

**CPI—CPI(M) RELATIONS :  
Post-Emergency Period (1977—86)**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
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In memory of my father

"BAPU"



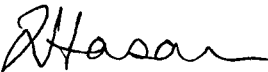


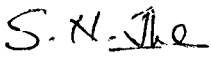
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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled  
"CPI - CPI (M) RELATIONS: POST-EMERGENCY PERIOD (1977-86)",  
submitted by Mr. K. VIDYASAGAR REDDY in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, has not been previously submitted for  
any degree of this or any other University. This is his  
own work.

We recommend this dissertation be placed before  
the examiners for evaluation.

  
( Dr. ZOYA HASAN )  
Supervisor

  
( Prof. S.N. JHA )  
Chairperson

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(K.VIDYASAGAR REDDY)

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Communist movement, has traversed a long path in its history of over six decades. Unlike the Congress, the Communist party had set out a longterm strategy of achieving 'total independence' not only from colonial rule but also from the nascent Indian 'bourgeoise' in order to establish a democratic society. And thus, the Communist movement aimed at the radicalisation of the Indian National Congress, while fighting against the foreign rule. But, unlike the Gandhians, what the Communists lacked was an indigenous approach and thinking, as they were largely influenced by an alien ideology like 'Communism'. In an attempt to apply the Communism to the Indian conditions, the Communists had counterposed Gandhism with Communism. Besides, in the later period, their pro-Soviet international outlook created greater problems when their domestic policies were predominantly formulated out of external necessity. This was partly because of their inability to correlate theory with practice and concretise their strategic objective of socialist revolution.

As a result, the Communists played marginal role throughout the freedom struggle. Specifically, the Communists incurred popular displeasure during the Quit India movement in 1940s, which forced them to remain in the periphery of the 'mainstream' politics. Even their historic role in the Royal Indian Navy mutiny (Bombay), the Vayalar-Punnappa uprising (Travancore) and Telangana People's struggle (Hyderabad) earned them no great support. As a matter of fact, the Telangana people's struggle sharpened the political-ideological differences in the undivided CPI for the first time. By early sixties, the split in the world Communist movement, on the one hand, and Sino-Indian border rift, on the other, influenced the CPI in leading to an intense inner-party struggle. In consequence, the party faced problems from 'within' and 'without'. The Sino-Indian war provided an occasion for the virtual split and formation of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M). As a result, the Indian Communist movement was immensely weakened.

In the post-split period it was the 'dual role' of the Congress as reflected in the pursuit of progre-

ssive foreign policy and a conservative domestic policy, simultaneously which created misunderstanding between the two parties. In the event the Communists were often more preoccupied with criticising each other than attacking their common enemy. In the absence of any viable alternative to the Congress Party, both the parties had visualised a left and democratic alternative, but had not concretised their vision. Given their limited influence in the political terrain of India, the two left parties needed the support of other parties which subscribe to a similar understanding. But in their search for allies, both the parties differed on the characterisation of left and democratic parties that should form part of the United Front.

The two parties having traversed in different directions until the emergency period were keenly aware of the need to forge left unity before they could work for left and democratic unity. Towards this end, the two parties worked and identified 'authoritarianism' and 'communalism' as two most important problems. Hence again they differed on the question of priority. While the CPI(M) focussed its main fire against the



authoritarianism of the Congress, the CPI equated both the menaces and concentrated its attack on the Janata party. Meanwhile, failure of the Janata experiment led to the restoration of the Congress rule in 1980. In the Indira Gandhi phase, conclave politics of non-Congress parties engendered unity not only among the non-left parties but also between the two left parties. Almost all the parties, including the left, turned their attention to the crucial issue of Centre-State relations. During this phase the non-Congress parties evolved a common understanding on this problem, which had far reaching implications for the growth of a non-Congress alternative in different parts of the country. While the understanding on Centre-State relations united them, the intractable problems of Punjab and Assam divided the opposition parties because their positions were marked by serious differences. As a result, the left parties did not play a pivotal role in realising their longterm goal of establishing a left and democratic alternative.

Again, the assassination of Indira Gandhi gave a blow to the opposition unity. To begin with the non-Congress and left parties differed on the factors responsible for her assassination. More importantly, serious

differences emerged on the assessment of the assassination and its effects on national unity. For the left parties, Indira Gandhi's death posed a serious threat to national unity as it was engineered by the forces inimical to India's unity. Whereas the non-left parties were not convinced that this was so. Besides, the landslide victory of Rajiv Gandhi in the 1984 elections shakened the 'fortress' of the leftists, on the onehand, and the rightists' base in the Hindi-speaking region, on the other in the opposition camp. Apart from the electoral setback, mutual hostility between the two parties, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal led to 'status quoism' in the CPI(M)-CPI relationship.

These developments compelled both the parties to maintain unity in action on common issues. Their 'shifts' in tactics facilitated the two parties to embark upon united actions at mass front level. But, they did not extend this unity to the ideological plane, for, the ideological differences continued to separate both the parties. As far as their differences are concerned, both the parties owe their allegiance to the principles of Marxism and Leninism, yet their interpretations have given rise to two different programmatic understandings.

While the CPI aims at achieving its objective of National Democratic Revolution by forging an alliance of progressive sections of the National bourgeoisie and the working class against the pro-imperialist, pro-monopoly and pro-feudal sections of the bourgeoisie. The CPI(M), in contrast, aims at achieving its goal of People's Democratic Revolution under the leadership of working class and its vanguard party against the landlord-bourgeois state led by big-bourgeoisie. Since their strategic objectives have remained virtually unchanged, the present discussion is focussed on their tactical positions, which have undergone some changes in the last one decade. Moreover, their mutual relations can be examined only through the study of their activities at the tactical level. The purpose of this study is to understand the nature of the 'shifts' in their tactical lines and to explain the consequences of these shifts. This is essential for understanding the role played by the two parties in the post-emergency period.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

The contribution that these two parties made to the socio-political life of India is significant. Be

they in power, as in W.Bengal and Kerala, or in opposition inside and outside the Parliament, the left parties deserve academic attention. For, it is only the CPI(M) led left front government in W.Bengal which not only won the three assembly elections successively and remained in power but faced no 'dissident' factions in the way that almost all state governments led by both the Congress as well as non-Congress parties have faced. Similarly, on the question of communalism and national unity, it is only the left parties which have taken clearcut stands. The left parties' role in fighting against the terrorism in Punjab, in a sense, vindicates this point. The significance of this study lies in the explanation of the different approach that these parties have adopted in responding to the larger issues like, path of development, approach of the Congress, federal character of the Indian Constitution, divisive movements, threat to National Unity, Centre-State relations and process of political development in India; and exposure of the left parties' contribution, problems and prospects towards that end, particularly in post-emergency period (1977-86).

## SCOPE

In this study, it is not the Communist movement per se, but the two parties and their attitudes regarding major political developments which had some bearing on the mutual relations of both parties during the period 1977-86 are examined. In this sense this is not a theoretical exercise. And therefore, the ideological polemics are not discussed in any detail as it is beyond the scope of this study. Nor is it our concern to explore the prospects of left unity or left and democratic unity. The main objective of this study is to analyse the state of CPI-CPI(M) relations, their assessment of each other's position on the central issues of Indian politics and finally how this affects their intervention in political happenings in the current period. For the CPI-CPI(M) relations has a profound influence on the growth of left movement in India.

This study to a large extent relies upon primary sources like: party congress documents, pamphlets, National Council/Central Committee reports, articles, press statements of the two Communist parties. In addition to these, their party organs, New Age and Peoples' Democracy have been used in discussing their

day-to-day activities. The abundant material that is available through the primary resources made our task easier, in the sense, that the diary of events was readily available, which in turn, lessened the efforts to search for material. Moreover, the problems of misinterpretation of theoretical as well as practical positions taken by the two left parties was overcome due to the extensive reliance on the first-hand information. However, it would have been also useful if sufficient secondary sources like, books, articles and commentaries authored by non-party people was available. This has not been possible as there is dearth of secondary literature on the post-emergency period. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to find a few secondary books, leave alone academic research, on the subject under discussion. Whatever little is available in the form of articles and commentaries from the non-party sources, has been made use of. Much of this material is not of academic nature, as it is written in a journalistic manner. As a result one hardly finds a systematic study on the subject of CPI-CPI(M) relations. Even scholars on Communism have not written much on the subject, perhaps this did not attract their attention

as they were primarily involved with theoretical problems.

### HYPOTHESES

The causes and consequences of the split in the Communist movement kept the two parties apart till the emergency period. The two left parties maintained their differences since their inception in 1964. In view of Congress debacle in the 1977 elections, the CPI reassessed its alliance policy with the Congress. The elections inaugurated a new era in the political landscape of India. To some extent, the emergency and elections changed the course of CPI-CPI(M) relations. It appeared as if the Bhatinda congress of the CPI marked an end of the CPI-CPI(M) animosity. The two parties viewed the Janata government differently, which in turn led to their coming closer on the eve of 1980 midterm polls.

Faced with a divided opposition in the election, Indira Gandhi staged her comeback and reestablished the Congress rule in the Hindi-speaking region. The left parties' perception of the Congress(I) had undergone a change, though they were not affected much by the Congress performance in the elections. The left parties

attempted an opposition unity through the 'conclave' politics. Differences arose between them on the question of the role of the BJP, Assam and Punjab problems.

In the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination, Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister in 1984. In the elections, held later, the Congress scored a resounding victory over the opposition. All the opposition parties, barring a few regional parties, were badly affected by the 'sympathy wave', apart from their mutual bickerings over seat adjustments. The differences centered around electoral alliance, attitude towards Telugu Desham Party in A.P., West Bengal government's new industrial policy and merger concept. These differences hampered the united actions between the two left parties. Even after a decade since the Bhatinda, the prospects of left unity appear bleak.

#### METHOD

The method followed in this study is the analytical method. All those political events which influenced the course of CPI-CPI(M) relations during the post-emergency period are so analysed as to discern the 'shifts'



in their tacticts and to establish the link between the two parties' shortterm and longterm goals. This study is an empirical one as it is largely based on actual events which shaped these parties' relations. The main political developments which occured during the period are analysed chronologically and thematically. The period of study, that is, post-emergency(1977-86), is so chosen as it deals with the problems and prospects of left unity in retrospection. The subject of study is so divided into three main phases, as to characterise each phase with a particular theme.

#### CHAPTERISATION

This dissertation is organised in such a way that each of the five chapters deals with a specific aspect. In the Introductory chapter, significance of the Communist movement, scope and limitations of study, hypotheses and method of research are dealt with. The second chapter, "Historical Background" is aimed at studying the CPI-CPI(M) relations in the pre-emergency (1964-75), as a backgroud to acquaint with the basic differences between the two parties. This is done because, these very differences are largely responsible for the present state of

their relations. Third chapter entitled, "The Janata Period (1977-80)" deals with the divergence in their perception of elections, Janata party, Congress and how the CPI shift in Bhatinda congress affected their mutual relations. In fourth chapter, "The Indira Gandhi Phase (1980-84)" left unity in actions on common issues, impact of the Congress restoration on the left parties, divergence on the BJP, differences on Punjab and Assam movements, Conclave politics and the rise of regional parties and the question of Central-State relations are discussed. The fifth chapter, entitled "The Rajiv Gandhi Period (1984-86)", examines opposition disunity on the question of national unity, debacle of the left in its 'bastion' in the elections, differences between them in A.P., Bihar and W. Bengal, divergence on the CPI's merger proposal and the problems as well as prospects of left parties' unity. In the Conclusion, summary of the main findings and a few concluding remarks on the possible unity of the CPI and the CPI(M) are made.

## CHAPTER-II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter is mainly aimed at examining the developments after the split in the Communist movement in India. The responses of each party, in relation to each other, over the policies of the Congress are studied so as to analyse the 'divergence' in their perception of Indian reality. Besides, certain events occurred during the course of pre-emergency period which had some bearing on the CPI-CPI(M) relations. An attempt is made in this chapter as to know how the two parties perceived the policies of the Congress and opposition parties differently, which in turn resulted in their mutual state of relations. Of course, the two parties held identical views on some issues as they shifted some of their tactical positions. And thus one witnesses 'unity and struggle' between these parties in the period under study. The study of pre-emergency phase is important since it provides some historical background to further study post-emergency in the realm of CPI-CPI(M) relationship.

However, to understand the pre-emergency phase it is essential to discuss the causes and events of the split. Accordingly, in this chapter the first part deals with the causes and consequences of the split. How the two parties had evolved their programmatic understandings after their formation is also studied. The second part deals with the aftermath of the split till the imposition of emergency in 1975. Here, these parties in reacting to some events had made some changes, which in turn changed the course of CPI-CPI(M) relations. These events which had contributed to their 'shifts' include, Indo-Pak war, Midterm Elections in Kerala, Fourth General Elections, Non-Congress United Front Governments in some states, Congress split, Naxalite movement, the 1971, 72 Elections and the JP movement.

At the outset, the complex nature of split in the Communist movement can not be understood without going into multiple factors and questions which need to be discussed. Whether or not the split was inevitable in the given circumstances? Was it a factional rivalry which was responsible for the split? Was it caused due to ideological, strategic and tactical reasons?

Was the split a culmination of inner party struggle over the years? Or was it due to external factors (CPSU/CPC intervention)?

No two authors on the subject are unanimous. According to Bhabani Sen Gupta,<sup>1</sup> the split occurred due to personal differences among the leaders. He gave secondary importance to the external factor such as, split in the international Communist movement.

Contrary to this was the opinion of Victor Fic<sup>2</sup> who attributed external factors like, Sino-Soviet rift and Sino-Indian rift, as chiefly responsible for the split. Similarly, Alan Jay and Henry Degenhardt<sup>3</sup> found both external as well as internal factors as responsible. But, according to the CPI(M)<sup>4</sup>, the split was culmination of the long inner party struggle regarding the attitude over ruling Congress party, path

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1. Bhabani Sen Gupta, Communism in Indian Politics, New York, 1972, pp. 66-100
  2. Fic, Victor M, Peaceful Transition to Communism in India, New Delhi, 1963.
  3. Alan D. Jay and Henry W. Wegnhardt, Political Parties of the World, New Delhi, 1980., p.156.
  4. Harikishan Singh Surjit, On CPI-CPI(M) Differences, New Delhi., 1985.

of development, stage of revolution, nature of the ruling class etc. Whereas the CPI<sup>5</sup> found the CPC as chiefly responsible for the split. Later on, the CPI had acknowledged the fact that the ideological factors also contributed for the split. According to Sudipto Kaviraj,<sup>6</sup> the split was due to the ideological differences in understanding Indian political situation, which of course found its expression at the time of India-China war in 1962. Be that as it may.

To begin with, the main differences between the two parties to a large extent, stemmed from their "dual understanding"<sup>7</sup> of the Indian National Congress(INC) and its policies over the years. One can trace the roots of "dual understanding" of the Congress in early 30s. when the undivided CPI under the influence of "Dimitrov thesis" (United Front Strategy) had characterised the Indian bourgeoisie as consisting of two wings called 'right' and 'left'. As the left wing was considered 'progressive', the party called for an anti-imperialist United Front with the left wing Congress members. To put this thesis into practice, the Communists operated within the

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5. Indradeep Sinha, CPI's Struggle for Communist Unity, New Delhi., 1985., p.9.

6. Sudipto Kaviraj, The Split in the Communist Movement, (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, J.N.U., New Delhi., 1979) p.32.

7. The INC was understood as representing two conflicting policies postures simultaneously, by the Communists are progressive and reactionary and second, domestic front and external front.

However, since the differences persisted, on the nature of independence and the possible path of Indian revolution, a delegation of the party comprising of CR Rao, M. Basavapunniah Ajoy Ghosh and SA Dange visited Moscow to seek clarification from the CPSU and Stalin. Their Moscow visit enabled them to bring out two documents, viz., the Draft Programme and the Statement of Policy, which were adopted at the All India Conference in October 1951. Added to this was the question of Telangana people's struggle on which sharp differences in the party culminated in the polarisation of two factions, particularly in the party unit of Visalandra, According to P.Sundarayya:

"History has demonstrated that the inner-party unity achieved following the withdrawal of the Telengana armed resistance in October 1951 was only formal, superficial and temporary, and that the division actually got crystallised into two distinct and hostile political trends. It was certainly no accident that in the Communist Party split that came about in 1962-63, the division in the state party unit of Visalandhra remained more or less, of the same character and with the same composition, as it was during the 1950-51 inner-party strife."

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10. P. Sundarayya, Telengana Peoples Armed Struggle (1946-51) New Delhi., 1985., p.7.

Though the struggle was confined to only Telengana region it had implications on the overall strategy and the tactics of the Communist Party. The Party leadership was almost divided on the question of withdrawal of struggle in the last phase (1949-51) Meanwhile in early 50s, the government of India made some 'shifts' in its foreign policy. The CPI third congress resolution had observed that there were some significant changes in the foreign policy of India. It said:

"the Indian government's denunciation of the atom bomb its help in ending the hostilities in Korea, its condemnation of the tactics of Syngman Rhee, its opposition to the American move to transform Pakistan into a war base are helping the cause of peace."

Similarly, at the domestic front too, the government proposed some new policies. It published the draft of the Second Five Year Plan which emphasised the building of the public sector and implementation of land reforms. Taking into account the 'radical mood' of the people, the ruling

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11. C.P. Publication, "Political Resolution of CPI 3rd Congress, Madurai, CPI Documents, 1955-56., p.286.





Congress party adopted, at its Avadi session (AICC), the goal of a "socialistic pattern of society".<sup>12</sup>

In view of such changes in the policies of the Congress party, P. Ramamurthy<sup>13</sup> had argued that the National bourgeoisie had been split up into two, the monopolist section standing for out and out collaborationist understanding and compromise with imperialism and native feudalism, while the other section (presumably, the Congress) was opposing imperialism and feudalism. This line was supported by the ten members of the UP state committee led by PC Joshi, but that was rejected by the central committee.<sup>14</sup> This did not put an end to the internal differences in the party. Infact, they got further aggravated after the Andhra Elections in 1955. The Andhra Elections were taken place within a few weeks of the much publicised visits of Khrushchev and Bulganin. They praised the 'progressive' policies being pursued by the Nehru government, which,

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12. Apart from inclusion of 'socialism' as the goal to be achieved in the preamble of the constitution and the directive principles of state policy in Dec. 1954, a pledge was made at the Congress party's Avadi session in Jan. 1955 to the effect that the party would work towards that goal.
13. New Age, July 18, 1954.
14. "Resolution of the CP Document" and the Report of the CPI to the IV Party Congress.

ineffect, created confusion within the ranks and among the followers of the CPI itself. The party's strength in the assembly was diminished.<sup>15</sup>

It was in that background that the fourth party Congress was convened in Palghat (Kerala) in 1956. Mainly there were two drafts which were placed in the Congress. The CC which met on the eve of Congress to sum up the inner party discussion made some concessions to the draft which satisfied those who had placed the alternate draft. It incorporated the strategic objectives of 'people's democracy' and the front led by the working class. The alternate draft was withdrawn. But the result was that a section of the leadership<sup>16</sup> which was earlier supporting the CC draft could not agree to the amended draft, and thus, moved their own resolution (alternate) at the Congress. The alternate resolution concluded:<sup>17</sup>

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15. The results of the election proved that the CPI paid heavily for its failure to take advantage of the left-ward trend in India's foreign policy and the Indo-Soviet amity. The strength of the CPI was dropped from 48 seats to 15 in a House of 196 in 1955. (Ref. The Resolution on the Andhra Elections, March 1955)
16. This section included PC Joshi, CR Rao, RN Reddy, SS Yusuf, HK Vyas, LR Kamalakar, Bhowani Sen, Somanath Lahri, K. Damodaran and Ramesh Chandra.
17. Documents of the IV party Congress ~~at~~ Palghat.

