67 against 42 votes. An amendment rejecting the idea that the Soviet Union has become an ally of the United States was defeated by 67 to 45 votes. Another amendment to rewrite the section on the joint action between the Soviet Union and China was defeated by 54 to 51 votes. Thus also in Madras the Central Committee commanded a substantial support.

In Punjab, the State Plenum was attended by 64 delegates, who represented 4,875 members of the party. An amendment against the unity of action between Moscow and Peking was defeated by 88 votes against 6. An amendment demanding that a section be added to the draft on the Cultural Revolution in China was also defeated.

In Rajasthan, all proposals to amend the draft were rejected by delegates who represented 1,680 members.

In Assam, with a membership of 1,131, the draft of the Central Committee was adopted with a great majority.

In Orissa, the plenum was boycotted by the Maoists from Ganjam and Koraput. Only 30 members attended the meeting and passed the draft. The party has some 800 members.
In Maharashtra, where the party has 2,603 members and 87 candidates, the document was adopted without dissent.

In Kashmir, the party has some 700 members, and the draft was rejected by their representatives.

In Bihar, the State Plenum represented 3,120 members. The draft was approved by 76 votes against 8.

In West Bengal, the discussion was most widespread. Out of 16,000 members of the party full 11,000 participated. About 3 per cent of those participating rejected the draft. The main point of difference was over the unity of action between Moscow and Peking, and the characterization of the Soviet role as an ally of the United States. Some delegates demanded that the document should be wholly rewritten. As it was impossible to hold a State Plenum, the State Committee then passed a resolution stating that it was in full agreement with the analysis, formulations and conclusions of the draft, voting 36 for and 2 against.

The ideological discussion across the whole country to sound out the alignments existing within individual state units of the party served as a basis on which the Central Committee prepared a new draft of the Ideological Resolution. This was presented to the Central Plenum of the party, held in Burdwan, West Bengal, from April 5 to 12, 1968, in which 207 delegates participated. The plenum, which was called to register the final rejection of the "right revisionism" also became a battle ground against the "left-sectarianism" and "left opportunism" represented by the advocates of the Maoist line.

The main attack against the new draft of the Central Committee was led by the delegation from Andhra, which in fact presented a draft of its own to be moved as an amendment to the official document. Moreover, the spokesman for the Andhra delegation challenged the entire programme of the party as adopted at its VII Congress, and it took him some 5 hours to present and explain the Maoist line for India demanded by his delegation.

The essence of the Andhra line was the following: (1) the socialist camp has been liquidated by the revisionist policies of the Soviet Union; (2) restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union has taken place; (3) the Soviet Union has become an ally of American imperialism; (4) while there existed contradictions among the imperialist powers, like France and the USA and Britain and the
USA, there were no contradictions between the Soviet Union and the United States; (5) the world revolution must direct its struggle against the Soviet-USA axis; American imperialism is not the main enemy of the people, but the Soviet-USA axis; (6) therefore, there is no question of the united action of the socialist camp against the United States imperialism until the Soviet revisionists are overthrown by the Soviet people. This was, obviously, a Maoist line of the most extreme version.

In addition to the proposals made by the Andhra delegation other amendments were proposed and some accepted. However, when it came to voting on the Andhra line, the plenum rejected it by 158 votes, against 22 votes, while 13 remained neutral. Many amendments which went against the spirit of the draft of the Central Committee were also defeated by a large majority, and only two received some fifty votes each.

The final draft of the Central Committee, amended by several proposals, was then passed by 162 votes for, 27 against, and 9 remaining neutral. This was a major victory for the central leadership, on which basis it hoped to rally the party and consolidate its unity.

This, however, was not to be so for the Maoists would not accept the defeat at the plenum and decided to work for a split and separation. This was particularly evident in Andhra Pradesh, where the party completely collapsed, and in Uttar Pradesh and Kashmir, where serious defections took place.

**Split of the CPI(M)**

First to crack was the CPI(M) in Uttar Pradesh, even before the Burdwan unification plenum. The leading Maoist who started to organize the new party in Uttar Pradesh was Shiv Kumar Mishra. The first steps had been taken immediately after the Madurai meeting of the Central Committee, held in August 1967, when Mishra, himself a member of the Central Committee, discussed with Shankar Dayal Tewari, another member of the Central Committee, and Surjeet, the need to organize an explanatory campaign in Uttar Pradesh to line the cadres behind the Madurai resolution. However, soon after this event Peking mounted its main attack upon the CPI(M) and Namboodiripad personally, branding them revisionists. As a result, Mishra was
swayed in Peking's direction and, instead of organizing a campaign in favour of the policies of the Central Committee he organized groups of dissenters, initiating his campaign in Kanpur.

On September 8, 1967, Mishra, as Secretary of the State Committee in Uttar Pradesh, issued a circular to all party units inviting them to organize the Naxalbari Kisan Sangham Sahayaka Committees, and called on all revolutionaries inside and outside the party to fight the leadership of the CPI(M). Later in September he issued another circular addressed to all members of the State Committee who belonged to his faction, instructing them not to attend the next meeting of the Committee. However, the State Committee met and approved the Madurai policy which strongly criticized the Peking leadership. Mishra now wrote a letter on September 23, 1967 to P. Sundarayya, Secretary-General of the CPI(M), in which he attacked the Politbureau for "conspiring to get its Revisionist anti-China and anti-Naxalbari line stamped under the name of Uttar Pradesh Communists (Marxists)."20

This was a violation of party discipline and, as a result, Mishra was relieved from his post of Secretary of the State Committee. This move then precipitated the resignation of his five followers from the State Committee, of whom three were Secretaries of the Regional Committees. The rebellion was spreading. Following this, the State Committee dissolved the three Regional Committees and also reconstituted the State Secretariat. As the next step, the State Committee issued an appeal to Mishra and his five followers, who had left the State Committee, to abide by the discipline of the party and resume party activities.

This, however, was too late to expect. Mishra instead issued a circular on September 26, 1967 to all District and other party units instructing them not to recognize the new Secretariat and the new Secretary, but follow his instructions. Moreover, the circular, in the name of himself and his followers, called upon the party members to reject the existing leadership and start functioning as independent units, the activities of which would be co-ordinated soon.

This was a serious matter. The Central Committee of the CPI(M) discussed his case at its meeting in Calicut, expelled
him from the party and directed the Politbureau to take all necessary steps to see that the disruptive activities of Mishra were stopped and expel all those who would persist in such activities.

During the whole of November and the first half of December 1967 the members of the State Secretariat toured the Districts of Uttar Pradesh to convince the rebels not to organize a separate party, but all these efforts proved futile.

Mishra went ahead with his own plan, and on November 12, 1967 addressed in Calcutta a meeting of the Naxalbari Maoists. The meeting was also addressed by Satyanarayan Singh of Jamshedpur, who had been a member of the State Secretariat in Bihar. The public meeting denounced the leadership of the CPI(M) and declared that they would organize a new party of their own all over India. For the purpose they established an All-India Co-ordinating Committee of Revolutionaries of the CPI(M). This was the first beginning of the new party. Their declaration was published in the Naxalite organ, called Deshbhrati, in the Bengali language, and then in the Liberation, their English monthly.

The State Committee of the party in Uttar Pradesh met in Benares in December 1967 and decided to re-organize the district and lower party units with those people willing to carry out the Madurai policy and accept the authority of the existing State Committee and the Central Committee of the party. The meeting then expelled 6 members of the State Committee for their disruptive activities. The split of the CPI(M) in Uttar Pradesh was thus completed. Mishra took with him a half of membership of the party, some 2,000, reducing it to 2,000.

Next cracked the CPI(M) organization in Andhra, but in a much bigger way than in Uttar Pradesh. Immediately after the adoption of the Burdwan Resolution by the Central Plenum in April 1968, the Central Committee had a meeting about the situation existing in Andhra. The Andhra view was presented by D. Venkateshwar Rao, whose radical views alarmed the participants to such an extent that the Central Committee decided to authorize the Politbureau to issue an open letter to the party ranks in that state and take all necessary steps to implement the Burdwan Resolution in order to stem the tide of the Maoist rebellion.21

In order to rally the party behind the Burdwan Resolution
it was decided that the State Committee of the party should not hold its next meeting in Andhra but in Calcutta, where it would be relatively safe from the splittist activities of the Maoists. The meeting was crucial, and was attended by 5 members of the Politbureau to make sure that some 10 Maoists on the 25-member committee submitted to the Burdwan decisions. The report on the splittist activities of the Maoists was presented by Secretary of the Andhra State Committee, M. Hanumantha Rao. However, the Maoist participants of the meeting, who had presented the Andhra line at Burdwan, rejected now its verdict, insisted that their line was correct, refused to accept responsibility for splitting the party in the state, and refused to line up behind the central leadership. The meeting broke up in a complete disagreement.

As the next step, the Politbureau decided that the Maoists should be isolated from the ranks by an explanatory campaign which would be organized in Andhra. However, a meeting of members of the District Committee was boycotted by the left elements upon the instructions of the Maoist leaders. The next stage of the battle took place at the meeting of the State Committee in Andhra, when the Maoists objected to the implementation of instruction of the Politbureau about the decisions of the Burdwan Plenum. And when the State Committee decided to go ahead with their implementation, the Maoists announced that they had resigned from the Secretariat.

However, the explanatory campaign decided upon by the State Committee was finally mounted, but was sabotaged in those districts in which the Maoists controlled the District Committees. The final break came when the Maoists started to organize their own groups, held public meetings at which their new line was explained, and when they distributed leaflets urging the party members to revolt against the official leadership and join the rebels. These leaders “individually and collectively carried on factional and anti-party activities, incited their followers to do the same and violated party discipline”.

Moreover, when approached with requests to stop this activity, they demanded that steps must be taken first to revoke the orders of the Politbureau on the implementation of the Burdwan party line. When the State Committee authorized the Secretariat to take action against them if they persisted in the factional acti-
vities, the leadership of the Maoists issued a press statement in which it incited the entire party to revolt against the "revisionist" leadership. As no more action against them could be delayed, the Secretariat expelled, on June 16, 1968, 10 out of 25 members of the State Committee; among them were Nagi Reddy, Pulla Reddy, and one member of the Central Committee of the CPI(M), D. Venkateshwar Rao.

After this, the split was carried out on the district level, where the Maoists had been firmly entrenched, and where hundreds of them were expelled. The District Committees were then reorganized and composed of those who stood behind the Burdwan policy.

This polarization within the leadership of the CPI(M) then paved the way for mass defection of the ranks, particularly because the rebel leaders took with them the entire lower level party organizations in certain areas. It has been estimated that out of 15,000 members of the CPI(M) in Andhra, some 6,000 had separated themselves and went over to the new party.²⁸

It was in Andhra that the CPI(M) suffered the largest defection. At the beginning of 1969 the membership of the CPI(M) had dropped to 9,048 from 16,000 before the split in 1967. This was a loss of 7,000 members, who went over to the Maoist line. Of these 7,000, some 3,000 are actively engaged in organizing the revolutionary activity in the state.

The third largest group of defectors was evident in West Bengal. In 24-Parghanas the membership dropped from 3,854 in 1967 to 3,398 by the end of 1968, which was 12 per cent. In Calcutta DC, the defection amounted to 27 per cent; Burdwan 19 per cent; Howrah 21 per cent; Hooghly 24 per cent; Midnapore 24 per cent; Birbhum 24 per cent; Bankura 18 per cent; Malda 17 per cent; West Dinapur 12 per cent; Nadia 27 per cent; Jalpaiguri 34 per cent; Cooch Behar 37 per cent; Purulia 53 per cent; Darjeeling 4 per cent; and Murshidabad 4 per cent. The defections ranged from 54 per cent to 4 per cent, averaging for the whole state of West Bengal 19 per cent. The strength of the CPI(M) was reduced from 16,393 members in 1976 before the split to some 13,233 members at the end of 1968; the 3,000 defectors went over to the Maoist line.

