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### **The Left in India's Freedom Movement and in Free India**

The author of this paper has been an active participant in the left movement since the early 1930s. His personal knowledge of the movement is naturally confined to the progress registered during the last half-century. The left movement, however, dates back to the early years of the present century, or almost three decades earlier than the author's entry into it.

#### THE LAL-BAL-PAL LEADERSHIP

The emergence of the left movement in India coincided with radical trends in the anti-imperialist movements in several other colonial, semi-colonial and dependent countries, particularly in Asia. The defeat of Czarist Russia at the hands of a newly emerging Asian imperialist power (Japan) and the first Russian Revolution (1905) inspired radical forces throughout Asia. Lenin, in his writings, noted this new trend in the oppressed countries, which, he pointed out, could become an integral part of the revolutionary movement developing in the capitalist countries. Demarcating himself from the right-wing Social Democrats of the second International who took a negative stand on the freedom struggles of the oppressed peoples, he did his best to educate the revolutionaries in the international movement on the importance of fraternal cooperation between the two forces — the working class in capitalist countries fighting for socialism and the peoples of the oppressed countries trying to throw off the colonial yoke.

On India in particular, Lenin made a positive assessment of the emerging left in the freedom movement headed by Lokmanya Tilak, who made the historic declaration, 'Swaraj is my birth right; and I will have it'. The barbarous sentence was given by a British court to the Lokmanya, following which there was a general protest strike of the Bombay working class, was noted by Lenin as a significant pointer to the emergence of a national revolutionary trend in India.

Tilak and his distinguished colleagues Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal — known as the Lal-Pal-Bal trio — introduced what came to be known as the politics of militancy', as opposed to that of 'mendicancy'. Swaraj, Swadeshi and national education constituted the programme for mobilising the common people. A new generation of young men and women dedicated themselves to the

cause of Swaraj, prepared to make the supreme sacrifice at the altar of national freedom. They followed the revolutionary movement throughout the world, looking upon the heroes of the revolutionary struggle in any other country as models for their own action. The international working class and socialist movements and the teachings of Marx began to exert their influence on the thinking of Indian youth. A biography of Karl Marx appeared more or less simultaneously in Hindi and Malayalam. Tilak and his colleagues immense had an immense influence on the young men and women who dedicated themselves to the cause of the revolutionary struggle for Indian freedom.

It was at this stage that revolutionary groups appeared in Bengal, Punjab and to a certain extent in other provinces as well groups that were denounced as 'terrorists' by the British rulers, using the bomb and the revolver to do away with the hated individuals belonging to the British bureaucracy and their agents among the Indians. Similar groups were formed in foreign countries where Indians were living and working.

#### REVOLUTIONARY GROUPS ABROAD

These groups of revolutionaries working abroad started planning the liberation of India with assistance from powers hostile to the British. A Ghadar Party was formed in the US in 1913 with a view to unifying the scattered Indian revolutionary and patriotic organisations which had earlier emerged in the U.S. and Canada. Similar groups were formed in some of the European countries and tried to get financial and military aid from Britain's main imperialist rival, Germany, for an anti-British armed uprising in India.

The essence of leftism, or what may be called 'the politics of militancy, thus consisted of the use of force against individual representatives of the British power by those who are working inside the country and the assistance of Britain's imperialist rivals for liberating India from outside. British imperialism, however, was able to suppress the revolutionary groups which had been operating in India before and during the war. The few efforts made abroad to liberate India with material and military assistance from foreign powers also ended in a fiasco.

Two developments of post-war years, however, gave new life to the left and helped it to assume new forms. The first was internal. Resentment was growing among all sections of the Indian people against the policies and actions of the British Government to which concrete expression was given by the Congress and the Muslim League, which gradually developed into a new mass upsurge- the non-co-operation or the Khilafat movement. Imitated by Mahatma Gandhi with full co-operation from the Muslim leaders who carried a

special grievance on account of the treatment meted out by the imperialists to the Turkish Khalifa, the movement enveloped the whole country. Gandhi's programme of triple boycott, his slogan of 'Swaraj in one year', united campaigns undertaken by the Congress and the Muslim leaders throughout the country—all these brought into action hundreds of thousands of young men and women, the first countrywide mass urge witnessed in India.