"The direction of the policy of the ruling class has begun to change from what it in the past was, on the whole, policies of compromise with imperialism and feudalism. The old policies are now being replaced by policies of firmer opposition to imperialist and feudal elements."

Though this resolution was defeated at the party congress it received the support of one third of the delegates attending the congress. And thus, the process of polarisation of two factions started in Palghat itself. Meanwhile, the 1957 elections gave an impressive victory to the CPI in Kerala. And the party also emerged as the second largest party in the country, both in terms of votes and seats. This had boosted the party image throughout the country. As a result, the differences in the party had gone underground.<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting to note that both the CPSU and the CPC were openly advocating that Nehru government was pursuing progressive policies and those required support from all democratic forces. Incidentally this

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18. *ibid.*....

happened at a time when the Congress party was conspiring against the Communist ministry in Kerala, for the latter had offered an alternative set of policies in the field of agriculture, education, police and social relations. Whatever might be intentions and interests of those parties (CPSU and CPC) their interference cost heavily the Communists at home. Because by the end of 1959, the Kerala Ministry was dismissed. The Congress Party was instrumental in organising the so-called liberation movement with the collaboration of communal and casteist forces. This act of the Congress party exposed its nature and attitude towards the 'left', especially the CPI.

Meanwhile the fifth congress of the party held in 1958 in Amritsar (Punjab) reiterated the aim of "the achievement of power by the working class, establishment of people's democracy led by the working class. However, since the differences were still prevailing in the party, the organisational report of the party congress had to say:

"Divergent and conflicting ideas have grown among different comrades about the decision of the 20th congress of the CPSU, about the

implications of the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism. After the General Election, the Kerala State committee adopted a resolution trying to link our success in Kerala and formation of Govt. there with the broader view of peaceful transition.... Some comrades even dispute such basic concepts of Marxism-Leninism as the dictatorship of the proletariat being essential for the building of socialism....."19

On the eve of the sixth congress of the party in 1961, serious differences developed inside the party. As a result, there were two Draft programmes and two Draft Resolutions before the congress.<sup>20</sup> While the majority resolution took positive attitude towards the Congress party, the minority resolution of the 21 NC members took negative attitude towards the Congress. A split was, however avoided by making the political report and speech of the General Secretary, Ajay Ghosh, the basis for amending the political resolution.

It was no doubt a compromise-congress and all the ideological-political differences which divided the

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19. Organisational Report of the V Party Congress, 1958.
20. Ajay Ghosh stated that the differences were revolved around, Moscow statement, political and economic situation in the country and immediate tasks before the party. (Ref. Ajay Ghosh Report to the VI party Congress (Vijayawada))

party (informally) remained unresolved. The only unity that was achieved was with regard to the broad tactics that were to be adopted in the elections to come. The party went to the electoral field with the slogan of breaking the Congress monopoly of power. Meanwhile, Ajay Ghosh died and the National Council which met for the review of elections had again two draft re-views for discussion, one prepared by Bhupesh Gupta and second, by PC Joshi.

It was at the juncture, the India-China war erupted due to border dispute. Prior to that, the CPC came out with two articles <sup>21</sup> criticising the Indian bourgeoisie as "comprador" and Nehru as a "Puppet", thus making the state of Indian revolution 'anti-imperialist'. Of course, the party leadership (CC) had rejected that position. Meanwhile, the government of India had launched an attack on a section of leadership, which appeared somewhat "pro-Chinese", and put some leaders in prison. The party leadership,

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21. On Nehru's Philosophy., More on Nehru's Philosophy.

predominantly led by Dangeits, did not protest as it could have done. As a matter of fact, the Dangeit leadership found it appropriate time to dissolve the 'leftist' dominated State Councils in Punjab and W.Bengal. Another important issue which exposed the leadership was the question of lifting of the emergency after the India-China border clashes had ended. Not only did the party leadership not press for the lifting of emergency but Dange made a statement that in his opinion, the emergency should continue.<sup>22</sup>

What can be inferred from these developments is that the party leadership was uncomfortable with activities of the 'leftists' inside the party, for their "pro-Chinese" stand on the question of border conflict and their "anti-Congress posture". In such a situation some attempts made by M. Basawapunnaiiah, apart from others, to keep the party united met with no success.<sup>23</sup>

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22. SA Dange made a statement in the meeting of the General Council of AITUC in June, 1963.
  23. MB made some suggestions regarding the dissolution of new POCs in Bengal and Punjab and withdraw enquiry commission against leftists. (Ref. Threat to party Unity and How to avert it by MB).

As a result, the final countdown began when the 32 members of NC staged a walk out from the meeting on 11th April 1964. The 32 members made an appeal to the entire party membership to struggle against "revisionist factionalism and renunciation of revolutionary traditions" which are characteristics of "SA Dange and his group".<sup>24</sup> The polarisation of leaders and cadres which started nearly a decade preceding the split had crystallised when the Tenali (AP) convention was held on 7th July 1964. While hoisting the flag, Muzaffar Ahamed, a founder member of the undivided CPI said; "let us pledge to build a real Communist party".<sup>25</sup>

Following the Tenali convention, the 'leftist' faction held its seventh congress in October 1964 at Calcutta and elected P. Sundarayya as the founder-General Secretary of the party. The declaration of the congress said:

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24. Appeal of the 32 members, from Resolutions of Tenali convention the CPI., p.2.

25. *ibid.*, p.3.



"This Congress is thus the end of the first stage of the struggle against the bourgeois-reformist policies and disruptive organisational practices adopted by the Dange group."<sup>26</sup>

The rightist faction held its party Congress at Bombay, in December 1964. The CPI formulated its programmatic understanding in the following manner.

The Indian state is a state of the national bourgeoisie as whole. It has strong links with landlords who are at the helm of affairs at local and state level. The ruling classes are interested in anti-imperialism, anti feudalism and development of independent Capitalism, The Socialist aid is essential for independent economic growth as it is a crucial force aiding the completion of the National Democratic Revolution. The National Democratic Front will be led by neither working class nor bourgeoisie exclusively, and it consists of all the patriotic classes, except big bourgeoisie and the land-lords.<sup>27</sup>

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26. Resolution of the Calcutta Congress (CP Pub: NBA, Calcutta) Oct., 1964. p.6.

27. From the programme of the CPI, adopted at its Bombay Congress. Dec., 1964.

However, according to the leftist faction<sup>28</sup> (later, CPI(M)) the Indian state is a state of bourgeois-landlord coalition led by the big bourgeoisie, collaborates more and more with the multinationals and the imperialism. The ruling classes are interested in perpetuating their class rule through compromise and struggle with both the imperialism and the semi-feudal, forces. To replace the present ruling classes the Peoples Democratic Front led by the working classes has to be formed. The core and the basis of the People's Democratic Front is the firm alliance of the working class and the peasantry having allies in intellectuals and national bourgeoisie. The party while supporting the socialist aid said that it enables the bourgeoisie to resist imperialist pressures, has taken a position that the bourgeoisie also utilises the socialist aid for bargaining with the imperialism.

Comparison of these two programmatic understandings suggests that the two parties were actually at

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28. From the Programme of the CPI(M) adopted at its Calcutta Congress in October 1964.

poles apart, particularly due to their differences on the question of nature of ruling class and leadership of the revolution. Apart from this, the discussion on the split corroborate a fact that the parties were formed because of ideological factors, not the external factors. Of course, the external factors like, Indo-Soviet relations, Sino-Indian rift and Sino-Soviet rift had aggravated the split. That is to say, they were not actual causes for the split. In this regard, Dr. Kawiraj<sup>29</sup> had rightly argued that the external factors, especially the Sino-Indian rift could not be attributed as a cause for the split, though it provided an occasion. In otherwords, reading too much from either the Sino-Soviet rift or Sino-Indian rift, as was done by Victor Fic,<sup>30</sup> indeed, leads to misunderstanding of the Indian Communist movement as a whole, and the split in particular. As<sup>a</sup> matter of fact, it is concluded in this study that no single factor per se led to the split, rather a combination of ideological,

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29. Sudipto Kawiraj op.cit.

30. Victor M Fic., op.cit.

strategic and tactical factors at the domestic and external fronts led to a situation where the split had become inevitable.

## II

Following the split in the party, the government of India launched a country-wide attack on the CPI(M) arrested many of its leaders and cadres and issued a 'white-paper' indicting them for their alleged anti-national 'pro-Chinese' activities during the course of Sino-Indian border war. This happened on the eve of midterm elections in Kerala in 1965. While the CPI had joined the Congress alongwith RSP on the basis of 'white paper' and campaigned against the CPI(M) in an attempt to derive some electoral benefits in the Kerala election. The CPI(M) was portrayed as an anti-national. The Party had to fight the election alone. The result was undisputed victory of the CPI(M) which secured the largest number of seats in the Assembly, where as the CPI lost deposits in many constituencies. The CPI(M) in alliance with Socialists formed its United Front Ministry in Kerala, which did not last longer as the Congress party once again succeeded in toppling the

ministry. The CPI later on admitted that:<sup>31</sup>

"We overestimated our strength and underestimated the capacities of the rival party as well as the Congress and the Kerala Congress. We failed to correctly anticipate the impact of Government repressions against the CPM, which angered the masses and led them to vote in large number, for the rival party candidates, especially the detenués amongst them... We failed to carry the political-organisational ideological issues involved in the party split to the basic Communist masses. The failure enabled the CPM to draw these masses towards themselves and paint us as 'pro-Congress'".

Meanwhile, the country was forced into a military confrontation with Pakistan. While the CPI's stand, on the Indo-Pak war, of defeating the Pakistan coincided with that of the Congress and 'rightists', the CPI(M) appealed for negotiations with the Pakistan government.<sup>32</sup> The Indo-Pak war, on the one hand, had increased miseries of the people as on the other hand the state of economy during the period (1965-67) was very grave due to the failures and setbacks under the third Five year plan. During this period, the pressures by Indian and foreign monopolists on the government had enormously grown. In June 1966, devaluation of the Indian rupee took

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31. From the Documents of the VIII Congress of the CPI, 1966.

32. *ibid.*

place at the dictates of the world bank. The exports had fallen while payments for imports had increased, aggravating thus the pressure on foreign exchange reserve. In short, economy had been brought to the brink of ruin in addition to causing great natural humiliation.

This was a time when the non-Congress parties including the CPI(M) and Samyukta Socialist Party(SSP) decided to wage a political struggle against the Congress regime. The opposition unity was evident in their action on the issues like, civil liberties, price rise and later on, the electoral adjustments. This development paved the way for unification of the opposition forces in the fourth General Elections in 1967. The opposition parties put up a united struggle against the Congress in the elections. As a result, the monopoly of the Congress had been greatly undermined, and indeed shaken to its foundation by the elections. The Congress was defeated in eight out of sixteen states that went to polls and the post-election situation saw the emergence of nine non-Congress governments ruling over a population of 300 million out of 500 million.

The political significance and impact of the emergence of the non-Congress governments after the elections was viewed by the CPI as:

"This development has given great confidence to the masses, brought them closer in defending and advancing their cause. It has helped the process of unity of left and democratic forces. After the elections, emergence of non-Congress govts. have given a great fillip to the forces that make for the national democratic revolution. The adoption of the common minimum programme by the popular non-Congress govts. and their policies and activities in the interest of the masses have put the question of alternative policy and programme sharply to the forefront."<sup>33</sup>

It is evident from this that the CPI had to shed its earlier attitude towards the right parties, and viewed the debacle of Congress as positive and the party had even shared power with right parties like Jana Sangh and Swatantra in a few states namely, Punjab, Bihar and UP. It also joined the CPI(M) dominated W.Bengal and Kerala ministries.

The CPI(M), on the other hand, took a position of not joining any ministry where it could not assert

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33. *ibid.*.....

its political stand. The party declined the offer to join these ministries but, it was prepared to offer its cooperation to these non-Congress governments within certain limits. As a result, the party joined only in two states namely, Kerala and W.Bengal on the ground that, these two coalition governments were of a "leftist political complexion and where therefore, the possibility of using the governments as instruments of struggle in the hands of the people was brighter than any where else."<sup>34</sup> This is how the two parties understood the non-Congress governments differently. Accordingly, while the CPI remained in the coalition governments in Bihar, Punjab and UP until they were toppled, the CPI(M) enjoyed power in only Kerala and W.Bengal. The two parties, however, had tried unsuccessfully to resist the moves of the central government in dismissing the W. Bengal ministry.

It is in this backdrop, that the midterm elections in the four states namely, W. Bengal, UP, Bihar and Punjab were held in February 1969. In the elections the Congress

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34. EMS Namboodripad, Crisis into Chaos op. cit., p.100.



party once again suffered a setback since it failed to come back to power in these states. The 14 party alliance in W.Bengal won a resounding victory. In Bihar the Congress lost heavily. And so was the case with Punjab, where Akal Dal gained 17 seats more than what it secured in 1967. In UP, the Congress though improved its position, failed to get an absolute majority. In a sense the poll results disappointed the Congress, which in turn led to an intensification of the crisis in the Congress party. The failure of the Congress in the 'mini General Elections' led to a virtual split when the Indira Gandhi faction flouting the majority decision of campaigning for N. Sanjiva Reddy, supported V.V.Giri in the presidential election. Following the defeat of official (Congress) candidate an intense tussle took place between the two groups leading to the formation of two Congresses namely, Congress(R) and Congress(O). The split of ruling party however had its impact on the opposition in general and left parties in particular.

The two parties' perception of the left-oriented political strategy of Indira Gandhi underwent some change.

These parties, reacted to the split<sup>35</sup> differently, though they supported the candidature of V.V. Giri in the Presidential election. The CPI in its Cochin congress in 1971, welcoming the developments at the agrarian, industrial and economic fronts had characterised the 'Congress split' as "qualitative nature".

The report stated that:

"The split in the Congress reflected the advance of the process of differentiation in the Indian capitalist class to a qualitatively new level, the bulk of the pro-imperialist, pro-monopolist, pro-feudal and anti-people and antidemocratic forces having gone with the Syndicate under the leadership of Nijalingappa, Morarji Desai, Kamaraj, C.B. Gupta and S.K. Patil. But at the same time there remained in Indira Gandhi's camp many vacillating and reactionary elements to obstruct the radicalisation of the organization as well as progressive measures. The Prime Minister her self stuck to the centrist position."<sup>36</sup>

The CPI's overenthusiasm over the Congress split led it to cooperate with the Congress(R) led by Indira

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35. Both the parties used to base their strategy and tactics on a split in the ruling party and tend to find themselves on either side of the split most of the time. (Ref. K.N. Pannikker (ed), Prospects of left Unity) p.7.

36. From the Documents of the tenth Congress of the CPI, 1971.

Gandhi in order to fight the 'rightist syndicate and other 'reactionary' forces. Accordingly, the party had reevaluated its tactical line in the light of "shift" in the Congress policies. This facilitated the party to reverse its "pro-Congress" line when the party justified its electoral alliance with the Congress(R).<sup>37</sup>

Interestingly, on the otherside, the CPI(M) too supported the 'progressive' policies like, nationalisation of big banks, radical land reforms, curbs on monopolies etc., apart from Indira Gandhi sponsored V.V. Giri in the presidential election. But unlike the CPI, the CPI(M) had not magnified the progressive nature of the Congress party. Nor it campaigned in favour of the Congress. The party while merely supporting the above mentioned policies started launching its campaign against the Congress party in general. Infact, the CPI(M) had maintained its anti-Congress posture and cooperated with other non-Congress parties. This anti-Congress stance of the party was not liked by the CPI on the ground that the progressive nature of the policies of the ruling Congress required the support of left parties,

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37. ibid.....

which was to defeat the efforts of right opposition parties.<sup>38</sup> As a result, the two parties were once again pitted against each other leading to worsening of their mutual relations on the eve of midterm elections to the Lok Sabha in 1971.

Owing to the split<sup>of</sup> the Congress party, Indira Gandhi led Congress(R) lost its majority in the Lok Sabha. This necessitated the midterm elections. On the heels of her 'victory' in Bangladesh war and due to her progressive postures and populist slogan (Garibi X Hatao), the Congress (R) won the elections with a big majority. The CPI was an important electoral ally of the Congress (R). The party worked out its strategy at its CEC meeting in 1970 focussing its main fire at the 'right reaction'. The party's task was fulfilled when the Congress defeated the 'right reaction' in the assembly elections in Orissa, Tamil Nadu and W.Bengal in 1972. The CPI felt that the significance of the election results lies not only in the rout of 'Grand Alliance' but in the tremendous fillip it has given to the country's broad democratic movement.<sup>39</sup>

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38. EMS Namboodripad, Crisis into Chaos., op. cit., p.108.

39. ibid....

In contrast, the CPI(M) was neither an electoral ally of the Congress(R) nor that of the "Grand Alliance". The party had fought 1971 and 1972 elections alone. The CPI(M) described the elections as the victory of "one of the two reactionary combinations". The party while maintaining its anti-Congress stance had been able to win more seats than other opposition parties in the Lok Sabha. And in the assembly elections too, the party secured many seats but not majority, particularly in W.Bengal when the CPI(M) approached the CPI to seek its cooperation to form the non-Congress government, the CPI declined the offer, and infact, emphasised that for the purpose of left and democratic unity it was essential to unite with the Congress.<sup>40</sup> This understanding of the party led it to align with the Congress for its government in Kerala, whereas in Bihar and W.Bengal it lent support to the Congress led ministries. During the Achuta Menon led CPI-Congress(R) regime in Kerala, the CPI(M) had a tough time. Similarly, in W.Bengal after the 1972 'rigged' elections Siddartha Shanker Ray headed the Congress ministry with the support

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40. *ibid.*...p.189.

of CPI. The CPI(M) had alone faced onslaughts launched by the Congress regime. The Political report of its ninth Congress had noted as to how as many as 650 of its cadres and activists were murdered in W.Bengal alone by "the police and hired goondas of the Congress, its allies, CPI and the Naxalite bands," besides killing another 18 activists in Kerala.<sup>41</sup> In the prevailing situation, the CPI(M) exhorted that:

"all the democratic and left parties, all democratic groups and individuals to come together to battle against the rise of fascist trends of one party rule and protect civil rights and democratic rights of the people."<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, the CPI had made some self-criticism of its policy in the chapter "some serious shortcomings" at its party congress in 1971. But the party did not correct its mistakes as was evident from its close cooperation in running the Kerala ministry.