Another major defection took place in Kashmir, where the
entire membership of the party of 700 went over to the revolutionary strategy.

In the rest of the states, the defections were relatively minor: Kerala 1,500 (5 per cent); Punjab, 2 per cent; and Madras 3 per cent.

On the whole, the party registered a serious loss of membership since its VII Congress. At the time of that Congress in 1965 it had in its ranks 119,000 members and candidates; before the split in 1967 this dropped to 82,000; and by the end of 1968 it was further reduced to 76,425. This was a loss of 43,000, or some 33 per cent. Majority of deserters went over to the revolutionary strategy, who represent a great reservoir of recruits for the Maoist party.

In Memory of Lenin

The third Communist Party of India was not born with a big bang, as had been its mother organization, the CPI(M), at the Tenali convention in July 1964. The Maoist party has, in fact, several beginnings at different places.

The first attempt to rally the radical splinter groups, which had separated themselves during summer and fall of 1967 from the CPI(M) in West Bengal, was made in Calcutta on November 12, 1967, when Mishra, Satyanarayan Singh, Charu Mazumdar, Kanu Sanyal, Asit Sen and others, had established the Co-ordinating Committee of Revolutionaries of the CPI(M). As the title indicates, the rebels merely claimed to represent the revolutionary wing of the CPI(M), and there was no attempt to launch a separate party at this stage. However, the first step in this direction was the inauguration of their independent publications, the Liberation and the Deshbrati. The decision to establish the rebels as a separate party was made on November 22, 1967, when Mazumdar started to function as Secretary-General.

The next stream of rebels working in the direction of co-ordinating the activities of various insurgent groups emerged in Andhra. It will be recalled that the Girijan Sanghams had been organizing a peasant and tribal militia in Palakonda, and that by the end of 1967 the movement had reached a sweep and extent which led to the establishment of the first “liberated area” in Andhra in the Srikakulam District. An intensive fighting took
place after October 31, 1967 as a result of murder of two Communist tribal militants at Levidi village.

Following this, the government dispatched armed police into the area on March 3, 1968 and, after much fighting in which machine guns were used, the movement was suppressed. The tribals and their Communist leaders offered a particularly stiff resistance in the Pedakarja village, where two Communist organizers were killed. Commenting upon the temporary defeat of the movement, the leadership of the Naxalites, as the rebels now became known, regretted that "if we could have organized the people's guerrilla lines we would have seen the effect. But we were not prepared for resistance". The leadership blamed the CPI(M) for the failure to prepare the party for an armed struggle, and particularly Sundarayya came in for heavy criticism.

The task of arming the party for the armed struggle and taking the necessary steps for reshaping the organization to suit the needs should have been completed by the time the repression on us started. The then conditions were also favourable to this task: yet we could not complete the task. Renegade Sundarayya and his clique were the main causes of our failure. Due to confidence in him we could not see through the treachery of this clique.

After this debacle, the militants established a Secretariat and a Co-ordinating Committee in Vijayawada on July 2, 1968, in order to rally the isolated groups of rebels in Andhra and evolve a common strategy. At a press conference on the same day their leader, Nagi Reddy and two of his colleagues who had been expelled from the CPI(M) on June 16, 1968, declared that the Secretariat and the Committee had been set up in order to provide a rallying point for the revolutionaries operating in various parts of the state.

As far as the policies of the new groups were concerned, Reddy said that their movement would make use of, and exploit, the parliamentary institutions only to demonstrate that there was no other but a revolutionary way to power. First, however, the people must be educated in a militant spirit before actual revolutionary activities could be mounted on a significant scale. Reddy attacked the leadership of the CPI(M) for its hostile posture toward China and its failure to see that in the existing
situation China was the real centre of world revolution. Reddy further said that within a year an all-India party of Revolutionary Communists would be formed.

This line was quite different from the position taken by the Co-ordinating Committee of West Bengal, the leaders of which had said that there was no need to establish immediately a new party hierarchy as no revolutionary party could be set up from top; it must emerge out of sharp class struggles. In fact, there was a faint hostility between the centre in West Bengal and the one in Andhra, evident in the criticism of Charu Mazumdar of the Andhra militants who, according him, should have broken away from the revisionist CPI(M) a long time before.

Following the formal establishment of the Co-ordinating Committee the Andhra Naxalites evolved a strategy of guerrilla warfare which was announced on November 25, 1968 and immediately implemented.

After giving training we prepared the guerrilla squads to help the people's initiative in seizing the properties of the landlords, to help intensify people's desire to annihilate the class enemies and to help implement the programme of November 25, 1968... Exploiting classes in the country began to tremble. More special armed police were sent to the Agency area. They began to intensify the repressions, which had already started on a much bigger way. We began to resist the police bands on the line of the guerrilla struggle. At that time we used the guerrilla squads formed previously. Only one squad moved actively. 27

This was a small beginning of the armed struggle, and its extent, one month after its initiation, as it stood at the end of December 1968. However, since then the movement grew in intensity and scope.

But now, the situation is different. Militant peasants from the villages are coming forward with great enthusiasm to join the guerrilla squads. The number of squads which are quite active is increasing day by day. We have made many new changes in the organization of the squads. After our taking up the gun there was great enthusiasm among the people. 28

In the spring months of 1969 the Naxalite movement has
spread from the forest areas into the plains where the houses of landlords were looted and burned and land seized. The territorial base is in the Srikkakulum District, from which the movement has spread early in 1969 to the forest area of the districts of Khammam and Warangal, where some 20 armed attacks have been carried out. According to a report of June 17, 1969, the base of the movement was located in Parvatipuram, Palakonda, and Pathapatnam tahsils of Srikkakulum District, which the state government declared as "disturbed areas" under the Andhra Pradesh Suppression of Disturbances Act. 29

The next move was made by the Naxalites of West Bengal, who organized from April 19 to 22, 1969, the First Plenary Session of the All-India Co-ordinating Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, and adopted a Political Resolution as the main guiding line of the new party. The plenum concluded by the formation of the new party in April 22, 1969, and issued the following Communique:

The All-India Co-ordinating Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, which met in a plenary session from 19th to 22nd April 1969, announced the formation of the revolutionary party, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), based on the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung on 22nd April 1969, the one hundredth birthday of great Lenin—a task it set itself eighteen months ago, in November 1967.30

The new party was then publicly launched at a mass meeting held at the Maidan in Calcutta on May Day 1969, presided over by Asit Sen, at which Sanyal, Mazumdar, Jangal Santhal, and other leaders, officiated. While Sanyal and Santhal are the main organizing forces behind the new party, Charu Mazumdar is considered its Secretary-General and chief ideologue.

Spelling out the policies of the new party on the May Day, Sanyal said that this would not have any permanent headquarters in this stage, but "a village headquarters... which will shift according to the needs of the revolutionary peasants' struggle". Quoting Mao's dictum that political power grows out of the barrel of gun, Sanyal added that the past experience clearly indicated that revolution in India was possible only "through the path shown by Chairman Mao".

The Political Resolution of the CPI (M-L) was published in the
May 1969 issue of the monthly official journal of the party Liberation.

The resolution congratulates the party on the correctness of its militant policy, because the events of the last 18 months since the CPI(M-L) had repudiated the "neo-revisionist line" of the CPI(M) had proved "beyond any doubt that the line of rejecting the parliamentary path and adopting the path of revolutionary struggle is wholly correct". The reason is that the Indian revolution at this stage is "a democratic revolution of a new type—the people’s democratic revolution—the main content of which is the agrarian revolution, the abolition of feudalism in the countryside."31

The resolution attacks the two rival parties, the CPI and the CPI(M), for their policy of class betrayal, and for co-operating in the coalition governments in Kerala and West Bengal. These governments, by limiting themselves to "providing relief to the people", had blunted the consciousness of the people and diverted them from the revolution.

The main line of the new party is expressed in the paragraph which says that the CPI(M-L) must take upon itself the chief responsibility of organising the peasantry and advancing toward the seizure of power through armed struggle. To fulfill this task, the Revolutionary Communist Party must study Chairman Mao’s thought, for it is only Chairman Mao’s thought that can bring the peasants into the revolutionary front, and Chairman Mao’s theory of people’s war is the only means by which an apparently weak revolutionary force can wage a successful struggle against an apparently powerful enemy and can win victory. The basic tactics of the struggle of the revolutionary peasantry led by the working class is guerrilla warfare. We must bear in mind the Chairman’s teaching: Guerrilla warfare is basic, but lose no chance for mobile warfare under favourable conditions.

Our tactics as described by Comrade Lin Piao are: ‘You fight in your way and we fight in ours: we fight when we can win and move away when we can’t.’ The task of the party of the working class is not merely to master these tactics but also to rally all the other revolutionary classes behind the basic programme of the agrarian revolution.32
The resolution then glorifies the armed struggle which had been waged by the Communists in Telengana between 1946-1951. It endorses the strategy known as the Andhra Thesis, which had been defeated by Ranadive at the Second Congress of the CPI in 1948, who had steered the Communist Party toward a "Trotskyite theory of accomplishing both the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution at one stroke".33

The resolution of the CPI(M-L) thus repudiates all policies which the CPI had followed for the past 20 years since its Second Congress of 1948, and calls for return to the glorious Telengana days.

Peking bestowed its formal recognition upon the new party by the Hsinhua Agency carrying almost the full text of the Political Resolution adopted by the CPI(M-L) at its first and secret Plenary Meeting of April 1969.

In the meantime, the party had made a major effort to organize a revolutionary base in the Terai District of Uttar Pradesh and in the Siliguri sub-division of the Darjeeling District. This is evident from the following report published in the Deshbrati and the Liberation and quoted by the Peking Review on May 16, 1969.

A convention of militants had been held in Siliguri, which adopted the following programme of revolutionary action: (1) establish the authority of the Peasant Committees, or local Soviets, in all matters of the village; (2) get organized and be armed in order to crush the resistance of landlords and rural reactionaries, (3) smash the landlord’s monopoly of ownership of land and redistribute the land anew through the Peasant Committees. The convention further declared that the peasant’s struggle against feudalism would have to face repressions by all reactionaries “be it Indira Gandhi’s government in New Delhi or the United Front government in West Bengal”. In view of this, all these repressions must be resisted by force of arms and by carrying on a protracted struggle.34

The extent of the rebellion is evident from the following report on the activities of Naxalites in the Siliguri area. Almost all villages had organized themselves from the end of March to the end of April 1967. While in the past the membership of the Kisan Sabha (peasant organizations) could not be increased beyond 5,000, now the membership jumped to 40,000. Some
15 to 20,000 peasants have been engaged, on a full time basis, in organizing the Peasant Committees, which function as local Soviets, in all villages. During a period of one and a half month the revolutionary peasants had "formed peasant committees through hundreds of group meetings and turned these committees into armed village defence groups. In a word, they organized about 90 per cent of village population".

