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Communism in India

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Introduction

In 1947, when India became independent, communism in the country was centered on the Communist Party of India (CPI). The party was affiliated before 1943 to the Soviet-backed Comintern; and the CPI's commitment to the overthrow of the British colonial establishment foreclosed a stable legal existence during the interwar years. Party structures, though, developed. This was under the cover of mass organizations and other political groups; it was also through an interface with the Indian National Congress (INC), the main nationalist force. After 1942 the CPI supported the war effort against the Axis and functioned openly.

From 1947, without renouncing its revolutionary character, the CPI became involved in electoral politics. A complex relationship took shape with the ruling INC. The development evolved from the CPI's status as a minor opposition party in provincial assemblies in the 1946 elections. From 1952, the party became an element in the Indian republic's national and state legislatures, based on bicameral structures and universal adult suffrage. Its standing grew as indicated in the tables at the end of the chapter. During the Nehru period, the CPI faced INC measures to integrate the state more effectively, give practical form to its constitution, evolve social goals and establish a system of economic planning. The situation generated challenges to ideology as well as opportunities for the CPI to indulge in political mobilization. The party established perspectives on where the country stood on the path to the construction of socialism and evaluated its priorities; to achieve its goals, the party created disciplined structures, even as it encouraged mass appeal and mass support.¹

¹ See Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Communism in India: Events, Processes and Ideologies* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), "Introduction"; and Dwaipayana Bhattacharyya, *Government as Practice: Democratic Left in a Transforming India* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2016), ch. 1, for different aspects of the party.

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Soviet communism and its allied parties were reference points for the CPI: It was through the connection that the party linked to global communism. Indian communists were critical of the valorization of national development per se and looked to the Soviet experiment as a model. The USSR and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) saw in Indian communism an instance (like China) of how communism could be meaningful in the postcolonial world and serve the Soviet Union's purposes in the Cold War.

Indian communism was marked by heterogeneity. Communism was not focused on an individual, though specific figures commanded respect. Ideologically communism was adaptive, although it was given structure by communist parties, by the Comintern and by the example of the Soviet Union. Texts and ideas were read according to local circumstances, and developed specificity. Within the CPI, rival positions and groups were not silent. Dissension in the CPI led to a split in 1964 and the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M). In 1967, the CPI(M) itself divided, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), or CPI(ML), was formed. The situation drew from a culture of socialist discourse in India's post-1947 public life. Marxist-inclined groups and parties existed outside the CPI. Discussions and alliances occurred across party boundaries. This encouraged the development of a plurality of formal communisms in India.

Politics, leadership, mobilization and ideology in Indian communism have been subjects of study, especially in areas of regional strength. This chapter builds on the literature to show how communism's scattered presence was consolidated in the 1950s. This established ground-level authority in enclaves, as well as a national and international reputation for Indian communism. When global connections weakened, national strength was maintained at the cost of international awareness within the party; when global links were stronger, this could weaken internal coherence and strength.

Communism in India: The Pre-1947 Background

Socialist Ideals and the Nationalist Movement Before 1917

Before 1917, in British India, anti-colonial nationalism, economic justice and social equality drew attention rather than "socialism" or "communism." Awareness of socialist literature existed, but was not significant. Empathy with notions of equality and cooperative action were associated with

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prominent public figures such as Narendranath Datta (Swami Vivekananda) and Rabindranath Tagore, institutions such as the Theosophical Society and figures in the INC. Liberalism, radicalism and sectarian religious and communitarian ideas that had arisen independently within the country shaped people's perspectives.²

The impact of ideas varied in an India divided into directly governed provinces and princely states under a viceregal administration. Except in the princely states, electoral politics, associative activity and a lively print culture, both in English and in Indian languages, provided the ambience for debate. Egalitarian, anti-colonial and revolutionary sentiments were aggressively asserted in the Swadeshi movement of 1905–06 in Bengal. Revolutionary organizations, focusing on terrorist strategies, developed in Bengal and Punjab. During World War I, these sentiments found expression in a provisional government of India in Kabul, a Berlin group that sought German help for India's independence and the Gadr movement set up in the United States by Hardayal.³

The Communist Party of India and the Comintern

After the October Revolution in Russia, Indian communism took shape in a diffused manner. Indian revolutionaries in Kabul and Berlin were attracted by the Bolsheviks' affirmation of principles of national self-determination and the social agenda of a communist regime that thought beyond constitutional reform. M. N. Roy, an Indian revolutionary working in Mexico, attended the second meeting of the Comintern in August 1920. Indians were present at the Bolshevik-organized Baku Congress of Peoples of the East in September 1920. These diverse elements established a Communist Party of India in December 1920 in Tashkent.⁴ The party's reference points were Comintern positions on the "colonial question," i.e. the nature of imperialism, its class character and how it was to be overcome, with or without assistance from "bourgeois" nationalism.⁵

2 Christopher Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

3 Amala Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge: India Between 1890 and 1910* (Mumbai: Orient Longmans, 1967); Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903–1908* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973); Hiren Chakrabarti, *Political Protest in Bengal: Boycott and Terrorism, 1905–1918* (Kolkata: Papyrus, 1992).

4 M. A. Persits, *Revolutionaries of India in Soviet Russia: Mainsprings of the Communist Movement in the East* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973).

5 Sobhanlal Datta Gupta, *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India, 1919–1943: Dialectics of Real and a Possible History* (Kolkata: Seriban, 2006).

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Those forming this CPI were members of a cosmopolitan set whose “revolutionary” character was shaped within a global defiance of empire located in transnational social spaces.⁶ They were not revolutionaries with a specific constituency in India or socialists schooled in debates of the Second International. In India, independent of this, and also unschooled in debates of the International, Singaravelu Chettiar formed a Labour Kisan (Peasant) Party in Madras. Muzaffar Ahmed in Calcutta drew together Muslim activists who read up on Marxism, through books such as Julian Borchardt’s *The People’s Marx* (1921). Suggestions came from M. N. Roy, and his emissary, Nalini Gupta, who arranged the distribution of Bolshevik literature.⁷

These early developments occurred in isolated enclaves and were not linked to each other.⁸ Numbers increased, following the popular politics of the Non Co-operation Movement (1921–22) – substantially inspired by M. K. Gandhi and the INC – and disillusionment with the movement’s abandonment by the INC. A conference of communists took place at Kanpur in December 1925. A meeting in Bombay in 1928 established a communist party constitution and Central Committee. The Comintern was the reference; local suggestions for the formation of a National Communist Party were not accepted in 1925. As a party, the CPI had a difficult existence: British authorities defined its activities as seditious and imprisoned communists following the Peshawar conspiracy case (1923), the Kanpur conspiracy case (1924) and, in 1929, the Meerut conspiracy case.