It is pertinent here to throw some light on the Naxalite movement as to know how different the two left

41. Political Resolution of 9th Congress of the CPI(M), 1972.

42. *ibid.*....p.61.

parties were on this score. As a matter of fact, the Naxalbari incident erupted in W. Bengal when the CPI(M) was a predominant partner of the coalition ministry and it was Jyoti Basu, the state Home Minister who crushed the Naxalite violence in 1967. Following the crush of 'Naxalbari', the CPI(M) adopted two documents in its party plenum (Madurai) in August 1967.<sup>43</sup> The party criticised the Naxalbari struggle as "adventurist" and "wrong".<sup>44</sup> It also accused the CPC of responsible for its overt and covert support to the Naxalites. To quote EMS Namboodripad:<sup>45</sup>

"Not only did the Communist party of China criticise the political positions of the CPI(M); it gave all forms of ideological, material and practical help to a group within the CPI(M) which rebelled against the leadership and formed another political group called the Naxalites"

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43. "On left Deviation", "On Divergent views Between our party and the CPC on certain Fundamental Issues".
44. Manoranjan Mohanty, Re-volutionary Violence, New Delhi, 1977, p.55.
45. EMS Namboodripad, Crisis into Chaos, op. cit., p.85.

Later on, party conducted its Burdwan Plenum in 1968 to discuss some ideological issues. It adopted a resolution entitled "Stand on ideological issues" which rejected the CPC's views on internal conditions in India while upholding CPC's position on international issues. In a way the CPI(M) maintained some sort of 'neutral' posture. With this, the party had demarcated itself from the Naxalites who later on formed their own party in 1969.

According to the CPI, Naxalite activities were the result of a "wrong, impatient and immature approach" to the problems of revolutionary movement. It admitted that the "failure of the organised left movement" and in particular its disruption (referring to the CPI(M)) was driving certain sections of the militant students and youth to the desperate and self defeating course.<sup>46</sup> And thus, the party had taken a critical but persuasive ideological and political approach towards Naxalites, unlike the CPI(M) which denounced them as "antisocials" in early 70s. The CPI also claimed that it "exposed

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46. From the Documents of the 9th congress of the CPI, 1971.



and condemned the illegal police reprisals and tried to save the Naxalites from them."<sup>47</sup>

But <sup>as</sup> a matter of fact, the Naxalites and the CPI(M) were pitted against each other in bitter physical fights. Biplab Das Gupta had observed that the Naxalites attacked the CPI(M) cadres in early 70s in Calcutta in the same way the Siva Sena attacked the CPI cadres in Bombay.<sup>48</sup> It is in this context, that the attitude of the CPI(M) towards the Naxalites differ from that of the CPI. Meanwhile, the Naxalite movement was decimated into innumerable groups in the last two decades.

Finally, on the question of JP movement the two left parties polarised further. The inability of the Congress party to appease the masses at all fronts evoked sharp response from the opposition parties. Particularly it was the organised working class under the leadership of opposition led Trade Unions engaged itself in united struggles. The growing coordination among them reached its climax in the all-India railway

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47. Mohit Sen, CPI's Battle Against Maoism and the Naxalites. (CP pub. N. Delhi., Dec. 1985)

48. Biplab Das Gupta, The Naxalite Movement, (Calcutta, '74)

strike in May 1974. Ofcourse, the government came down with a heavy hand in suppressing the railway strike. Meanwhile the CPI led AITUC withdrew its support to the strike.<sup>49</sup> But, when the Socialist party and the section of Gandhians who followed Jayprakash Narayan extended their support to the resistance, the movement gained popular orientation. The 'total revolution' that was unleashed in this manner rallied the opponents of authoritarianism under one banner and the movement came to be known as JP movement. The main thrust of the JP movement was against the growing authoritarianism of the ruling Indira Gandhi regime. JP not only moved millions of people into struggle but involved both the 'right' and 'left' parties under one banner. JP represented a trend which was leftist and populist in character. His being the leader of the popular opposition movement was of particular value for those who were interested in the struggle against the Congress regime. The JP movement in fact agitated the ruling party which in turn denounced JP as an 'agent of CIA',. The Congress's ally the CPI, had gone a step ahead and called the JP movement a 'fascist movement'.<sup>50</sup> The CPI had put up

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49. From the Documents of the CPI(M)'s 10th Congress in 1978.

50. From the documents of the CPI's 10th party Congress, '75.

an anti-JP movement in Bihar and elsewhere so as to tune with the Soviet party line. On the contrary, the CPI(M) gave limited and conditional support to the JP movement, especially in the initial period. Later on, the party had admitted that its vacillation and hesitation were due to their failure to notice the main thrust of the JP was against the growing authoritarianism of the ruling Congress party.<sup>51</sup> This is how the two parties perceived the JP movement differently.

To conclude it, the two parties during the pre-emergency period achieved no unity even in their actions on common issues. Because, these parties while pressing for left and democratic unity in words acted contrary in deeds. Not that the two parties were sectarian and so functioned independently. But, the objective compulsion led to their disunity. To be specific, while the CPI was identified with the Congress the CPI(M) was isolated from all the opposition parties, for its half-hearted attitude towards these parties, particularly in W.Bengal in early 70s. Such a divergence in their perception of objective situations led them to take two parallel lines on the eve of imposition of emergency in 1975.

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51. EMS Namboodripad, Crisis into Chaos, op cit. p.136

## CHAPTER III

### THE JANATA PHASE (1977-80)

The year 1977 represents a landmark in the evolution of Indian polity. The Lok Sabha elections held in that year had changed the political landscape of the country. One party dominance of the Indian National Congress was ended for the first time in the history of independent India. The voting pattern in the elections altered the basic structure of the party system. The one party dominance system was replaced by the nebulous two party system.

The Congress party had never tasted defeat on this scale. The Congress which received its main support from the Hindi-speaking region had to draw blank. Even the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was defeated from her native constituency. These developments dealt a severe blow to the Congress party. The electoral outcome did not surprise many because the electorate was appalled by the phenomenon called "emergency" and gave their

verdict against the ruling party. Infact, the party's debacle started while the emergency rule was under implementation. It was during this period that the realignment of political forces had taken place. Notwithstanding their variant political character, almost all the opposition parties were unanimous in opposing the Indira Gandhi-led emergency regime. The emergency was such an important issue that it rallied both the 'Right' parties like Jana Sangh, Swatantra and the 'Left' parties like the CPI(M) and CPI(ML) under one banner. And again the same emergency rule was chiefly responsible for the rise and growth of the Janata Party.<sup>1</sup>

Ofcourse there were other issues which also led to the debacle of the Congress party. But those were insignificant when compared to the importance of the

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1. In the period of emergency rule, the political leaders belonging to the Opposition were imprisoned. The jail life had brought those leaders, ranging from the Jana Sangh to the CPI(M) at one place. Jayaprakash Narayan rallied all such forces which were willing to defeat the Congress regime. And thus, the emergency provided the Opposition an occasion to the formation of Janata party in Feb.1977.

emergency. The fight against emergency culminated in the formation of Janata party, largely due to the efforts of Jayaprakash Narayan. The Janata party, a conglomeration of four small parties consisting of the Congress(O), Bharatiya Lokdal (BLD), Jana Sangh and Socialist party, was formed just before the polls. The Janata party in alliance with the Congress for Democracy (CFD) led by Jagjivan Ram emerged as an alternative to the ruling Congress. The Janata-CFD combine had campaigned exclusively against the emergency regime. Some of the salient features of the emergency rule which angered the masses were, forced sterilization, demolishing slums and huts in Delhi, new acts like, Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), Pre-censorship of the newspapers, Imprisonment of political opponents and so on. If this is what the emergency meant for the opposition parties, the Communists especially the CPI understood it differently. The CPI(M)'s position, however, was decisively against the Emergency. In the 1977 elections the electorate gave its mandate to those parties which opposed the emergency rule. Those who

had either associated with the anti-emergency struggle or fought against Indira Gandhi-led Congress were the winners in the electoral contest. The CPI(M) was an important beneficiary of the anti-emergency wave, CPI which was ambivalent about the emergency was routed in the elections. This is how the two Communist parties played different roles till the elections were held.

An attempt is made in this chapter to explain the stand of these two parties on various issues ranging from the emergency to the Janata Phase. The chief factors which contributed to their divergent attitudes are also examined. How did their divergence manifest itself in their mutual relations? What lessons did the two parties learn from the electoral outcome? What was the significance of the Bhatinda Congress? Was there any shift in their strategy or tactics in the Janata Phase? To what extent these shifts led to the normalisation of CPI-CPI(M) relations? What were the obstacles which hampered the process of left unity? These were a few questions which have been dealt with.

In the wake of JP movement in 1974 the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi perceived a threat to her power. Her attempts to liquidate the movement met with little success. The movement was so powerful that it posed a major threat to state power when JP had called upon the army and police not to obey the orders of the government.<sup>2</sup> The main thrust of the JP movement was its concern over the phenomena of corruption and authoritarianism of the ruling party. The movement first began in Bihar and, later on, spread to Gujarat and other states. The JP movement in due course got transformed into an anti-Congress political movement.

On the heels of the Congress defeat in the Gujarat elections<sup>3</sup> in June 1975, the Allahabad High Court unseated Indira Gandhi from the Lok Sabha over an election dispute. The High Court judgement provided an opportunity to the Opposition to demand Indira Gandhi's

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2. Draft Political Resolution for the tenth party Congress of CPI(M) (CPI(M) Publication: January 1978)p.19
3. An opposition combine called Janata Front defeated the Congress party in the elections. This event set trend in the entire North India in the emergency period in the name of JP led anti-emergency struggle.



resignation, atleast until the case was settled in Supreme Court. Indira Gandhi saw in these developments a threat to the ruling party and her Prime Ministership, in particular. Almost all the opposition parties from 'Right' to 'Left', except the CPI, joined the fray to resist the policies of Indira Gandhi. Faced with such a volatile situation in the country, she worked strategies of outwitting the opposition. It is in this light that the imposition of emergency rule on 25 June, 1975 was justified by the Prime Minister. The reasons for proclamation of the emergency, according to Indira Gandhi were:

"the institution of the Prime Minister is important and the deliberate political attempts to denigrate it is not in the interest of democracy or of the nation....the threat to internal stability also affects production and prospects of economic improvement.... the forces of disintegration are in full play and communal passions are being aroused, threatening our unity... the nation's integrity demands firm action".<sup>4</sup>

Unlike the earlier Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi had adopted coercive methods to silence the opposition.

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4. Indira Gandhi, "The Reason", Seminar, March 1977, New Delhi. p.12

In the emergency period, spanning around twenty months, the Congress regime unleashed a reign of terror especially in the Hindi speaking region. Legislation after legislation was made so as to suppress dissent and the voice of the opposition parties. Civil liberties and freedom were curtailed, including the fundamental rights of the people. The press was exclusively controlled by different means so as to make it another mouthpiece of the government. Ofcourse, the All India Radio(AIR) and the Doordarshan were already tuning with the government. Soli Sorabjee comments on the press censorship in the emergency, in the following words:

"Nothing is to be published that is likely to convey the impression of a protest or disapproval of governmental measures.... For the first two days, there was some semblance of opposition from certain sections of the press. Blank editorials appeared as a gesture of protest".<sup>5</sup>

On the otherhand, the Prime Minister exhibited certain elements of radicalism through her 'progressive'

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5. Soli Sorabjee, "The emergency, censorship and the press in India, 1975-77", Central News Agency (New Delhi) p.3

20 point programme along with her son, Sanjay Gandhi's 5 point programme. It was to be proved later that such a radical posture was essential at that time for two reasons. One, to gain legitimacy for enforcing emergency rule, second, a corollary to the above to contain the growing discontent among the people which was being expressed through the anti-emergency struggles that was gaining ground. It was such a two-edged policy which resulted in different interpretations of the emergency rule, especially by the two Communist parties.

The two Communist parties could not make a proper assessment of the contradictions in the policies of the Congress party during the emergency. Nor could they turn the 'intra-ruling class' conflicts to their advantage. While the CPI overemphasised the progressive nature of the Indira Gandhi, the CPI(M) underestimated the 'bourgeois-landlord' cleavage. To quote the CPI's Party Life:

"The emergency undoubtedly struck a heavy blow at the diabolical plans of internal reaction and imperialism directed against democracy. Together with the Prime Minister's 20 point

economic programme, it constituted the democratic counter-offensive on a wide front. It held out possibilities of a new favourable turn in the entire political situation. Progressive, democratic and patriotic forces, particularly in the Congress and the CPI, were immensely enthused..."<sup>6</sup>

The CPI's understanding flowed from its ideological analysis of the Congress split. The party viewed the split as a fissure in the ranks of the 'bourgeoisie' between the national anti-imperialist and pro-imperialist sections. In concrete terms, Indira Gandhi-led Congress represented the national anti-imperialist forces, whereas the Congress(O) represented the interest of the pro-imperialist reactionaries. According to the CPI General Secretary C. Rajeshwar Rao;

"In the present critical situation facing our country with its 500,000 members should rise like one man and unite with the Congress and other democratic forces to rout the dark forces of reaction".<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, the Central Committee of the CPI(M) came out with a call for a "Broad Front of Fighting

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6. Party Life, May 1976

7. C.Rajeshwar Rao, "Emergency and the Communist Party" (Pamphlet) CPI Publication: N.Delhi, 1975

People". Its report stated:

"The emergency has introduced a qualitatively new feature in the political situation. In contrast to what has happened in W.Bengal in 1972, it is not our party alone that is attacked but a wider spectrum of Indian society and all political parties in opposition to the government, irrespective of their colour. This, combined with the deteriorating economic situation, proclaims the possibility of the widest possible democratic movement to fight the emergency and restore the right of the Indian people. This will facilitate the advance of the left and democratic forces."<sup>8</sup>

However, when the question of anti-emergency struggle came, the CPI(M) hesitated to take a forthright stand in support of the ongoing JP-led movement. This was partly because the party could not understand the nature of the confrontation among the 'bourgeois opposition' parties. Suffice it to quote from its Review Report of the tenth congress:

"In a way these political parties of former Right opposition were being considered by us as the 'permanent' enemies, pitching their tents in the camp of reaction and counter-revolution. While

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8. CPI(M)'s CC Report, People's Democracy July 1975

willy-nilly considering the ruling Congress party to have certain basic conflicts and contradictions with the Right reactionaries, thus virtually conceding a sort of "Centrist" position to the ruling Congress. History had proved that such an assessment of our PB and CC was incorrect. (emphasis its)"<sup>9</sup>

What emerged from the CPI(M)'s understanding of anti-emergency struggle was its unwillingness to support the JP led movement, as it represented a 'Rightist' trend. Moreover, old prejudices against JP owing to his anti-Communist posture in the past had prevented the CPI(M) leadership from making a greater contribution than the party actually did. The party leadership was, infact, divided on the question of the 'extent and form' of support to be given to the populist movement of JP in 1974-75 as well as to the anti-emergency struggle.<sup>10</sup>

Fortunately, the CPI(M) changed its stance on this score by late 1970s, for the party wanted to be in the forefront of the fight against the Congress.

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9. CPI(M) REVIEW REPORT adopted by the tenth congress in April 1978 at Jalandhar(Punjab) p.35
10. Bhabani Sen Gupta, CPI(M): PROMISES, PROSPCTS, PROBLEMS (N.Delhi: Young Asia Publications, 1979)

This occurred at a time when the party had borne the brunt of the authoritarianism of the Congress regime, especially in Kerala and W.Bengal. The party unit in Kerala advocated "the substitution of our accepted concept of left and democratic front" with that of a "Democratic Front".<sup>11</sup> In other words, to fight back the repression let-loose by the CPI-Congress coalition government, the party needed some political allies. Similar feeling was expressed by the W.Bengal group in the party's Central Committee. The W.Bengal group had presented a note asking the PB's rationale behind characterising "some political parties as parties of extreme Right opposition when the ruling Congress party itself has become reactionary and dictatorial."<sup>12</sup> That is to say, a section of the party leadership had laid emphasis on the need for an anti-Congress front. Though initially, the PB tended to ignore this section, it had to come around the same opinion, later on. The 'shift' in the party's stand towards the 'Right' parties was pronounced

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11. CPI(M) REVIEW REPORT Op. cit. p.26

12. ibid. p.28

by February-March 1977, when the party changed its earlier understanding. Therefore, the CPI(M) extended greater support to the anti-Congress struggle. This stance enabled the CPI(M) to embark upon joint actions with the opposition parties. The party's Review Report noted that the joint actions in support of the JP led movement had placed it in an "unassailable position". To quote from the report:

"People understood our position as one of general support with our own reservations on particulars. Our stand had helped the rank and file of these Right parties in JP's Coordination Committee in overcoming some of the deep prejudices they were holding against our party and its political line earlier."<sup>13</sup>

On the otherhand, the CPI continued to uphold its 'sacred task' of defeating the "Counter-revolution" unleashed by the JP led opposition combine. The party termed all those forces (namely, Congress(O), BLD, Jana Sangh, Socialist party, the CPI(M) etc. ) who were waging a common battle to protect the democratic rights, as

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13. *ibid.* p.43



the "counter-revolutionaries", "Right-reactionaries", "Imperialist-aided feudal lords and monopoly capitalists" and the JP's 'total revolution' as the "Fascist movement".

As observed earlier, the CPI's understanding emanated from its strategic objective of supporting the "rule of national bourgeoisie" which was committed to an independent path of development, anti-feudalism and anti-imperialism. Meanwhile the party did notice an "intra-bourgeois polarisation" and on this basis decided to continue supporting the Congress. This was due to its inadequate reading of the socio-political situation prevailing in the pre-emergency period. As a result, the party had supported the progressive government of Indira Gandhi assuming that it would help in "crushing the forces of right reaction" and gave the emergency regime a visible and durable left-orientation.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, the CPI supported the emergency to oppose the 'Right reaction'. This led the CPI, along with the Congress, to vote in favour of the controversial 42nd Amendment to the Constitution in the Parliament.

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14. New Age, July 6, 1975, "National Emergency and our Party's Task"

The party's fight against anti-emergency forces amounted to supporting the Congress party in a brazen manner, which gave an impression that it was behind the Congress. The party not only continued to support the emergency but also embarked upon mobilising its cadres against the opposition parties in Bihar and elsewhere. Paradoxically, the emergency helped the 'Rightists'.<sup>15</sup>

Given the party-to-party relations between the CPI and the CPSU, the stand taken by the CPI on the question of emergency was not exceptional rather it coincided with that of the CPSU. The Soviet leader Brezhnev when he visited India had supported the emergency rule, which in fact, encouraged the CPI to tilt further towards the Congress. Of course the CPI admitted this in its National Council meeting wherein it criticised the 'excesses' during the emergency period:

"the party is also understood to have come to the conclusion that it had misjudged Mrs. Indira Gandhi's professions of Progressivism merely on the strength of pro-Moscow Foreign policy and lip service to the poor at home".<sup>16</sup>

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15. Ouseph Varkey, the CPI-Congress Alliance, Asian Survey, Sept., 1975

16. The Statesman, 29 December, 1977

This is how the two Communist parties moved in two parallel directions, meeting nowhere in the political spectrum. And so obviously, the relations between the two parties were at low ebb. Added to this, the two parties were engulfed in street battles throughout the emergency period, particularly in Kerala which contributed to mutual destruction.<sup>17</sup> Though the CPI criticised the excesses of the emergency rule, the party did not quit the Kerala ministry. The 1977 elections forced the party to reassess the CPI-Congress relations, on the one hand, and the CPI-CPI(M) relations, on the other.