Furthermore, the Naxalite movement was proud that the revolutionary activities had united all peasants irrespective of their "nationality, religion, language and caste". According to the report, the militant movement in the Siliguri area had accomplished the following tasks: (1) declaration of policy had been made that all land which was not owned and tilled by peasants themselves would be redistributed by the peasant committees; (2) public meetings had been held at which all legal deeds and documents relating to the land ownership had been burned; (3) all agreements had been declared null and void relating to the mortgage of land and bullocks, as well as to the huge burden of interest imposed upon them which the peasants had been "forced into" by landlords and money-lenders; (4) rice, food supplies and other commodities, which had been hoarded by the landlords, were seized and distributed; (5) "notorious" landlords had been tried and sentenced to death; (6) the "ruffian elements and flunkeys of the landlords" had been tried and some of them paraded through streets with fool's caps on their heads; (7) the rebels had armed themselves with traditional weapons like bows, arrows and spears, as well as with guns forcibly taken from the landlords, and organized armed militia groups; (8) night watch had been arranged, dacoity and theft punished, and schools brought under the control of the peasant committees; (9) in every area a revolutionary committee had been set up to represent the peasant's political power; (10) the "bourgeois laws and law courts" had been declared null and void in the villages. The only valid laws were the "decisions of the revolutionary committees".

The report further said that a new political power can be established by arousing and arming the peasants, by organizing guerrilla groups, by creating liberated areas, by building a regular armed force, and by protecting and expanding this force. "Such a political power, no matter in how small an area it is
established, is the embryo of the future people's democratic state power in India”.

Regarding the future, the report unfolded the following perspective of the activities of the Marxist-Leninist party:

We have learnt from the experience of our struggle (in the Terai District, ed.) that the armed groups formed after arousing the people in the villages and arming them will become the village defence groups.

We must acquire knowledge of guerrilla warfare by arming the peasants with traditional weapons (bows and arrows, spears, etc.) and by organizing assaults upon the class enemies.

We are to build up liberated zones gradually by forming peasant guerrilla groups and by carrying on their activities. It would not be possible either to form guerrilla groups or to carry on their activities for long, if we do not, at the same time, persevere in building liberated zones also. We must lay utmost stress on building a people’s armed force. To build a people's armed force we must form centrally organized groups of armed guerrillas. These, we think, will be the embryo of the people's armed forces.

In some other areas, again, we may try to organize armed peasant revolts and build the people's armed force comprising those peasants who have risen in revolt.35

This then was a blueprint of “people's power” for India, which drew from Russian as well as Chinese experience. By combining the legislative, executive and judicial functions the People's Committee represented the revolutionary power in the form of local Soviets, and this drew upon Russian experience. And in using psychological terror and public humiliation by parading the “class enemies” in dunce's caps through streets, the Naxalites obviously drew upon the Chinese cultural revolution for inspiration.

The most astonishing aspect of the Naxalite movement is its rapid spread to all parts of India. The Home Ministry’s estimate, based upon the assessment of the Central Intelligence Bureau, presented the following picture on May 14, 1969.36

In West Bengal, one third of the CPI(M) membership, some 5,000 militants, had joined the new movement. They are well entrenched in the strategically important Jalpaiguri region
bordering Nepal, Tibet and East Pakistan. They are also influential among the urban population, particularly students and trade unions.

In Andhra, some 6,000 extremists are committed to a Naxalbari line of militant action. The main centre of their activities is the Srikakulam Agency.

In Bihar, the Naxalites are quite active in as many as ten districts, namely Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Ranchi, Dhanbad, Palamou, North Monghyr, Gaya, Shahabad, Singhbhum, and Bhagalpur. They also penetrated in a significant way into the tribal areas of North Bihar, where a movement is under way for a separate Hill State.

The Naxalites have been paying special attention in Uttar Pradesh to the hill and jungle tracts bordering Nepal. The Bharaich District and the Terai District are considered an ideal environment for organizing successfully a tribal-agrarian rebellion.37

In Kashmir, the entire party of 700 went over to the Maoist line.

It is estimated that out of the total of 24,000 members of the CPI(M) in Kerala, at least 4,000 have joined the Naxalite movement. This is rapidly gaining ground in several districts of Kerala. Namboodiripad is under extreme fire for “betraying” the cause of Marxism-Leninism and for being a “stooge of Soviet revisionism and Indian imperialism”.

From the speed with which the Naxalite movement is spreading to all parts of India it can be concluded that objective conditions really exist in India for an armed uprising, its dynamism to be fed by twin forces of the national and tribal unrest on the one hand and the agrarian upsurge on the other.

This fact has been well recognized by both rival Communist parties, which behind an ideological smoke-screen of criticism and disagreement respect the healthy vigour of the new party. A meeting of the National Council of the CPI, held in New Delhi from April 5 to 12, 1969, called for co-operation with the Marxist-Leninist Party in order to build a unity of the Communist ranks in India.38

A similar recognition was accorded by Jyoti Basu, Deputy Chief Minister of the coalition government of West Bengal, who rejected a demand that the CPI(M-L) be banned or dealt with
"legally"; he said that his party would deal with the rebels politically instead.\textsuperscript{39}

That India is pregnant with revolutionary possibilities is evident from the fact that both rival parties are organizing their own militia, to prepare for the time when the centre would be sufficiently weak to initiate an armed assault upon it. The CPI had organized a camp for training its militia in Chammankhadi near Chatrapur, in Orissa. The training was under the command of Laksham Mahapatra, member of the state assembly, who had been a Police Sub-Inspector in 1952 before joining the party. Two instructors had arrived from Delhi and two from West Bengal. Some 38 volunteers had joined the camp for a two-week course.\textsuperscript{40}

The CPI(M) already has its own militia, in red and white uniforms, particularly active in West Bengal. When Jyoti Basu visited the Kilvenmani village on June 28, 1969 to lay the foundation stone to a memorial for the 42 peasants who had been burned alive in December 1967, several hundreds of Red Guards, armed with lathis, functioned as his personal bodyguard. The state police was pushed aside and the security function was taken over by the Red Guards.\textsuperscript{41} Similar groups of Red Guards exist in other parts of India.

\textbf{NOTES}


\textsuperscript{2} “Mobilize Nation Against Imperial Menace”, \textit{People’s Democracy}, Vol. 3, No. 17, April 25, 1967, p. 5.


\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Why the Ultra-Left Deviation; An Examination of the Basic Causes of Left Defections in Special Reference to Andhra}, adopted by the Central Committee, Calcutta, October 5-9, 1968, (The Communist Party of India (M): Calcutta, 1968), pp. 34-5.

\textsuperscript{5} Political-Organizational Report, VIII Congress, 1968, (op. cit.), p. 170.

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9 *Loc. cit.*
11 *Central Committee Resolutions*, adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (M), Madurai, August 18-27, 1967, pp. 1-2.
17 The following narrative is based upon the *Political-Organizational Report*, VIII Congress, 1968, (op. cit.), pp. 277 and ff.
18 *Ideological Resolution*, adopted by the Central Plenum of the CPI (M), Burdwan, April 5-12, 1968.
19 The following narrative is based upon the *Political-Organizational Report*, VIII Congress, 1968, (op. cit.), pp. 235 and ff.

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CHAPTER XIII

PROSPECTS

One of the most significant, and in its consequences most far-reaching, developments since the Fourth General Elections of 1967 was the split of the Congress Party in the fall of 1969, and the subsequent loss of majority of its government in the Lok Sabha. This event, long awaited for by Indian Communists and Moscow, had three main consequences.

First, it propelled the country onto a threshold of coalition politics at the centre which, undoubtedly, will bring in its train the unsavoury bargaining and horse-trading, alliances and counter-alliances, compromise in principle and lure of opportunism, and periods of dangerous immobility, drift and legislative and executive paralysis for which Kerala has been known for the past twenty years.

Second, the split resulted in a serious erosion of federal legislative and executive powers, particularly in the field of internal security. The government had to permit the lapse of the Preventive Detention Act on December 31, 1969, due to the lack of support to put it through the Lok Sabha, depending on the support of both Communist Parties as it was which opposed it.

Three, the split of the Congress Party opened a possibility for the Communist movement in India, first time in its history, realistically to contemplate the strategic and tactical manoeuvres leading, ultimately, to the seizure of central organs of state. The split of the Congress thus ushered in an entirely new era for the Communist movement in India by placing on the agenda, and within its reach, the prospect of siege of the centre. This prospect liberated the movement from the narrow confines of local and provincial politics, added a new dimension to its outlook, and will dominate its activities during the years to come.

The general crisis of the Congress Party, caused mainly by indiscipline and defections, intensified after the elections of
1967. While at that time the Congress had been reduced to a minority party in six states but had won majorities in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana, the Congress governments collapsed in these three states after the elections due to factionalism and defections. Thus soon after the elections of 1967 the Congress had lost its dominant position in nine states, the people of which accounted for more than half of the total population of the country. The general malady of the Congress was further evident from the returns of the mid-term elections held in West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab early in 1969, where factional struggle within that party dominated the polls. West Bengal appeared irretrievably lost for the Congress Party by the victory of the government of the left united front, dominated by the CPI(M) as in 1967.

Thus early in 1970 India has entered a decade of development during which the sharing of power at the centre by the Communists, as a transitional step, appears a possible prospect, judging in terms of the past performance of the Communist movement in that country during the two decades since independence in 1947.

At the end of the first decade, in 1957, a Communist base, an Indian Yenan, has been established in Kerala. There the fundamental aspects of the strategy of united front, and other theoretical and organizational innovations, have been pioneered with special reference to the indigenous political culture and then successfully applied.

At the end of the second decade, in 1967, two Yenans have been functioning in India, one in Kerala and the other in West Bengal. In the latter state further and more significant innovations have been pioneered, particularly regarding (a) the techniques of bringing under the operational control of the CPI(M) the Naxalite movement; (b) neutralization of the police; (c) making use of the state apparatus for party purposes; (d) harnessing the agrarian and tribal unrest to the promotion of party objectives; (e) building party's own armed militia and, above all, (f) the techniques and instrumentalities to be used against the centre to weaken its effectiveness specially in the area of security operations.

The split of the Congress Party in the fall of 1969 has ushered in an era of coalition politics in the states and at the centre, and
injected a new and crucial time element into the situation which might substantially shorten the processes which in the past have taken years and decades to mature in Kerala and West Bengal. Broadly, three possible courses for the Communist movement in India can be visualized.

First, the split of the Congress incalculably enhances the possibility of emergence of a Communist-left Congress alignment and the formation of a Transitional Government in New Delhi, called for by Dange, as well as the establishment of similar and other types of left united front governments in the states as a result of 1972 general elections. This is the expectation of the CPI.

Second, and a less likely course, there is the possibility that important structural changes in the states and at the centre would be attained by the application of prolonged Communist-led mass actions based upon the exploitation of the agrarian and tribal unrest. These mass actions would essentially aim at political objectives and concessions to be wrested from the state governments and the centre, and would be escalated and toned down according to the needs of the situation. This is the strategy of the CPI(M).

The third, and quite a remote possibility at the moment and for some years, would appear the prospect of a full-fledged agrarian armed uprising and the setting up of "liberated areas" in some parts of the country, if any of the two above Communist parties would resort to this policy as the major thrust of advance. The experience from West Bengal and Andhra would indicate that the raw material for such a possibility seems to be present in the unsettled agrarian and tribal unrest, and for which some incipient moves have already been made by the third Communist Party, the CPI(M-L). However, on its own, the CPI(M-L) would not be able to escalate this policy to a significant degree of effectiveness.

There is little doubt that all these three strategies and approaches of the three Communist Parties of India will be applied and tested during the coming decade. The events themselves will decide which of them would yield best results, making the allies and adversaries alike in the states and at the centre go through the agony of negotiating today and fighting tomorrow. This simultaneous application of the three strategies, escalating
one while toning down the others and *vice versa*, will create a confusing picture and place a tremendous strain on all involved. The Communist parties themselves will be seriously strained, either doggedly holding on to their positions, or shifting grounds according to the flow and ebb of the situation, co-operating in some areas while fighting in others. The general infighting of all political parties involved might be so intense and consuming that it might affect India's foreign policy postures and diminish her role in world events as the internal feud goes on and intensifies and India turns inward.