The focus of the party was agitation and strike activity in trade unions, and a role in movements for land rights among peasant bodies. Its social goals and revolutionary strategies, arguably utopian,⁹ differed from those of the Congress. The CPI did not participate in local, municipal and provincial British Indian elected bodies. Authority within limits was established in a Workers’ and Peasants’ Party (until 1929) and other mass organizations. By 1939, the communists dominated the All India Trades Union Congress (AITUC) established in 1920 and the All India Kisan Sabha

6 Kris Manjappa, *M. N. Roy: Marxism and Colonial Cosmopolitanism* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010).

7 Suchetana Chattopadhyay, *An Early Communist: Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta 1913–1929* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2011).

8 Muzaffar Ahmad, *Amar Jibani o Bharater Komiunist Parti* [My Life and the Communist Party of India], 12th edn. (Kolkata: National Book Agency, 2012), 85–86.

9 In their *Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920–1947* (New Delhi: Sage, 1992–93), Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh develop arguments already made in this direction by Bipan Chandra, Aditya Mukherjee and Mridula Mukherjee.

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(AIKS) peasant body established in 1936, though in neither was their position unchallenged. Members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) – Philip Spratt and Ben Bradley – came to organize the party in India and give it some form. Schooled in the USSR’s discussion circles, they provided interpretations of Marxist theory generated by the Comintern.¹⁰

To Indian communists, the Comintern provided a sense of communism as a critique of capitalism based on class analysis and Leninist theories of imperialism. Literature stressed differences between communist parties and organizations with a social agenda.¹¹ Strategies were suggested for anti-colonial struggles: for collaboration within a framework of alliances before 1928, a strict “class approach” after 1928 and construction of “united fronts” after 1935. Analysis and injunctions were important, since the CPI’s own networks, journals and newspapers had a fragile existence. Funds dispatched by the Comintern through international organizations assisted strikes and provided wherewithal for party work.¹²

Communists charted a course through various specific issues toward theory. The issues included regional and linguistic particularism, as in Telugu-speaking areas, divided between the directly administered Madras Presidency and the princely state of Hyderabad – where Telugu had no official standing. Communists threw in their lot with the Andhra Mahasabha, which promoted use of Telugu – and developed a social agenda linked to tenants’ rights.¹³ Religious issues promoted by the Muslim League were not ignored, nor were caste concerns (focused on inherited disadvantage). Both were major factors in politics, partly promoted by electoral arrangements based on separate electorates after the 1919 reforms. The communist emphasis on class relations as a frame of reference evoked sympathy – but also dissatisfaction. In the case of caste, this drew a line between the “dalit” activist B. R. Ambedkar, who sought affirmative action

10 See Ashoke Kumar Mukhopadhyay (ed.), *India and Communism: Secret British Documents* (Kolkata: National Book Agency, 1997), for the CPGB in India.

11 Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Documents on Party Organization 1964–2009: A Collection* (Kolkata: National Book Agency Pvt., 2015), 9–58. For Moscow discussions, see Purabi Roy, Sobhanlal Datta Gupta and Hari Vasudevan, *Indo-Russian Relations 1917–1947: Select Archives of the Former Soviet Union: An Inventory* (New Delhi: Shipra, 2012), 37–106.

12 E. Mel’nikov, “Kommunisticheskaia partiia i deiatel’nost’ sovestskikh sektsii massovykh mezhdunarodnykh organizatsii rabochevo klassa (1919–1959),” Ph.D. dissertation (Leningrad University, 1984); Roy, Datta Gupta and Vasudevan, *Indo-Russian Relations*.

13 P. Sundarayya, *The Telangana People’s Struggle and Its Lessons*, www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/Telangana.pdf

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for lower castes. Ambedkar developed a critique of communism and formed bodies focused on the emancipation of lower castes.¹⁴ Elsewhere, communist tactics led to dissension, as in trade unions, when “red unions” functioned briefly during 1931–34.¹⁵

By 1939, the CPI was active in cultural initiatives. Via agencies closely linked to the party, experiments were undertaken in street theater and song production as well as writing, painting and sculpture. The All-India Progressive Writers’ Association (AIPWA) was pivotal to this from 1934. The Indian Progressive Theatre Association (IPTA) was established later. Production in many Indian languages found attention.¹⁶ Noncommunists were drawn into debates. In projections of communism, the Soviet experience acquired iconic status and figures such as Lenin aroused intense affective enthusiasm.¹⁷

Fellow Travelers

Groups outside the CPI were committed to socialist and Marxist perspectives.¹⁸ The Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was concerned with social issues (wage levels, working hours, problems of rent, terms of tenancy etc.) and radical tactics to achieve its agenda. Established in 1934, it was until 1939 a group within the Congress, founded branches throughout the country and acted as an interface between communists and the Congress. The CSP had the approval of Jawaharlal Nehru, who expressed admiration for the Soviet experiment.

Elsewhere, in Punjab, activists of the Gadr party, trained in Moscow, became the core of the Kirti Kisan Party. In 1939, the Forward Bloc (FB) was set up with a strong social agenda by Subhas Chandra Bose, after the sabotage of his presidency of the Congress by M. K. Gandhi. Members of the Bengali revolutionary organization Anushilan turned to Marxism and formed the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) in 1940. Trotskyites¹⁹ and

14 See Ishita Banerjee Dube, *A History of Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), ch. 9, for general accounts of caste and B. R. Ambedkar.

15 V. B. Karnik, *Indian Trade Unions: A Survey* (Mumbai: Manaktala, 1966), 74–75.

16 Anuradha Roy, *Cultural Communism in Bengal, 1936–1952* (New Delhi: Primus, 2014).

17 R. Vaidyanath, “Soviet Studies in India,” *Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 11, 2 (1969), 145–55; Rajarshi Dasgupta, “Rhyming the Revolution: Marxism and Culture in Colonial Bengal,” *Studies in History* 21, 1 (2005), 79–98.

18 Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri, *Leftism in India, 1917–1947* (New Delhi: Palgrave-Macmillan Reprint, 2007).

19 Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism 1929–1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 516–32.

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the Socialist Unity Centre of India would add to the number of Indian communists by 1948, as would M. N. Roy, who broke with the CPI and formed his own party.