### IMPACT OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Parallel to this internal development was the international development — the October Revolution in Russia. Indian revolutionaries living and working abroad began to converge on Moscow, while several people working in India for the revolutionary cause left the country. Braving the trekking over the Himalayas, the latter landed first in Afghanistan, then in the Asian Republics of Russia. Revolutionary groups operating for Kabul in Afghanistan, Tashkent in one of the Eastern Republics of the Soviet Union and in Moscow itself came into contact with the Soviet Communist Party, many of them having personal interviews with Lenin himself. Moved by the inspiring slogan of self-determination for oppressed nationalities given by the Soviet Government and the Russian Communist Party, they took the side of the Soviets, many of them participating personally in defence of the Soviet State against the attacks of the reactionaries in the Civil War. Their very stay abroad and the stories of their activities influenced large numbers of revolutionaries in India itself.

A new dimension was thus given to the perspectives and plans of the earlier revolutionaries. Those who, during the years preceding the war and during the war itself, were trying to get material and military assistance from Britain's imperialist rivals started thinking of getting the same assistance from Soviet Russia. Many of them committed themselves to the idea of communism, though their understanding of communism was hazy and distorted. The Russian Communist Party, its leader Lenin and the Communist International paid great attention to the revolutionary emigres staying on the soil of their country not only from India but from other Asian countries, particularly China, Korea, Iran and Turkey. Groups and organisations of Communists hailing from these oppressed Asian countries were formed, and the specific problems they raised came under discussion at the First and Second Congresses of the Communist International. Lenin himself took a personal interest and gave a lot of his time to understand the problems raised by the comrades coming from these countries.

### PATIENT WORK BY LENIN

Finding that many of these emigre comrades had a poor understanding of the theory and were equally lacking in the understanding of the concrete conditions of the struggle in their respective countries, Lenin worked patiently to combat their simplistic ideas of communism, their efforts to transplant the Bolshevism of Soviet Russia to countries which had very little resemblance to pre-revolutionary Russia. Cautioning against painting the national revolutionaries in Communist colours, Lenin disapproved of the idea of the hasty formation of the Communist Party in these countries. He, however, emphasised the need for convinced communists in the countries to organise themselves as a party and try to apply the general principles of Marxism to the concrete conditions of their respective countries. While advising them to form themselves into an independent revolutionary party, he called for a united front between the national revolutionaries and communists. He had to combat the sectarian ideas put by India's M.N. Roy and his counterparts in China, Korea, Turkey and Iran. This helped the consolidation of the small groups of Indian communists in the Soviet Union and in the formation of communist groups in India itself.

The communist groups living in the Soviet Union, being small in number and away from the country, could not exert any direct influence on the course of development in India itself. Their activities abroad and the links that were established between them and the scattered groups of communists in India, however, were important for the future development of the left movement in the country.

#### THE FIRST CPI IN TASHKENT

Among the groups abroad, special mention should be made of a group in Berlin and another in the Soviet cities of Tashkent and Moscow. The latter formally came into being on October 17, 1920, and was granted consultative status at the Third Congress of the Communist International. This, according to one of the founder members of the Communist Party of India, the late Muzaffar Ahmed, should be considered as the foundation date of the Party.

A Soviet scholar who has made an intensive study of all the materials available in the CPSU Archives tends to agree and says that the Indian Communists who organised themselves in Tashkent and Moscow was the first Communist group that tried to create a Communist Party in exile and by that act alone, had laid the ground for the Indian Communist movement.'

The author goes on to point out that many of the Communist groups at home (which in the end succeeded in convening the first open conference of the Indian Communists on Indian soil) were

created with full-scale participation or sometimes even upon the initiative of individual members of the Tashkent group, who had been expressly sent to India to that end.' Most of the members of the Tashkent group, the author goes on 'had been sent to India to prepare the Communist Party and to Western Europe to establish a foreign Centre which is known to have subsequently played an essential role in launching the Communist movement in India.'