In contemplating the possibility of the Communists sharing power at the centre during the coming decade two interesting questions arise.

First, what kind of Communism would India feature? Would it be characterized by a long period of transition, lasting perhaps several decades, from the Transitional Government through the Government of National Democracy to the People's Democratic Government, during which process the old forms would be gradually and painlessly remoulded and replaced by hybrid and new forms, and in which the genius of the Indian people for compromise and accommodation would mould Communism into a new and its own cast? A hypothesis for such a form of Communism has already been advanced in which the traditional values would indelibly brand all Communist forms and mould them into new and indigenous shapes.

Or would the control of the federal instruments of power, particularly during the stage of People's Democracy, usher in an era of their merciless use against foes and friends alike, and impose upon the country a modern totalitarian dictatorship for which the zealot Communist regimes of People's Democracy elsewhere have been so sadly known?

Obviously, much would depend upon the processes and instrumentalities through which the Communists would be propelled to sharing power at the centre, for the residual influence of such processes and instrumentalities would play a decisive role in shaping the forms and styles and conditioning of the regime.

In thinking in terms of decades one must bear in mind the galloping developments within the Soviet Union, the Communist countries of East Central Europe and even China which clearly, though haltingly, push toward the democratization and general
humanization of their regimes. It is quite possible that by the time India reaches the stage of the People's Democracy, in a decade or two, the doctrinal as well as practical needs of Marxism for monopoly of power and dictatorship of the proletariat would be substantially weakened. The reason is that the general trend in the Communist countries, though incipient, is toward genuine coalitions and sharing power, as these are thought to be more effective in mobilizing the national resources, are human and civilized and far less expensive in terms of over-all social cost than the naked dictatorships of the Stalinist era. It was to this position, of sharing power and a genuine coalition, that Dubcek's regime had evolved, although a decade or so prematurely, in the spring of 1968.  

In this case, and decades from now, the Indian Communists might be genuinely interested in the preservation of the national coalition in the form of the National Democratic Government, and might not see the need for pushing toward monopoly of power, dictatorship and toward the People's Democracy. Of course, the key question is whether a Stalinist type of dictatorship could be at all imposed upon the Indian people, given the vastness and diversity of the land, strong regional pulls and characteristics, complexity of social fabric, deeply imbedded traditional values and institutions, and martial groups like the Punjabis.

And even if a Stalinist type of dictatorship were imposed upon India to develop her, the central question is whether this could provide a viable and meaningful alternative to development and modernization, in fact quite impressive and promising considering the magnitude of her problems, which are evident under the existing system of parliamentary democracy. Judging from the performance of the Communist systems in the Soviet Union, China and elsewhere, it is on the agricultural front that these regimes are singularly ineffective, and have to depend upon large quantities of imports of grain to feed their people. It is quite possible that the application of Soviet agricultural methods in India, in a country in which some 80 per cent of people are engaged in farming, would not only fail to solve her food problem but might result in famines unparalleled in magnitude. And even the Soviet model of industrial development, considered not only in terms of total social cost but also in terms of its results as
analysed by Brzezinski, is clearly no answer to India’s problems. The second important question is what impact India, under a Government of National Democracy, would have upon her immediate neighbours, the regional balance of power and, finally, the relations of the three super-powers—the Soviet Union, China and the United States. There is no doubt that incorporation of India into the sphere of Soviet hegemony, as a result of the establishment of the Government of National Democracy, would create an entirely new alignment in South Asia, for this would seal the southern flank of the Soviet Union stretching from Calcutta to Cairo and beyond. The control over such a vast expanse would fulfil the historical propensity inherent in the geopolitical position of Russia—reiterated for the Soviet Government by Molotov to Hitler in 1940 while discussing the allocation of spheres of influence, which had already been pursued by the Tsars Catherine and Paul—that the ultimate territorial expansion of Russia’s influence lies in the direction of the Persian Gulf and India.

In West Bengal, Assam and the NEFA, Moscow’s influence would be touching upon the interests of Peking, and their interaction in that part of India would much depend upon the state of the Sino-Soviet relations.

The fall of India under Soviet hegemony would create an entirely new situation in South-east Asia by bringing the three super powers into a face-to-face confrontation in that area, reopen the question of the withdrawal of American troops from there, and propel the states of the region into a centre of great power rivalry. This aspect of the developments in India is frequently overlooked in current discussions of the future of South-east Asia after the withdrawal of the British in 1971, the extension of war from Vietnam to Laos and Cambodia, and the reduction of American military posture in the area.

This international aspect of the National Democracy would deprive India of her freedom of action in foreign policy operations and impose upon her a neo-colonial servitude only a few decades after shaking off centuries of foreign rule. It would cast a serious shadow upon her ability to maintain her independent existence, given the enormous resources, as a modern national state playing its rightful and independent role in the international arena, somehow reminding India’s status under the
hegemony of the Afghan and Turkish dynasties. It is the ultimate objective of Moscow's grand strategy to reduce India to such a status of dependency, redefined in terms of contemporary idiom, euphemistically already now called "special relationship", in which India would function on the periphery of a vast geopolitical complex based upon Central Asia, protecting its inner frontier. Soviet scholars are hard at work in carrying out research into that period of India's history when she had been a part of the Central Asia complex in order to provide a historical justification for her return to that alignment.

In addition, there is the possibility that the requirements of the Soviet grand strategy vis-a-vis China and the United States would dictate to a great extent also the domestic policies of the National Democratic Government in New Delhi, irrespective of the domestic needs. India thus would have to discharge her new "international obligations" at a great cost to herself and pay for the security of Soviet umbrella. While it is certain that Moscow would not be able to exploit India to the magnitude extracted from its friends and allies in East Central Europe, Moscow already now can apply an immense pressure upon India as is evident from the negotiations for the "wagon deal" and the "Trivandrum Affair", which border on a serious infringement of her sovereignty, and from other aspects of Indo-Soviet relations in trade, aid, armament deals and cultural exchanges.

There is little doubt that the Soviet Union—because of its enormous manipulative power to structure suitable alignments in India and interfere in her internal processes through the CPI and other instrumentalities, which has increased so greatly in the past few years, and because of its geopolitical position and drive to incorporate India into the sphere of its own influence—will emerge during the decade as the major threat to India's internal freedom and external independence. At this moment India does not seem to appreciate this danger, as the "special relationship" with the Soviet Union over the years has emasculated her of the Kautilyan reflexes which are so essential for the national survival of any people.

In contemplating the possibility of the Communists sharing power at the centre during the coming decade a question must be asked whether this is an "inevitable development", to the extent social processes can be "inevitable". If the experience of
Kerala during the past twenty years is of any guide, then the conclusion is on hand that it is not so.

Enough evidence has been produced in this volume to demonstrate that it was the gross indiscipline of the Congress leadership, its suicidal propensities, its lack of foresight to structure suitable alignments in good time to rally the dissenters, the middle forces and the like-minded parties into new combinations, and to pay the political price for this by sharing power, which had opened Kerala to the establishment of Communist hegemony. The political history of Kerala since 1954 is a graveyard of lost opportunities for providing the state with a new structure in the wake of the dissolution of the Congress Party due to factional struggle, and for evolving a machinery of political and social change and modernization which could have effected the transition from the Congress-hegemony type of politics to a coalition type of politics, from old to new forms, while preserving the basic forms and ethos of parliamentary democracy.

This study has found no significant correlation between the great poverty in Kerala and unemployed intelligentsia on the one hand, and the rise of the Communist movement to power on the other. In fact, the study has demonstrated the obverse to the effect that the people by and large have not deserted the Congress Party whatever the shortcomings of its policies and in spite of the agonizing experience of political instability and economic underdevelopment.

The following figures speak for themselves. In the last elections to the Kerala State Assembly, held in 1967, both Congress groups polled creditable 45.11 per cent of votes, but won merely 10.53 per cent of seats. A similar result was obtained by both parties in the elections to the Lok Sabha, where they polled almost 40 per cent of votes but secured one seat out of 19, a mere 5.25 per cent. Thus over 40 per cent of people have not lost confidence in the Congress and stood faithfully by in Kerala. The two Communist parties, on the other hand, during the same elections to the State Assembly polled 30.86 per cent of votes but won 53.50 per cent of seats. Similarly in the elections to the Lok Sabha both parties collected 31.32 per cent of votes but 63.15 per cent of seats. Also in West Bengal both Congress groups won impressive following of 51.28 per cent in 1967 and 49.47 in 1969,
while the government was lost to the left united front under the leadership of the CPI(M).

The reason for this disparity between the impressive mass following of the Congress and its meagre number of seats won, the effective source of political powers, is the fact that the Congress was unable to give effect, through coalition politics, to the mass base it commands. There is no mystery, nothing inexorable, behind the rise of Communism in Kerala and West Bengal but a supreme craftsmanship and the maximization of a moderate popular support through the calculus of coalition politics.

And this analysis holds true for the entire country, where between 1957-1962 the Congress had commanded over 40 per cent of popular votes. The shattering defeats which the party suffered during the elections of 1967 in terms of seats won, and in the by-elections of 1969, were mainly due to indiscipline, defections and suicidal and outdated strategy of fighting the elections alone and in isolation, while permitting the opposition parties to combine against it. Thus should this electoral strategy continue a situation might be created in the years to come in which the country could be ruled by a Communist-dominated coalition while the vast majority of people opposed such a combination as in Kerala and West Bengal.

The split of the Congress in the fall of 1969, precisely as a result of the defeats suffered in the mid-term polls early in that year and over the question with whom coalitions should be formed, whether with the parties on the right or the left, will make impossible for the Congress to reclaim the lost ground in the 1972 elections, although reunification of the two wings must not be entirely ruled out, if not at the centre at least at some levels.

The most likely perspective is that both Congress rivals might go to the polls in 1972 at the head of two coalitions, which might have national as well as state ramifications, the left-Congress leading a centre-left group while the Organization Congress heading a centre-right alignment. In some states the grand coalitions might penetrate each other and exchange partners due to local conditions, forming new configurations the shape of which is hard to foresee. As a concomitant, there is every possibility that other political parties might split at various levels, like the SSP and PSP, one faction gravitating toward the
left Congress while the other willing to work with the Organization Congress. Such a general erosion of political parties might lead during the years to an excessive balkanization and usher in periods of great instability both in the states and at the centre in which no majority governments could be formed. This situation will pose the great and delicate constitutional question of redefining the "discretionary and residual powers" of the President and State Governors to hold the central and state administrations functioning either through minority governments, Presidential Rule, or other arrangements, until majority governments could be formed. In such periods of crisis the central organs of state power, such as the army, the Central Reserve Police and others, will be called upon to play the key role.

While the foundation for a centre-left coalition has been laid in Kerala during the manoeuvres for putting into power the CPI’s government in November 1969, the Organization Congress has been exploring with the Swatantra Party, the Jana Sangh and others in February 1970 the possibility of a common programme on which basis electoral adjustments and alignments could be formed. There is no doubt that the Organization Congress can forge an equally effective alignment as its rival and, perhaps, even better. If the past experience is any guide then Table XXXVIII, giving the strength of political parties in the State Assemblies, indicates that after the last elections in 1967 the country was in a centre-right mood, with the Jana Sangh (262) and the Swatantra (253) controlling 515 seats, against the combined strength of the two Communist parties amounting to 296 seats, the CPI(M) having 165 while the rival party 131. Similarly was the mood reflected in the party position in the Lok Sabha, as Table XXXIX shows.

