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The Communist Party of India:
The Correct Zig

c/o American Express
Connaught Place
New Delhi, India
April 25, 1958

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The Communist Party of India held an "Extraordinary Session" in Amritsar, the Punjab, from April 6 to 13, and "extraordinary" is putting it mildly.

The Communists revamped their Constitution, abolishing that conspiratorial cliché, the Party "cell," and substituting the more respectable-sounding "branch." They also put an end to the "Politburo," which smacks of sinister High Command, and replaced it with an enlarged "Central Executive Committee," which sounds almost like the Kiwanis Club.

The "revolutionary changes," to use the Communists' own term, included a restatement of the very aim of the Party. Indian Communists will now strive for "full democracy and Socialism by peaceful means," specifically by "developing a powerful mass movement, by winning a majority in Parliament and by backing it with mass sanctions."

Although the Party defined itself as the "highest organisation" of the "working class," it blossomed forth, at Amritsar, in full multi-class sociability. The 474 Comrades who gathered from throughout India ---bearded Punjabi Sikhs, dark-skinned Madrassis, dhoti-clad Bengalis--- slept in proletarian humility in Golbagh park, held their meetings in ruling-class exclusiveness in the Badminton Club, and slipped away, many of them, in the late afternoons to the bourgeois Kwality Restaurant for ice cream.

For all the Communists' extraordinary changes, however, it is still a little early to march down to the nearest friendly neighborhood Party branch and apply for membership.

The Indian Communists have not fallen head over heels for "full democracy and socialism by peaceful means." They have, with help from Moscow, simply come to face these facts:

1. With the present strength of the State and the present patient, peaceful temper of the people, the Communist Party cannot come to power by violent means.

2. While enjoying democratic freedoms, they can continue to undermine India's fledgling democracy while posing to further it. Especially, by capitalizing on popular dissatisfaction with the present Congress Government, they may be able to come to power by using the democratic machinery.

This parliamentary approach is, of course, the "purest and most

vulgar opportunism," to quote Lenin when his rival Kautsky suggested the idea 40 years ago.

But it is also a rare and promising opportunity. For though the Indian State is vigilant against hard Communist violence, the ruling Congress Party is asleep to the threat of soft Communist non-violence.

And while the Congress is running into increasing popular discontent, it is the Communist Party, more than any other political group, that gains. For the discontented, the Communist Party is establishing itself as the No. 1 sympathizer and pleader, while offering the diagnosis and cure. Their attempt to come to power by peaceful means requires them to stay close to the nationalist, democratic, peaceful mood of the country. By taking on a vivid "Indian," "democratic" coloration, they expect to erase remembrance of their past violence and to blur recognition of their subservience to international Communism.

In the past, the Communist Party of India has taken, at the behest of Moscow, many a disadvantageous zig-zag, each described as the "correct line" even when it repudiated a line that was already "correct." But now the Indian Communists have taken a correct line indeed. If they remain on it, they have a very good chance for themselves.

India is the big prize for Communism. Lenin wrote fifty years ago that "the road to Paris lies through Peking and Calcutta," this when Calcutta was the capital of India. Peking is gone, New Delhi remains. There is a string of new goals: Jakarta, Rangoon, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and on.

India is also the big test for democracy. Here is the opportunity not only to assure for India a democratic way of life, but also to show to the rest of the newly free, underdeveloped, ambitious nations that democracy, like Communism, can also promote economic progress, but, unlike Communism, it permits something more: real national freedom, and the free expression of the human spirit.

India is the prize, and the test.

I visited Amritsar during the last five days of the Communist congress, with rather disappointing results. The sessions, I knew, would be private, but I hardly expected that the delegates' camp would be fenced off by barbed wire and patrolled night and day by husky Sikhs carrying quarter-staffs.

At first, the guards at the gate greeted me as the long-overdue "fraternal delegate from France" (who, being refused an Indian visa, never made it). But once identified as an American student, I was regarded by the minor functionaries and many delegates as something of a spy.

There was literally no telling, by the Communists, what went on in the secret meetings. From hand-out press conferences came only the faintest ideas: The draft Constitution, as released to the press just before the congress, emerged from four days of debate with an eyebrow-raising

addition to the notable Paragraph 14: namely that the Party, in the promised Communist India, "guarantees the widest possible extension of individual liberty, freedom of speech, press and association, including the right of political association to all, including those in opposition to the Government, so long as they abide by the Constitution of the country." (The addition is in my italics.)