## TWO STAGES

It is thus clear that the formation of the Communist Party of India took place in two stages — first on October 17, 1920, at Tashkent, which had been given representation with consultative status in the Communist. M. N. Roy, who was active in the formation of the Tashkent Group helped the dissemination of communist ideas in India through his letters, articles messages, etc., addressed to left-inclined Congressmen and budding Communists. The work done by Roy and his organisation made a big contribution to the second stage of the formation of the CPI, namely, the Kanpur Conference of 1925, where the Communist Party of India was formally constituted on Indian soil.

It was because of these two stages in the development of the Indian Communist movement that the two conflicting dates were given by the Secretariat of the CPI and Muzafar Ahmed, respectively. The former gave 1925 as the date because the Party formed earlier in Tashkent and consultative status at the Third Congress of the Comintern, was not formed on Indian soil; those who took the decision were prepared to consider only what took place on Indian soil as the foundation of the CPI.

It is, however, significant that even those who took the decision in favour of 1925 as the foundation of the CPI do not consider it as the First Congress of the Party. Nearly 16 years had to elapse between what, according to them, was the foundation of the Party and its first Congress. The reason is that, after the 1925 Conference where the Party was said to have been born, its activities had to face severe repression at the hands of the British rulers.

## THE MEERUT CASE AND AFTER

The notorious Meerut Conspiracy Case involving all the known Communist leaders of the time disintegrated what had been formed at Kanpur. Furthermore, serious differences arose among those who remained in the jail of the tactics to be pursued in the rapidly changing situation in India and abroad. For four full years since the Meerut arrests of 1929, the Party virtually ceased to exist as a Party, the small groups of Communists in some parts of the country

acting as they thought fit. While the tenacity with which these groups operated testified to the influence started by communism over large sections of anti-imperialists, the pronouncements and practices of these groups cannot be termed as the work of the Communist Party of India.

These difficulties could be overcome partly towards the end of 1933 when most of the Meerut case comrades came out of jail, but that could not overcome the difficulties caused by ideological confusion. These were remembered only when the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (1935) gave the line of Party against fascism and as an integral part thereof, the anti-imperialist front in countries like India. This helped in politically and organisationally unifying the various Communist groups which had, for several years, been ideologically divided. It was from that time onwards that a stable and continuing central leadership, the Central Committee and the Polit Bureau — came into existence.

### SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

Significant developments had, in the meanwhile, taken place in the freedom movement. Under the influence of the Communist Party of India formed in Tashkent, national revolutionaries in India were gradually imbibing the idea of mass revolutionary action. Militant organisations of the working class, the peasants and other toiling people were formed, drawing tens of thousands of members.

At the ideological level, militant mass action was replacing individual action as the antidote to Gandhian non-violence. Vague ideas of Swaraj were being given a more concrete definition, such as complete independence or severance of all connections with Britain, independence being extended from political to economic independence and so on. Extensive political campaigns were being carried on in favour of the unity of workers and peasants, which is the basis for the struggle for complete independence. Larger and larger sections of freedom fighters were being drawn into the movement embracing all these ideas of proletarian-semi-proletarian militancy. A broad revolutionary party (the Workers' and Peasants' Party) came to be formed in which the activists of the Communist Party of India were working energetically.

The influence of all these was felt in the historic debate inside the Congress itself on Dominion Status versus Complete Independence. The adoption of the latter as the objective of India's freedom movement and the decision to launch a countrywide mass struggle to attain the objective took place at a session of the Indian National Congress (Lahore, 1929), presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru, who in his presidential address declared himself to be a Socialist. Fifteen months after this came the Karachi Congress,

which adopted the resolution on the fundamental rights of the people, which indicated a turn by the Congress to the left. The ideas on the basis of which the Communist Party of India was formed, first in Tashkent and then in Kanpur, thus had gripped the minds of lakhs of people and, in a way, became the official programme of the major organisation of the freedom movement.