The crucial battles between the two grand coalitions in the states would undoubtedly be fought over the allegiance of the SSP (182), the PSP (105), the DMK (158), various Congress splinter groups like the Jana Congress, and a host of regional parties like the Vishal Haryana, Muslim League, Akali Dal, and others.

It will be in the states, through an intensive competition and depending on the nature of alignments formed, that the future of India will be decided, because the dominant national combination at the centre will emerge out of the cauldron of state
Kerala: Yenani of India

politics. The answer to India's future thus lies no more in New Delhi alone but in the state capitals.

However, the discussion of the possible alignments to be formed, the prospects which the 1972 elections might hold for them, and the political landscape which is likely to emerge in the states and at the centre, is beyond the scope of this study.

Yet, the relevance which the experience of Kerala holds for the 1972 elections and, indeed, for the future of the entire country, can hardly be overestimated. If for the Communist forces Kerala represents Yenani where the basic strategic and tactical devices have been pioneered and applied, then for the forces committed to social change and progress under parliamentary democracy Kerala should represent a laboratory of techniques which should have been developed and used and had not been, but which still can be resorted to and applied elsewhere to bring about the desirable alignments and winning combinations to give expression to the people's will and checkmate the Communist calculus of power. Communism in India has been advancing during the past decades not because it represents in the eyes of millions of her poor an intrinsically superior and more efficient model of nation-building and modernization than can be provided by parliamentary democracy, but mainly because of the division of the democratic camp and the ability of the former to maximize power through the united front and coalition politics.

This is the message arising out of the experience of the people of Kerala between 1937 and 1967—out of their misery and sorrow, hopes and triumphs, despair and agony—which has been telescoped into a fast moving panorama and unfolded on these pages.


APPENDIX I

"The policy which we propose to pursue in this respect was outlined as follows in the statement which I made at a press conference on 23rd July 1957":

1. It is admitted on all hands that the role of the police, as understood in the past, has been of a two-fold character: firstly, to help society in tracking down crimes and bringing anti-social elements to book; secondly, to prevent the development of the democratic movement in the country by restricting the activities of, if not totally suppressing, certain democratic political parties.

"This latter role was, in pre-independence days, directed against all the freedom-loving political parties including the Indian National Congress. After independence, it was directed against what are popularly known as Left political parties in general, and particularly against the Communist Party and its friends. The development of the last two years, particularly the result of the recent general elections, have made it abundantly clear that the people do not appreciate this role of the police, whatever the party in power. The government want to make it clear to all concerned that the rights of freedom of speech, press, assembly or organization being the essence of democracy and guaranteed by the Constitution of our Republic, shall be allowed to be exercised by every political party in the country and that the police will not be allowed to use the provisions of law and the duties of maintaining law and order in such a way as to suppress or restrict the democratic activities of any political party whether big or small. Rules and practices which go contrary to this essential basis of a democratic State will be changed.

2. Apart from the question of political parties, there is also the question of the approach to such things as strikes of workers, peasant struggles, students' agitation and such other peoples' movements. It has been the practice of previous governments that at the slightest sign of workers' or peasants' unrest leading to demonstrations, strikes, hartals or satyagraha, the police was
rushed in to help the employers, landlords, etc., to suppress the movements, prohibitory orders were issued, and security proceedings launched, lathi charges and firings were ordered.

"This use of the police for suppressing people's movements has become so normal a feature of our public life that they have come to be considered as part of the 'rule of law'. The government, however, desire to point out that, in such a country as Great Britain, which is considered to be a classic land of the 'rule of law', the police is not allowed to be thus used for the suppression of the people's movements. For decades in the past, one has never heard of firings on strikes or issuing of prohibitory orders and security proceedings against people for participation in strikes and other people's movements even when such movements affected the whole country or the entire line of industries. But they are normally considered inevitable in our country even in a small strike in a small factory or plantation. The government therefore repudiate the charge made against them that their policy of not giving capitalists and landlords the assistance and protection which they have so far been getting in the matter of suppressing the working class' and peasants' struggles is a violation of the rule of law. They, on the other hand, hold the view that such use of the police in favour of the owning classes is a violation of the fundamental rights of the toiling classes—the right of collective bargaining, accompanied by the right to resort to strikes or other forms of peaceful direct action.

"3. The government fail to see why their refusing to use the police in such an anti-people way should 'demoralize' the police personnel, as is made out by several spokesmen of the Congress and other opposition parties, including the General Secretary of the Congress, Shriman Narayan. The policy pursued by the government is only one of restricting the use of the police force in an anti-people way. The government do not desire the slightest weakening of the efficiency and usefulness of the police force in so far as it relates to the suppression of anti-social crimes such as theft, arson, murder, dacoity, etc. The government are, on the other hand, anxious to see that the efficiency and usefulness of the police in this respect is further augmented. They will do all that is within their power to bring about such a strengthening and toning-up of the morale of the police force in discharging its real task.
"4 The government further want to make it clear that their policy of not using the police force in the suppression of the people's movements does not mean any weakening of the role of the police in rendering that protection and assistance to the person and property of the owning classes to which they are entitled as the citizens of the State. The government recognize that the right of the toiling classes to resort to collective bargaining and direct action has certain well-defined limits. The essence of these limits is that the direct action should not do violence either to the person or property of the individuals and families of the owning classes. The government have had reports that, in certain instances, direct action has gone beyond these limits, satyagraha in front of a factory or a plantation, or other institution has, sometimes, gone to the extent of surrounding the houses of the employer or his staff members, preventing them and even their family members from going into or out of their houses for their normal, daily peaceful life. Such practices do obviously go beyond the limits of peaceful direct action. The government hope that all organizations of the working class, and all democratic-minded persons will do their best to avoid such incidents and enable individuals and families to peacefully carry on their normal daily life. However, if these efforts made by the organizations and individuals fail, and the direct action continues to overstep the limits set forth above, the police will have obviously to intervene. The government desire to make it clear that this will be done."

Appendix II

Joint Declaration of Seven Opposition Parties of Kerala
Adopted in Ernakulam on September 16-17, 1966*

Representatives participating in the meeting expressed the view-points of their respective parties on the political situation in India and specially in Kerala, and on the ensuing Fourth General Elections in that background.

As a result of this exchange of views, these parties unanimously decided to take steps to defeat the Congress in these elections, end the political instability in Kerala and form a stable non-Congress Government in the State.

The following will be the general principles for the work of the Government thus formed:

1. Nineteen long years have passed since power in India passed into the hands of the Congress. When they assumed power, they had made many promises, but no major promise has till now been fulfilled. Most of the problems that existed at the time of the attainment of freedom still remain unsolved; many problems which did not exist then have since arisen. The Congress Government has totally failed in finding solutions to these problems. Abnormal rise in price of daily necessities, black-market, food scarcity, unemployment, tax-increases, many other economic difficulties, fast-growing corruption, red-tape in the administration, totalitarian tendencies of the State—all point out to this failure. All this is an inevitable consequence of the political-economic policies being pursued by the Government. Against people who raise their voice against all this, the Government unleashes repression and resorts to Black Laws and thus seeks to suppress civil liberties.

2. One of the grave failures of the Congress Government is

*People's Democracy, Organ of the Communist Party of India (M), Vol. 2, No. 41, October 9, 1966, pp. 6-8.

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seen in the disabilities of the religious minorities, tribal people and the backward communities and in the fact that problems like language get intensified and become national problems. Instead of finding just solutions to these problems, and really unifying the Indian people, what the Congress Ministers and rulers are doing are to make meaningless speeches on "national integration". Congress rule thus stands in the way of the legitimate rights of backward communities and religious and linguistic minorities as well as of Indian unity.

3. Against this background, to reduce to the maximum the representation of the Congress in Parliament and to win a majority in the State Legislature to enable the formation and unobstructed functioning of a democratic non-Congress Government in Kerala, it is decided to contest all the 19 Parliament seats and the 133 Assembly seats in the State with either the candidates of the seven parties or other candidates acceptable to the seven parties. These parties also declare that if they win, they will regulate their legislative activities as needed for the formation of a Government of these parties and to ensure that this Government remains in office for its five-year term.

4. Each of the seven parties thus striving to bring into existence a Government of the Opposition parties in Kerala has its own approach and programme regarding all India problems and international questions. Each party has the right to have its own election manifesto to put forward this approach and programme and, on its basis, to conduct its election campaign. At the same time, these seven parties have a common approach to the lines of administration of the Government to be formed in Kerala. It is on the basis of this approach that the representatives of these parties and others pledged to stand with them will work inside the Legislature. What follows is a general picture of the approach these parties accept to stand together and form a stable Government.

A. Common Approach

Food scarcity, industrial backwardness and consequent unemployment, which are considered to be the "special problems of Kerala" are an index of the all-India policies of the Congress Government. Further, the neglect of Kerala by those who rule
at the Centre, the slavish attitude of the Kerala Congress which
nurseries this neglect, the dog-in-the-manger attitude of the
Congress that if it cannot rule, it will not allow any one else to
rule and as a result of all this, the political instability and admin-
istrative bureaucracy which have continuously existed in Kerala—
these have also further worsened the difficult problems of Keral.

It was for these reasons that Kerala was neglected in the First,
Second and Third Five-Year Plans. To end this situation it is
necessary to form a stable Government in Kerala, for this
Government to advocate strongly the legitimate needs of the
State, to inform the people of the details of these demands and
get them to exert their own pressure on the Centre. A Govern-
ment of these parties would take the necessary steps towards this.

B. Centre-State Relations

The Centre is seeking to gradually deprive the States of even
those powers given by the Constitution and thus cut at the auto-
nomous powers and status of the States. The Government will
strive to defeat this attempt, to win more powers for the State
Government and mobilize people's support for this. It will also
seek the help of other State Governments in this regard.

To remove the economic dependence of the States, it is essen-
tial that the control of the Centre on financial resources is loosened and the States get more powers in this matter.

C. Food Problem

A difficult problem which any Government in Kerala has to
face is the food problem. That it has become so serious is due to
the wrong policies pursued by the Centre. Though this State is
deficit in food production it earns foreign exchange so sorely
needed by the country and as such it is the responsibility of the
Centre to see that its people are not made to starve but enough
foodgrains are provided to meet the needs of the State.

The Government will demand of the Centre to provide in time
all the rice requirements of the State's people at prices within
the capacity of the poor people of Kerala and will seek the co-
operation of the people to exert the necessary pressure on the
Centre. It is our opinion that to solve the food problem, sub-
substantial changes have to be made in the policies at present pursued by the Central Government. For instance, it is necessary to bring wholesale trade in foodgrains into the State sector, ensuring that small traders and co-operative societies are not adversely affected, guarantee fair prices to the cultivating peasants while at the same time organizing distribution in such a way as to make food available to the consumers at low prices. All this cannot be done by a State Government alone, specially the Government in a deficit State like Kerala. What the Kerala Government will do is to exert pressure on the Centre to concede the demand that Kerala should get the rice it needs at low prices.

D. Levy, Price, Distribution

While exerting pressure on the Centre for the above demands, the State Government will take all practical measures within its powers to make food distribution more fair and fruitful. The details of these steps will be decided in consultation with representatives of peasants and consumers. In such consultations what the Government will consider are the following:

(i) Raise the exemption limit for levy;
(ii) Increase the present levy in the case of big cultivators;
(iii) Enhance the price of paddy levied to make it a fair price; (Though the powers of the State Government regarding this are limited, even within this limit peasants can get some benefits.)
(iv) Relaxation in the matter of levy, cancellation of cards, etc., during floods, drought, etc.