With “fellow travelers,” the CPI pressed, during the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–34), for alleviation of the rent burden on various categories of tenants throughout the provinces. When Congress ministries of 1937–39 failed to take adequate measures in this direction, and restrict inroads into forest areas to the cost of tribal populations, the CSP and the CPI launched joint agitations. Compromises regarding class attitudes and other issues associated with Gandhian strategies were deemed unacceptable by the CPI; such compromises drove a wedge between the CSP and the CPI, as well as between the CSP and the FB and RSP.

World War II

During World War II, the CPI followed the Soviet lead. Initial opposition to the “imperial” war effort turned to support for the British government in the “People’s War” initiative after 1942. The party refused to boycott the British authorities as part of the Congress Quit India program (1942). The CPI lost support from “fellow travelers,” who stood with the Congress view that the time should be utilized to press for independence.

Permission to function legally led to party consolidation. The CPI did not participate in government, but activity was unencumbered by police action. The party intensified control over mass organizations. It staged mass events to draw attention to the Soviet war effort, through the friends of the Soviet Union.²⁰ The anti-colonial agenda was not abandoned. Sympathizers on the cultural front drew attention to the famine in Bengal (1943–44). By 1945, party structures had gained in solidity. The first congress was held in 1943. At a time when women were increasingly active in politics, the establishment of the women’s Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti (1942) added to the party’s profile.²¹ Notions of an impending end to British rule inspired suggestions for India’s future: as a federation that mirrored the USSR, based on states driven by language and/or culture.²²

20 L. V. Mitrokhin, *Friends of the Soviet Union: India’s Solidarity with the USSR During the Second World War in 1941–1945* (Mumbai: Allied Publishers, 1977).

21 M. Sinha Roy, *Gender and Radical Politics in India* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010), 28ff.

22 Utpal Ghosh, *The Communist Party of India and India’s Freedom Struggle, 1917–1947* (Kolkata: Pearl Publishers, 1996), chs. 4 and 5 for broad politics, and pp. 196–211 specifically for constitutional suggestions.

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Communism in India After Independence 1947–1960: The Changing Role of the CPI

A Regional Map of Communism in India

In 1945, the standing of communists in different parts of India varied.²³ In the case of Bengal, Muslims turned to communism, finding Congress, the Muslim League and other parties unacceptable or limited. Workers in tramways, the port and the jute mills formed part of the CPI rank and file. Professionals, recruited by the CPGB while studying in Britain, added to numbers, as did other members of Bengal's *bhadralok* (educated classes). In the case of Bihar, the rank and file came from the AIKS, as they did in the United Provinces and Punjab, although in Kanpur the party was strong among the textile workers. In Telugu-speaking areas of the Madras Presidency, the Andhra Mahasabha was the core, with influence in the Nizam's Hyderabad. In Bombay, under S. A. Dange's and S. V. Ghate's initiatives the unions were the pivot, while in Kerala, between 1934 and 1939, most of the CSP, led by P. Krishna Pillai and E. M. S. Namboodiripad, went over to the CPI.²⁴

Early Post-Independence Years

After 1945, in the CPI illusions of opportunity²⁵ were inspired by Soviet success in the war and communist victories in China. This coincided with postwar scarcity, economic dislocation and announcements that the British Empire in India was to end: phenomena that pointed to a crisis of imperialism and capitalism. Equally, CPI leaders were aware of the party's limited numbers, while the notion was popular that the INC and the class alliances it represented would undermine imperialism and benefit the laboring poor. Meanwhile, INC participants in the Quit India movement were released from prison. In directly governed provinces, after the elections of January 1946, executive authority rested with the Congress and the Muslim League. The two parties shared control over departments

23 Unless otherwise specified, the narrative up to 1958 is found in G. Overstreet and M. Windmiller, *Communism in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

24 T. J. Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala: A Study in Political Adaptation* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 73ff.; Dilip Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India: Malabar 1900–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

25 Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *Decolonization in South Asia: Meanings of Freedom in Post-Independence West Bengal, 1947–1952* (Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2009), ch. 4.

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of central government after formation of the Interim Government in September 1946. This political reality marked communism's weakness.

Communists were committed to revolutionary and constitutional strategies simultaneously. They were involved in the naval mutiny in Bombay in 1945. At a time when the Congress was in conflict with the Muslim League, the CPI provided support to peasants in Bengal, who, in the Tebhaga movement (1946) sought a more substantial portion of the harvest in sharecropping arrangements. These actions were projected as agitations directed against colonial misrule.

P. C. Joshi, the CPI general secretary, allowed articulation of gestures in support of the Congress through 1947. Conflicts between the Congress and the Muslim League about India's future led to Hindu-Muslim confrontation based on mobilization around religious sensibilities and tropes. Communists asserted their opposition to this "communalism," supporting the Congress where possible in elections in January 1946, when the CPI first entered electoral politics. India's partition in 1947, the persistence of violence thereafter and the arrival of refugees in the newly fashioned states of PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States) and West Bengal led to continuities in the CPI focus on anti-communalism, with involvement in rehabilitation of refugees and common cause with Congress administrations.

Uncertainties of the three years that followed mirrored the variety in communist debate internationally. Soviet ideas on colonies were in flux, and Mao's ideas were influential.²⁶ Doctrinal assistance and resources were sought from international communist bodies, especially the CPGB and the CPSU. Dange was dispatched to Moscow in September 1947 and met Andrei Zhdanov and Mikhail Suslov to discuss whether the CPI should continue to be a party straddling India and Pakistan, along with other issues.²⁷ In the atmosphere of the early Cold War, the "line" propagated by Zhdanov arguing for militancy among communist parties was foregrounded; but the Soviet establishment was negotiating different arguments,²⁸ as Zhdanov acknowledged to Dange.

Accepting Soviet advice that the party must divide following partition, the CPI oriented its focus to the new "India." The local standing of the party in different regions slowly altered. Independent of any "line" disseminated by

26 John H. Kautsky, *Moscow and the Communist Party of India* (New York: MIT Press and John Wiley, 1956), 6–30.

27 Roy, DattaGupta and Vasudevan, *Documents*, vol. II, 348–62.

28 Kautsky, *Moscow and the Communist Party*, 28–29.

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Moscow, Andhra members of the CPI, acting from positions of strength in the Andhra Mahasabha, built on the party's activities among peasant tenants in the Telangana region to take advantage of a rebellion there. The rebellion began from conflicts between tribal and peasant cultivators and landowners supported by the administration of the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Telangana rebellion grew in scale from its origins in Nalgonda country in January 1946, involved both women and men, and marginal as well as more substantial cultivators.²⁹ The CPI's involvement gave a sharp revolutionary angle to the party's public profile. This coincided with the party's role in strikes in other parts of India.