The delegates spent a day and a half each on an Organisational Report and a Political Resolution, and passed a handful of other resolutions variously congratulating Kerala Communists on their "historic achievement" in coming to power in their State; viewing with grave concern the "anti-people" measures of the West Bengal Government "against" refugees from East Pakistan; hailing and endorsing the "Peace Manifesto" recently adopted by 64 Communist Parties forgathered in Moscow; and re-asserting their own "unshakable faith in the principles of Marxism-Leninism." On the final day of business, the delegates "elected" a 101-man National Council after being presented a 101-man slate of candidates by the convention Steering Committee.

All this came second-hand, and there was no information on debate ---the meetings were off-limits. Nevertheless I attended the evening "cultural shows" of Punjabi and Keralan songs and folk dances in an open-air theater, heard Prof. Hiren Mukerjee, a Communist Member of Parliament from Calcutta, address a listless audience in Temperance Hall, and took in the last-day procession through the streets of Amritsar, and the congress-closing mass meeting.

The procession, according to a staff poet of the Party weekly, New Age, was remarkable for

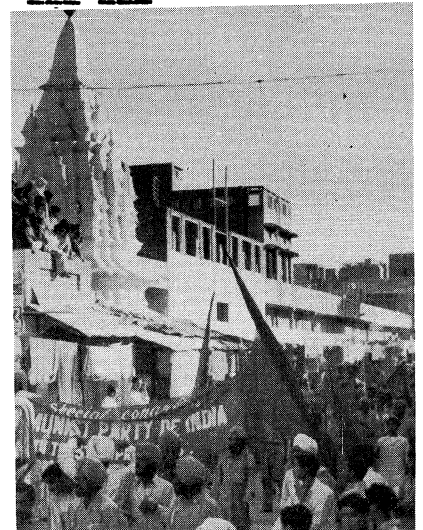
the excitement on the faces of the numberless who were on both sides of the roads, on the balconies and rooftops showering rose petals and scented water on the demonstrators and the grown-ups and children who were running up and down the line with buckets of ice water insisting that the marchers drink it.

I saw the procession myself, and if I didn't know New Age is a Communist paper, I would swear the reporter had drunk at least one bucket of that scented water.

The mass meeting in the park was attended by 60,000 Punjabis---a very good crowd---most of them villagers who had come to town for the triple holiday: Sunday, Baisakhi (a Sikh festival), and the anniversary of the Amritsar Massacre of Indians by British troops in Jallianwalabagh garden in 1919.

The audience, who numbered 200,000 in New Age, heard the Party greats explain "what we have decided here." It was a helpful rally for the several thousand Punjabi Communists, who turned out en masse. But the jargon was meaningful only to the initiated, and some of the peasants I talked to had no idea of what was being said.

For me there was much wasted time during the



The Procession

week, but I did sidle up to congress delegates at the evening shows and in Kwality Restaurant. Though they refused to talk about the congress, they did talk about Communism.

In all, at Amritsar, in New Delhi and elsewhere in India, I have talked to Communists from most of the States and at most of the Party levels: Ajoy Ghosh, the General Secretary, and P.C. Joshi, the long-time General Secretary once expelled for "Rightism" but since reinstated; general secretaries of State, city and district organizations; MP's and MLA's; Kerala's Chief Minister, E.M.S. Namboodiripad; labor-organizers, journalists, office clerks and even a self-styled "capitalist" who recently joined the Party.

The Communist Party of India---the "CPI"---counts 219,500 card-carrying members, having doubled its size in the past year by admitting fellow-travellers. Now bent on "building a mass party"---actually Communist jargon for "expanding the cadre"---the Party hopes to number 500,000 within another two years, and 750,000 by the time of the third general elections in 1962.

The CPI's present membership is far less than the 3.8 million of the Indian National Congress. But only 75,000 Congressmen are designated as "active," the rest forming a vast reserve, while the Communists are quite active indeed, but have very little reserve. The CPI does outnumber the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), its democratic socialist rival, which has 140,000 members. The fourth national party, the communalist Jana Sangh, has but a few ten thousands.