E. Food Production and Land Policy

As in the other States, in Kerala also, if the food problem is to be solved, food production has to increase rapidly. Though it may not be possible to bridge the entire deficit gap, it is absolutely essential that efforts are made at least to bring the deficit down by a large extent. The Government is now taking a number of steps on this plea. It is distributing loans to peasants, better seeds and fertilizer, chemicals for destroying pests, etc. There
are co-operative societies for all this as also organizations like the Block.

Such aid will be extended and irregularities in it removed as also the irregularities in levying and collecting water tax.

But the benefits from all these facilities are at present mainly drawn by a handful of rich peasants alone and not the poor and middle peasants who constitute the majority. If this situation is to be changed and the ordinary peasants who are the majority and who need these benefits are to get it, there should be relations of co-operation between the ordinary peasants and the Government. Towards this end, the Government will make efforts to reorganize the schemes of agricultural aid by giving recognition to the organizations of peasants and agricultural labourers where they exist, by helping and encouraging the forming of such organizations where they do not exist and by re-framing the rules of co-operative societies and Blocks to enable poor peasants, agricultural labourers, etc., to get legitimate consideration from these institutions.

Simultaneously with taking such measures to increase agricultural production, it is necessary to reduce rents and give rights on the land to the cultivating peasants so that they can enjoy the fruits of their labour. Many provisions in the land law framed by the Congress Government in 1964 stand in the way of this, and amendments have to be made in that law regarding oral tenancies, fair rent, rent arrears, prevention of evictions, etc. The law should provide for all types of tenants including those occupying homesteads to buy the land they cultivate or occupy and possess them with full rights. The Government will prepare an amending bill to the land law to serve this purpose.

When the land law is so amended, small landlords who do not have their land in their possession and have no other source of income—specially in cases where their tenants are richer than them, will be given special consideration. So also special consideration will be given to lands needed for their day-to-day need by religious institutions like temples, churches, mosques, etc.

But such special consideration should not lead to the eviction of those occupying homesteads.
APPENDIX

F. Distribution of Waste Land and Forest Land

Through distribution to agricultural labourers and poor peasants of cultivable waste lands in the possession of the Government and enforcing by law private owners to cultivate their fallow lands, attempts should be made to increase agricultural production and find some relief to the problem of unemployment. To see that this is done properly Government would consult representatives of peasants and agricultural labourers. Additionally, forest lands not needed for the preservation of forest wealth should also be distributed. Government will reduce to the utmost the eviction of peasants in the name of forest preservation and projects, and in cases where eviction becomes unavoidable, legitimate compensation and rehabilitation facilities will be accorded to those evicted. While protecting Government forests, efforts should be made to take over private forests and include them in forest preservation schemes.

G. Cash Crops

Government will take the necessary steps to give encouragement to those cultivating cash crops.

H. Unsurveyed Land

Speeding up of steps to survey land that has not been surveyed, to even more speedily survey Government land that is now in the possession of peasants and to give them rights on his land on fair terms.

Government will initiate steps to prepare records regarding possession of land and other rights.

I. Agricultural Labourers

To improve the lot of agricultural labourers and to make them interested in increasing food production, all necessary reforms should be made in the socio-economic set-up in the rural areas, fair wages and working hours have to be fixed, adequate facilities have to be provided where they do not exist for medical aid, education, housing, etc.

J. Taxes

It is by imposing any number of new taxes in the name of imple-
menting the Plan that the Congress is conducting its administration. Many new taxes like sales-taxes, excise, water tax, etc., have been imposed in the last 19 years and their burdens increased. The Central Government has approved the plans of the States with the provision that taxes should still further be increased. Though, therefore, there are limitations to what the State Government can do to give tax-reliefs, it will use its utmost capacity to remove the irregularities in these taxes. The basis of the change will be: relief to the poor among the tax-payers and on the rich burdens which they can bear.

K. Industrial Front

Glaring evidence of the discrimination against Kerala in the Plans is the backward state of its industrialization. Kerala has received only a small part of what it deserves in the Central sector of industries which should be considered as the gain of the whole country from planning. It will be the task of the Government to change this and to get for Kerala the share it deserves. It is also necessary to remove the drawbacks in the State Government's running of those industries which have been allotted by the Centre and to see that every district gets its legitimate share of such industries. A major stumbling block in the way of starting new industries in the State is that not enough capital is getting formed here itself. To remedy this, Government would give encouragement and aid to those ready to invest capital in new industries.

As for existing industries in the State which give employment to the largest number of people or earn foreign exchange, like coir, cashew, handloom, bidi, fishing, water transport, tiles, etc., Government in consultation with concerned interests will initiate measures to improve them and through reform and reorganization run them economically.

Necessary research, etc., will be conducted to reorganize the mineral industry and expand it. Effective steps will also be taken to establish industries which can be run by utilizing to the maximum the natural resources of the State and electricity that can be produced cheaply here.

To enable the cashew industry to operate round the year, Government will take steps to set up a Cashew Trading Corpo-
ration with the participation of industrialists and workers to eliminate unnecessary competition in the industry, procure and distribute cashew, sell cashew-nuts, etc.

A trading corporation will also be set up for the coir industry with the participation of industrialists and workers to make the industry prosperous, reorganize it and improve sales.

Steps to improve the handloom industry and find new markets for its products.

Necessary measures to run Government-owned industries efficiently and profitably and enlist workers' participation in the conduct of these industries.

Cottage and other rural industries will be encouraged and emphasis will be laid on the co-operative sector for this. The present irregularities in the working of the Khadi Board will be removed and its functioning will be made efficient.

L. Expansion of Fishing Industry

The fishing industry is one of the most important resources of Kerala and the source of livelihood of lakhs of people. Schemes to expand it have to be framed with expert advice. As a part of this, the living standards of fishing workers have to be improved, health and sanitation facilities have to be provided for their living places, fishing centres have to be connected by roads with other places, housing accommodation and drinking water provided to them, etc. Due to the mechanization that is being introduced in this industry, those who have been for generations following this trade are faced with many difficulties. Steps have to be taken to guarantee that the benefits of mechanization are fully enjoyed by the fishing workers.

M. Labour Policy

Government's labour policy will be based on the following: Legislation for recognition of trade unions, opportunities for collective bargaining and protection of other trade union rights and for gratuity benefits, fixing of minimum wages in industries in which it has not been fixed and enhancement of minimum wages where they have been fixed.

Effective implementation of Plantation Act, Shop Act, Bidi and Cigar Act, Motor Act, etc.; steps to ensure dearness allowance
linked with the cost of living to all sections of workers; removal of all difficulties in the matter of housing construction, social insurance, etc.; setting up of statutory arbitration boards with representatives of employers and employees; ending of the contract system that exists in many industries and departments and permanency of service to workers. Equal wages for equal work, scrapping of service regulations which ban marriages, more hostel facilities for women working in towns.

The Industrial Housing Scheme will be expanded and implemented. The working of the Labour Department and the Factory Inspectorate will be streamlined to see that agreements are fully implemented and conciliation proceedings become fruitful.

Labour laws will be strictly implemented in industries under Government ownership.

Steps to expand the Employees’ State Insurance Scheme to newer areas, set up special hospitals and enable workers to get the benefits of indigenous medicine and treatment.

N. Electricity

Steps to speedily complete the Idikki and Kuttiadi projects, get the Silent Valley Scheme re-examined, set up three thermal stations to avoid power-cuts, and to redress the grievances of electricity workers.

O. Education

Scientific and rational principles have to be evolved in the matter of allowing new schools. It is necessary to raise the level of the people in the backward regions, amend the Kerala Education Act to grant teachers their legitimate rights, end the categorization into ‘B’ and ‘C’ in Chapter XIV of the Education Act and re-establish the democratic and political rights of private teachers, encourage the teaching of Sanskrit, Arabic, Urdu, Kannada and Tamil, redress the grievances of language teachers, craft teachers and non-teaching staff, and formulate a Library Act to regulate the working of libraries. Steps have to be taken to put an end to the present corruption and nepotism in the appointment of teachers. Facilities for technical education have to be expanded and more financial aid will be given to poor students belonging to all communities.
APPENDIX

P. Services

Indispensable for a democratic administration are service rules for Government employees which do not create discontent among them and such behaviour by them as does not create any complaints in the public. Both these cannot be formulated for Kerala alone. The services today have to function in conformity with service conditions made by the Central Government, finances of which are under the control of the Centre, a core of behaviour framed under Central directives and controlled by Central officials. Within these limitations the Government should try to give whatever benefits it can to the Government employees.

As a part of this, the Government would frame new service rules which under Article 35 of the Constitution should be passed by the Legislature but have not yet been adopted, place them before the legislature and adopt them with the necessary amendments. In the service rules so adopted, there will be provision for taking stringent and effective action against corrupt officials.

To eliminate political discrimination through verification, appointments will be made by the Public Service Commission.

Q. Administrative Reforms

The Panchayat and Municipal Acts have to be so amended as to enable the effective participation of the people and their representatives at all levels of administration. The power now vested in officials have to be transferred to non-officials. Zilla Parishads have to be formed between the Panchayat and the State levels with elected Chairmen and all district officials including Collectors should be brought under their control.

Including at the State level, administration will be conducted in Malayalam. Effective steps will be taken to eliminate corruption and nepotism in people’s representatives who take part in day-to-day administration. The Central Government has not accepted even the recommendations of the Santhanam Committee about this. Instead of taking strong measures against the corrupt practices of Central Ministers, what the Congress Government is doing is to protect the corrupt Ministers and Congress leaders. In this situation it will be the task of the Government to take the widest anti-corruption measures possible by a State Government.
R. Backward Communities and Religious and Linguistic Minorities

It will be the special responsibility of the Government to raise the level of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward communities, etc., in the matter of education and Government services. Rights and opportunities of religious minorities to establish and manage religious institutions and burial grounds according to their religious beliefs.

Difficulties created for the backward communities by the Kumara Pillai Commission Report have to be removed and the problem has to be solved after getting the views of concerned interests. Reservation has to be continued in Government services for backward communities.

In schools where students belonging to linguistic minorities are not less than a specified number arrangements should be made to impart teaching to them in their mother-tongue.

In areas where linguistic minorities exceed a specified percentage of the population, provision will be made for the authorities to consider petitions submitted in their own languages.

All attacks on the rights of linguistic minorities will be ruthlessly suppressed.

S. Prohibition

In view of the fact that the present prohibition laws have miserably failed and to eliminate the hazards to health from the consumption of poisonous illicit spirits, this problem will be examined with a view to formulating measures necessary to control to the maximum the harmful effects of drinking.

T. Transport

Road transport will be nationalized step by step, transport facilities in backward areas will be developed, the scope of water transport will be expanded, the wages and working conditions of motorboat workers and motor workers under private ownership as also workers in countrycrafts will be improved. Government will safeguard the interests of workers in private transport when it is nationalized.
APPENDIX

U. Other Subjects

The Government will do all it can to stem the price-rise and take steps to develop the co-operative movement, and expand medical aid, distribution of drinking water, social welfare, etc.

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What have been enumerated above are only some of the most important of the problems facing Kerala, there are many other problems to which solutions have to be found. Detailed programmes to solve these problems will be worked out in consultation with people's representatives and then implemented.