The INC worked to consolidate its position in the princely states, through the Praja Mandal initiatives and through reorganization of the states. The CPI took a stand in the complications of reorganization and found support. The party came to be pitted against the INC – especially in Telangana, where rebellion persisted after the nationalist government's military action in Hyderabad in early 1948, and in West Bengal, where fresh rural and urban agitations occurred, driven by shortages of essentials and high prices.

Revisions occurred in the CPI's ideological position toward Nehru's government. The Bombay radical B. T. Ranadive became general secretary in February–March 1948 at the Second Congress of the CPI at Calcutta. He argued for strikes in industrial areas, further radicalization of peasant action and proclamations that “this freedom is a lie.” The approach led to police and military action that targeted the CPI, and bans on the party in Telugu country and West Bengal.

Divisions within the party came to the fore over the alliances in Telangana, the Central Committee opposing the Andhra secretariat on the matter. At the same time, the formation of the INTUC (Indian National Trade Union Congress) in 1947 and new Congress peasant initiatives outside the AIKS gave the Congress instruments to undermine the CPI. “Fellow travelers” and their popular organizations added to the party's problems. B. T. Ranadive was replaced by the more moderate Rajeswara Rao and, in 1951, Ajoy Ghosh. Debates in the party were sharp and marked with references to “right” and “left” deviations (pro-Congress and pro-revolutionary respectively) – terms that marked party discussion thereafter.³⁰

29 Sundarayya, *The Telangana People's Struggle*; D. N. Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements in India 1920–1950* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986).

30 T. R. Sharma, *Communism in India: The Politics of Fragmentation* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1984), ch. 2.

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Changes in leadership and policy were effected through maneuvers in the Central Committee and the various provincial committees of the party (Andhra, Kerala, West Bengal and Bombay) and mobilization of opinion through the party press organs, *Communist* and *Crossroads*. Even the decision to fight the elections of 1952 was taken at this level. The party congress at Madurai in late 1953 faced a *fait accompli* at many levels. The party acquired a reputation for discipline, intolerance and conspiracy. The impression was circulated by the anti-Soviet Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and the Democratic Research Service, established in 1948 by the socialist-turned-conservative Minoos Masani, who received support from the home minister, Vallabhai Patel.

Changing policy paid dividends, albeit in a limited manner. The early popularity of Congress postindependence labor policy declined quickly. The latter had been epitomized by legislation of 1948, new tribunals and the triumph of unions therein. Firm action against AITUC strikes and arrests of CPI members undermined goodwill toward the Congress. This coincided with dissension in the Congress. This coalition of those disillusioned with the Congress led to increased support for the communists. In national elections of 1952, the CPI emerged as the single largest opposition party. In states formed from princely entities, the communists gained where there was dissension surrounding the Congress's Praja Mandal initiatives, as in Manipur, where communists focused on the disgruntled Irabot Singh, a pivotal figure in public life. The party emerged strongly in Tripura, where tribal claims and refugee rehabilitation were problems.³¹ Trade union activity spread to Mysore and Rajasthan.³²

The party remained well short of the Congress as a force at the national level in the 1952 and 1957 elections. Its vote share was less than that of the successors of the CSP – the Socialist Party and the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). In 1952, the CPI was authoritative in two provincial legislative assemblies – West Bengal and Madras – and in Andhra and Travancore-Cochin through other organizations. The Congress, though, formed all state governments. Communists had a thin showing in Bihar, Punjab and Bombay – previously reliable areas of support.

31 S. K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India* (Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 1999), 204–10.

32 R. Chatterjee, *Union Politics and the State: A Study of Indian Labour Politics* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1980).

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*The Communist Party of India: The Making
of a "Revisionist" Party*

The party leadership's decision to focus on electoral politics received support from the Third Congress at Madurai (December 1953–January 1954) and the Fourth Congress at Palghat (April 1956). Continuity prevailed in party structures. Older figures were brought back into active party life (both P. C. Joshi and B. T. Ranadive). This, though, did not resolve tensions that came of a disconnect between parliamentary concerns, established commitment to "revolution" and links with marginal peasants and trade unionists to whom constitutional politics meant little.

In terms of perspective, the slide into electoral politics came of a view, better shaped after 1954, that India was not ready for the construction of socialism; rather, it was argued, the country required to be oriented toward the construction of democracy and the building of a powerful anti-imperialist, anti-feudal coalition based on popular politics.³³ Electoral campaigns, parliamentary politics and organizational matters came to take up a large part of party activity. Central Committee meetings, intermittent party conferences and standard party congresses became further institutionalized.

Subtle changes took place. While overall critical of the Congress – which was presented by communists as the representative of the interests of large landownership and capitalist wealth – the CPI's position in the parliament wavered. In foreign policy, especially after the Korean, Hungarian and Suez crises, party representatives approved government policy. Deeply critical of the First Five-Year Plan (1951–56), the party was less negative about the Second and Third Five-Year Plans, where the extension of state enterprise was foreseen.³⁴ At other levels the CPI settled down to a piece-by-piece negotiation over official policy, often acknowledging the validity of government stands. This occurred over the reorganization of the states on the basis of language (1956), adding to the party's standing in the Vishal Andhra (Greater Andhra) and Aikya Kerala (United Kerala) movements³⁵ and other moments after 1945 when CPI spokespersons pressed for linguistically based states.

³³ See Kautsky, *Moscow and the Communist Party of India*, 17ff., for early ideas on these lines after 1947.

³⁴ Pranab Kumar Dalal, "The Communist Opposition in the First and Second Indian Parliaments," D.Phil. thesis (University of Burdwan, India, 1979), ch. 4.

³⁵ Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (New Delhi: Pan Macmillan, 2011), ch. 9; K. Sreedhara Menon, *Political History of Modern Kerala* (Kottayam: DC Books, 2010), ch. 5.