Unlike the Congress, the CPI organization does not blanket the nation, nor have such a reservoir of good will and funds. But it is strong in the rural South. More than half of its membership is in three Southern States: 60,000 in Kerala, 50,000 in Andhra Pradesh and 25,000 in Madras. In West Bengal, centering in Calcutta, there are 30,000 Communists, in the Maharashtra part of Bombay some 20,000, and in the Punjab as many as 10,000. Aside from a few industrial cities in other States, the Communists have scarcely any other areas of strength.

In terms of discipline and capacity for sacrifice, however, the hard corps of Communists forms the strongest political organization in India.

In fact, the CPI is doing well these days, and they know it. They have correctly recognized themselves as "a major force in the political life of India" following the second general elections a year ago. The Communists surprised everybody, including themselves, by winning 11% of the total vote, well below the 47% or so of the Congress, but double their own showing in the first elections five years earlier.

In Kerala, for the first time anyplace (except in Italy's tiny San Marino) Communists were elected to State office by the democratic process. Though the election results were more a defeat for discredited Congressmen rather than a victory for Communism, and though the margin of stability of the Communist Government is thin and thus liable to disappear in forthcoming by-elections, the Communists have been in power in Kerala for more than a year and have made a good impression nationally for diligence and reasonableness.

In New Delhi, in the Lok Sabha, the lower House of the People, the

Communists are the largest Opposition group and the most vocal. Their 30 MP's are far outnumbered by the Congress bloc of 373, but they in turn outnumber the Praja Socialist's 19 and the lesser groups, and they dominate the Opposition benches.

Aside from Kerala, in two other States, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, the Communists sit as the largest Opposition group. They are represented in the Assemblies of all the States.

This is but the "Parliamentary front." On the "labor front" the CPI controls the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), rival of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), which the Congress set up after AITUC, apolitical formerly, became Communist-dominated; and bitter rival of the PSP's Hind Mazdoor Sabha ("Indian Workers' Association" or HMS). Numerically, the Communists are again in second place---INTUC's 900,000 members to AITUC's 700,000 and HMS's 500,000---but they are better-managed than the HMS and free from the political restraints that bind the INTUC.

On the "organisation front" also are the Party journals, the English "news" weekly and the English "theoretical" monthly, both called New Age, the eight or nine Indian-language dailies, the many weeklies, crypto-Communist papers like the popular, scandalous Blitz. Included is the whole papers-and-pamphlets network of the People's Publishing House in New Delhi and the host of "New Century" and "Progressive" bookshops and sidewalk stacks in many cities which sell CPI publications and the cheap, attractive books and magazines that come in from Russia and China.

Party work also includes the kisan sabhas or peasant societies (which are rather weak) and agitation and propaganda among "agricultural labour, women, teachers, youth and students."

There is another "front," namely the "front" organizations run by Communists with the help of transparent fellow-travellers and opaque innocents. The big ones are the Indian Federation of Students, the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, the Indo-Chinese Friendship Association and the Indian People's Theater Association.

Indian Communists, content when they survey this whole array of forces, and this enhanced by secret auxiliaries, are downright optimistic when they look out on the Indian scene, where they see the Congress punctured by dissension and worn by deterioration, increasing public awareness of the Government's shortcomings and growing indifference to its accomplishments, and other political groups weak and divided among themselves.

With all this the Communists, from the most revolutionary Reds to the coffee-house Pinks, are confident that the future of India belongs to them. They are freely predicting that two more States---Bengal and Andhra---will fall to them in the next general election. And counting on the collapse or break-up of the Congress "after Nehru goes," they visualize India as going Communist in twenty years.

This is the optimistic Communist view, but there are non-Communists who reluctantly agree. Some political fence-sitters are beginning to show a Communist leaning, and one hears of an occasional businessman making, now for the first time, a better-be-safe contribution to the CPI.

Who is this newly formidable Indian Communist?

He is apt to need a haircut, but he wears a clean shirt. He is a protestant, a rebel, but he bears the marks of the old order. His "class origin," more likely than not, is "middle class," or what in old-fashioned Communist parlance was the "bourgeoisie."

Although the CPI defines itself as a "voluntary organisation of workers, peasants and of toiling people in general..." among the 474 delegates at Amritsar (according to the report of the Credentials Committee) those of the "working class, peasants and agricultural labour" were outnumbered by the "middle class, landlords and small traders," 315 to 159. And the best place to find a delegate on duty back home would not be the field or factory, but a Party office: 229 of them toil in the Party organization and another 105 in the Party's trade unions.