The 1977 elections inaugurated a new era in the arena of CPI-CPI(M) relations. The two parties contested elections from two different political camps, one led by the ruling Congress party and the other by the Janata party. Not only that the two parties suffered severe losses in the elections but the left movement as a whole was weakened. And the 'Right' parties like Jana Sangh

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17. CPI(M) Publication, Salkia Plenum, December 1978  
p.16.

BLD and Congress(O) enhanced their strength in the Parliament. In other words, Janata party, comprising of 'rightist' and 'leftist' parties benefitted the most at the cost of both the Congress and the left parties. The two left parties were represented in two opposite camps and so the election outcome affected them disproportionately. That is to say, that the CPI was the biggest loser, its strength in the Lok Sabha was reduced from 23 to 7 seats and its votes from 4.89% to 2.82%. The seven seats it won were from Kerala and Tamil Nadu where the party had an alliance with the Congress and other parties. The party drew a blank in its strongholds, particularly in Bihar. The election results clearly indicates that due to its proximity with the Congress.

The National Council(NC) of the CPI evaluated the election result and admitted that the party had suffered a "serious setback ... in the greater part of the country", and that its mass base had been "considerably, though temporarily, eroded in some places".<sup>18</sup>

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18. Resolution of the NC, 3-6 April, 1977 pp. 13-19  
(CPI Publication: New Delhi)

On the otherhand, the CPI(M) while retaining its support base and electoral strength in the Lok Sabha, emerged victorious in the Assembly elections held in W.Bengal and Tripura. The party led the two left front governments without the support of the CPI. With this, the CPI(M) became the largest Communist party in the Parliament and outside.

While the CPI(M) improved its position in the electoral battle, its longterm goal of evolving a left and democratic alternative remained to be fulfilled. But to achieve this goal, both the left parties had to come closer. Since the two parties contested elections against each other the prospects of coming closer appeared bleak. Nevertheless the electoral outcome did teach some lessons to the CPI as it suffered the most. As a result, the CPI had to realise the damage it suffered in the elections, as is evident from its political review report which said:

"Our party lost because it was temporarily on its wrongside of mass vote, as the dominant popular urge to get rid of the Congress Government".<sup>19</sup>

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19. Documents of the eleventh congress of the CPI, p.80

This development facilitated the two parties to reassess their relations. Their recognition had some significance in the sense that the two parties would come closer. As a preliminary step in this direction the CPI withdrew its general support to the Congress party. Further, the two parties initiated a debate to explore the possibilities of hammering out their differences amicably.

## II

After having pursued parallel and sometimes conflicting paths throughout the emergency period, the two left parties reached Punjab in April 1978 to hold their party congresses. The CPI held its eleventh congress at Bhatinda. It is significant to note that the CPI admitted its mistakes in supporting the emergency rule in review of activities. The party, however, attributed its mistakes to its 'departure' from its programmatic understanding. Rajeshwar Rao said:

"As a matter of fact, the mistakes committed during the period of emergency were due to a departure from the party programme, in particular relation to the Indian bourgeoisie."<sup>20</sup>

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20. C. Rajeshwar Rao, "Continuing Validity of party programme", New Age, April 30, 1978

And therefore, the party did not alter its programmatic understanding.<sup>21</sup> The CPI, however, enumerated the reasons and circumstances for supporting the emergency and Indira Gandhi in its political review report at the Bhatinda congress. The report said:

"the extremely complicated situation preceding the proclamation of the emergency warranted more prudence on the part of the party. But the party rushed to support the emergency. This was due to the mistaken understanding that a split had taken place between the anti-imperialist, democratic sections of the bourgeoisie on the onehand, and the pro-imperialist most reactionary, pro-monopoly, pro-landlord, anti-Communist sections on the other, and that the emergency could be used to bring about progressive shift in the correlation of forces and state power in a national democratic direction. The progressive potentialities of the national bourgeoisie and Indira Gandhi government and the capacity of the party and other democratic forces to bring about these shifts in the situation were overestimated. The Party's support to the emergency was wrong from the beginning".<sup>22</sup>

Two amendments to the political resolution were rejected in the Congress. The first amendment to be rejected stated that the party's initial support to the

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21. *ibid.*

22. CPI Political Review Report, (New Age: April 9, 1978)

emergency was unavoidable.<sup>23</sup> Another amendment sought to reject the assessment of the National Council draft that the party was following a broadly correct policy till the latter part of the year 1974. The amendment sought to change this assessment to say that the line followed by the party since 1969 contained the seeds of subsequent mistakes.<sup>24</sup>

The CPI(M) held its tenth congress at Jalandhar in April 1978. Unlike the CPI, the CPI(M) viewed the success of the Janata party as a positive development. The political resolution adopted at the party congress attached greater importance to the defence of parliamentary democracy and democratic rights and liberties and to the struggle against authoritarianism. According to Bhabani Sen Gupta, the CPI(M) was the only political group in India which, as far back in 1972, anticipated the authoritarian regime of Indira Gandhi, but it could

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23. This amendment was rejected by 403 to 713 votes, 7 abstained. For details, see New Age, April 9, 1978

24. This amendment was also turned down by 232 to 774 votes.



hardly foresee that the democratic struggle would be spearheaded by a major segment of the "bourgeois-landlord ruling class", itself. Further he said that what was being witnessed in India then was not merely a crisis of the "bourgeois-landlord political system", but also the "sharpest ever conflict within the ruling class". These conflicts made it possible for the CPI(M) to develop "broad and wide resistance to the emergency and dictatorial rule". The democratic "bourgeois-landlord" parties, i.e. the Janata coalition, continued to play an important role in the struggle for democracy and against dictatorship, a struggle that would be marked by many "vacillations and changeovers" from one camp to another.<sup>25</sup>

The CPI(M) position underlined the fact that there was no alternative to Janata rule if the authoritarian forces were to be kept at bay. The party has consistently upheld the task of the struggle for democracy. However, the party on its own could not fulfil the task as its

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25. Bhabani Sen Gupta Op. cit.

strength was very limited. And so it saw a potential ally in the Janata party to fight against the Congress party, notwithstanding the inconsistencies in Janata party.

Moreover the CPI(M) provided cogent arguments to support its positive attitude towards the Janata government. It was based on its understanding of the masses and their unpreparedness in the fight against the bourgeois parties. The authoritarian dictatorship had been removed owing to the electoral defeat of the Congress and the restoration of civil liberties and democratic rights. But the anti-emergency struggle and the electoral victory did not lead to a shift in the balance of forces "in favour of the working class", and thus, the masses were still under the influence of bourgeois parties.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the objective conditions are not there for the left parties to lead the masses.

In December 1978, the CPI(M) held its party Plenum in Salkia (W.Bengal) to discuss its organisational problems.<sup>27</sup>

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26. The Statesman, July 26, 1978

27. Documents of the Salkia Plenum, published in People's Democracy, Jan-Feb issues (1979)

The party reiterated its support to the Janata party, keeping in view of its long term goal. To be more specific, the CPI(M) in the pursuit of its Plenum objective of expanding its base in the Hindi-speaking region, wanted to maintain its cordial relationship with the Janata party which appeared to be an alternative to the Congress in the region. Following the Salkia Plenum, there were some changes in the party set up. First, the party office was shifted from Calcutta to New Delhi. Second, a decision was taken to transform the party into "mass based", rather than "cadre based" party. And third, P. Sundarayya was replaced by EMS Namboodiripad as the General Secretary of the party. These changes enabled the party leadership to adopt a more flexible approach which was necessary for expanding its base in the Hindi-speaking region. In view of these factors the party was unwilling to sever its ties with the Janata party.<sup>28</sup> The party maintained its anti-Congress posture even though the Congress was now in opposition. This was basically

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28. It is said that P. Sundarayya had, infact, resigned from the PB and General Secretary because of his disapproval of the pro-Janata stance of the majority in the PB. For details, see Marxism Today (N.Delhi), August 1986.

due to the fact that the Congress continued to represent authoritarian trends though with denuded strength. The CPI(M) Draft Political Resolution said:

"The Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections showed that the Congress which had imposed emergency on the country had considerable strength among the people. The loss of seats by the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections was out of proportion to its electoral strength. Even then it secured 150 seats in the Lok Sabha. It also controls the majority in the Rajya Sabha."<sup>29</sup>

Contrary to this, the CPI perceived the Janata party as the dangerous, for it predominantly represents the rightist trend due to the presence of old Jana Sangh in it. Though the CPI had given up its formal alliance with the Congress, except in Kerala, it still persisted with an anti-Janata line. This remained an important obstacle in the path of normalisation of their relations even after the Bhatinda Congress set the trend.

However, in the post-Bhatinda period, both the parties decided to initiate united actions on common issues.

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29. CPI(M) Draft Political Resolution, tenth congress, Jan.1978 p.20

it was decided that there should be a coordinating body to settle the disputes concerning joint actions. And thereby to strengthen the left movement as a whole through resolving the differences across the table, a Central Coordination Committee (CCC) was set up in April 1978.<sup>30</sup>

But the relations between the two parties remained strained, notwithstanding the Bhatinda spirit and the formation of the CCC. This was partly because there were no attempts made by either party to remove the ideological differences. And more importantly, the CPI did not change its understanding of the Congress as well as the Janata parties. As a result, the CPI did not extend support to the Janata led governments in states and at the Centre.

The CPI press during the period 1978-80 indicates that the party aimed its attack more at the Janata party

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30. On April 13, 1978 at Ajay Bhawan(CPI), a formal meeting was held between the leaders of two parties and a joint Communique issued.

than at the Congress. The CPI was reluctant to support any of the Janata policies, instead it chose to criticise the CPI(M) for its support of the Janata party. In an attempt to justify its stand the party General Secretary Rao said:

"The country can no longer be saved either by continuation of Janata party rule or by restoration of Congress rule. It can be salvaged only by bringing about structural changes in the state power at the Centre, that is, by a left and democratic national alternative power structure at the Centre.... Replacement of Indira Gandhi government by the Janata Party government at the Centre and in a number of states has not mitigated this crisis. On the contrary it has intensified further because the Janata party government is systematically reversing the nationally accepted policies of planned economic development, expansion of the public sector, development of modern industries and promotion of Indian technology, in the name of giving preference to smallscale industry, handicrafts and agriculture ... In such a situation of acute crisis of the capitalist system, it has taken only one year for the Janata party government to come to the same pass which the Congress government came to after 30 years. The same authoritarian danger which engulfed the country in the last days of Indira Gandhi regime, looms large on the Indian political horizon today. (emphasis Rao's) 31

The essence of the argument was that the Janata party was equally dangerous as the Congress. And thus, to get rid of the Janata party which was in power the CPI advised all the left and democratic parties to form a left and democratic national alternative. The National Council of the CPI while re-viewing its activities during the period after the Bhatinda congress continued to indict the Janata government for its failures at home and abroad. But it paid very little attention to the activities of Indira Gandhi. Understably, the CPI(M) had been termed sectarian, un-marxist, disruptive, anti-Soviet and so on for its friendly relations with the Janata party.

It is pertinent at this stage to quote from its Review Report so as to bring out its criticism against the CPI(M). It stated:

"Its (CPI(M)'s) criticism of Janata's policies and actions on class and mass issues is, however, becoming more outspoken and sharp. But still it clings to the absurd and un-Marxist theory that since Indira Gandhi is the "main enemy", the Janata government should be supported against her. In actual practice, everyday of Janata's bankrupt rule prefers to turn a blind to this reality.....By and large, CPI leadership is still not prepared to work for a left and democratic alternative to both the Janata and

the Congress through the process of developing united mass actions and struggles on a country wide scale on agreed issues." 32

It is from this understanding of the party that the CPI envisaged an alternative to the Janata party. The core of such an alternative of the third front was to consist of the CPI and the CPI(M). Accordingly, the CPI emphasised the importance of unity of the two parties so as to pose an all India leftist alternative, not only to the Congress but also to the Janata party.

But the perception of the CPI(M) is different from that of the CPI on this aspect. The CPI(M) did not anticipate any radical change in the economic policies of the Janata party. Because it considered the latter as basically a bourgeois-landlord party. Accordingly, the CPI(M) supported the Janata regime with a hope that it would intervene in the "intra-ruling class" conflict and thereby weaken the bigger enemy namely,

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32. Report and Resolution, adopted by the NC of the CPI, November 1978.



the Congress party with the help of the Janata government. The CPI(M) established friendly relations with the Janata government due to its defence of parliamentary democracy which was an important step in the struggle for people's rights. It seems that the CPI(M) gave primacy to short term political interests over the longterm. goals. The party, in an attempt to dismantle the authoritarian regime of the Congress, ignored the formation of left and democratic alternative, even after two years of the Janata rule. This was because the party relied excessively on the Janata party. The People's Democracy editorial observed:

"Take for instance, the composition of the two Houses of present Parliament. The parties and groups committed to a left and democratic programme are so weak in number that no realistic political observer can think of providing a 'left and democratic national alternative' as is facilely assumed by some people."33

The CPI(M) has a point in the sense that given the marginal strength of the left parties it was premature

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33. People's Democracy, July 27, 1979

to think of the third front as an alternative to both the Janata and the Congress parties. For the CPI(M) the three major problems obstructing the fulfilment of a third front are the following:<sup>34</sup>

1. The mass base of the Communist parties is very limited.
2. The Communists are badly divided.
3. There are other non-left parties which can augment the third front on their own to provide an alternative.

Seen in this light, the CPI's undue importance to left unity surprised many including the CPI(M). Surprised over such a dramatic shift in the CPI's strategy, the CPI(M) did not appreciate it, rather the party expressed its misgivings that it might disrupt CPI(M)-Janata relations at a time when it was taking a new course. Unlike the CPI, the CPI(M) was in favour of participation of all non-Congress forces in the proposed left and democratic alternative.

After the Bhatinda congress, the CPI was vociferous in its propaganda about launching united actions on

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34. Ram Joshi and Kiritidev Desai, "Towards a more competitive Party System in India", Asian Survey, November 1978.

common problems at the mass front level. The party felt that the very survival of the country depended upon forging a united front of left and democratic forces. But the CPI(M) differed with this idea of the CPI as that alienates the former from the Janata.<sup>35</sup>

Discussing unity in action between the two parties the CPI(M) emphasised one precondition, that the CPI should not make the Janata party and government the target of attack. But the CPI was not willing to oblige the CPI(M) on this score. According to Rajasekhar Reddy of the CPI:

"the very approach of laying preconditions for forging unity of action with a fellow left party betrays an allergy to such unity...."<sup>36</sup>

Further, the CPI took strong exception to the negative attitude of the CPI(M) as the latter continued to harp on the differences between the two parties and

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35. People's Democracy, April 23, 1978

36. New Age, February 18, 1978.

even ridiculed the former for its anxiety over unity. According to the CEC of the CPI:

"This negative attitude of the CPI(M) leaders may be aimed at pleasing the Janata party and assuring it that the two Communist parties would remain apart... the CPI(M) leadership is actually helping the emergence of Indira Gandhi as an alternative to Janata party rule through their alliance with the Janata party and underplaying the importance of left and democratic unity which is the need of the hour."<sup>37</sup>

The CPI(M) was not pleased by the CPI-Congress coalition government in Kerala. The party wanted the CPI to first establish its credibility as a left party before going for any sort of unity with the latter. The CPI(M) recalled as to how the CPI joined hands with the Congress led by Indira Gandhi to break the united front of leftist parties and their democratic allies in two states of Kerala and W.Bengal in late sixties. The party accused the other of disrupting the then existing left and democratic fronts.<sup>38</sup>

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37. C. Rajeshwar Rao, "CPI(M) helps Indira Stage Comeback", New Age, May 21, 1979

38. People's Democracy, March 4, 1979

The two parties viewed the problem of left unity differently. According to the CPI(M), there were differences on the concrete details of joint action to be developed which ought to be sorted out through mutual discussions. Only such a discussion can lead to agreement on issues and on the "concrete lines of actions" which can facilitate unity of action.<sup>39</sup>

At the international plane, both the parties did not agree on significant issues. While the CPI exhibited total loyalty to the CPSU, the CPI(M) blamed both Moscow and Peking as equally responsible for the current conflicts in world Communist movement, but acknowledged both the USSR and China as the Socialist states. And the CPI(M) was very explicit in its views on this issue since its Madurai congress. To quote the Draft Political Resolution of its tenth congress:

"The policy pursued by these two ruling parties (viz., CPSU, CPC) of subordinating the development of the revolutionary forces in the underdeveloped countries to the opportunist needs of their government's foreign policy has greatly harmed

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39. ibid.....

the democratic struggle of the people in newly liberated countries. Despite the setbacks in a number of countries as a result of these policies, these parties have not learnt the lesson and pursue the same opportunist course".<sup>40</sup>

### III

By the end of 1978, the disenchantment of the masses with the Janata government became pronounced, leading to the appearance of Indira Gandhi staging a comeback due to the wranglings in the Janata party over policies and power.<sup>41</sup> This was precisely because the policies of the Janata government at the Centre and in states, were largely similar to that of the Congress party. At the same time, the Janata party's approach towards the Trade Unions and Kisan Sabhas was also not appreciated by the left parties, including the CPI(M). On the question of enacting the Preventive Detention Bill, the CPI(M) criticised the Janata government. And so was the case with the foreign policy. More

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40. Draft Political Resolution, tenth congress of the CPI(M) Op. cit. p.13

41. Iqbal Narain, "India 1978: Politics of Non-issues", Asian Survey, Feb.1979, Vol. XIX No.2

importantly, what concerned the CPI(M) most was the growth of RSS-Jana Sangh influence in the Janata party. These were the main factors which forced the CPI(M) to reassess its position on the Janata party government. This had resulted in its changed attitude towards the Janata party.

It is against this backdrop that the CPI(M) bid farewell to the Janata party. The party's shift from its original stand of lending "unstinted support" (to use Namboodiripad's words) to the Janata party to that of supporting it only in its "fight against Indira Gandhi or authoritarianism" could be discernible. The party had to shift further by the end of 1979 when it supported Charan Singh led Janata(S)-Congress(S) coalition ministry at the Centre, instead of the Janata party. Not only that its erstwhile ally (Janata party) had become its main enemy, but Indira Gandhi-supported Charan Singh government became its friend. Ofcourse, the CPI(M) had a point in justifying its shift on the premise that there had occurred a split in the Janata party, consequently the democratic, secular and progressive sections were not with the Janata party, but on the side of Charan Singh.

However, the change in the CPI(M) policy inspired the CPI considerably to change its pro-Congress stand, notwithstanding SA Dange's apprehensions and warnings. The party put forward its 19-point charter of demands<sup>42</sup> as the basis for common platform to launch joint actions. More significantly, the CPI stepped down from the Kerala government and joined the CPI(M) led left and democratic front. The CPI's 'sacrifice' in Kerala was welcomed by the CPI(M). In a way, this put an end to the mutual bickerings between the two parties, particularly in Kerala. No doubt the end of CPI-Congress alliance enhanced the prospects of left unity.

Besides, the July-August governmental crisis<sup>43</sup> in 1979 provided an occasion to both the parties to take common lines and to plunge into joint actions not only on economic issues but also on political ones. These parties decided to support the dissolution of Lok Sabha and the call for holding fresh elections. The common platform adopted by the two left parties created a new atmosphere in the country's political field on the eve of 1980 Lok Sabha elections.