Thus the seven parties which represent the millions of Kerala people are coming forward to establish a firm and good Government and find a solution to the problems of this problem State whose people have been undergoing unending misery as a result of past Congress misrule and the Centre's discrimination against Kerala. Though these parties will have to face the Congress moneybags and their slander campaign, we appeal to the conscious masses of Kerala to defeat them and support us to form a non-Congress people's Government.
APPENDIX III

The Revisionists on the National Question*

The essence of national chauvinism being the obliteration of the class unity of the working people of all countries, or the "unity" of the working people of a particular country with "their own" ruling classes against the people of another country, its role does not remain confidant to the external relations of the country concerned. It also embraces the relations between different nationalities in a multi-national state. That was why Lenin had to fight an irreconcilable struggle against the Great Russian and other forms of chauvinism on the national question in Russia.

India is admittedly a multi-national state. This fact is reflected in the twin slogans of "linguistic states" and "federal constitution" which had been accepted by the anti-imperialist democratic movement in the pre-independence years. It is further reflected in the conflict which raged in the post-independence years around the question of official language and on the implementation of the pre-independence promise of forming linguistic states.

The extent to which these national conflicts can go and has gone was seen when the Dravida Kazhagham (DK) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagham (DMK) of Tamilnad brought to the forefront the demand for a separate Dravidastan. It is seen today in the fierceness of the conflict between the Central Government and such tribal peoples as the Nagas, Mizos and so on. The other hill peoples of Assam too are now on the point of launching a struggle for their own state — whether within the Indian Union or outside is not yet clear. Although not going to this extent, it is well-known, there are several other regions, mainly inhabited by the tribal people who are also advancing slogans of basically the same character.

India, however, is not only multi-national, but a land of many castes and religious communities. Conflicts among these various castes and religious communities are mixed up with national conflicts. The forces striving for the unification of national (or linguistic-cultural) group are sometimes combined with, and at other times obstructed by, the forces of caste and communal separatism. This makes the internal situation in our country much more complicated than anywhere else in the world.

There are two approaches to this phenomenon - the approach of the bourgeoisie and the approach of the proletariat. The former would consider the "unity of India" as "good" and the "fissiparous forces" (such as the caste, the religious community, the tribe, the language and the religion) as "evil". It would, therefore, give a stirring call to the people to oppose and defeat the fissiparous forces and strengthen the forces of unity.

The proletarian standpoint has nothing to do with such abstract slogans of "good" and "evil". It goes into the essence of this conflict and uncovers the reality of conflicts among different sections of the ruling classes.

Capitalist development in our country, as anywhere else in the world, means the rapid growth of the bourgeoisie class. While those who are already in the field become stronger and more powerful, new sections enter into the fold. While the former try to maintain and further strengthen their stranglehold on the people, the latter try to get an increasing share of the loot. This inevitably leads to conflicts between the two major sections of the bourgeoisie.

Such conflicts between the newly-emerging and already-developed sections of the bourgeoisie are breaking out in India under circumstances in which society as a whole is divided into various castes, religious communities, linguistic-cultural groups and so on. New strata of the bourgeoisie arise out of those castes, religious communities, tribes and linguistic-cultural groups which have so far been lagging behind.

Even from the ranks of the most socially-oppressed and lowest castes, the most backward tribes and the most undeveloped linguistic-cultural groups and regions, new strata of the intelligentsia, the professionals, small businessmen, etc., are emerging and are trying to secure a place for themselves. At the same time, the already rich and powerful sections from the higher castes
and advanced regions are doing their utmost to preserve and further strengthen their own grip on the country's economy and public life.

This is the origin of the caste, communal, tribal, linguistic and regional conflicts, since the bourgeoisie thrown up from every national and social group is able to appeal to the peasants, middle classes and workers belonging to their national or social group as against their rivals. This is a fact noted by a non-Marxist economist like D. R. Gadgil who points out that the existence and development of monopoly in business-field leads to concentration of power in terms of regional, communal, and social groups.

"This", he goes on, "is an extremely important sociological phenomenon which cannot be ignored in Indian conditions. It cannot be ignored because the total picture that emerges is that of concentration and control over and patronage resulting from all modern finance, trade and industry in the hands of a comparatively small number of persons concentrated in particular social groups. The diffusion of the benefits of the rise of modern industries and commerce is thus clearly restricted within the community and the joint operation of socio-economic and political makes certain groups so entrenched that social justice is denied and social peace cannot be guaranteed with the continuance of this state of affairs".

Out of this conflict between various sections of the ruling classes arise various ideological-political outlooks of a separatist character — casteism, communalism, tribal separatism, linguistic chauvinism, regional separatism and so on. As against these ideological-political outlooks of a separatist character is the outlook of a "strong unitary centre" firmly keeping under check all fissiparous trends.

The ruling classes belonging to each social and national group try to unite "their own" people against other nationalities and social groups. In thus uniting its own national or social group against the rest, it helps the dominant ruling group at the centre by disrupting the unity of the working people of the whole country against the bourgeois-landlord regime.

At the same time, the dominant ruling group at the centre tries to establish a fake 'unity of the nation' by denying the right of every nationality and social group to have equality of oppor-
tunity and status in a democratic set-up. In doing this, it fosters and strengthens those very fissiparous forces against which it claims to be fighting.

This makes it necessary for all Marxist-Leninists to make it clear to the people that the so-called "struggle between nationalism and the fissiparous forces" — the struggle in the name of which the leaders of the ruling party are trying to beat oppositionist forces into submission — is a fake "struggle". It is the means through which the dominant section of the bourgeoisie is trying to maintain its domination not only over the working people but over sections of their own class. The slogan of "national unity" is thus the weapon with which the dominant monopoly group tries to bring their competitors into submission.

Equally is it necessary for Marxist-Leninists to see that the claims made by those sections of the ruling classes which are not monopolistic and dominant at the centre — those who claim to champion the cause of their respective national and social groups — are equally false. It is not the interests of the people belonging to these national and social groups (as is alleged), but of a narrow stratum of the ruling classes belonging to these groups, that they with their separatist slogans and demands try to serve.

While thus exposing the false claims of the dominant and other sections of the ruling classes, Marxist-Leninists should see what is anti-feudal and democratic in the struggles waged by the various national and social groups against the dominant section of the ruling classes.

The demand of the scheduled and backward castes for equality and social justice; of the religious communities against suppression by the majority community; of the tribal people against attacks by the ruling classes from the plains; of the linguistic-cultural (or national) groups and regions against over-centralisation — all these are perfectly legitimate, democratic demands. They are part of the platform on the basis of which the democratic revolution is to be completed and the soil prepared for the socialist revolution.

This, however, does not mean that the unity of India as such is an anti-democratic or false slogan. The working people belonging to all national and social groups are, on the other hand, interested in preserving and further strengthening the unity of
India. For, it would enable them to join their forces, to strengthen their struggle against the class enemy — the bourgeois-landlord regime at home and imperialism abroad.

This real unity, however, is different from, is in conflict with, the "unity" of the type which is sought to be imposed on the people by the dominant monopoly section of the Indian ruling classes. For, it is not a unity calculated to preserve the existing regime but to replace it by a new regime of People's Democracy. It will not suppress the various nationalities, tribes and other social groups who are fighting for their legitimate, democratic demands. It would, on the other hand, help them in these struggles.

Such a Marxist-Leninist approach to national unity and democracy is absent in the ideological stand of the revisionists. Blindly echoing the agitational and propagandist slogans of the monopoly bourgeoisie, they violently attack the so-called "fissiparous forces" of casteism, communalism and so on. They praise the dominant sections of the ruling party for its "national outlook. Both the Programme and the various resolutions on current questions adopted at their Seventh Congress show that their approach to the problem of national unity and democracy is nothing but tailism to the bourgeoisie.

Their characterization of the DMK, for instance, is that it is a party "reflecting separatist tendencies allying itself with the Swatantra Party and the Muslim League on key political questions, but indulging in left demagoguery, a party that aims to divert and disrupt the democratic movement in the South." There is not a word here, it will be noted, about the role which the DMK has played in giving expression to the national aspirations of the Tamil people.

Let us recall in this connection that the Communist Party (when the revisionists and we were both in the same party) never took such a negative attitude to the DMK. The Party did always make a strict distinction between the essentially democratic content of the national aspirations of the Tamil people (which were sought to be given expression to by the DMK) and the separatist, distorted form given to it by the DMK leaders. While opposing the DMK for its separatist distortion, the Party was at one with the DMK in championing the Tamil people's national cause. That was why the National Council of the (then
APPENDIX

united) Communist Party laid down in 1961 that the Communist Party should come to an electoral united front with the DMK if it agrees to keep its slogan of separation from the North out of the election manifesto. Even if the DMK refused to do this, it was laid down, the Party should have adjustment of seats with it.

These clear and explicit directives of the Communist Party were disregarded by the revisionists who adopted the line of fighting the DMK as a reactionary pro-imperialist party. They joined hands with the Congress, not indirectly but directly, in order to defeat the DMK in the parliamentary, legislative and local elections. This went to the extent of a statewide election campaign of several parties, including the Congress on the one hand and the revisionists on the other (municipal and panchayat elections in Madras).

If this was the attitude adopted by the revisionists to the DMK (which is not communal in the sense of fighting for a particular caste or community), it is natural for them to adopt the very same or still more hostile attitude to those who organize themselves in the name of and fight for a particular community.

The resolution on Kerala elections adopted by the Seventh Congress of the revisionists declared that the “will have no truck with reactionary communal groups such as the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress”. It accused the Muslim League of acting in such a way as to “accelerate revival of Hindu communalism”.

The bankruptcy of this stand has now become clear for all to see. The revisionists themselves have now admitted that the Muslim League without ceasing to be a party representing particular community can be welcomed into the ranks of the democratic movement.

It is obvious that, both in its approach to the DMK and in its attitude of having no truck with the Muslim League, the leaders of the revisionist party were echoing the views of the central leadership of the ruling Congress party. In the name of fighting the separatist distortions made by the leadership of the DMK, the revisionists were opposing the very democratic demand of the Tamil people to which the DMK was giving expression. In the name of fighting secularism and against Muslim communalism, they were rallying themselves around the dominant section of the (Hindu) bourgeoisie.

While thus joining the dominant section of the central leader-
ship of the ruling classes, the revisionists do sometimes also join
the bourgeoisie of those national and social groups which are
rallying "their" working people against the dominant section
of the leadership.

The most notorious example of this was the stand taken by
S. A. Dange on the border dispute between Maharashtra and
Karnatak. Instead of fighting the national chauvinism of "his
own" Maharashtrian bourgeoisie and uniting the common peo-
ple of Maharashtra and Karnatak, Dange joined the mainstream
of Maharashtrian chauvinism—a step which came in for dis-
approval at the hands of the National Council of the CPI (1958).
Dange however, defied the resolution of the National Council
and persisted in his Maharashtrian chauvinistic activities.

It is thus clear beyond dispute that, whether it is in relation
to India's foreign policy, or in connection with the internal
national problems, the revisionists are adopting the typically
chauvinistic approach of the bourgeoisie.