Young Communists

The Communist is a modern man. He is energetically for industrialization, renovation of agriculture and furthering of education. He is a foe of religious superstition, restrictions of family, caste and community, and the mentality of passivity.

In fact, many a young Indian has gone to Communism as a "radical youth," a lonely social revolutionary breaking out of the family, caste and religion whose traditional authority he no longer respects or obeys. It is among these--the sons (and daughters) of city-dwelling officials, clerks and professional men, and rural landlords, as well as the "educated unemployed" and low-paid young clerks---that the Communists gain their recruits.

To this young rebel, studying in college or clerking in an office, the new frustration of cutting competition and a future with "no scope" is no improvement over the old frustration he sought to escape. So he sits, in the cinema loafing, or in the tea shop talking, dissatisfied and impatient with the professor, the boss, society, New India, the world. To his vague sense and certain knowledge of things gone wrong, Communism offers an answer: a new secure social status, a "modern" world view, and a plan of disciplined activity. Taking up Communism, he becomes in his own mind an "understander" and a "changer," which is satisfying indeed.

The appeal of Communism in India does not lie simply in the psychological therapy and opportunity it provides. Other political alternatives to the CPI present themselves, for example, the Congress. But it is amazing how many Communist sons and daughters of Congress fathers there are, young people who find the Congress "reactionary," "too slow," or "not interested in young men with new ideas." The PSP, formerly attractive to many, now suffers from the loss of its leader, Jaya Prakash Narayan, and the lack of a distinctive ideology.

Many a young person has thus come to Communism as an idealist in search of a place to fulfill his humanistic sympathy. For some, the original

idealism remains. For others, the "idealism" of Communist dogma re-enforces it or, more likely, takes its place, and the grip of "historical necessity," of submission to "class morality," of surrender to the Party takes precedence.

To be a Communist, apparently, is to live in a special world of "we" and "they." The driving force, the compulsion to remain, is the utter confidence that "we" are right and good and "they" are wrong and evil. Such a zeal, such a steadfastness I have seen elsewhere in India only among holy men and priests.

Such a mentality leaves little room for disillusionment. A high-ranking young Communist leader told me, "When I first joined the Party, I thought that all Communists were saints. But you soon learn that even Communists have their human traits and behave just like politicians sometimes. But you accept that."

Now the Communists will become a "mass party," open for membership to "any Indian citizen, eighteen years of age or above who accepts the Programme and Constitution of the Party, agrees to work in one of the Party organisations, to pay regularly the Party Membership dues and to carry out decisions of the Party."

Ajoy Ghosh, the half-ponderous, half-sly General Secretary of the CPI, sat in his bare office in Delhi's Asaf Ali Road (three doors down from the Delhi Stock Exchange) and confessed the difficulty: "Compared to our influence, the Party is small. A mass Party is a necessity."

But the Party will not, in Mr. Ghosh's phrase, "become just a Left Congress," even though the Party structure and nomenclature has been changed to resemble that of the Congress and give a deceptive respectability.

Indeed, there are appropriate Constitutional provisions to keep democrats from getting in, such as recommendation for membership by veteran Comrades, six months' probation, and yearly membership renewal.

"Mass party" is in fact nothing more than an enlarged cadre, required by a program of increased activity. For all the hullabaloo about reorganization of the Party and "broadening the base," there has been no significant broadening of the body of decision-makers. The old Central Committee of 39 members has been expanded to a National Council of 101, the Politburo of 9 has been replaced by a Central Executive Committee of 25, true. But the Politburo has reappeared, as a matter of fact as distinguished from fiction, as a nine-man Secretariat, manned by the same top Party men.

Significantly enough, the one slogan most publicized at Amritsar was "Strengthen Discipline, Combat Individualism," and a sizeable portion of the new Constitution has to do with the duties of members, procedures for breaches of discipline, and the operation of "democratic centralism."

Because of the rapid increase in the size of the Party already, Mr. Ghosh was sorry to say, "There are many Comrades who are advanced in Party work, but are not theoretically developed. These will now be instructed in the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism."

And how about the late Josef Stalin? Mr. Ghosh replied that whatever else he was, Stalin made "some great contributions to Communism," and he got on to the main point: "We do not say 'Marx and Lenin and Stalin.' We hyphenate."