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42. NC Resolution of the CPI, "Political Platform for Left and Democratic Unity", Party Life, 7 March, 1979.

43. In July 1979, when a no-confidence motion against the Charan Singh ministry was tabled in the Lok Sabha, the Prime Minister resigned following the withdrawal of support by Congress(I)



## CHAPTER IV

### THE INDIRA GANDHI PHASE (1980-84)

The 1980 midterm elections to the Lok Sabha inaugurated a new phase in the Indian political process. The Congress party routed in the 1977 elections was once again voted to power. Indira Gandhi who earned the wrath of the people for infamous emergency rule staged a comeback within three years of her political oblivion. The Janata party which scored a resounding victory and formed the first ever non-Congress government at the Centre in 1977 could not survive as a united party. The massive mandate that Indira Gandhi secured in the elections was not due to her catchy slogan, "the government that works", but because the Janata party was a divided house. The erstwhile constituents of the Janata party, particularly Jan Sangh on the one hand, and the BLD on the other pushed the Janata government to collapse. As a result, the non-Congress parties maintained their 'opposition' role, but this time, these parties opposed themselves, not the Congress party.

It is against this backdrop that the left parties had entered the electoral fray. As observed in the preceding chapter, the political developments since July-August (1979) governmental crisis led to normalisation of the CPI-CPI(M) relations. As a result, there occurred more united actions not only between the two left parties but also among the other left and democratic parties. This enabled these parties to fight the elections unitedly on their own. For the first time that the CPI and the CPI(M) did not join either of the two major political camps led by the Congress and the Opposition. Ofcourse, the left parties extended their limited support to the Janata(S)-Congress(S) combine.

In this chapter, the factors which enabled the left parties to evolve an independent left alternative to both the Janata and Congress parties are examined. To what extent did this unity alter CPI-CPI(M) relationship? How did the left parties perceive the reemergence of Indira Gandhi on the political scene? Did these parties shift their positions regarding the BJP? What was their approach towards regional parties? Why did the left parties participate in the 'conclave politics'?

These are a few relevant questions which are examined in the course of study.

## I

On the eve of the 1980 elections, both the left parties had come to an understanding to cooperate with each other in fighting the twin danger of authoritarianism, represented by the Congress(I) and communalism, represented by the Jana Sangh-dominated Janata party. The significant shift in the CPI(M) position on the question of communalism leading to its support of the CPI line, had in fact, facilitated the two parties to come around the above understanding. The CPI(M) had to face severe criticism from its most powerful state party unit(W.Bengal) as well as a powerful section in the party's Central Committee for equating the communalism with the authoritarianism. This is evident in the following passage:

"The dissenting opinion in the CC directs its criticism against the CC that it had underestimated the danger of authoritarian Congress(I), that it had overestimated the menace of Jana Sangh-RSS communalism, that it overestimated at one stage that the prospect of the RSS-Jana Sangh led wing of the Janata party coming to power was becoming real and that the usage of

the term "twin danger" was the reflection of the CC's erroneous assessment."1

However, the party went ahead with its overestimation of the danger from the Jana Sangh-dominated Janata party. While refuting the minority view, the CPI(M) leadership justified its stand. According to the party's Political-Organisational Report of its eleventh Congress:

"Such a criticism of the CC's tactics emanated, firstly from looking at the Jana Sangh-RSS role as it was during the days of the JP movement in 1975-77, secondly, from the failure to see that its role was increasingly undermining the struggle against authoritarianism while it was attempting to even make up with the Congress(I) in its bid to capture the leadership of the Government, and, thirdly, from the utter unawareness of the havoc that the role of the RSS-Jana Sangh was causing among the Muslim minorities and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes."2

What is discernible from this argument of the majority of the CPI(M) leadership is that the party

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1. Political-Organisational Report, at its XI party congress in 1981 p.41
2. ibid... p.42

considered the Janata party to be just as dangerous as the Congress. This would mean weakening its struggle against the Congress(I). Moreover this stance enabled the CPI(M) to contest elections alone or in alliance with other left and democratic parties. Meanwhile, the Janata(S)-Congress(S) posed to take on both the Congress(I) and Janata parties in the electoral contest. This coincided with the left parties's strategy of winning the 'double battle' at one stroke. It is in this background that the limited alliance of the left parties with the third front, Janata(S)-Congress(S) in the 1980 midterm polls has to be analysed. It was because of each party's preparedness to accommodate the other that these parties could put up a common fight in the elections. As a result, the left parties scored their first victory in the sense that they intervened in the 'intra-class' conflict when they ensured triangular contest between the 'bourgeois parties'. In doing so, it appears, the left parties paid scant regard to the possibility of Indira Gandhi staging a comeback. The left parties' attempt was to derive some political advantage from the split of non-left parties, at best the status of the leading opposition group in Parliament.

Both the parties were enthusiastic about a joint campaign in the elections. Their optimism led them to overestimate their strength and to pose themselves as a national alternative, as is clear from the following statement by the CPI:

"The realisation of this unity is accentuated by the need to bar the way to power again of the authoritarianism as well as communal forces represented by the Congress(I) and Janata party..."<sup>3</sup>

Given the state of hostility in the non-Congress camp, the Congress led by Indira Gandhi triumphed in the elections and formed the government at the Centre. Surprisingly, no single party in the Opposition secured a minimum of 54 seats to claim the recognition status of a the Opposition in the Parliament. The left parties, on the other hand, secured the required number of seats and emerged as the main opposition bloc in House. Though the Janata(S) and Janata parties secured more seats than the left parties, they could not claim the opposition status due to their mutual divisions. Of the left parties, the CPI(M) which secured 22 seats in the 1977

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 3. New Age, January 6, 1980

elections improved its position to 35 seats in the 1980 elections. The party not only withstood the Congress(I) wave in its 'bastion' (W.Bengal, Kerala and Tripura), but also made its presence felt from the states like, Maharashtra, Punjab and Orissa in the elections. The party polled around 152 lakh votes, nearly doubling its strength from the 1972 election. Likewise, the CPI also improved its strength from its earlier position in the House. The party which won 6 seats in the previous elections, doubled its strength in the 1980 elections. However, its voting tally was reduced by two lakh votes. While the party polled around 53 lakh votes in the 1977 elections, it could secure only 51 lakh votes in 1980.<sup>4</sup> The CPI(M) which had secured three times more than the CPI in the recent elections had left the latter far behind in its popular support, emerged as the leading left force in the country. This position of the CPI(M), infact, "placed a heavy responsibility on its shoulders, in building left and democratic unity and in defending democratic freedoms

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4. Political-Organisational Report of the CPI(M) Op. cit. p.3

against authoritarian attacks".<sup>5</sup> It is in this context that the midterm poll provided an opportunity to the party pay more attention to the national politics. At another level the midterm elections also enhanced the prospects of normalisation of their relations.<sup>6</sup>

Commenting on the election results, the Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) noted that the success of Congress was mainly due to the inability of the Opposition to provide a viable alternative to the Congress. The party felt that the Congress was defeated only in Kerala, Tripura and W.Bengal, for the left parties forged an alliance.<sup>7</sup> Similar was the understanding of the CPI on the unity of the left parties in elections which fetched good results. Its National Council Election Review revealed:

"It is for the first time in the last 15 years after the split in the Communist movement that

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5. *ibid.* p.8

6. New Age, January 20, 1980

7. People's Democracy, January 20, 1980



the CPI and the CPI(M) did not confront each other in the electoral arena. On the otherhand they worked together to the extreme happiness of the Communist masses and all left-minded people...."8

The Janata party leader, Ramakrishna Hegde had also acknowledged the same when he said:

"The left was the only group which came unscathed out of election. It is not merely because of the performance of the Govt. in W.Bengal but mainly because of the united fight they put up against the Congress(I). This atleast should be a lesson to all opposition parties now."9

What runs through these quotations is that the unity of the opposition parties can undermine the Congress monopoly, and thus aid the process of the formation of a national alternative to the Congress. Keeping this in view, the two parties made serious attempts to involve other left and democratic parties in the broad front. As a result, the scope of the left unity was broadened to include the parties like, Forward

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8. New Age, February 10, 1980

9. Mainstream, Republic Day 1980

Bloc, Revolutionary Socialist Party, Peasants and Workers party, Democratic Socialist party and the Congress(S), apart from other small and regional parties. At a time, when the opposition parties were so fragmented, the attempts at opposition unity made by the left parties generated substantial benefits in mobilising the masses on common issues particularly in the period after elections. Meanwhile, the two parties extended these actions over a range of issues to the state and local levels. Almost in all the states, unprecedented unity in action was evident even though there remained a lot of differences between the two parties. This became possible because the two parties grasped the prevailing socio-political situation in the sameway leading to similar conclusions on specific problems.

## II

The resounding victory in the Lok Sabha elections encouraged the Congress to dismiss nine state governments led by the non-Congress parties in the same way that the Janata party had done after the 1977 elections. The Congress party established its government in all

these states. The Opposition having learnt few lessons from the previous Lok Sabha elections had to meet the same fate. Moreover the old Jana Sangh faction left the Janata party and formed the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) thereby completing the process of fragmentation of the opposition forces. Thus while the Congress was consolidating its position, the Opposition was dwindling due to splits and resplits. The Congress(I) had shattered the hopes of the opposition parties, particularly those which claimed to enjoy supremacy in the Hindi-speaking region. Though the left parties were not affected much in the region, they were also unhappy with the Congress monopoly, as it might once again topple their governments in W.Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura as it did it before. This was precisely because the left led governments raised certain fundamental questions like communalism, imperialism, feudalism, capitalism apart from the question of Centre-State relations to expose the ruling party and also to radicalise the masses. It was this understanding which guided the left parties to reassess their 'tactics' towards the other opposition parties and to broaden the scope of opposition front. However, there arose some differences between the two

parties in the evaluation of Congress as well as non-Congress parties. This time the differences centered around giving primacy to left unity over broad Opposition unity. Though the CPI accepted the Congress(I) as the main enemy, it differed with the CPI(M) on the question of supporting the other 'bourgeois' parties even to fight against the Congress(I). The CPI laid greater stress on left unity than on extending support to other parties.

Unlike the CPI, the CPI(M) focussed its energies on defeating the Congress(I) in the elections to the nine state assemblies. The party blamed the Congress(I) policies for the sufferings of the people everywhere. It concentrated its attention on the defence of the left-led governments in three states and thus staunchly defended the federal character of the Indian Constitution.<sup>10</sup> The CPI(M) was more outspoken on the question of more powers to the states than any other party as it felt that the non-Congress state governments would not be given a due share in the budgetary allocation. It is

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10. People's Democracy, May 25, 1980

in this light that the party maintained its rapport with not only left parties but non-left parties as well. As a part of this strategy, the CPI(M) preferred Akalidal to the CPI in the Punjab Assembly elections. It was alleged that the CPI(M) favoured Akalidal rather than the CPI in the allocation of seats. This was because the CPI(M) considered that the defeat of the Congress(I) could be possible only if the Akali Dal was supported. In other words, the party's enthusiasm to defeat the Congress(I) was given primacy over forging unity of left parties. This stance of the CPI(M) was resented by the CPI. The CPI accused the CPI(M) of disrupting the unity of left forces in Punjab. Its State Council adopted a resolution criticising the leadership of the CPI(M) and more particularly its PB member HKS Surjit.<sup>11</sup>

The CPI was greatly agitated over the issue of electoral understanding with the BJP and some regional parties. Since the party was opposed to the policy of

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11. Punjab Assembly Election Review Resolution adopted by the CPI State Council of Punjab, 28-30 June, 1980.

"all-in-unity against the Congress(I)"<sup>12</sup> as envisaged by the CPI(M), the CPI upheld its opposition to the CPI(M)'s strategy. What the CPI expected from the other party was the projection of left front, rather than mere 'anti-Congressism'. But its expectation did not materialise. As a matter of fact, both parties clashed with each other in the state assembly elections in Orissa and UP. Both parties accused each other of violating the understanding on joint electoral fight reached by them before the elections. This led them once again to reiterate their old prejudices, even though the Congress(I) was consolidating its position.

There were many such occasions which kept the two parties apart. When the relations between India and China were taking a new course, the CPI restated its earlier position of hostility to China. This evoked a sharp response from M. Basavapunnaiah, CPI(M) PB member, who reacted to the CPI article on Sino-Indian relations in the following way:

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12. M. Farooqui, Report on National Political situation', Party Life 22 July, 1980

"The CPI(M) is not one like the CPI which is panicked at the very slogan of normalisation of relations between India and China on the spurious plea that such a normalisation, ipso facto, is sure to undermine Indo-Soviet cooperation and friendship. We can not and do not think that Indo-Soviet relations are so fragile and on so unsound a basis that any success in the normalisation of India-China relations would undermine Indo-Soviet friendship and cooperation. Such a scare on the part of the CPI neither does justice to the self-respect of the Indian people nor adds to the credit of the CPI's Political Wisdom."<sup>13</sup>

The leadership of these two parties did not just confine themselves to 'article-duel' but to physical assaults too. It was reported in ~~the~~ CPI press that two of their cadres in W.Bengal were murdered by the CPI(M) cadres. However, when a similar murderous attack was committed in Kerala, the CPI(M)'s sharp condemnation of the incident was appreciated by the CPI.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, a significant development took place in April 1981. The CPI Chairman S.A.Dange was expelled

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13. With reference to an article dated, October 26, '80 (New Age), M.Basavapunnaiiah wrote "On CPI's Plemics", in People's Democracy on November 9, 1980

14. New Age, November 30, 1980

from the party for his overt and covert association with the All India Communist Party(AICP). The AICP was formed by dissidents led by Dange's daughter Roza Deshpande, who unsuccessfully waged a battle in the CPI to revert to the old political line of supporting the Congress party. The AICP advocated an alliance with the Congress(I) rather than the CPI(M). Infact, this was not first time that such pro-Congress stand was favoured by Dange. He was largely responsible for the pronounced pro-Congress thinking of the party leadership since split in 1964. In fact Dange harboured major reservations against the forces of left unity in the CPI. Dange's expulsion, thus paved the way for normalisation of the CPI-CPI(M) relations.

It is around the same time that the two parties held their party congresses. The twelfth congress of the CPI was held at Varanasi in 1981, whereas the CPI(M) held its eleventh congress in Vijayawada. These congresses were significant because the two parties made an assessment of their joint actions in the post-Bhatinda period. After proper review of the united actions between themselves, the CPI and CPI(M) called for furthering of united efforts for future.



However, the CPI(M) Polit Bureau document on major political events, while noting positive trends in the field of CPI-CPI(M) relations criticised the vacillating attitude to the CPI on the role of parties like, Congress(U), Lok Dal, Akalidal etc. in united actions.<sup>15</sup> The CPI thought the CPI(M) position indicated a reversal to its old line of supporting the opposition to oppose the Congress, thereby undermining the cause of left unity. The party hoped that the CPI(M) would ultimately be forced to retreat from its posture of infallibility by the fast changing national and international situation.<sup>16</sup> But, it was the CPI which had to retreat from its earlier position on the question of lending support to non-Congress parties, including the BJP. The CPI which was so allergic to the BJP, joined hands with it in Parliament and outside on questions like authoritarian measures of the Congress party, civil liberties, trade union rights, corruption exposures and such others. However, the CPI(M), did

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15. CPI(M) Publication, (N.Delhi) May 1981

16. Party Life, 7 September 1981

not change its position vis-a-vis the Congress as well as non-Congress parties. Even on the international plane, the party maintained its earlier position regarding China and Soviet Union. Ofcourse, the CPI(M) appeared changed on the issue of imperialism and world peace. The CPI(M) underestimated the war danger as frequently mentioned by the CPSU leaders in its Jullandhar congress. According to its PB member B.T.Ranadive:

"In the Jullundhur resolution we criticised those i.e. the leaders of the CPSU and others, who repeatedly talked of detente, creating illusions".<sup>17</sup>

### III

After the Varanasi Congress of the CPI, attempts at left parties's unity were more pronounced. This was partly because the authoritarianism of the Congress haunted both the parties. As a result , both the left parties had to shed certain amount of mistrust of each other in order to come closer. This inturn, gave rise

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17. B.T.kanadive, Main Speeches at the XI congress of the CPI(M), held at Vijayawada, January 1982 pp.3-4

to mutual cooperation not only on economic issues but on political issues too.

Around the same time, the Congress(I) government toppled the Kerala Left and Democratic Front ministry in 1982. This led the left parties to realise the need to achieve opposition unity and to work towards that end. And thus the left parties decided to coordinate with the other non-left parties so as to strengthen the opposition front and to check the authoritarian measures of the Congress(I). In view of this, both the parties in W.Bengal came closer and the CPI joined the CPI(M) led left front ministry. This indicated that the two parties were equally interested in defeating the Congress(I) by a united left bloc.

Incidentally the CPI was forced to take a more forthright stand against the Congress(I). The occasion was when the Congress(I) stepped up its campaign against the Indian Communists in general and the CPI in particular. For example, Indira Gandhi established the Friends of the Soviet Union(FSU) in direct competition with an influential CPI front group, ISCUS. In her inaugural

address to the FSU, Indira Gandhi attacked 'professional friends' (CPI) who act as self-appointed custodians of Indo-Soviet friendship.<sup>18</sup> The Varanasi Congress of the CPI held in March 1982, took note of the prevailing political situation and called for building up of a left and democratic alternative. It further observed, In the words of N.K.Krishnan, the CPI leader:

"The process of carrying forward, extending and deepening this unity and raising it to a higher level requires patient and persistent struggle against anti-unity forces and for strengthening the hands of those who stand for such unity."<sup>19</sup>

Another significant contribution that the Varanasi congress made towards the CPI-CPI(M) relations was regarding the cooperation with the BJP on specific issues.<sup>20</sup> The CPI had to make a volte-face when it viewed BJP positively. The CPI leader N. Rajasekhar Reddy felt that those pro-Indira Gandhi elements within the CPI and outside were attempting to drive the CPI to a position

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18. Walter K. Anderson, "India in 1981: Stranger's Political Authority" Asian Survey, February, 1982

19. Party Life, 22 April, 1982.

20. ibid.....

where it would be isolated from the CPI(M) and other opposition parties including the BJP, and later on, to push it into the Congress(I) camp as the only way out of isolation.<sup>21</sup> This point was elaborated further by another CPI leader, M. Farooqi in his article titled, "In what situation can the CPI join a united mass action in which the BJP is also participating alongwith other parties?"<sup>22</sup> In conclusion he said:

"the varanasi party congress did not adopt a policy of political untouchability vis-a-vis the BJP in every situation. Forbidding political alliance with it (or with the Congress(I) or even a permanent Coordination Committee with it is one thing and dealing with it in a specific situation or for a limited issue is quite another. We would like to avoid, but it may not always be possible."

To some extent, such a stand of the CPI encouraged the CPI(M) to respond to the unity efforts more positively than before. As a result, an atmosphere was created to step up the united actions between the two parties. And thus, one witnesses hectic campaign in the field

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21. The Statesman, 27 September, 1982.