#### MILITANT MASS ACTION IN PLACE OF INDIVIDUAL TERRORISM

A significant consequence of these developments was that the cult of the bomb, which had been the ideological basis of the militant groups for almost three decades, ceased to operate. In its place came the programme for militant mass organisations and struggles. It influenced the lakhs of men and women who actively participated in the mass direct actions organised under the Congress leadership in 1930–1932. Spectacular gains made by the Socialist Soviet Union in rapidly developing its economy at the very time when the capitalist world (of which India was a part) was going through an unprecedented crisis in history, exerted their influence on the people. These developments abroad, as well as in India, brought about a basic change in the attitude of left-wing Congressmen. The Congress Socialist Party (CSP) formed in 1933–34 was a manifestation of this change in the thinking and outlook of Congressmen. Coinciding as this did with the overcoming of the organisational political and ideological difficulties facing the Communist Party of India, the mid-1930s witnessed the co-existence of three distinct left trends

Firstly, an undefined group of Congressmen who talked vaguely of socialism, had unconcealed sympathy for the Soviet Union, was anti-fascist and stood for the defence of the rights and freedom of the toiling people. Nehru was the best-known leader of this group. Secondly, the newly formed organisation of Congress Socialists whose members had the obligatory duty to work in the Congress but who formed themselves into a distinct party of their own. Thirdly, the reorganised Communist Party of India with its Central Committee and Polit Bureau having close links and co-operating with the other two groups.

The emergence of these three groups and their cooperation made the latter half of the 1930s remarkable for a new anti-imperialist upsurge that swept the country. The forging of the unity of the trade union movement, the formation of the All-India Kisan Sabha, the emergence of the All-India Students' Federation, the rise of a progressive literary and cultural movement and united activities of the left, in general, took the anti-imperialist movement several

steps ahead.

### QUALITATIVELY CHANGED LEFT

Although separated by nearly three decades, the new united front of left forces in the 1930s was qualitatively different from the left forces, which emerged under the Lal-Bal-Pal leadership.

The emergence of the latter was indicative of the fact that the bourgeoisie had become mature enough to operate as an independent force in political life. The triple slogan of Swaraj, Swadeshi and national education gave clear expression to the aspirations of the new class, the bourgeoisie. The large mass of petty-bourgeoisie who constituted the core of the revolutionaries with their cult of the bomb were the younger camp-followers of the bourgeoisie.

The years of the war and the post-war mass upsurge further matured the bourgeoisie in whose ranks divisions started making their appearance, a section allying itself with the rapidly growing working-class movement within the country and the socialist and national revolutionary forces abroad. Together with the further extension and consolidation of the left forces in terms of the new ideology of the working class, this planted the ideas of socialism and communism within the freedom movement. All this at a time when imperialism was doing its utmost to prevent the consolidation of the growing forces of socialism and communism in a well-organised Communist Party of India. The growth of a new trend within the Congress in the early 30s, however, could not be prevented: the Congress Socialist Party was born. In the meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, the Communist groups themselves could take advantage of the developing international and national situation to internal problems and develop a well-organised Party with its their overcome their leadership. The relationship between the three forces — the Communists, the Congress Socialists and left Congressmen — indicated the approach of the distinct class forces, namely the working class, the radical petty-bourgeois and the left bourgeoisie. Within the latter itself, it was subsequently revealed, there was a division between those who were anti-imperialist and at the same time anti-fascist and those who did not hesitate to take the help of the fascist forces in the struggle against imperialism.

### CLASH OF IDEAS WITHIN THE LEFT

The clash of ideas among these three forces was revealed in the internal crisis of the Congress that emerged in the furious conflict on the Congress President's election in 1939. All the three left



forces were united in supporting Subhas Chandra Bose, as opposed to the Congress right supporting Pattabhi Sitaramayya. However, as soon the Congress right took up this challenge and created a crisis which ended in the ouster of Subhas Bose from the Congress, differences were revealed between the Nehru and the Bose supporters among the left Congressmen, between both of them and the Congress Socialists, as well as between the latter and the Communists. All this came to a halt when the Second World War broke out and on the question of the attitude to the war.