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This case-by-case strategy was applied to positions taken over untouchability offences (1955), the press (1954), marriage (1952) and dowry (1953), preventive detention and president's rule. CPI parliamentarians felt the government was inadequately distancing itself from exploitative forces; but they considered that policy was susceptible to pressure. Statements made by the Congress at its Avadi plenum in 1955 concerning "socialistic" goals – however far from communist usage of "socialism" – were regarded positively. The Palghat Congress was enthusiastic about the potential of parliamentary action, and members resolved to continue their commitment in this sphere. The consequence of the CPI's electoral focus was improvement in numbers in the second general elections of 1957, when, as the table at the end of the chapter indicates, vote share more than doubled. The party was able to form the government in Kerala.³⁶

In the course of the CPI's parliamentary participation in 1952–57, strong awareness of etiquette and procedures was established among CPI representatives – an important change for an underground party. A. K. Gopalan, H. N. Mukherjee, Renu Chakrabarti and Sadhan Gupta, in the Lok Sabha/Lower House, and K. Sundarayya in the Rajya Sabha/Upper House were among those affected. The awareness was consolidated in the third and fourth parliaments of 1957–62 and 1962–67. In the Central Committee and party press, a parliamentary focus evolved. The parliament was treated as a forum for interpellation and one in which to press for legislation, especially during budget presentations or debates on ministry appropriations. In state legislatures, similar initiatives were seen. Party journals and newspapers were used to critique legislation.

The Communist Party of India: Social Concerns

Initiatives outside electoral politics continued. Associative action as well as methods linked with demonstrations, assaults and bombs were a stock in trade. These were practices of a party organization that used a rigid communist lexicon; members cultivated an image of probity and austerity.³⁷

³⁶ Dalal, "The Communist Opposition," 227–93.

³⁷ For agitation activity, see Susanta Bhattacharya, "The CPI and Radicalization of Politics in West Bengal 1950–1962," D.Phil. thesis (University of Burdwan, India, 2012), ch. 2. For AITUC links, see P. R. N. Sinha, *Industrial Relations, Trade Unions and Labour Legislation* (New Delhi: Pearson International, 2006), chs. 4 and 5. For memoir literature on image-building, see Ritwika Biswas, *The Radical Face of Democratic Liberalism* (Kolkata: Calcutta University Press, 2011), 135–41.

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In the cultural sphere, communism was still avant-garde. The AIPWA and IPTA continued to be influential through cultural personalities such as Kaifi Azmi, Balraj Sahni and K. A. Abbas.³⁸ Romesh Thapar (associated with *Crossroads*) and, later, Nikhil Chakravarty (editor of *Mainstream*) became prominent social figures. In academic circles D. D. Kosambi, S. Nurul Hasan and Mohammad Habib exhibited Marxist leanings among historians, as did a number of political scientists and sociologists. From this kind of engagement, Marxist theoretical debate in India acquired an edge – adding to the quality of “left” political discourse, though not always party discourse.

Language politics was a focus. In the State of Bombay – which had not been reconstructed during the formation of linguistic states in 1956 – the CPI gained support from local intelligentsia and associations standing for a Marathi-language state and a Gujarati-language state to be carved out from old Bombay.³⁹

Otherwise, the party acted through mass organizations to achieve social goals. Among the working class, the CPI supported AITUC activities under the first two plans. Authority fluctuated: partly the result of neighborhood politics and recruitment networks;⁴⁰ partly the consequence of inroads by the Congress INTUC, the socialist HMS (Hind Mazdoor Sabha) and independent Marxist UTUC (United Trade Union Congress).⁴¹ The party’s Price Increase and Famine Resistance Committee was a force in West Bengal during demonstrations of popular outrage at times of food shortage, but the effects of action were temporary. Refugee activism in Bengal through the United Central Rehabilitation Committee was more lasting.⁴²

The CPI’s stand on land issues was crucial to support for the party. The party was critical of the Congress’s response to the J. C. Kumarappa Committee of 1948. The committee argued to end the variety of tenures prevalent under British rule and paramountcy with benefit to the cultivator. Normative legislation was established by Congress state administrations.

38 For a sense of the “set,” see Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, *I Am Not an Island: An Experiment in Autobiography* (New Delhi: ImprintOne, 2010).

39 Dalal, “The Communist Opposition,” 229–49.

40 E. A. Ramaswamy, *The Worker and His Union: A Study in South India* (Mumbai: Allied Publishing House, 1977).

41 See Chatterjee, *Union Politics*, 58–59, for the Rajasthan case.

42 Bhattacharyya, *Government as Practice*, 8–10; Prafulla Chakrabarty, *The Marginal Men: The Refugees and the Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal* (Kalyani: Lumiere Books, 1990).

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This envisaged rights to the cultivator, a ceiling on holdings and the abolition of other rights with due compensation. The legislation made exceptions, though, blunting its redistributive edge: Some laws were passed during 1947–54, when, for most of the time, the CPI-led AIKS, still the main umbrella body for peasant organizations, was banned in the states and no meetings were held. The AIKS, at Cannanore (1953), Moga (1954) and Dahanu (1955) congresses, addressed the limitations of legislation, especially in the case of marginal cultivators and agricultural labor.⁴³

The party consolidated a constituency among those discontented with Congress legislation. But achievement was not uniform. The AIKS failed to evolve after 1955 in different states. Conditions of agriculture and landholding changed with Green Revolution policies after 1960. These were designed to improve productivity of cultivation with US assistance focused on technology and new strains of seed.⁴⁴ This coincided with revisions in grain-procurement policies and the establishment of the Food Corporation of India and the Agricultural Prices Commission (1965). The variety of issues generated across the country weakened the authority of the AIKS, even if it provided the CPI different constituencies among agricultural laborers and new smallholders. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, peasant interests coalesced around the socialist parties. The CPI's approach to the land question changed to use of land reform legislation and state agencies.

The Communist Party of India: Soviet Links

The CPI was guided by Soviet interpretations in its own propaganda regarding socialist construction, as well as its analysis of flaws in capitalism, imperialism and other global trends. The Soviet party's representative was present in the congresses of the CPI and vice versa. Regular references to the Soviet Union were made at party congresses.

The party participated in Soviet-generated international institutions that promoted the communist agenda. The CPI was involved in the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation, the World Federation of Trade Unions, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the Women's International Democratic Federation and the World Peace Council. This led to the situation at the end of the 1960s where Romesh Chandra of the CPI headed the World

43 H. K. S. Surjeet, *The History of the Kisan Sabha* (Kolkata: National Book Agency, 1996), 92–113, for a partisan resume.

44 Francine Frankel, *India's Green Revolution: Economic Gains and Political Costs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 3–11 and 74–75.