22. Party Life, 7 July, 1982.

of CPI-CPI(M) relations. The CPI(M) upheld the task of building the left and democratic front. The party felt that the Congress and its spokesman in the media, including the organs which claim to be "leftist" in political complexion were busy engaging in creating confusion, disrupting the growing unity of action and forging a "Patriotic Front".<sup>23</sup> Again while reacting sharply to articles in the Patriot, Link and Mainstream, the CPI(M) organ the People's Democracy observed that:

"the Communist movement in the country as a whole is far stronger and more united today than at any time since the undivided CPI was split 19 years ago...Finally and most importantly, relations of cooperation between the CPI(M) and the CPI have been improving to the discomfiture of the champions of the 'Patriotic Front' in India".<sup>24</sup>

This prompted C.Rajeshwar Rao who was also very optimistic about the unity of the left parties, to comment that:

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23. People's Democracy, 17 October 1982

24. People's Democracy, 23 January, 1983.

"it took eight years for the differences in the party to result in a break. Similarly, attempts towards unifying them would also take time."<sup>25</sup>

## IV

The elections to the three state assemblies namely, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tripura took place in January 1983. The poll outcome had a significant impact on the political process. The Indian polity witnessed the emergence of the forces of regionalism. Ofcourse, this was not a new phenomenon as there were some regional parties in the past which won elections in a few states. But the meaning of the Telugu Desham Party (TDP) victory in Andhra Pradesh assumed greater importance since the Congress monopoly in the state was shattered for the first time. Not only an entrenched national ruling party like, Congress(I) was defeated but the other opposition parties, including those of the CPI and the CPI(M) were trounced. The left parties which had been strong enough since the days of Telangana

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25. Times of India, 14 February 1983.

People's struggle had miscalculated the phenomenon called, Telugu Desham.

Likewise, the Congress(I) had to meet a similar setback in Karnataka at the hands of the Janata-Kranti Ranga combine. These two southern states were considered the 'fortress' of the ruling party because of their overwhelming support to the Congress in the 1977 and 1980 elections to the parliament. The crushing defeat on the Congress party indicated the proposition that the anti-Congress sentiments prevailing at the time in the region were effectively channelised by the TDP and Janata-Kranti Ranga combine. While the Janata party, BJP, Lok Dal, CPI and CPI(M) were fighting among themselves in forging an electoral alliance, the cine-star turned politician, N.T.Rama Rao offered an alternative to the Congress(I) in A.P. Similarly, the Janata-Kranti Ranga combine succeeded in providing an alternative to the ruling party in Karnataka. The people supported these 'regional formations' in the elections. The inability of the national opposition parties to provide a viable alternative in many states, accounts in part for the rise of regional parties.



Thus if the regional aspirations of the people are not attended to, and no alternative to the ruling party is offered, the opposition parties lose their mass base thereby leading to the growth of movements on the questions of language, culture and underdevelopment.

In the case of Tripura, however, the left front retained power. Surprisingly, the Congress party which suffered losses in A.P. and Karnataka had improved its electoral strength in Tripura due to its collaboration with the regional TUJS. This happened precisely because the regional parties which emerged as a response to the misrule of the Congress(I) and which took up specific local problems had earned popularity in the region, and also because the left parties did not put up a united fight in the elections due to their mutual acrimonyes.

Although the CPI(M) expressed its happiness over the defeat of Congress(I) in these states, it admitted that its electoral estimates went wrong, particularly in A.P. as is evident from its CC Communique

on the elections.<sup>26</sup> The CPI(M) PB member M. Basavapunniah, while commenting on the electoral verdict, pointed out their erroneous assessment of the alignment of the political forces in the state, particularly their failure to take note of the split in the Congress(I) which led to a sizeable section defecting to the newly formed TDP. The State Committee of the CPI(M) failed to keep track of the rapidly developing frictions in the faction-ridden Congress(I).<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the party's attempts, to forge an electoral understanding ended in a fiasco, as the CPI claimed a large share of seats. Likewise the CPI also made similar analysis and came to the conclusion that the party should have come to an electoral understanding with the regional TDP. Such an evaluation of the TDP led both left parties to extend their support to the former. This encouraged the two parties to participate in the 'conclave politics' initiated by opposition parties. As a matter of fact it was the TDP which convened the first ever opposition parties' conclave

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26. People's Democracy, 6 February 1983.

27. People's Democracy, 13 March 1983.

in Vijayawada to discuss ways of breaking the monopoly of the Congress party and building the unity of the non-Congress parties. The TDP considered itself as nationally oriented party and spelt out its anti-Congress policies. This evoked a positive response from the left parties as well who attended the conclave.

At the same time when the Assam and Punjab movements appeared to pose a threat to national unity and secularism, the left parties characterised them as divisive and chauvinist movements. This was not all. These movements crystallised into political formations which posed a threat to the unity of India, consequently the left opposed the movements tooth and nail. It is in that context, that left parties stressed the primacy of national unity and integrity.

The CPI(M), initially, supported the Akali Dal in Punjab on the economic and political demands, but it changed its position on the Punjab problem when divisive forces gained ground. The CPI however, maintained its anti-Akali Dal posture throughout the period on the ground that the Akalidal was a communal

party. The divergent attitudes to the Punjab movement led the two parties to criticise each other, instead of offering a leftist alternative in the state. In the same manner, the two parties viewed the Assam problem leading to mutual bickerings in Assam. While the CPI(M) opposed the movement in Assam, since its inception, on the ground that the demands of the AASU were chauvinist and secessionist, the CPI changed its stance in the later period. As a result, while in Assam it was the CPI(M) which faced more problems, in Punjab it was the CPI which suffered much. Both the left parties had adopted different stands as they interpreted the objective situation quite differently.

During the period under study, it was the question of Centre-State relations which came to the fore in the Opposition politics. The campaign launched earlier by the left parties in general and the W.Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu<sup>28</sup> on the issue of greater powers to

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28. CPI(M) Pamphlet, "On Centre-State Relations", (NBC: N.Delhi) Dec. '83

the states and against the Centre's discrimination towards the non-Congress governments, was boosted by demand of the TDP and N.T.Rama Rao to protect the 'interests' of the states. It was an issue that concerned all the states ruled by the non-Congress parties and thus evoked considerable support from the regional parties.

It is under these circumstances that the opposition parties in the country had developed a new formula of opposing the ruling Congress(I) through forming 'conclaves'. The idea came from Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N.T.Rama Rao when 24 opposition leaders met at his instance in Vijayawada. The main thread running through this and other two conclaves was the "Centre-State relations which had been vexing Indian politics. This was in response to the Centre which continued to assume more and more powers vis-a-vis the states, as a result, the tension had grown proportionately, particularly between the non-Congress(I) state governments and the Centre. The conclaves made a number of sweeping suggestions including constitutional amendments to curb central power over states. As a matter of fact,

such feelings and demand of the regional parties had prompted the Centre to set up a Commission under the Chairmanship of Justice R.S.Sarkaria in March 1983, to look into the Centre-State relations.

The three conclaves of the opposition parties in Vijayawada, Delhi and Srinagar provided an opportunity to them to come closer on some pressing problems. Along these lines followed some united actions of these opposition parties inside and outside the Parliament. This had contributed to widen the scope of opposition unity. However, both the left parties viewed the conclave politics with some reservations. Interestingly, their main concern was to prevent the entry of the BJP into the conclaves. The CPI was agitated over the participation of the 'communal' BJP in the conclave meets. The left parties gradually eliminated the BJP from the Opposition conclave. What is discernible from the conclave politics is that the left parties demonstrated their united strength, which helped them in two ways. One, both the parties could improve their mutual relations, second, their attempts to forge an

alliance with the non-Congress opposition parties, excluding the BJP, to fulfill their longterm goal of left and democratic national alternative, met with some success. However, it was a shortlived phenomenon, but initiated the process of normalisation of relations not only between the two left parties, but also among the other left and democratic parties.

## V

As observed earlier, the CPI(M) did not equate both the BJP and Congress(I), as harmful, rather it singled out the latter to concentrate its main fire. But the CPI which considered both the BJP and Congress(I) as equally dangerous, infact, focussed its attack on the BJP. However, the party had to retreat when it joined the chorus along with the BJP on the issue of toppling Farooq Abdulla government in J&K, and later, NTR government in A.P.<sup>29</sup> Such were the occasions which

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29. The NTR ministry was reinstated when all opposition parties unitedly launched an all India struggle against the Congress(1) in September 1985.

facilitated the all parties to come closer. However, it is premature to expect that all the opposition parties forge unity through such incidents as the political understandings of them differ from one another.

In the meantime, there occurred some incidents which hampered the process of normalisation of relations between the two left parties themselves. To recount a few; one, when the CPI(M) suffered some losses in W.Bengal Panchayat elections in June 1983, the party blamed the other left front partners, including the CPI. As a response to such criticism, the CPI CC attributed highhandedness, sectarianism and big-brother attitude of the CPI(M) as the reason for defeat.<sup>30</sup> Second, when the CPI leader Indradeep Sinha wrote an article on the restoration of the CPI(M) and CPC relations accusing the latter of splitting the undivided CPI, the CPI(M) PB member HS Surjit joined the debate and raised countercharges against the CPI. This issue aggravated the relations between the two left parties.<sup>31</sup>

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30. New Age, 19 June 1983.

31. New Age, 5 June 1983; People's Democracy, 12 June 1983.



Third, the AITUC leadership accused the CITU of letting down the Birla Textile workers in Delhi. An article appeared in the New Age, alleged that the CITU had collaborated with the Congress(I) to betray the workers.<sup>32</sup> Ofcourse the CITU leadership reacted sharply levelling counter charges against the AITUC.

Fourth, at this juncture the two parties revived the debate on history through the columns of their party organs, these discussions slandered eachother's ideological positions.<sup>33</sup>

The CPI(M) leader M.Basavapunniah, on the other-hand, ridiculed the CPI as "just one left party but not a Communist party". The argument that he gave was that "the CPI(M)'s line was correct as it emerged the major party in the country."<sup>34</sup> This stance of the CPI(M) evoked sharp reaction from the CPI quarters.

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32. ibid....

33. Times of India, July 2, 1983; Indian Express, July 4, 1983.

34. New Age, August 14, 1983

The CPI General Secretary Rao, while ignoring the former charge, contested the latter argument, in the following words:

"when the split in the party came, the CPI(M) took away with it majority of the party in W.Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. May we ask: apart from that where has the CPI(M) grown in other states?"<sup>35</sup>

The assessment of Rao is partially incorrect in the sense that the CPI(M) not only improved its strength in other states including the Hindi-speaking regions, but also emerged as the second largest party, at the national level. Leading three state governments, the CPI(M) became the main opposition party <sup>after</sup> the 1980 elections. And the very fact that the CPI(M) took away majority of the party in W.Bengal and other places vindicates the CPI(M) point of view. However, it is an exaggeration if the CPI(M) measures its correctness in terms of its electoral strength.

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35. *ibid*.....

Meanwhile, when the two parties differed on the Assam problem, the process of normalisation got a blow. To be more specific, while the CPI supported the Election Commission's decision on 1971 as the "cut off year", the CPI(M) opposed it and stood for 1979.<sup>36</sup> As a result, the two parties landed themselves in two different camps. This is a glaring example of the divergent perception by the two parties, their interpretation of the government policy on cut off year.

As a matter of fact, both parties found more areas of convergence in the international matters in the period after 1980. It is except on China problem, that these parties agreed on all other issues, particularly on Poland crisis, Afghanistan problem, Indo-Soviet relations and the question of world peace and the US imperialism. And so, this phase in their external policies both the parties achieved a breakthrough. By and large, the left parties resorted to more united actions inside and outside the Parliament, on internal as well as external problems as they were confronted with authoritarianism, communalism, regionalism and imperialism.

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 36. The 'cut off year' means, all those 'foreign nationals' who emigrated to Assam after 1971 stand disqualified as citizens of India.


## CHAPTER - V

### THE RAJIV GANDHI PHASE (1984-86)

The Indian politics in the 1980s has passed through a difficult period at the economic and political levels. With the return of Congress party to power, Indira Gandhi gradually implemented the policies of import-liberalisation and export-oriented growth as prescribed by the World Bank and the IMF. The pursuit of such policies intensified the economic crisis, and this in turn, aggravated the political crisis. The cumulative effect of these crises led to the emergence of regional, communal linguistic and federalist movements. As a response to these movements the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi adopted coercive methods. In other words, having failed to meet these challenges in a democratic way, she resorted to coercive measures and violated the norms and forms of Parliamentary democracy by enacting new acts, the use of army and the toppling of non-Congress state governments. Suffice it to quote the CPI assessment on the prevailing situation in the middle of 1984:

"the Congress(I) led by Smt. Indira Gandhi was gradually losing its mass base because of its anti-people, anti-democratic and pro-vested interests policies, its failure to solve serious

political problems, particularly Punjab and Assam, and its policy of toppling non-Congress(I) state governments, etc".



The Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated on 31st October, 1984. Communal riots broke out in the capital and elsewhere, leading to the death of thousands of Sikhs. It appeared as if the ruling party was hand in glove with the arsonists, since the tragedy occurred in the capital city for three days continuously even while the police and armed forces were patrolling round the clock<sup>2</sup>. It left an indelible mark on the secular fabric of India. Some believed that the incident might trigger off the polarisation of two communities namely Hindus and Sikhs.

Meanwhile, Rajiv Gandhi, son of the late Prime Minister emerged as the 'consensus' choice for the leadership of the Congress(I) party. With this, a new era was ushered in Indian politics. It was expected that the Rajiv Gandhi's leadership would reverse the old trend and set in motion a trend of reconciliation and national unity which was overwhelmingly represented by the mainstream in the Congress

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1. CPI Draft Review adopted by the NC in December 1985 for its 13th party congress (Communist Party Publication New Delhi. P.17)
  2. Indian Express, dt. 7,8 and 9th November 1984.

leadership since the time of freedom struggle. The presumption seemed untrue, when the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi justified, albeit indirectly, the aftermath of the assassination in Delhi and outside.<sup>3</sup> The attitude of the new Congress leadership towards a section of people caused apprehensions. The Ranganath Mishra Commission found no congressmen as the culprit, even after some factfinding committees named a few Congress leaders as responsible for the tragedy.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact, no single arsonist has been punished till date. This indicates that there began a new 'phase' which is distinct from the earlier one. It is in this light that the Rajiv Gandhi phase can be seen as a 'break' from the past.

Understandably, this had an impact on the relationship between the ruling party and the Opposition. Because opposition parties exhibited their weakness, in the sense that they were not unanimous on the question of national unity and divisive movement such as the Punjab. As a result the opposition parties perceived, the death of the Prime

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 3. On 19th November 1984, Rajiv Gandhi while addressing a Boat Club Rally justified the Delhi killings. He referred the assassination of his mother to the falling of a big tree and the violence to the earth shake.

4. Truth About Delhi Violence, by Amiya Rao, Aurobindo Ghosh and ND Pancholi; published by Citizens for Democracy in Jan. 1985.

Minister in different ways. This inturn had changed the course of relations among the opposition parties themselves. While the left parties emphasised the question of national unity, the non-left parties had underestimated the threat to unity of India. An attempt is made in this chapter to bring out distinct features of the Rajiv Gandhi trend which had influenced the opposition politics.

The assassination of Indira Gandhi was perceived by the nation in general and the left parties in particular as a serious threat to the unity and integrity of India. Whereas, the non-left parties did not consider that was so rather they found fault with the ruling party for the tragedy. The left parties were not with the opposition on this aspect. Again the same non-left parties criticised the election of Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister.<sup>5</sup> Contrary to this was the approach of the left. The left parties viewed the developments after the death of Indira Gandhi as inextricably linked with the question of national unity and integrity. They perceived that the 'imperialism' led by the US and its agencies was responsible for the national tragedy. And, thus, these parties were some what reluctant to endorse

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5. While the non-left parties not only protested over the procedure adopted in the election of Prime Minister but also criticised the dynastic rule, the left parties did not join them, on the plea that they were not concerned about the personalities but the policies only.

the non-left stand of lukewarm opposition to imperialism on this score. The left parties believed that the assassination of Indira Gandhi was the handiwork of those Sikh extremists who were aided and abetted by some foreign agencies, although there was no substantial proof. According to the CPI(M):

"The assassination of Mrs. Gandhi at the hands of her own bodyguards can not be explained away as the plot of the Sikh extremists who were enraged after the Operation Blue Star. Behind this ghastly murder of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi there was clearly the hand of the US imperialists who were encouraging the Khalistan agitation and giving armed training in US camps for the Sikh extremists. Mrs. Gandhi's policies of non-alignment, world peace and Indo-Soviet friendship treaty etc., were not liked by the US imperialists, and they were out to resort to any crime that might help them in their world aggressive designs."<sup>6</sup>

The CPI also held that the assassination was part of the conspiracy of the CIA and the killers were its tools.<sup>7</sup>

It appeared that the left parties raised the issue of 'imperialism' on the lines of the Congress(I)'s 'foreign hand' theory. But, unlike the Congress(I) which merely mentions the invisible 'foreign hand' in its propaganda, the left parties intensified their campaign to expose the 'nexus' between the Khalistani secessionists and the foreign agencies like, CIA and BBC. Accordingly these parties aimed their guns at a 'distant' enemy: US imperialism.

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6. CPI(M) Political Organisational Report, 12th congress December 1985 P. 23

7. CPI Draft Review, 13th congress, February 1986 p. 35



The Congress(I) campaign, on the otherhand, gave the impression that the Sikh community was responsible for the assassination of Indira Gandhi. As a matter of fact the Congress(I) made it a point to whip up communal frenzy against the Sikh community.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the political situation changed dramatically on the eve of elections to the new Lok Sabha. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi with an eye on the elections concentrated his main attack on the opposition parties for their alleged support to the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of the Akalis.<sup>9</sup>

In the preceding chapter, it was observed that there was sufficient space for evolving a broad opposition front as an alternative to the Congress(I). But, the two left parties were not willing to merge their identity with other opposition parties on the pleas that the non-left parties differ on many fundamental questions, including that of the imperialism. Given their inhibitions vis-a-vis the 'bourgeois' opposition parties, the left parties were somewhat lukewarm on the opposition unity moves, focussed merely on the elections. In the prevailing political

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8. *ibid* .... pp 35-36

9. *ibid* .... p. 37

situation created by the assassination of Indira Gandhi their stand became more pronounced, and thus, these parties decided not to work for just marginal benefits derived by entering into electoral adjustments in some states.<sup>10</sup>

As a result, the two left parties faced the ruling party alone in the electoral battle. The non-left parties could not forge an electoral alliance, despite the fact that they were very weak due to their fragmentation. This gave rise to the formation of two or more fronts in the Opposition camp itself. Added to this was the question of leadership. For instance, there was no unanimity among the opposition non-left parties on the choice of Charan Singh of the DMKP. Nor was the leadership of Jagjivan Ram of the Congress (J) acceptable to all left parties. Besides, there were a few other leaders who figured in the opposition choice.