The conflict between the anti-Communist leadership of the CSP and the CPI had, in fact, come to the surface even before the outbreak of the war. The anti-Communist group in the CSP headed by Masani, Mehta and Lohia had already launched their attack on the Soviet Union internationally (on the question of the trial of the Generals) and ran a concerted anti-Communist witch-hunting campaign within the Party. The news of the Soviet Union signing a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany on the eve of the outbreak of the war culminated in a hysterically anti-Soviet and anti-Communist campaign undertaken by the Congress Socialist Party (Jaya Prakash, who had earlier kept away from the anti-Communist campaign, now joined it). The Communists within the CSP had, therefore, to leave the Party. The disintegration of the left was thus complete by the time the war broke out.

#### INDIAN POLITICS AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

The attitude adopted by the major political forces in the country to the war made a clear division among the main trends in the country. The right-wing Congress leadership adopted the line of using the war situation for hard bargaining with imperialism which was manifested in the symbolic individual satyagraha launched under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership by those chosen by him. This was opposed by the rival bourgeois leadership represented by Subhas Bose, who clandestinely went abroad, came into contact with the leaders of Nazi Germany and then landed himself in Japan — a repetition of the performance of the revolutionaries during the First World War.

As against both these sections of the bourgeois leadership arose a new leadership represented by the All-India Muslim League which, led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, adopted the Lahore Resolution in 1940 demanding complete independence — not for a united India but for two (Muslim and Hindu) 'nations' to be carved out of India

The Congress Socialists were critical of the Congress leadership but failed to give any militant leadership to the fighting people. The CPI, on the contrary, came out with what was called the 'proletarian path', a programme of organising and leading militant struggles of

the working people on the living problems of their life which were being made more and more unbearable, turning these struggles into a revolutionary upheaval.

## THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

With the opening of a new phase in the war — the attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union, followed by the Japanese attack on America, which obliged the imperialist powers headed by the U.K. and the U.S.A. to have an alliance with the Soviet Union, the situation underwent a complete change. The Congress leadership abandoned its earlier attitude of carrying on a symbolic individual satyagraha and prepared for an all-out offensive against imperialism. The preparation for this all-out offensive, however, was used to make hard bargains with imperialism (the Cripps Mission). But, once it was found that the British were not prepared to concede anything, the decision was taken to go into action.

The rival leadership of the bourgeoisie led by Subhas Bose had already reached Japan and used the help of that country to organise a march on India. Standing between these two sections of bourgeois leadership were the Congress Socialists who took hold of whatever was left of the Congress organisation after the arrests and organised new centres of resistance — a follow-up of the call given by Mahatma Gandhi for a 'short and swift' struggle with the slogan 'do or die'. The CSP thus played its role as the junior partner of the bourgeois leadership — carrying forward the 'short and swift' struggle, preparing the soil for a negotiated settlement with the British

The CPI came out in opposition to all this and called on the Government and the people to look upon the anti-fascist war as a people's war. The Muslim League, for its part, intensified the campaign for Pakistan and emerged as the second most powerful political force.

This was the first time that the Communist Party came out as an active political force opposed to all other political forces, including the Congress and the Muslim League, the Subhas Bose section of the bourgeois leadership as well as the CSP. Despite the mistakes committed to carrying out the policy of people's war (which were owned and copped by the Party in the Second Congress of 1948 and later), the Party had the credit of having brought before the people the intimate connection between India's struggle for freedom and the worldwide war against fascism in which the Socialist Soviet Union was playing the decisive part.