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Peace Council.⁴⁵ As host and participant, the CPI played a role in CPSU policies to win “hearts and minds” on a global scale through these organizations in the late Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras.⁴⁶ Soviet and Chinese achievements indelibly marked the Indian communist’s imagination, despite 1956 revelations regarding Stalinist excesses.⁴⁷ The party worked with the Soviet establishment’s notions of the meaning of communism, with no attention paid to the larger discussions during the thaw in the USSR.

At the time of the Soviet meeting with Dange in 1947 and, when CPI leaders met Joseph Stalin in February 1951, the dependence of the CPI on the CPSU was on display. The pattern was epitomized by the structure and relationships of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform, 1947–56). But this did not foreclose debate. In the Stalinist establishment itself, risks were taken – as indicated by the case of the first Soviet ambassador to India, K. V. Novikov, who argued, to his cost, for a strong engagement with India.⁴⁸ The dispatch by the CPI of the vast range of papers concerning Telangana to Moscow told of such expectation. The Soviet embassy in Delhi was a point of dispatch for regular correspondence. Space for discussion, disagreement and negotiation with the Soviet establishment grew with time. This was also true elsewhere during the Khrushchev era.⁴⁹

In the case of India, the flexibility came from changing Soviet perspectives on roads to socialism. David Engerman indicates that, from 1954, doctrine enunciated in Moscow stressed that the road to socialism in former colonies could bypass capitalist ascendancy.⁵⁰ The ideas were “learned” by Moscow from colonial experiences and set as reference for communist parties. Civil war was not necessary for the advancement of socialism; support to constructive forces could lead to evolution of “state capitalism” in a postcolonial context. The distinction between communist and noncommunist was not

45 Fredrick C. Barghoorn, *Soviet Cultural Offensive* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), ch. 7; David Engerman, “Learning from the East: Soviet Experts and India in the Era of Competitive Coexistence,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, 2 (2013), 227–38.

46 Andreas Hilger’s introduction in Andreas Hilger (ed.), *Die Sowjetunion und die Dritte Welt. UdSSR, Staatssozialismus und Antikolonialismus im Kalten Krieg 1945–1991* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2009), 7–17.

47 Hiren Mukherjee, *The Stalin Legacy: Ivory Flawed but Ivory Still* (Kolkata: National Book Agency, 1994).

48 P. M. Shastitko and P. M. Charyeva, “Istoricheskii proryv v sovetsko-indiiskikh otmosheniakh. O vizite N. A. Bulganina i N. S. Khrushcheva v Indiiu v 1955,” in *V Indiiu dukha* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura RAN, 2008).

49 Ted Hopf, *Reconstructing the Cold War: The Early Years 1945–1958* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

50 Engerman, “Learning from the East.”

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rejected; but the road to socialism, it was suggested, could be achieved in the developing world through negotiation or parliamentary means. Accommodation came easily to communisms from the developing world that adapted to local requirements.

The Soviet approach had a double edge. It projected the desirability of accommodations with the Congress. Nehru's visit to Moscow (1954) and Nikita Khrushchev's and Nikolai Bulganin's visit to India (1955) were important here as was later Soviet assistance for Indian projects in steel production, heavy engineering and electricals, pharmaceuticals and oil refining.⁵¹ The Nehru state's commitment to "state capitalism" was on show in these ventures. But the Congress regularly refused to play to the Soviet lead. In 1960, cooperation between Nehru's government and the USA over agricultural innovation was initiated. Observers noted attempts to develop links between the Congress trade union organization (INTUC) and US unions.⁵² The Congress developed its own youth movement associated with the anti-Soviet WAY (World Association of Youth).⁵³ Soviet leaders remained convinced, though, that the Congress was not a counterrevolutionary force and might be a contributor to socialist construction.

The CPI's perspectives anticipated the international parties' conference in Moscow in November 1957, where transition to communism in conditions of "peaceful coexistence" was declared possible. The perspective was given concrete shape at the extraordinary congress at Amritsar (1958). This declared the importance of the simultaneous development of electoral profiles and a mass party base to achieve this. The new constitution passed at Amritsar reshaped the party's structures further along the model of the Soviet party.

Communism in India 1957–1968: Toward the Development of Multiple Communisms

Disagreements in the CPI, Sino-Soviet Tensions and the Formation of the CPI(M)

The constitution represented a compromise between two forces in the party: a side willing to compromise with the Congress and a side skeptical of such

51 Hari Vasudevan, *Shadows of Substance: India-Russia Trade and Military Technical Cooperation Since 1991* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), ch. 1.

52 David S. Burgess, *Fighting for Social Justice: The Life Story of David Burgess* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 111–13.

53 Joel Kotek, *La Jeune Garde. La jeunesse entre KGB et CIA (1917–1989)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998), touches on the complications of the international youth movements.

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action, which looked to mass initiatives.⁵⁴ Both were involved in party policy in Kerala, where the CPI came to power in 1957. Here, from the start, the communists gave protection to the small cultivator, passing an ordinance that was a stay of eviction proceedings. Land legislation was prepared to redistribute property. The party also undertook legislation on education, and involved itself in appointments in the police and civil service. Large-scale violence erupted around these measures, with the party's general secretary Govindan Nair suggesting the formation of party militias to counter the formation of militias by other groups. However, compromises were established by the moderate figure of E. M. S. Namboodiripad.

From Delhi, the Congress dismissed the communist front in 1959. Radicals in the CPI concluded that peaceful initiatives had failed. In West Bengal, in 1959, the Congress's response to the leftist Food Movement against high prices and shortages contributed to confrontation. The Congress government used police to disperse demonstrators and arrested sympathizers.⁵⁵

Tensions began to surface vigorously with the assessment by the Chinese Communist Party of the Kerala experiment as misguided and its assertion that the USSR was guilty of major ideological mistakes.⁵⁶ By the Sixth Congress at Vijayawada (1961),⁵⁷ there was a marked lack of unity in the response from the CPI. Ignoring party injunctions, some members visited Beijing to ascertain Chinese views.⁵⁸ When the parliamentary debate over Tibet (1959) and Sino-Indian border disagreements took place, though, there was relative agreement. S. A. Dange, a supporter of pro-Congress policy, was firm that the government had to negotiate with China.⁵⁹ But debates exacerbated interparty disagreements regarding support for the Congress. Cracks were plastered over at the time of the death of Ajoy Ghosh

54 The most up-to-date narrative is in Biswas, *The Radical Face*, 142–242. This builds on Anjali Ghosh, *Peaceful Transition to Power: A Study of Marxist Political Strategies in West Bengal (1967–1977)* (Kolkata: Firma KLM, 1981), and Marcus Franda, *Political Development and Political Decay in Bengal* (Kolkata: Firma KLM, 1971).