Under these circumstances, attempts at opposition unity met with no success. For the gravity of the socio-political situation, was not properly grasped by these parties. Moreover the left parties exhibited a 'sectarian' attitude towards the other parties. This had contributed to the alienation of one party from the other. It is

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10. Times of India, 13th November, 1984.

at this juncture, the Lok Sabha elections were held in December, 1984. The Congress (I) led by Rajiv Gandhi scored<sup>a</sup> landslide victory, securing more than 420 seats that is, three-fourths majority. This massive victory in the Lok Sabha had become possible for the Congress(I) even though the votes polled by it did not exceed 50 per cent. This was partly due to the disunity among the opposition parties, which fared very badly. Among the non-left parties, the BJP and the Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party had to content with just two and three seats respectively in the house of 540. The Janata party tried hard to secure a double digit number of 10 seats only.

But some regional parties like TDP, AIADMK and National Conference(F) improved their position. Surprisingly, the regional TDP became the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha, securing 30 seats and outdone all the recognised national parties.

The left parties' strength was reduced. They could not make an impact on the national political arena, largely because their appeal to the electorate was marginal as it offered no alternative to the congress(I). Moreover there was no unity between the two left parties themselves. As a result, both the parties performed very

badly. Of all the left parties, the CPI(M) lost heavily in the elections. The party won only 22 seats as against 35 in the previous Lok Sabha. Though it could retain the two seats from Tripura, the party lost 10 seats from W.Bengal and 5 from Kerala where the CPI(M) was the strongest. The CPI won 6 seats as opposed to its 13 in the last Lok Sabha. The party performed very poorly in Kerala and suffered heavily in UP and Bihar.

The CPI, in its election review, observed that the main concern of the people was how to preserve national unity and for that they thought it would be prudent to support the party of Indira Gandhi in the present situation.<sup>11</sup> The CPI(M) PB member BT Ranadive while agreeing with the CPI view on this score in his article<sup>12</sup> entitled "Concern for National Unity Swayed Electorate", exposed the 'blindness' of the 'bourgeois' opposition parties.

The concern for national unity or 'sympathy wave' partially explains the defeat of the left parties in the elections. But the left parties did not lag behind in

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11. CPI Draft Review Op. cit. p.37

12. People's Democracy, 3 February, 1985.

expressing their concern for national unity. In fact, the left parties campaigned against the imperialist designs which undermined the national unity. In any case, the wave affected all the parties in all the states, except A P. Apart from the wave, there are other factors such as the inability of the left parties in forging an alliance with other parties. There was no consolidation of the left unity in their strongholds. Besides the performance of the left front government in W.Bengal contributed to the downfall of the left in the elections. The left front government policies regarding education, financial crisis, land reforms and closure of some industrial units due to power-cut was not appreciated by the urban voters.<sup>13.</sup>

On the eve of Lok Sabha elections, the relations between the two parties were quite strained. Fortunately the parties had restricted in the area of conflict to only two states namely, Bihar and A.P. In these states the two parties did not come to any understanding on the question of allotment of seats, leave alone alliance with other parties. For instance, in Andhra Pradesh it was the

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 13. CPI(M) Political Organisational Report Op. cit. P.27

'Khammam controversy' which trapped the left parties in a tussle which helped the Congress (I) to gain support at the expense of the left. In Bihar the distribution of seats and alliance with DMKP aggravated the differences between the two parties. They hurled charges and counter-charges at each other during the course of their review of the elections.<sup>14</sup> However, this did not affect the mutual relations of the two parties in W.Bengal and Tripura, the two strongholds of the left.

Overall the strained relations did affect the performance<sup>in</sup> the elections. This was not all. It had lowered the image of the Communist movement as a whole. More importantly longterm strategy of evolving a left and democratic alternative received a blow. As a result, some of the opposition parties fought among themselves in many constituencies. It was such disunity in the opposition which enabled the Congress (I) to secure 80 per cent seats by polling about 49 percent of the votes.

Having suffered the major losses in the elections, both the parties recognised the need to improve their relations. The CPI(M) regretted what had happened in A.P.

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14. The Statesman, 14 March, '85.

and Bihar its CC opined that :

"left unity must be protected and strengthened and such temporary strains should not be allowed to affect the struggle for left unity" 15.

The CPI in its election review observed that:

"only the creation of powerful and united left, leading countrywide mass movements on economic and social demands as well as on political issues like the defence of the democratic institutions of national unity and security can pave the way towards the emergence of a left and democratic alternative to the Congress(I) or any other bourgeois combinations".16.

The most important issue that caused misgivings was the allotment of seats in the elections as each party tried to gain over the other. As a result, not only each party lost heavily but the Communist movement as a whole suffered. In the event any attempt to forge a left and democratic national alternative to the ruling party, appeared more than hypocritical. For which both parties are equally responsible.

It seemed as if the two parties did not correct their mistakes, albeit they made confession, during the course of their election review. For instance, when the assembly elections were held in 11 states and one union Territory,

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15. People's Democracy, 27 January, '85

16. New Age. 27. January. '85.

on the heels of the debacle of the opposition, no common understanding was arrived at between the two parties. This naturally led to mutual recriminations on seat adjustment in these states.

It is clear from the case of Bihar elections that both the parties contested against each other which weakened the left movement as a whole. While CPI(M) accused the CPI of exhibiting 'Opportunist' and 'big-brotherly' attitude towards the former, the CPI repudiated the accusation as 'wild allegation'. Citing this as an example, the CPI (M) General Secretary Namboodiripad concluded that:

"It was naive to dream of merger of the two parties the CPI was sought to be prosecuted for its alliance with the Congress(I) for about a decade in the past" 17

In these assembly elections the left parties suffered severe losses because of their disunity and lack of adjustment of seats with the other opposition parties. Though the non-left parties were unable to replace the Congress(I) state government, in several states, these parties could resist the congress wave.18.

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17. Indian Express, 15 April, 1985

18. In the elections, theseats secured by the oppositions in overall areLDKMP(154), Janata(235), BJP(170).Congress(s) 58 and the CPI,CPI(M) put together got 55 seats only.



The theme underlying the Congress reverses in the elections is that the Rajiv Gandhi wave had receded thereby causing maximum loss to the Congress.<sup>19</sup> The popularity of the Prime Minister had come down when the electorate rejected his thesis of one party rule at the Centre and in the states.<sup>20</sup>

There was a significant shift in the CPI attitude towards the policies of Rajiv Gandhi government. This was evident when some left intellectuals pleaded with the CPI to line up behind the Rajiv Gandhi government on the ground that the country's unity and integrity was in great danger.<sup>21</sup> The party General Secretary Rao rejected the plea. He reminded them of the crisis created by domestic policies of the congress(I) at the centre. He rejected the argument that a progressive foreign policy reflected progressive domestic policy<sup>22</sup>. Commenting upon the economic policies of the Congress(I), Pauly V. Parakal said:

"The Rajiv Gandhi strategy of development and growth based on export promotion, computerisation, liberalisation and luxury consumption will only increase the imperialist penetration of the economy, lead to ouster of small capitalists and petty producers and thus increase the concentration of capital

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19. People's Democracy, 17 March, 1985.

20. CPI Draft Review, Op. cit. p.37

21. Mohit Sen. "Lok Sabha elections: Communist review" (Document)

22. Patriot, 29 April, 1985 .

have adverse consequence for employment in manufacturing industries and increase income disparities".<sup>23</sup>.

The CPI as is clear from this statement did not deviate from its anti-Congress position. Such a stand belied the hopes of those pro-Congress leaders in the CPI who had always wanted the CPI to maintain close relations with the Congress.

Mohit Sen, Kalyanasundram and others in the CPI propagated the line of supporting the Congress inside and outside the party forums. Their expulsion from the CPI paved the way for it taking more critical stand against the ruling party.

The new economic and other policies of the Rajiv Gandhi government prompted the opposition parties to focus their criticism against the congress(I)<sup>24</sup>. Beside the left parties having tasted bitter lessons in the elections were once again inclined to launch united actions. The CPI(M) took initiative in rallying the opposition parties, except the BJP. For this a meeting both parties was held on April 12, 1985 at the CPI Office. Views were exchanged on the conflicts which marred the relationship of the two parties.

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23. P.V.Parakal, CPI's concept of Left and Democratic Alternative, (Communist Party Publication:N.Delhi) Dec.'85 p.9

24. People's Democracy, 14 April, 1985.

during the course of elections in 1984 and 1985. It was agreed that every effort should be made to avoid the repetition of similar conflicts in future.<sup>25</sup> A brief discussion centered on how the independent initiatives of the two parties can be followed up by endeavouring to consolidate the left forces and draw other left and secular forces in the mass campaign.

An agreement was reached that the Central Coordination Committee (CCC) should function as a forum to resolve differences that might crop up from time to time at the state level. It was also felt that it would not be helpful to go into the reasons why the differences arose and to apportion the blame. "The point is to address ourselves to the question of how the thread of united action which was developing can be taken up again".<sup>26</sup> They also agreed that the CCC should function as a body for the exchange of views between them on current political developments so as to evolve a common stand which in turn would help the cause of broader left unity. The Patriot commented that the two communist parties had achieved a breakthrough in their seven year

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 25. People's Democracy. 21st April. 1985.

26. New Age, June 16. 1985.

old unity efforts following this agreement between their top leaders on an institutional framework (CCC) to coordinate their mass activity.<sup>27</sup>

But in practice, the CCC did not achieve much. Because the leaders of both the parties did not appreciate the significance of the body (CCC) itself. And thus one finds that the two parties continued to trade charges and allegations in public even though they have a forum to air their differences. What surprises many is their going to the press very oftenly on trivial issues in order to score some points over the other.

It is pertinent to throw some light on the external issues of the two parties, as they also have impact on their mutual relations. During the period under study, the CPSU-CPC differences were narrowed down gradually leading to their rapprochement.<sup>28</sup> Its effects were manifested in the attempts at left unity in India in the recent past while some positive developments in the realm of the CPSU-CPI(M) relations had influenced the two left parties especially on international matters. The CPC-CPI relations in the changed atmosphere lessened the friction between the CPI and the CPI(M) on the question of Sino-Indian relations.

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27. Patriot, June 6, 85

28. CPI(M) Political Resolution, 12th party congress (calcutta) Dec, '85 p.25

The normalisation of CPSU-CPC relations enhanced the prospects of the CPI-CPI(M) unity. As a matter of fact, the visit of Chinese Vice Premier Yao Yilin to the Soviet Union in July, 1985 resulted in the economic and trade agreements. According to Yao:

"In the present involved international situation, which has been strained by imperialism, relations between the People's Republic of China and Soviet Union affect not only the basic interests of the Soviet Union and Chinese people, but the world situation as a whole and appreciably tell on the alignment of class forces world wide. A normalisation of Soviet-Chinese relations would no doubt make for stabilising the situation not only in Asia but throughout the world"<sup>29</sup>.

The CPI(M) had been recognised by the Soviet party and bilateral relations were established between the two parties recently. The CPI(M) not only reversed its earlier 'equidistant' attitude towards the Soviet Union, but also recognised the leading role played by the USSR in support of national liberation struggles in the world. It is for the first time that the CPI(M) did not criticise the Soviet Union in its party congress in December, 1985. On the eve of the CPSU General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to India, the ground was prepared for the consolidation of the CPSU-CPI(M) ties. While the Soviets felt that there had been a change in the CPI(M)'s perception regarding the importance of the CPSU in the international

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29. *ibid.*.....

Communist movement, the CPI(M) asserts that the Soviets had finally conceded that there were two Communist parties in India.<sup>30</sup> When Gorbachev visited India in November, 1986 leaders of the two parties (CPI and CPI(M)) met him separately and exchanged views regarding bilateral relations apart from others.<sup>31</sup>

It is along these lines that the CPC-CPI relations were sought to be repaired. It can be recalled that in the wake of Sino-Indian border clash in 1962, The CPI-CPC relations were snapped. The CPC had party-to-party relations with only the CPI(M). As there prevailed a conducive atmosphere leading to the Sino-Soviet normalisation the CPC showed interest in <sup>e</sup>reestablishing ties with the CPI in the same fashion as the CPSU had done with the CPI(M). But, interestingly, the CPI continued to harp on its differences with the CPC on the 'border' issue, even while attempts at the CPI-CPC unity were being made.<sup>32</sup> However, the <sup>g</sup>changed relationship between the CPSU and the CPC, noted above, has contributed to a renewal of CPC-CPI relations. It is at this juncture that the ATTUC delegation

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30. Telegraph, November, 26, 1986.

31. While it has been customary for CPI delegation to call on visiting soviet Heads of state, this was the first time that a similar privilege was given to the CPI(M) indicating the growing importance the Soviets now attach to the latter party.

32. New Age, June 1, 1986.

paid a visit to China on the invitation of CPC's Trade Union Front. A CPI leader viewed the visit as an effort by the two estranged Communist parties viz., CPI and CPC to come closer. He said that despite serious and wide ranging political difference between the CPI and the CPC both the parties seemed eager to repair the ties "as both of us believe in Communist principles".<sup>33</sup>

Accordingly, both these parties had exchanged views on a number of issues, mainly on the bilateral, during the course of their visits. This was a positive development which in turn brought about some progress in the field of CPI-CPI(M) relations. It is in this background that an analysis of the debate between the parties through their party organs becomes meaningful. The CPI in its organ New Age initiated the debate. It published a series of articles written by its national leaders, covering ideological, political and tactical issues apart from differences on day-to-day activities. In one of his articles, the CPI leader Jagannath Sarkar has concluded:

"So long as differences in the ideological positions persist the CPI-CPI(M) relations will be marked by jerks and jolts. But by holding joint actions on as many issues as possible and by soberly evaluating the experiences it will be possible to bring the two parties closer on an increasing scale"<sup>34</sup>.

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33. The Statesman, July 16, 1985.

34. New Age, July 28, 1986.

Another CPI leader N. Rajasekhar Reddy was very candid when he admitted that both the parties had changed the positions they took earlier to quote him:

"The fact that the CPI(M) had begun to acknowledge the revolutionary role of the CPSU and had accepted many ideas of the world communist movement which it had earlier dubbed as revisionist and the fact that it had begun to critically re-evaluate the policies and practices of the CPC; and the fact that it chose to break with the Janata party government headed by Morarji Desai...." 35

At some other occasion he had underlined the need to promote a greater degree of united actions. To achieve the Unity between the two parties, it is the areas of agreement that should be stressed than the other way round.<sup>36</sup>

By contrast the CPI(M) PB member, Harikishan Singh Surjit had written extensively on the question of CPI-CPI(M) differences in the People's Democracy.<sup>37</sup> He laboured a lot to expose the "Class-collaborationist" nature of the CPI, and ofcourse, advised the CPI to change its programmatic understanding so that the cooperation was possible between the left parties. The CPI(M) approach on this question of unity amounts to 'Status-quoism'. This is perhaps, because the CPI(M) has some reservations on this score.

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35. CPI's struggle for Communist Unity by four authors in December, 85 (Communist party publication: N. Delhi) pp 1-2

36. New Age, August, 3, 1985

37. H.S. Surjit, "On CPI(M)-CPI Differences" (NBC: N, Delhi) Oct. '85



For, one, the ideological differences still remain unsolved, and second, the left unity per se might not bring about much change in the correlation of 'class forces'.

At this juncture there occurred a few incidents in W. Bengal which provoked the CPI(M) greatly. These include, admitting two CPI(M) legislators into the CPI and the attitude of the CPI on the New Industrial Policy (NIP) of the left front. The CPI(M) leadership condemned the admission into the CPI of the two MLAs, Fakeer Mohammed and Banamali Das, who were expelled for their alleged anti-party activities by the CPI(M). This caused a strain in the relations between the two parties in W. Bengal.<sup>38</sup> More important was the issue of W. Bengal government's industrial Policy (NIP) which triggered a controversy between them at both local and national levels.

The CEC of the CPI said in its resolution in Dec. 85 that the CPI(M) led left front government's new industrial policy is "grievously misguided" since the collaboration with the multinationals in the joint venture projects would weaken the country's public sector. the policy would help "strengthen the monopolies transnationals and impair our efforts at national self-reliance."

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38. National Herald, October 30, 1985

The CPI General Secretary Rao,<sup>39</sup> while commenting upon the CPI-CPI(M) relations, had sharply criticised the 'double standards' of the CPI(M) in criticising the Rajiv Gandhi government for allowing multinationals into the country on the one hand and inviting them to W.Bengal on the other. He also alleged that the CPI(M) was on its own going for joint sector projects brushing aside objections from the other left front partners. His claim is partially incorrect in that no CPI leader had formally opposed the NIP inside the W.Bengal left front.<sup>40</sup> This ~~is~~ provoked Jyoti Basu, The W.Bengal Chief Minister, to comment:

" I wonder why they go to the press all the time. They never use the left front committee forum to air their objections or differences"

The Telegraph had commented editorially on this controversy. In its conclusion the editorial justified the policy, albeit sarcastically.

To Quote from the editorial:

"If Lenin could invite foreign capital in the early twenties during the period of New Economic Policy(NEP), what is wrong in the LF Govt. adopting a similar measure during what communists believe in the interregnum before the ultimate capture of power at the Centre" 41.

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39. National Herald, December, 25, 1985

40. The CPI neither proposed any alternative policy to that nor it, atleast, threatened to quit from the ministry.

41. Telegraph December 15, '85

In view of the propoganda carried in the press by its adversaries the CPI(M) clearly stated that the party opposed to the "intrusion of multinationals in our economic life." <sup>42</sup> At the same time, the CPI(M) led left front ministry entered into a joint agreement with Goenkas and Hindustan Lever, a subsidiary of the Philips for establishing Salt Lake and Haldia Petro-Chemical complexes in W.Bengal. Such an ambivalent stand on the issue of multinational corporations(MNCs) gave rise to apprehensions not only inside the left front but also in the party leadership itself. As a result, a large chunk of the delegates at the Calcutta party congress expressed concern on the policy towards multinationals. It is in this light that its political-organisational report contained the following passages. To make the CPI(M) overall understanding on the matter it is necessary to quote at length:

"left front ministry functions within the framework of the capitalist economy. It is not a government free to attack the property relations and mobilise resources through confrontation. It is in conflict with the Central government which seeks to prove that the Left Front government can do no good to the people. The Central government is organising an economic blockade by withholding investments in the state to demonstrate to the people that the left front is too helpless to do anything for the people. This is the form of class struggle the Centre wages against the Left Front ministry.

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 42. CPI(M) Political-Organisational Report, Op. cit. pp.31-32

It will suit its game exceedingly well if the left front refuses to touch or encourage any capitalist venture. The question here is not capitalism versus socialism, but how to run the ministry so that the people get more confidence in it and are prepared to keep the Congress(I) at an arm's length. If these tactics are not to be adopted and relief not given, the ministry would have to quit in the shortest possible time. Secondly, the joint sector with the Deft Front government's participation should not be equated with joint sector with Congress(I) participation, with the latter prepared to oblige the capitalists at the expense of the people.

In this situation the participation of a monopoly firm which is free to use its capital all over India should not be considered as sacrifice of a strategic objective but a cumpulsion dictated by the immediate necessity to ward off the Central attack. Such tactics are often used to fight the immediate assaults... Such tactics should not be considered as our policy and wrong claims should not be made on their behalf."(emphasis mine)43

This indicates that despite all the proclaimed urge for left unity in the country the two parties seemed to be moving apart. Whether or not the CPI(M) is correct on this score is beside the point. It is clear from the CPI(M)'s party congress that the differences between the two parties were not merely on the longterm goal of socialist revolution but on the short term goal like running the left-front ministry. This

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43. *ibid...* pp. 32-33

is one specific example which illustrates the 'divergence' between the two constituents of the same left-front.