Subsequent developments in India and abroad proved the correctness of this broad understanding: it was the victory of the anti-fascist forces headed by the Soviet Union that paved the way

for the subsequent movement of freedom not only by India but a few other neighbouring countries immediately after the end of the war and, after a decade, of score other countries of Asia and Africa. Propagating the truth about the epoch-making significance of the anti-fascist war, no doubt, isolated the Party temporarily from the broad masses of anti-imperialist fighters however did not lead to any weakening of the Party's position among the people in those states and regions where it had already developed a significant political force. The three years that elapsed between the launching of the Quit India struggle by Congress and the ending of the war, in fact, saw an unprecedented growth of the Communist Party, an independent force having strong links with the working people.

The Party was, therefore, able to actively intervene when a near revolutionary mass upsurge arose after the end of the war. The countrywide strike wave, the militant demonstration for the release of INA prisoners, the glorious RIN mutiny, the historic Tebhaga struggle in Bengal, innumerable other peasant struggles all over the country, a new wave of the states peoples' struggle for democracy in their respective states — all these culminated in the two militant actions led by the Communist Party: Punnappra-Vayalar in Travancore and Telangana in Hyderabad

### THE FIASCO OF BOURGEOIS POLITICS

The right-wing leaders of the Congress who claimed to have headed the Quit India struggle had, in the meanwhile, resumed their politics of bargaining with the British imperialists. 'The short and swift struggle envisaged in the Quit India resolution was ruthlessly suppressed, and the mass of participants either felt frustrated or looked up to the INA led by Subhash Bose to march to India. The right-wing Congress leadership had, therefore, no alternative to having a negotiated settlement on terms that proved disastrous for the country. Having had to choose between a united but unfree India and a free but divided country, they opted for the latter, an option which was described by Mahatma Gandhi as the 'vivisection of my own body'. Gandhi, in fact, was the one man who felt sorry for the freedom won under his leadership — the one person who refused to join the celebrations of the dawn of freedom for the country. He was broken-hearted at the sight of millions of India's own sons indulging in the worst forms of manslaughter, loot, arson and rape. He spent the few weeks that preceded the dawn of freedom and the first few months after independence before he was shot in preaching peace and communal amity. The last few months of his life should, in fact, be characterised as tragic — showing Gandhi as a humane person. The bankruptcy of political leadership of the bourgeoisie, which he so shrewdly led, made his life a

tragedy.

This is not the place for an overall self-critical review of the policies and the practices of the Communist Party of India during the first and second stages of the war and the years that preceded and followed the attainment of independence. Suffice it to say that mistakes were undoubtedly committed and subsequently corrected, but, despite all mistakes, the Party emerged as an independent and growing political force, deeply rooted in the working masses in the country and the revolutionary movements abroad. The other forces that were active during the war — particularly before and after the launching of the Quit India struggle — started disintegrating in the years after the country attained freedom.

### PICTURE AFTER THE FIRST GENERAL ELECTION

The contrast between a growing Communist Party and the disintegrating CSP and the Bose followers on the left became completely clear in the first general elections (1952) under the new Republican Constitution of India. The CSP, which entered the electoral contest with the claim of being the strongest political party after the Congress and in a position to replace the latter in several states, met with the biggest fiasco in its history and immediately started disintegrating

The Congress, too, received the first big shock in its history after it became the ruling party in the country. The Communist Party, in contrast, came out as the biggest left force in the country and, together with the other left and opposition forces, came very near becoming the ruling party in the two neighbouring states of Travancore-Cochin and Madras and the major opposition in two other states (West Bengal and Hyderabad). At the Centre, too, it became the biggest opposition group in both Houses of Parliament. Maintaining this position in the Centre, the Party became the ruling party in Kerala in the second general elections, though, in the meanwhile, it suffered a big setback in the newly-formed Andhra Pradesh.

The disintegration of the former Congress Socialist Party after the 1952 general elections was rapid. Its tallest leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, left the Party to join the ranks of bhoodanis; so did several others. Many joined the Congress, while those who were left in the Party joined another bourgeois opposition party. The merger of the Socialist Party with the Praja Party to form the PSP, the split of the latter, the new Socks list Party (without the 'Praja') while the Praja Socialist Party contain the merger of the Socialist Party and the PSP again, etc., until in the end all of them joined in the Janata Party deserves a separate and details study. Suffice it to mention here that the entire course traversed by the Socialist Party

in the post-1952 election period and since then completely proves our contention that the Socialist Party in our country has been a thorough failure as any right-wing social democratic party anywhere in the world.