In educating the recruits, the old-hand Communists would do well not to go too deeply into Marxism and Leninism, for they are in danger of running into statements that they themselves repudiate daily by evasion and revision. What they had better do is to stick to the up-to-date Communism of Krushchev and Mao that uses Marx as the instigator, Lenin the organizer, and Stalin the exemplar of what Communists really practice and propagate: a subtle, savage totalitarianism.

Communism in India is , in a sense, the same as Communism anywhere has been, with all the tyranny that has been implied in it from the beginning, with all the variety of beguiling and terrorizing tactics used to further the cause.

In another sense, Communism in India is the up-to-date, latest model. Having begun with classical Left bomb-throwing Communism, conformed to the conciliatory Rightist demands of Russia's national interests, absorbed the Maoist lesson of working both Left and Right sides of the revolution, Indian Communism now stands as the hopeful key experiment in Communist expansion, "transition to Socialism by peaceful means," that is, the use of the parliamentary process.

This does not mean that the Indian Communists are the experimentors. They are the experimentees. On their own they have added little new so far to the theory and practice of Communism, except mistakes. That time may come. But for the present, the path of the Communist Party of India is the path marked out by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The pronouncements of the CPI at Amritsar bear a family resemblance to the declarations of the celebrated Twentieth Congress of the Russian super-colleagues:

Krushchev, addressing the Twentieth Soviet Congress in February 1956, said that "The winning of a stable parliamentary majority backed by a mass revolutionary movement of the proletariat and all the working people could create for the working class of a number of capitalist and former colonial countries the conditions needed to secure fundamental social changes."

The Communist Party of India, according to Paragraph 13 of the new Constitution it adopted at Amritsar, "considers that by developing a powerful mass movement, by winning a majority of Parliament and by backing it with mass sanctions, the working class and its allies can overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and ensure that Parliament becomes an instrument of people's will for effecting fundamental changes in the economic, social and State structure."

There are differences between the two paragraphs, but not big ones. The thinking of the CPI originates in Russia.

The history of the CPI originates in Russia too. After World War I, around 1921-22, the Comintern sent the young Indian agent M.N. Roy to the Central Asian border to organize and support a Communist movement in India,

with only scant results.* A few years later the Comintern, following the line of Empire, made the Communist Party of Great Britain the patron of the dozen-or-so Indian Communists.

By 1929 the Indian Communists were sufficiently active to bring the Government of India pouncing down on them. Thirty-one Communist leaders were arrested for designing to lead revolution. The lengthy trial of what became known as the Meerut Conspiracy Case revealed their certain loyalty to the Comintern, but it also provided them with a great deal of public sympathy as persecuted patriots.

Nonetheless, the Communists were in the awkward position of having to face two ways. As nationalists they antagonized the British "imperialists," but as Communists they had to oppose the nationalist movement under Gandhi as "reactionary" or "reformist and bourgeois." While the Congress forged ahead, gathering momentum, the Communists, the self-annointed revolutionaries, were left behind the revolution. What's more, there was new harassment from the British rulers: established in 1933 as a national party, the Communists were promptly outlawed by the Government.

But in 1934 the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), Left but not Communist, was founded within the Congress, providing the Communists with an opportunity they did not miss. Following the Popular Front line of the Comintern after 1935, the Communists made the required "union with leftist elements" and joined the CSP, confessing their past "left sectarian errors."

Despite sharp differences in attitude between the Congress Socialists and their Communist allies, the union was maintained. It was not until 1940 that the Communists were dismissed from the CSP after it became abundantly clear that they were out to capture the party. But the Communists had made optimum use of the alliance, gaining their foothold in the South and in the labor movement.

With the coming of World War II the CPI, taking Moscow's "Imperialist War" line, blocked the British war effort in India. But when Germany invaded Russia and the war became the "People's War," the Indian Communists made an abrupt about-face and supported the war effort. While the British jailed thousands of Congressmen, who protested unfree India's being thrust into the war for freedom, they unjailed Communist leaders and gave them a fairly free wartime hand. Even though the CPI's strength grew from 2500 to nearly 25,000, their collaboration with the British outraged Indian patriots, and left a resentment which still lingers.

Emerging from the wartime lull, Congress resurged toward Independence with mass support, while the Communists, so lately pro-British, stood by, unpopular and directionless. After Independence the CPI supported the Congress Government for a while, tagging along, having no other place to go.