#### IV

Time and again it is said that the merger of the two left parties was not practicable though desirable. This was because the leaders of both the parties insist on raising the issues concerning their ideological and programmatic stands. This happens because, each party sticks to its stand very rigidly. This in turn resulted in their divergent approach towards the merger idea. The CPI general Secretary Rao felt that the unity of the two parties was not an immediate task, since the CPI(M) was unwilling to shed its big-brotherly attitude towards the CPI. And he accused the CPI(M) of seeking unity only where it is in dominating position.<sup>44</sup> But, the CPI(M) General Secretary Namboodiripad denied the charge.<sup>45</sup> However, Rao rejoined the debate to substantiate his stand. According to him:

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44. New Age, January 5, 1986.

45. Times of India, January 8, 1986.

"Namboodiripad distorts our stand in order to cover up his own party's erroneous policy of not working for left unity on an all India scale and in states where they are not in a dominating position... They are for left unity in W.Bengal, Tripura and Kerala only, not at the all India level or in other states. Thereby they have been harming the development of left and democratic unity as an alternative to the Congress."46

As a matter of fact Namboodiripad ruled out the possibility of merger of two parties on the plea that the ideological-political differences remained unresolved. According to him:

"It would, however be foolhardy to think that the ideological questions on which the break came 21 years ago and many of which continue even now, are of no political importance."47

Meanwhile, it is interesting to note how he intends to bring about unity between the two parties. Suffice it to quote him:

"leaving aside the question of merger which is and will be impracticable so long as our ideological-political differences, is it not possible for us to activate the Central Coordination Committee and to activate the all-India Committee for peace?"48

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46. New Age, January 12, 1986.  
 47. People's Democracy, June 23, 1985.  
 48. People's Democracy, March 16, 1986.

His party colleague and PB member, H.S.Surjit goes a step further to justify the above stand. According to him, the CPI(M) is not willing to accept the merger proposal of the CPI because "unprincipled unity can do more harm than good."<sup>49</sup>

It is paradoxical to note that the CPI was using every occasion and platform to stress the unity theme, while the CPI(M) leaders seemed to be working overtime to stall any such move and some times they even ridiculed unity moves. To cite an instance, when the pro-CPI youth organisation (AIYF) conducted a 'jatha' under the slogan of 'youth for unification of the Communist parties' throughout the state(Kerala), the pro-CPI(M) youth organisation(DYFI) took out counter-jathas, criticising the CPI and its unity efforts.<sup>50</sup>

Again, the 13th party congress of the CPI, which was held in March 1986 at Patna, made an impassioned

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49. H.S.Surjit, "On CPI(M)-CPI Differences" Op. cit. p.1

50. Patriot, March 1, 1986.

appeal to the leadership for unification of the Communist movement, as is observed by Rao;

"we will not reach anywhere if the CPI and the CPI(M) concentrate on past differences."<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, another leader N.K.Krishnan "reaffirmed" his party's stand that reunification of the Communist movement on a principled basis is "our goal" and "we will patiently and persistently work for achieving it".<sup>52</sup>

In the CPI party congress many speakers urged the delegates to ratify the moves for unity and to evolve a left and democratic national alternative in order to replace the present Congress(I) regime. While presenting the report, the party General Secretary Rajeshwar Rao appealed for Communist unity pleading that was the only way to advance the Communist movement. And he believed that the unity between the two parties would take the movement forward and attract other left and democratic sections. Likewise Jagannath Sarkar also opined that

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51. Times of India, March 13, 1986.

52. ibid.....



in the current political situation unity between the CPI and the CPI(M) had become imperative.

The CPI's stand on this issue was nothing but a reiteration of the stand taken at the Bhatinda congress a decade ago. In the present party congress, the party's opposition to the ruling party was more unequivocal. The CPI had to wean away a good number of party leaders towards its side from the Dange-Mohit Sen fold. The CPI reestablished its image through its anti-Congress posture.

Given the CPI(M)'s hesitation on the question of merger, the left parties had only confined to some united actions on common problems during the period under study. They were at the level of Trade Union and Kisan Fronts. Even the joint actions were more frequent in W.Bengal and Tripura, whereas in Kerala it was pursued by setting upon electoral front for the coming assembly elections. In other states, the joint actions were very negligible, except in Punjab. It was the question of terrorism which prompted the left parties, to undertake united actions against the Sikh 'extremists' in Punjab. On the student front, both the parties worked

unitedly only under electoral compulsion or otherwise 'local factors' do play much, particularly in the students union elections. The SFI of the CPI(M) and the AISF of the CPI, due to 'local factors' were unable to forge an <sup>alliance in</sup> the elections to the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (New Delhi) in 1986, which resulted in the defeat of the 'left'. Having tasted bitter defeat both the parties abused each other in their national weeklies.<sup>53</sup> In the following year both the parties forged an electoral alliance notwithstanding the 'local differences' to win the elections.

Incidentally, the domestic political scene did not force unity between them, whereas the international situation enabled the two parties to come closer in the present phase.<sup>54</sup> But for CPI(M)'s attitude towards the CPI, there would have been greater unity, between the two parties.

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53. New Age, Nov. 2, '86; People's Democracy, Nov. 9, '86.

54. In connection with May Day Centenary, 40th anniversary of victory over Fascism and World Peace both the parties held joint rallies.

## V

Before concluding this part of study, it is important to throw some light on the state of CPI-CPI(M) relations in Andhra Pradesh. Because it provides a different picture. While the two parties, at the all-India scale, are moving in one direction, their counterparts in AP are moving in the opposite direction. This affects their all-India level relations, and thus, it is necessary to examine their points of divergence in the state.

The differences between them surfaced, when the two parties could not forge an electoral alliance in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections. Both the parties had their claims on one Lok Sabha seat, Khammam. Though the mediator, ruling TDP, formally supported the CPI, the CPI(M) did not give up its claims, leading to their mutual destruction in Khammam. As a result, the 'Khammam controversy' had its implications in other constituencies in the state. Further, it was reported that this issue had some impact on the Kerala elections. Following this, the two parties became hostile to each other in the state. Again, when elections to the AP Assembly

were held in 1985, the 'Khammam controversy' recurred in the state. The CPI(M), this time, emerged victorious in the tussle between the two parties.<sup>55</sup> While the electoral victory might have boosted the image of the CPI(M), its relations with the CPI were strained in A.P. More over, this resulted in several physical fights between the cadres of the two parties, leading to the death of a few in Khammam district. Similar incidents, marred relations in other districts as well culminating in more animosity between them. This led to an intensification of the rift between the two parties, when such incidents occupied much space in their regional and national organs.

In this light, it is pertinent to touch upon the TDP relations with regard to both the left parties. This is necessary to comprehend the specific nature of their mutual relations, in A.P. The CPI declared, that a 'bourgeois' party, such as, Telugu Desham can not provide viable and progressive rule to the state.

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55. The CPI(M) won four seats it contested in the district as opposed to the CPI's one. This election vindicated the former's stand.

And thus, the CPI decided to give left orientation to the politics of the state and try to build left democratic alternative.<sup>56</sup>

Seen in this light, it is understandable why the CPI had sought cooperation with the CPI(M). But since the CPI(M)'s main political plank is to build a broad anti-authoritarian platform against the Congress(I), it had taken a stand that the Telugu Desham alone could prevent the 'return' of Congress(I) into power in the state. As a result, a common political understanding between the two parties has become impossible. On the other hand, the CPI observed that the present CPI(M) line spoils the prospects of left unity as it leads to no third alternative in the state.

By and large, the CPI-CPI(M) relations in the state are based on the perceptible threat from the Telugu Desham as well as the Congress parties. This

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56. New Age, Feb. 23, 1986.

had landed them into two opposite political camps in A.P. On the one hand, the CPI along with other opposition parties rallied behind the anti-TDP front. In the absence of any viable third force, the CPI's stand virtually helps the Congress(I), the main opposition party in the State. The CPI(M), on the other hand, while maintaining very close relations with the TDP, on the plea that the latter had the potential to defeat the Congress(I), paid scant regard to the question of left parties' unity. It is this divergent approach in their perception that kept these parties apart.

The CPI - CPI(M) talks were held in November 1986 to patch up the differences so as to build united left movement in the state. They failed as the CPI(M) offered the same argument in support of its political line which stated that unless both CPI and CPI(M) support the TDP, the Congress(I) would come back to power. In this way, if the CPI(M)'s political line of 'blindly' supporting the TDP is followed, the masses disillusioned with the TDP, would have no other option but to approach the Congress(I). And thus in

a way even the CPI(M) line, can help the Congress(I) to stage a come back in the state. It is in this light that the left unity in the state as elsewhere assumes paramount importance.

To sum up, the left parties have not achieved any major breakthrough on the question of unity during the Rajiv Gandhi regime. The expectations of those who visualised 'normalisation' of CPI-CPI(M) relations in the light of setbacks that the 'left' as a whole suffered in the 1984 elections were belied. Of the two parties, the CPI(M) seemed to be more rigid. The CPI(M) views the CPI as merely an opposition party, but not a left party. Consequently, the party shows less interest in the CPI. Moreover, the CPI(M) is keen to have better relations with other parties as is evident from the case of AP. As a result, the CPI(M), though inclined to embark upon united actions, is not interested in the merger of the two parties.

## CONCLUSION

The Communist movement has virtually suffered a major setback in the 1960s when it was split twice in 1964 and 1968. The Communists failed in their attempt to realise the goal of Indian revolution and one of the reasons was that they were far too entangled in bitter wranglings and frictions between themselves. Their divergences led to the fragmentation of the Communist movement which resulted in the formation of the CPI and the CPI(M) with two different programmatic understanding. Their programmatic differences widened the gulf between the two parties in the post-split period which prevented the left forces from playing a decisive role in Indian politics. Without that it was not possible for the left parties to augment their role and enhance the possibility of building a left and democratic alternative. For this purpose the two left parties realised the importance of left unity as well as the need to mobilise the support of broad democratic forces and parties in the struggle against the Congress rule.



The two parties in the pre-emergency period, due to ideological differences, confined themselves to finding fault in each other's position on various developments, leading to their isolation from the mainstream politics. As a result, both parties remained a marginal force. But it is significant that the two parties recognised the imperative need to initiate the process of normalisation of relations and thereby reverse the trend of fragmentation and disintegration of the left movement. And thus, while on the onehand, these parties pressed for unity of left and democratic parties, on the other, they continued to indulge in mutual bickerings. This was partly because the two parties viewed the left and democratic parties quite differently. This had led them to ally with different parties. That is to say, the alliance policy had become the major bone of contention between the two parties throughout this period. In fact, the two parties pursued such vastly different tactics that they found themselves in two opposing camps. While the CPI supported the ruling Congress party, the CPI(M) remained isolated in the beginning, but it became an ardent supporter of the Janata-led opposition camp in late 1970s.

The Janata phase provided an occasion to both the left parties to reassess their relations. The parties which were so divergent in their pronouncements and actions during the emergency period had to revise their tactical lines, in their respective party congresses in 1978. Though the CPI formally acknowledged its mistakes, the party did not take any serious measures to correct them after the Bhatinda congress. It continued to support the Congress party in Kerala and elsewhere. Whereas the CPI(M) opposed the Congress as it still represented the trend of 'authoritarianism'. Besides, the CPI equated Janata party with the Congress. It is from this standpoint that the CPI consistently opposed the Janata government, while the CPI(M) maintained cordial relations with it. Accordingly, the CPI set for itself the task of replacing the Janata government as well as the CPI(M)-Janata alliance. And thus, it urged the left and democratic parties in general and the CPI(M) in particular to forge left unity. Seen in this context, the CPI's emphasis on left unity was a preliminary step towards weaning away the CPI(M) from the Janata camp.

At this juncture, the CPI(M) started criticising the Janata government's economic policies and 'genuine' foreign policy as also the growth of RSS predominance in the Janata party. On the otherhand, the CPI too, having done some introspection, changed its pro-Congress stance and severed its ties with the Congress. This, inturn, brightened the prospects of CPI-CPI(M) unity on the eve of Janata downfall. The CPI vision became a reality when the CPI(M) reversed its pro-Janata line in July 1979. As a result, both the parties successfully intervened in the "ruling class contradictions" in order to build up left and democratic alternative to both the Congress and the Janata. In the Janata phase, it is the objective compulsions arising out of failure of the Janata experiment and the rise of Congress(I), rather than the Bhatinda spirit of normalisation of the CPI-CPI(M)relations, which enabled the left parties to shift their tactics. Both parties, having shifted their earlier positions found their common ally in the Janata(S) and the Congress(S) combine to fight against the 'twin danger' namely, authoritarianism and communalism simultaneously. But in the elections, the twin danger was not defeated in any measurable way,

in the sense that the authoritarianism reemerged with vengeance when the Congress came back into power. And the 'communal' parties polled more votes than the left parties. Nevertheless, the left parties improved their electoral strength in the Parliament in spite of the fact that there was no unity between them and the opposition camp as the opposition was vertically split into two camps.

In the Indira Gandhi phase, the two parties followed divergent attitudes towards the Congress and the 'bourgeois' opposition parties. While the 'authoritarianism' of the Congress haunted the CPI(M), the 'communalism' represented by the BJP troubled the CPI. On the onehand, the CPI(M) envisaged a plan to put up a broad opposition fight against the ruling Congress, the CPI, on the otherhand, expressed its apprehensions over the participation of the 'communal' parties like BJP and Akalidal. Meanwhile, the objective compulsions warranted the CPI to change its line when the Congress(I) government at the Centre toppled the non-Congress ministries in Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh. The CPI had to change its tactics further at its Varanasi congress in 1981, when it kept its options open regarding

the BJP. Similarly, on the question of rise of regional parties and the Centre-State relations, the CPI stand coincided with that of the CPI(M). At the international plane, areas of convergence between the two parties increased. Because the CPI(M)'s stand on the question of war danger and US imperialism had undergone some change when it re-versed its lukewarm attitude on these issues in the recent past. The CPI(M) in its Vijayawada congress focussed its main attention against the US imperialism without any reservations. While these developments enhanced the prospects of mutual cooperation, the divisive movements like Assam and Punjab had undermined the unity efforts. By and large, war danger, restoration of the Congress rule, weakening of the opposition parties, growth of regional movements and parties enforced the two parties, atleast, to explore the prospects of left unity, leaving aside the left and democratic unity.

In the wake of assassination of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the question of national unity came to the forefront. While the Congress(I) led by Rajiv Gandhi cashed on the 'sympathy wave' to carve a massive victory in the 1984 elections. The non-left opposition parties

underestimated the significance of the 'sympathy' factor. The left parties took a middle path, as they neither echoed Rajiv Gandhi's concern on the question of Anandpur Sahib Resolution, nor did they belittle the significance of national unity. As a result, all the opposition parties, including the left ones, were crushed by the Congress(I) campaign. The left parties suffered reverses in their strongholds namely, Kerala, Bihar, W.Bengal and Punjab due to the sympathy wave in favour of the Congress(I), but also their inability to put up a united fight against the Congress.

Meanwhile, the two parties were involved in intense differences in A.P. and Bihar leading to their decline in a few constituencies in the elections. The leadership of the two parties failed to resolve the election disputes through the Central Coordination Committee (CCC), as it remained defunct. However, at the domestic front, the elitist economic, industrial and education policies of the Rajiv Gandhi government ensured the left parties in action on common problems.

Similarly, at the external front too, both the parties found more areas of convergence, during the same

period, as the Sino-Soviet 'rapprochement' had influenced the two left parties to reassess their stands on the international matters. While the CPI(M) reestablished party-to-party relations with the CPSU, the CPI moved in this direction with regard to the CPC.

The Mohit Sen faction in the CPI and M.Basavapunnaiiah in the CPI(M) thwarted the moves of unity forces to some extent. The CPI leadership in an attempt to move closer to the CPI(M) ignored the pleas made by Mohit Sen faction. As a matter of fact, the party after its Patna congress in 1986 contributed much more to the cause of left unity, it even expelled the Mohit Sen faction from the party. Whereas the CPI(M) leadership, leave alone censuring M.Basavapunnaiiah for his anti-CPI remarks exhibited a lukewarm attitude towards the CPI. The CPI(M) in fact, acted in a way which escalated tensions between their mass fronts in Kerala, A.P. and elsewhere. More than the CPI, the CPI(M) harped on the ideological differences, as is apparent from its 'debate' with the CPI. On the plea that the ideological differences were not yet settled, the CPI(M), strangely, put conditions and asked the CPI to revise its programmatic understanding so as to embark upon united actions.

The party entered into alliance with the CPI in the states where only the CPI(M) can lead the united fronts as for example Kerala, Tripura and W.Bengal. This is partly because conceiving itself as the only genuine working class party which can play a 'vanguard' role in the 'People's Democratic Revolution', the CPI(M) is not prepared to accept the leadership of the CPI in the struggle against the Congress government in Bihar, U.P., and Punjab, where the CPI is stronger than the CPI(M).

Instead the CPI(M) considered the non-left parties TDP, DMK, Akalidal, Lok Dal and Janata party as its potential allies in the states where it is not strong enough to take on the Congress(I). This indicates that the CPI(M) in its endeavour to fulfill the short-term goals preferred the non-left parties to its most reliable and longterm ally, the CPI. In this way the stand of the CPI(M) negates its longterm strategy. Both the longterm and shortterm goals can not always be reconciled as is clear from its electoral experience over the last two and half decades. For instance, while in elections, the CPI(M) has been successful to



large extent, it did not achieve any breakthrough in building the left and democratic alternative. Moreover, even electoral gains remain shortlived, if long-term strategy is not followed up by consolidating those gains. As long as the CPI(M) does not realise the significance of longterm strategy, the party is bound to suffer reverses in elections too as is demonstrated by its electoral defeats in Kerala (1982), W.Bengal (1984) and Tripura recently. Seen in this light, normalisation of the CPI-CPI(M) relations and further, unity of left and democratic parties assumes greater importance. And the CPI(M) has to take the major responsibility in leading and forging the left and democratic unity.

At a time when the country is faced with, the problem of progress and national unity from both internal as well as external forces and the ruling Congress party has failed to solve these problems even after four decades of independence, the non-left opposition parties find themselves engrossed in 'inter-party' and 'intra-party' conflicts without offering any alternative to the Congress, it becomes imperative for the

left parties to give an alternative direction to political developments. For this the left parties should not repeat the mistakes they committed in the past. This is possible if they make a concrete analysis of the objective situation, if they exhibit independent posture in formulating their strategy and tactics, if they do not imitate any 'models', and finally if they do not lag behind the 'ruling classes' in reacting to events and if they intertwine longterm as well as shorterterm goals successively.

It is true that the sympathisers of the left movement in general, and their cadres in particular, anticipate a left and democratic alternative to emerge soon, as they are unaware of their leaders' polemics over programmatic differences. Until and unless these 'actual' differences are not resolved the Communist unity appears a myth. If it is possible for their leaders to change tactics so often to meet their short term interests, it is ironical that they have not reconsidered their strategy even though major changes have occurred in the socio-political life of India since the inception of the two Communist parties.

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