### FIASCO OF RIGHT-WING SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

One of the reasons why the CSP, which at one time (during the Quit India Movement) appeared to be the most energetic force in the left, rapidly disintegrated in the post-Independence years is its basic class and political outlook. Except for a few individual leaders like Jayaprakash — and that too, only for a short while in the beginning — the CSP has always been anti-Soviet internationally and anti-Communist internally. The circumstances in which the Quit India struggle came to be launched were extremely favourable for their anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism.

Once the war ended in the victory of the anti-fascist coalition headed by the Soviet Union, however, their ideological basis got knocked out. Their only hope in the first post-independence years was the credit they had earned in the Quit India Movement and the hope of using it to become the major left opposition to the Congress. The electoral debacle of 1952 proved this claim hollow. Even after that, of course, the Socialists tried to assume the role of a major left opposition party in the country as part of the Socialist International. With their opportunistic manoeuvres in the arena of parliamentary politics, the hollowness of their claim to be a major force was exposed.

The Communist Party, too, faced, after the 1952 elections, a serious situation. An organised group arose in the mid-50s, which challenged the Party line of trying to break the monopoly of power enjoyed by the Congress since the attainment of independence. Defeated in the beginning (at the 1956 Party Congress) when they advocated the openly class-collaborationist line, they bided their time and taking advantage of the India China dispute here and the growing split in the international Communist movement, they launched a tirade against those in the Party who stuck to the position of opposition to the Congress and succeeded, by stages, creating an artificial majority at the leadership levels in the Party with which was started the campaign of purging the Party of all 'pro-China' elements.

### THE SPLIT IN THE CPI: THE AFTERMATH

Not only did it lead to a clear split in the Party — the formation of the CPI(M) and the CPI — but also to the ganging up of the latter behind the Congress. Although forced, for some time in the 1967–69

period, to join the anti-Congress united front (in the process incidentally, they had no hesitation to become the coalition partner of the Jana Sangh and other reactionary parties in three state governments), they broke with this policy in 1969 and started collaborating with the Congress. This continued for a full decade, including the notorious two-year-long Emergency. The CPI leader formally headed the Kerala government in that period, but the real force was the Congress, whose policies had to be loyally carried out by the CPI Chief Minister and his government. Naturally, therefore, the CPI had to share the ignominy which befell the Congress in the 1977 elections that followed the lifting of the Emergency.

The CPI(M) had to face the most difficult period in the years that culminated in the promulgation and continuation of the Emergency. Not only was a part of the Communist Movement (the CPI) a partner of the Congress in the violent attacks on the CPI(M) and other left and militant forces in the country, but it had to face the boycott organised by the fraternal Communist and Workers' Parties with very few exceptions. Faced by the semi-fascist terror in West Bengal, the vicious police-goonda attacks in Kerala, the severe repression wherever the Party or its left allies stood with the fighting people, the Party had to defend its honour. In discharging its major responsibilities, the Party had the supreme confidence that other left forces, including the CPI who had for the time being left the camp of which they are and should be integral parts, they cannot but come back. The CPI(M), therefore, patiently worked. Its hopes in this regard were partly realised when (in 1978) the CPI made its first break with the Congress and opted for the left and democratic front in which the CPI(M) is the most active force.

#### FRUITFUL PERIOD

The last eight years (since the CPI adopted its new line at its Bhatinda Congress) have been fruitful. They have seen the coming together of the CPI(M) and the CPI; certain other left forces like the RSP and the Forward Bloc were already with the CPI(M). The joint work of all these left forces, together with some other opposition (particularly secular) parties, have yielded some positive results. The four all-India conferences of opposition parties held in 1983-84 led to agreements on many issues of burning national importance.