And then came the Cold War and the word from Moscow to take a harder, more militant line. No sooner said than done: at the Calcutta Party Congress

* For this sketch of the history of the CPI, I am indebted to these works: M.R. Masani, The Communist Party of India (London: Derek Verschoyle, 1954). John Kautsky, Moscow and the CPI (Cambridge, Mass.: Technology Press, 1954 (?)) Gloria Steinem, "The Communist Party of India," an unpublished paper at the University of Geneva, 1955.

I have also become, indirectly, a financial supporter of the CPI by buying quite a stack of CPI publications from the People's Publishing House.

in 1948 the Central Committee expelled "reformists," decided that Independence had been "betrayed" by the nation's "bourgeois leadership," and suggested it was an "illusion" that "socialism may be achieved by constitutional means."

With that thesis and in that time---with the slaughter of Partition, the war in Kashmir and the "police action" invasion of Hyderabad in the air---the CPI struck a violent hand. In the Telengana area of Hyderabad, Communist bands killed landowners and local officials in the name of "Land to the tillers!" A special Indian police force in time crushed the insurrection, but only after at least 2000 people were killed. In West Bengal, Communist-led mobs brought arson, loot and murder to terrorized Calcutta streets.

These acts, which continued for a year and a half, shocked many non-Communists and put many Communists in jail. It also put the Government on guard thereafter.

But for Communists there was confusion. The violence in Calcutta and the violence in Telengana turned out to have two different theoretical models. In Calcutta there was an attempt at classical Communist urban rebellion, with the Party in the vanguard of proletarian forces ready to rout their "capitalist masters." In Telengana there was a resemblance to Mao Tse-tung's peasant-based rural insurrection, aimed at accomplishing both the "nationalist" (anti-Japanese) and "socialist" ("anti-feudal and anti-Nationalist") at the same time.

Furthermore, failure to understand Mao's super-United Front got the Indian Comrades into trouble. Not having a revolutionary proletariat on hand, as required by Marx, Mao frankly acknowledged the peasantry as his mass base and then formed a united front from below that eventually included elements from the proletariat, peasantry, "petty bourgeoisie," "anti-imperialist bourgeoisie" and even "progressive" landlord-officials.

What Mao did for Communism was to take it, theoretically and practically, out of Marx's revolutionary-class bondage. What he did---to a non-Communist---was to establish clearly that Marx is antiquated, that no longer does economic status decide social class which in turn determines the friends and foes of politics, as Marx held, but rather that Communism accepts all who will support its politics, regardless of economic status or social class, and it determines its friends and foes solely on that basis.

The Russian Communists, who had been exceedingly dense on China from the very beginning, refused to accept Mao's innovations until confronted with his success. Just at the time that Moscow was seeing the light on China, the then General Secretary of the CPI, B.T. Ranadive, was busy attacking Mao as "reactionary," "deviationist" and altogether unCommunist. Comrade Ranadive was sacked and the word went to the CPI via the Cominform magazine that what India needed was a "strengthening of the alliance of the working class with all the peasantry."

The new General Secretary, Rajeshwar Rao, of Telengana, understood the directive to mean continuation of the Mao-like rural insurrection but to drop the urban hostilities. But this was not correct either and there came further instructions "to unite all classes, parties, groups and organizations willing to defend the national independence and freedom of India."

In mid-1951 the CPI finally got the point, Ajoy Ghosh got the job of General Secretary, and it was made public that there would be no more violence from the Communists. The Party turned its attention to India's first general elections and won 5.5% of the total vote, a good showing, considering their recent history. The elections enabled the Party to rebuild its organization and restore its morale.

Although the Party line since then has been "peaceful," the same cannot be said of relations within the Party. Despite the disciplinary demands of membership and the binding tie of unique mission, there have been geographical, personal and ideological differences. With no strong single leader in command to resolve them, the differences co-exist:

Bengalis, heirs to a provincial terrorist tradition, and "encircled" by British commercial interests in Calcutta, are inclined to be Leftist, with an insistence that "British capitalism" must be driven out. They also take a militant trade-union stance.

In Andhra, on the East Coast, Communists take pride in their successes in the insurrection begun in 1948. Their bete noire is the "feudal" land-owner (often in their own families), and their chief slogan and prime concern is redistribution of farming land.

Kerala Comrades these days feel the responsibility---for the CPI and Communism internationally---of being the world's first demonstration of parliamentary-Communists-in-office. They are on good behavior with the Central Government and even their "class" enemies the capitalists, whose investment funds they are trying to entice to the State.