This is the inevitable consequence of their tailing behind the
bourgeoisie, their refusal to fight the bourgeoisie, ideologically
and politically, their effort to unite the working people with the
bourgeoisie. Never has there been a more shameless example of
subservience to the bourgeoisie and its ideological political out-
look.
### Table I
**LAND UTILIZATION IN KERALA IN 1956**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Utilization</th>
<th>Area in '000 acres</th>
<th>Percentage of total area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forests</td>
<td>2,434</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barren and uncultivable land</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land put to non-agricultural uses</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivable waste lands</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent pastures and grazing lands</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land under miscellaneous tree crops</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current fallow</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fallow</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net area under cultivation</td>
<td>4,477</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area sown more than once</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL LAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,412</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table II
**LAND HOLDINGS IN KERALA IN 1956**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acreage of Holdings</th>
<th>No. of holdings in lakhs</th>
<th>Area in lakhs of acres</th>
<th>Percentage of No. of holdings</th>
<th>Percentage of total area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1.00 acre</td>
<td>14.84</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00 acre to 2.50 acres</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>9.11</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 acres to 5.00 acres</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>10.66</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00 acres to 7.50 acres</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.50 acres to 10.00 acres</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00 acres to 12.50 acres</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.50 acres to 15.00 acres</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00 acres to 17.50 acres</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.50 acres to 20.00 acres</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.00 acres to 25.00 acres</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 25.00 acres</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>25.40</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE III
CASH CROPS IN KERALA IN 1956

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Crop</th>
<th>Area in '000 acres</th>
<th>Average yield per acre (lbs)</th>
<th>Total production '000 tons</th>
<th>Gross value of production (crores of Rs.)</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>1,954</td>
<td>1,559</td>
<td>1,358</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulses</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapioca</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>6,298</td>
<td>1,569</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugarcane</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40,698</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepper</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginger</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turmeric</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2,850</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesamum</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemongrass</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>6,005</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>2,800*</td>
<td>310†</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areca nut</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>45,000*</td>
<td>648†</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashewnut</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1,349</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnut</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardamom</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other crops</td>
<td>605</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 5,466 — — 180 100.0

Note: *No. of Nuts †Crores of Nuts


488
### TABLE IV
FACTORY ESTABLISHMENTS IN KERALA IN 1956

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>No. of factories</th>
<th>No. of workers</th>
<th>Average No. of workers per establishment</th>
<th>Percentage of total workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cashewnut</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>41,636</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>5,579</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice Mills</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1,872</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Food Industries</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1,541</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton Textiles</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>18,123</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coir</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>14,310</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw Mills</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4,246</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Estates and Factories</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2,168</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricks and Tiles</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>10,752</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile Engineering</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1,346</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-food Industries</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>15,254</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1,349</td>
<td>121,747</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE V
FIRST GENERAL ELECTIONS IN KERALA IN 1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Congress Party</td>
<td>1,204,364</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The TTNC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CONGRESS</strong></td>
<td>1,204,364</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communist Party</td>
<td>438,747</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL COMMUNISTS</strong></td>
<td>438,747</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PSP</td>
<td>485,194</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RSP</td>
<td>11,833</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The KSP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cochin Party</td>
<td>1,151,555</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>3,291,693</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: The Kerala Mail (February 14, 1960).*
### Table VI
MID-TERM ELECTIONS IN KERALA IN 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes won</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Congress Party</td>
<td>1,758,283</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communist Party</td>
<td>629,791</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PSP</td>
<td>589,140</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>277,923</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The TTNC</td>
<td>243,568</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RSP</td>
<td>209,831</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The KSP</td>
<td>93,601</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RCPI</td>
<td>5,772</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jan Sangh</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>3,808,312</td>
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</table>

*Source: The Kerala Mail (February 14, 1960), p. 9.*

### Table VII
MALABAR DISTRICT BOARD ELECTIONS 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Communist Party*</td>
<td>446,955</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Congress Party</td>
<td>414,452</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muslim League*</td>
<td>165,610</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PSP*</td>
<td>131,403</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jan Sangh</td>
<td>4,818</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RSP</td>
<td>4,389</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Includes Independents supported by the Party.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Communist Party</td>
<td>2,059,547</td>
<td>34.98</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Congress Party</td>
<td>2,209,291</td>
<td>37.40</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PSP</td>
<td>628,261</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RSP</td>
<td>188,553</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muslim League</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>751,965</td>
<td>13.20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elected Unopposed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>5,837,617</td>
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<td>126</td>
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### Table IX
SECOND GENERAL ELECTIONS IN KERALA 1957

Regional Distribution of the Seats Won

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Travancore</th>
<th></th>
<th>Cochin</th>
<th></th>
<th>Malabar</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communist Party</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Congress Party</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PSP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muslim League</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>126</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Seats Expected</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>million</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HINDUS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmans</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hindus</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRISTIANS</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian Catholic</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin Catholic</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yacob</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marthoma</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christians</td>
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<td>2.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSLIMS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAND TOTAL</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td>126</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Scheduled Castes</th>
<th>Other Hindus</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seats %</td>
<td>Seats %</td>
<td>Seats %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Congress</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PSP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muslim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Compiled from figures given in *The Kerala Mail* (August 23, 1959), P. 11
### Table XII
SECOND GENERAL ELECTIONS IN KERALA 1957

_Voting Pattern of the Christian Community_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Syrian Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Latin Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Yacob Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Others Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Communists</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Congress</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PSP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muslim League</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Source: Compiled from figures given in The Kerala Mail (August 23, 1959), p. 11._
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>Congress</th>
<th>PSP</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>League</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HINDUS</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.125</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elwars</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Castes</td>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hindus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.275</td>
<td>6.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| CHRISTIANS    | 4  | 6.6      | 19  | 2.98   | 0.875  | 2.06  |
| Syrians       | 1  | 1.5      | 1   | 0.15   | 0.01   | 0.05  |
| Latin         | 1  | 1.5      | 1   | 0.15   | 0.01   | 0.05  |
| Yacob         | 1  | 1.5      | 1   | 0.15   | 0.01   | 0.05  |
| Total         | 5  | 7.5      | 19  | 2.98   | 0.875  | 2.06  |

| MUSLIMS       | 2  | 3.4      | 9   | 1.36   | 0.34   | 0.65  |
| Grand Total   | 60 | 100.0    | 43  | 64.0   | 10.0   | 60.0  |

Source: Compiled from figures given in *The Kerala Mail* (August 23, 1959), P. 11.
### Table XIV

**MID-TERM ELECTIONS IN KERALA 1960**

Votes Polled: 8,103,758  \(\%: 84.4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes Polled</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>2,975,259</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Independents</td>
<td>574,877</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Communists</strong></td>
<td>3,550,136</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>2,791,294</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP</td>
<td>1,146,029</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>399,925</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Coalition</strong></td>
<td>4,337,248</td>
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<td>125</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>74.6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5,938</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohia Socialists</td>
<td>21,297</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Sangh</td>
<td>5,277</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka Samithi</td>
<td>38,630</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>39,095</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>8,103,758</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**
1. The 126 candidates of the CPI included 18 Independents supported by the CPI.
2. The 2 Independents elected were: one represented the Karnataka Samithi, the other represented the Rebel Congress. After the elections the latter returned to the Congress Party, giving it 63 seats, or exact 50% of the seats in the Assembly.

**Source:** The Kerala Mail, February 14, 1960.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Congress</td>
<td>1,895,226</td>
<td>34.26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PSP</td>
<td>546,621</td>
<td>9.91</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Coalition</td>
<td>2,441,847</td>
<td>44.17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communist Party</td>
<td>1,960,683</td>
<td>35.46</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Independents</td>
<td>641,712</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>199,377</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Communist Bloc</td>
<td>2,801,772</td>
<td>50.66</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>248,038</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Swatantra</td>
<td>9,675</td>
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*Source: "Kerala Vote May Rank Highest Cast", The Times of India (March 2, 1962).*
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| (2)      |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 1,384   |
| (3)      |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 1,658   |
| (4)      |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 1,736   |
| (5)      |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 10,104  |
| (6)      |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 5,789   |
| (7)      |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 10,008  |
| (8)      |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 2,923   |
| (9)      |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 969     |
| (10)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 9,966   |
| (11)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 15,076  |
| (12)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 25.125  |
| (13)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 21.121  |
| (14)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 14,958  |
| (15)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 19,594  |
| (16)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 12,533  |
| (17)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 14,969  |
| (18)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 7,713   |
| (19)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 13,174  |
| (20)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 8,697*  |
| (21)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 13,124  |
| (22)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 10,753  |
| (23)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 11,187  |
| (24)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 11,460  |
| (25)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 20,836* |
| (26)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 25,351* |
| (27)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 18,366* |
| (28)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 17,878* |
| (29)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 24,741* |
| (30)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 25,251* |
| (31)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 9,868   |
| (32)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 30,525* |
| (33)     |                     |           |            |         |             |       |       |           |         |            |                | 20,060* |

NOTE: * indicates an elected candidate.
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NOTE: * indicates an elected candidate.
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**NOTE:** * indicates an elected candidate.
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**Note:** * indicates an elected candidate.
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<th>Mararikulam</th>
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<td>13,997*</td>
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<td>16,707</td>
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\[ \text{\%} = \frac{\text{No.}}{\text{Electorate}} \]
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<td>14,058</td>
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| NOTE: Indicates an elected candidate.
### Table XXIV
MID-TERM ELECTIONS, MARCH 4, 1965: QUILON DISTRICT

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<th>Parties</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Pathanam-thitta</th>
<th>Koni</th>
<th>Pathanapuram (S.C.)</th>
<th>Punalur</th>
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<td>(5) Independents supported by CPI (M) &amp; CPI</td>
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<td>(3)</td>
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<td>(4)</td>
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<td>(5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(6) 16,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(8) 27,534*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
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<td>(10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(11) 16,291*</td>
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<td>(13) 268</td>
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<td>(15)</td>
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<td>(16) 528</td>
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<tr>
<td>(17) 540</td>
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<td>(18) 47,835</td>
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<td>(19) 62,759</td>
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NOTE: * indicates an elected candidate.
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<th>Attingal</th>
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<th>Vamanapuram</th>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>526</td>
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<td>564</td>
<td>575</td>
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*NOTE:* *indicates an elected candidate.
### Table XXVI

**GENERAL ELECTIONS 1967**

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<th>Votes</th>
<th>Seats</th>
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TABLE XXVII

GENERAL ELECTIONS 1967: CANNANORE DISTRICT

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<th>Perambra</th>
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**Table XXVIII**

**GENERAL ELECTIONS 1967: KOZHIKODE DISTRICT**
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<th>Kuttipuram</th>
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<th>Malapuram</th>
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**NOTE:** *indicates an elected candidate. The Independent Candidate in Balussery and Calicut I were supported by the Samastha Kerala Muslim League.

**Source:** *The Hindu*, February 22-3, 1967.
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**NOTE:** * indicates an elected candidate.

The Independent Candidate in Manalur was supported by KTP, and in Kodakara by KC.

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**NOTE:** *indicates an elected candidate. The Independent Candidate in the Palai Constituency was supported by CPI. Source: *The Hindu*, February 22-3, 1967.
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NOTE: * indicates an elected candidate.

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Percentage calculations based on actual vote counts and total electorate of 926,314 voters.
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NOTE: *indicates an elected candidate. The Independent Candidate in the Pathanamthitta Constituency was supported by CPI (M); in Adoor Constituency by KC.

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**NOTE:** * indicates an elected candidate. The Independent Candidate (18,588) in the Koalam Constituency was supported by the Democratic Front: in the Parassala Constituency by SSP.

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Strength in Parliament (Lok Sabha) (Rajya Sabha)

* Estimated figures. + Centrists. ++ Sitting in Rival's bloc.

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Table: Performance of Political Parties in Kerala State Assembly, 1957-67.
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* As on April 1, 1968. Defections have not been noted.


† _Haryana_ as on May 12, 1968. Other parties include: Vishal Haryana 13; Bharatiya Kranti Dal 1.

‡ _West Bengal_ as on February 12, 1969. Other parties include: Bangla Congress 33; Forward Bloc 21; Revolutionary Socialist Party 12; Socialist Unity Centre 7; Gorkha League 4; Workers’ Party 2; Revolutionary Communist Party of India 2; Lok Sevak Sangh 4; Progressive Muslim League 3; Indian National Democratic Front 1; Independents supported by the Left United Front 10 (including Forward Bloc Marxist and the Bolshevik Party).

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