The left parties, including the CPI(M) and the CPI, played a positive role in developing broader unity of action. The authoritarian attacks launched by the Central Government and the ruling party on the autonomy of states were partly rebuffed when the Central Government was forced to stay its hands in Andhra Pradesh.

At still another level, left parties, together with some other democratic parties, organised a countrywide peace movement,

culminating in a Central Convention in Delhi, participated in by the main fi organizations of the working people — the trade unions, the Kisan Sabha. While this is a positive development which should hearten all the students, the youths, the women's organisations, etc.

While this is a positive development which should hearten all those who are eager to forge the unity of the left, developing into the still broader unity of left and secular opposition forces, it will be unwise to be blind to the obstacles in the way of the fructification of this idea. The reason is that, despite the broad area of agreements, there is a wide gulf college politically and politically separating the two Communist Parties and between 'them' and other left parties. The CPI(M) considers the CPI as having committed serious ideological-political mistakes of a right revision character which manifested itself within the united CPI before the 1964 split and between the two Communist Parties since then. The CPI, for its part, not only denies this allegation but counter-charges the CPI(M) with having pursued a dogmatic and left sectarian line at the dictates Chinese Communist Party. The difference between the two approaches is obvious that no serious activist of either Party can consider it possible to reforge their unity or revive the old United Party.

#### UNITED ACTION, NO MERGER

This, however, does not negate the big possibilities of united action in a wide field. It was in view of these two aspects of the situation that h two parties agreed some time back to set up an All-India Coordinate Committee. It is, however, regrettable that, instead of taking all dis questions to the All-India Coordination Committee and sorting them at that level, the CPI leaders insist on CPI(M) toeing the CPI line on several issues which, they know, the CPI(M) can never agree to do.

To take one instance, they want the CPI(M) to agree that it has never committed revisionist or right opportunist mistakes, and theirs is a Marxist-Leninist Party. Some of them go to the extent of demanding an outright merger of the two parties since 'all the differences between the two parties have been resolved '. Everyone who can see will know that this will not work, that what is reasonable and practical will be for the two parties to develop unity of action on issues on which they agree while deferring the question of mutual differences for any congenial future. Such an approach will facilitate broader unity of action between the two parties and by them with other left parties.

#### THE CENTRAL ISSUE: CLASS STRUGGLE

The central issue involved in the question of left unity today is the historic reality that the political vanguard of the Indian working class is pitted against parties and organisations, some of which are oriented towards the working class but carry with them a lumber-load of non-proletarian ideas and practices. Many other radical parties and organisations are not even formally committed to the ideologies and practices of the working class. The Communist Party — the united party before the split and the CPI(M) since then — has been trying its best to assert the proletarian positions as opposed to alien class positions which are represented and supported by other (petty-bourgeois, bourgeois and even feudal) forces. The continuing class struggle in the realm of ideas, policies and practices is therefore inherent in the situation.

This struggle, however, should be so conducted as to forge the broadest possible unity of anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, anti-monopoly and anti-authoritarian democratic forces. It is with this idea that the CPI(M) gives the perspective of a People's Democratic Front, which is necessarily led by the working class. The Left and Democratic Front, which the Party advances as an immediate perspective, may not be led by the working class, but the working class and its firmest allies—mass of peasantry play a positive role in the Left and Democratic Front. While trying to develop such a Left and Democratic Front based on a programme that is opposed to the programme of all bourgeois, landlord and petty-bourgeois parties, the CPI(M) strives to develop the broadest possible unity of action on the largest number of issues affecting the life of the people.

To sum up, this overall review of the left movement in the country, the Left and Democratic Front, which is in the process of formation now, is a continuation of but qualitatively different — in its class content and therefore its ideology or world outlook, its political programme, the forms of its militant struggle, mode of revolutionary organisation, etc. from the left that took shape exactly eight decades ago. While the latter was the path-finder of a new class — the bourgeoisie with its petty-bourgeois following — the present left movement symbolises a growing working class that is finding allies in the other anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, anti-monopoly democratic forces, the mass of peasantry above all.

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