55 Suranjan Das and P. K. Bandyopadhyay (eds.), *Food Movement of 1959: Documenting a Turning Point in the History of West Bengal* (Kolkata: K. P. Bagchi, 2004); and Sibaji Pratim Basu, *The Chronicle of a Forgotten Food Movement*, www.mcrg.ac.in/PP56.pdf.

56 Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 141ff.

57 Stanley Kochanek, "The Coalition Strategies and Tactics of Indian Communism," in Trond Gilberg (ed.), *Coalition Strategies of Marxist Parties* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), 218.

58 Ross Mullick, *Indian Communism: Opposition, Collaboration, and Institutionalization* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 36.

59 Dalal, "The Communist Opposition," 382–85.

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in January 1962: Dange, the major pro-Congress leader, became chairman while Namboodiripad was appointed general secretary.⁶⁰

The war with China, later in 1962, brought matters to a head. Some party members refused to accept the party's condemnation of "Chinese aggression." Under the Emergency Decree of that year, party members were arrested. However, many party organizations continued to operate. The crisis came at a meeting in 1964. CPI members who had lost control of organizations, or suffered from accommodations with the Congress in politics and policy, walked out when a resolution on China came up. Figures such as E. M. S. Namboodiripad, Pramod Dasgupta and the young Jyoti Basu were concerned. They held a congress at Calcutta in October and formed the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which fought the 1967 elections alone, seeking support in "people's democratic fronts."⁶¹

The close connections with the Soviet "commonwealth" and its international institutions were retained by the CPI. Intellectuals associated with the CPI(M) cultivated links with China and radicals elsewhere without formal institutionalization.

The Radicalism of the CPI(M)

The two branches of the party were disoriented by the split, but developed direction. The CPI survived the split as an electoral force. The party varied its links with the Congress and "left" parties thereafter. The CPI(M) presented itself as the radical edge of communism. Successive party congresses at Kochi (1968) and Madurai (1972) emphasized the "revisionist" nature of the CPI. Challenges were mounted against the AIKS, leading to the formation of the AIKS (Ashoka Road) and other local organizations. Approaches to the workers' movement were piecemeal, leading to formation of the CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Unions) in 1970.⁶² The SFI (Students' Federation of India) was the party's student organization.

The party sought to realize its aims through the control of government via coalition politics. An opportunity came through alliances on the eve of the 1967 elections. The outcome was the CPI(M)'s participation in the United Front governments of 1967–68 and 1969–70 in West Bengal and in 1967 in Kerala. Assertion of democratic rights was the watchword in both administrations, along with instructions to the police to remain neutral in cases of

60 Bhattacharya, *The CPI and Radicalization of Politics in West Bengal*, 294–98.

61 Sharma, *Communism in India*, ch. 5. 62 See citucentre.org.

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land grabbing and politically sponsored affrays and *gherao* (a strategy focused on isolation of an individual physically without violence). All parties in the front participated in these agitations.

The CPI(M) Splits: Formation of the CPI(ML)

The situation was unstable. The CPI(M) consisted of those alienated from the CPI leadership by the priority they gave to the Congress. But, equally, generations and cliques confronted each other. In West Bengal Charu Mazumdar led young members critical of the CPI(M) for faltering steps to advanced land reform even in the aftermath of the split in the party. They rejected CPI involvement in the United Fronts. Critics who took this line came together in the All India Conference of Maoist leaders in Calcutta in 1967, after confrontations between local activists of the CPI(M) and police in Naxalbari in the north of the State of West Bengal. The conference was followed by the formation of the Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries in Calcutta in 1968.⁶³ The new “group” within the party met with sympathy in a number of states: Andhra Pradesh (Srikakulam), Orissa (Koraput), Lakhimpur (Uttar Pradesh) and a number of places in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Punjab.

The Chinese Communist Party celebrated the formation of the “Naxalite” group (named after the Naxalbari confrontations). According to Rabindra Ray, the situation also allowed for fresh formulations of ideology – some of it coming from “new left” perspectives. The situation coincided, though, with the inability of the Chinese Communist Party, during the Cultural Revolution, to build an international presence of substance.⁶⁴ Contributions to the Naxalite movement were restricted to limited training and distribution of literature.⁶⁵

CPI(M) leaders admitted that the Indian ruling class might have been susceptible to neocolonialism; but they refused, at the party’s Madurai Congress, to accept the legitimacy of the radicals. The latter established bases in the countryside, before initiating a wave of guerrilla strikes in urban and rural areas during 1969–71. In Calcutta, the new grouping announced the formation of the Communist Party of India

⁶³ Franda, *Political Development and Political Decay in Bengal*, ch. 6.

⁶⁴ Ingrid d’Hooghe, “Public Diplomacy in the People’s Republic of China,” in Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 88–105.

⁶⁵ Sreemati Chakrabarti, *China and the Naxalites* (New Delhi: Radiant, 1990).

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(Marxist-Leninist) at a congress in May 1970.⁶⁶ The following three years showed that this unity was more apparent than real, with various groups forming an independent presence (e.g. the Nagi Reddy group in Andhra) after the suppression of the urban violence in 1971.⁶⁷ Maoism in India developed as a much divided force.

Communism in India After the Mid-Century

National Communisms, the Dispersal of International Perspective and the Ascendancy of Regional Organizations

Both the CPI(M) and the CPI(ML) evolved with Indian politics as their primary focus. The CPI(M) projected a concern with international developments but affirmed a distance from the two major communist parties abroad. The Sino-US entente and Soviet-US détente were noted, but generated no serious debate. The CPI maintained connections with the USSR's global initiatives, but it was drawn into local problems generated by its formal project of building "national democracy" in India.

Regional focus was important all around. In the CPI(M), in 1967, awareness of differences of depth in the party's local authority guided an official focus on West Bengal and Kerala state organizations.⁶⁸ In the CPI, a region-specific approach came with the formation of a "mini-front" in Kerala in 1969 with Congress support; this did not involve a similar strategy elsewhere. In the case of the CPI(ML), central organization was seldom strong.

Meanwhile, state assemblies increased in number after legislation in 1963 and 1973 for Tripura, Manipur and Mizoram. Tripura especially attracted CPI(M) attention.⁶⁹ Scope for coalition politics grew in all states between 1965 and 1971. Congress hegemony waned. In 1967, the number of the Congress's seats in the parliament fell sharply; non-Congress governments were formed in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Bihar. With representatives in several states (see table), communists participated in coalition politics.

The central leaderships of communist parties faced conundrums. In the CPI, the approach to the Congress under Indira Gandhi

66 Rabindra Ray, *The Naxalites and Their Ideology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 107.

67 *Ibid.*, ch. 5. 68 Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Documents, 197–203*.

69 Chakrabarty, *Communism in India*, ch. 1.

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(1965–77) varied. A socialist tenor to policy aroused support. But violent confrontations followed the Congress's electoral victory in 1972 and the party's use of state machinery against opponents thereafter. Decisions to associate with the Indian Emergency (1975–77) came with reservations, and only from a sense of a sharp global confrontation between "imperialist" and socialist forces. A decisive loss of membership and electoral support followed the Emergency.⁷⁰

In the CPI(M) and CPI(ML), the Congress's onslaught on the opposition before and during the Indian Emergency contributed to poor consolidation of central organization. Both parties rallied regional resources to survive, affirming a regional orientation in the parties.⁷¹ The CPI(ML) disintegrated, and its components retreated into local "insurgencies." The CPI(M) focused heavily on West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, within a framework of regional coalitions and national coordination. Here, after the Congress's defeat in the 1977–78 elections, legislation on land, education and tribal affairs evolved according to state priorities.⁷²

Endnote

The "federalized" state of communist parties was unsatisfactory to leaderships.⁷³ But Congress governments dominated national politics in 1980–88, and communist strength showed only in the regions. National coalitions of 1989–92 afforded an opportunity to communist leaderships to assert themselves; the brevity and turbulence of the occasion, though, and regional electoral compulsions, ensured that party behavior hardly altered.

Internationally, *perestroika* in the USSR and the Chinese reforms presented a chance to utilize ideology as a means for authority in parties. However, while innovative in strategy, Indian communisms adhered to established references in an almost ritual fashion. Innovation in discourse posed problems. Invariably, obsolescence at this level, along with disaggregation and regional focus, came to be defining features of Indian communism by the end of the century.

70 David Lockwood, *The Communist Party of India and the Indian Emergency* (New Delhi: Sage, 2016).

71 Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Documents*, 243–73.

72 Bhattacharyya, *Government as Practice*.

73 Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Documents*, 339.

Communists in Indian National Election Results (Lower House or Lok Sabha)

Name	1952		1957		1962		1967	
	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share	Seats
INC	44.99	364	47.78	371	44.72	361	40.78	283
CPI (CPM)	3.29	16	8.92	27	9.94	29	5.11 (4.28)	23 (19)
Socialist Party / Samyukta Socialist Party (PSP)	10.59	12	(10.41)	(19)	2.69 (6.81)	6 (12)	4.92 (3.06)	23 (13)
RSP	0.44	3	0.26	0	0.39	2	-	-
FB(M)	0.91	1	0.55	2	0.72	2	0.43	2

Name	1971		1977		1981		1984	
	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share	Seats
INC	43.68	352	154	49.1	404			
CPI / CPM	4.73/5.12	23/25	7/22	2.71/5.87	6/22			
Socialist Party / Samyukta Socialist Party / PSP	2.13/1.04	5/2	2.82/4.29	2.49/6.24	10/37			
RSP	-	-	[41.32]	[9.39]	[41]	[6.89/5.97]	[10/3]	
FB(M)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

Note: CPI: Communist Party of India; CPM or CPI(M): Communist Party of India (Marxist); FB(M): Forward Block (Marxist Group); INC: Indian National Congress; PSP: Praja Socialist Party; RSP: Revolutionary Socialist Party.

Election Performance of the Communist Party of India (CPI) in Principal Areas of Support Among Indian States (Party Seats/Total Seats, CPM/ Front Parties Figures in Brackets)

	1951	1955	1957	1962	1967
West Bengal	28/238		46/252	50/252	16/280 (CPM 43)
Travancore-Cochin / Kerala	-		60/126	29/126 (1960)	19/133 (CPM 52)
Hyderabad/Andhra Pradesh	[PDF 42/175]	15/196	[PDF 22/105]	51/300	11/287 (CPM 9)
Madras/Tamil Nadu	62/292		4/205	2/206	2/234 (CPM 11)
Tripura	-		-	-	1/30 (CPM 2)
PEPSU/Punjab	4/126		6/154	9/154	5/104 (CPM 3)
Bihar	0/330		7/318	12/318	24/318 (CPM 4)
Orissa	7/140		9/140	4/140 (1961)	7/140 (CPM 1)
Bombay	1/315		13/396	6/264	10/270 (CPM 1)
Assam	1/82		4/108	0/105	7/126 (CPM 0)

	1969	1971	1972	1974	1977	1978	1980	1982	1985
West Bengal	30/258 (CPM 80)	13/258 (CPM 113)	35/280 (CPM 14)		2/294 (CPM 178)			7/294 (CPM 174)	
Kerala		16/133 (CPM 29)			23/140 (CPM 17)		17/140 (CPM 35)	13/140 (CPM 26)	
Andhra Pradesh			7/287 (CPM 1)			6/294 (CPM 8)		(1983) 4/294 (CPM 5)	11/294 (CPM 11)
Tripura			1/60 (CPM 16)		0/60 (CPM 51)			(1983) 0/60 (CPM 37)	
Madras/Tamil Nadu		8/234			5/234 (CPM 12)		9/234 (CPM, 11)		(1984) 2/234 (CPM 5)
Punjab	4/102 (CPM 2)		10/104 (CPM 1)		7/117 (CPM 8)		9/117 (CPM 5)		1/117

Bihar	25/294 (CPM 3)	35/301	21/324 (CPM 4)	23/324 (CPM 6)	12/354 (CPM 1)
Orissa	4/140 (CPM 2)	7/146 (CP- M 3)	1/147 (CPM 1)	9/117 (CPM 5)	1/147
Bombay / Maharashtra		2/270 (CPM 1)	1/288 (CPM 9)	2/288 (CPM 2)	2/288 (CPM 2)
Assam		3/114	5/126 (CPM II)		(1983) 1/109 (CPM 2)

Source: Election Commission of India, eci.nic.in/eci_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx

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