In Bombay, Communists see future gains for themselves in labor union activities, but they are also extracting full benefit from the United Front of non-Congress parties pressing a regional demand for the creation of a separate Marathi-speaking State out of the present bilingual one.

The various accommodations that State organizations must make in their own local "concrete situation" is often a worry to all-India headquarters, for the Party brass maintains itself with Moscow by being exactly in the correct Center. The two extremes to be pulled over are "continued Left sectarianism," that is, exclusiveness, and Rightism, especially the "corrupting influence of parliamentarianism," to quote Ajoy Ghosh.

As the Party's opportunity looms larger, there has been an apparent move of Leftists and Rightists over to the Center, and a greater agreement on tactics. As a second-rank delegate to the Amritsar congress claimed, "This is the first congress we've ever held that did not reverse the line taken by the previous congress."

The current line is stated in the Political Resolution, a 6000-word combination of lies, and truths atrociously presented, written in the special language that makes slavery "freedom," statism "people's democracy," efforts to capture the unsuspecting "the struggle for unity," and the slogan-mongering of a clique "expressions of mass support."

The resolution, framed as a public statement, is nonetheless primarily

a for-the-Comrades exposition and pep-talk.

To begin with, the resolution considers "world peace" and takes an un-Indian long time---13 paragraphs, eulogizing the USSR and condemning the USA---before getting around to "our country." The CPI supports India's foreign policy in general but warns that "large-scale financial 'aid'" from America is designed to put a brake on India in international affairs.

But the "single biggest event" in India's own "national-political life" is the establishment of the "Communist-led" Government in Kerala. For India, Kerala "shows the way," and the Party will "step up the campaign to popularize the achievements of the Kerala Government," as "the basis for a general advance of the democratic movement."

Meanwhile the Indian National Congress lies "in a state of political and moral decline, in a state of chronic crisis which has deepened after the General Elections."

Furthermore the Congress Government, wise enough when it came to fixing the aims and objects of the Second Five Year Plan, has plunged it into a crisis by its "concessions to Big Business," excessive reliance on foreign capital, "iniquitous taxation on the common people," "heavy deficit financing" and "dependence on the bureaucratic machinery."

The Party stands for "realization of the targets of the Plan in a democratic way," but makes its own additions: nationalization of big banks, coal mining and foreign plantations; expansion of State trading; "national control" of British and Indian monopolies; participation of workers in management of State enterprises, and radical agrarian reforms.

Having described the state of the world and the needs of the nation, the resolution lays down the tactical line for the future: "...Our Party will boldly lead the struggles of workers, peasants, middle classes and all sections of people against the ever-growing attacks on their standards of life by the vested interests and the Government..."

The areas of intensive activity will be "the organised working class," particularly in the public sector; local boards (town, city and district councils), cooperatives, social welfare boards, the Government's Community Development program, women's activities and youth groups, peasants' associations and agricultural labor unions.

"Every Party unit and Party member must acquire a comprehensive and all-sided concept of mass work, of defence of mass interests and must abandon that narrow and incorrect outlook which hampered the unfolding of multifarious mass activities in the past and which still persists in many areas."

The resolution then describes the task of strengthening the United Front from below, climbing up into the Congress ranks to recruit the "disillusioned" "democratic forces" there.

"With the position that the Party and the 'left' forces have won in the legislatures and among the masses, with the urge for united action getting demonstrated in practice in many places, with the growth of democratic

forces inside the Congress, possibilities for democratic advance and popular victories in many spheres have increased immensely.

"This necessitates the development of a united mass movement, extensive and powerful, through campaigns, struggles and other forms of activities, covering every area and firmly based on strong mass organisations..."

"Striving to build such a movement, the Communist Party will intensify its efforts to unite all patriotic and democratic forces in all parties." Specifically, the Communists will be out wooing the scattered small "Left Parties;" "progressive independents," "many of whom are former Congressmen," and "disillusioned progressives inside the Congress."

But this is not an easy task, Comrades are warned. The "dominant leaderships" of the Praja Socialist Party and the splinter Socialist Party persist in "keeping the masses divided" (that is, they refuse to be taken in by the United Front tactic). What the CPI will have to do is to overcome "this serious obstacle" by "combining firm ideological political struggles against such parties while developing common actions with these parties and their followers" (i.e., it attacks, undermines and uses them simultaneously).

The future, however, is bright. "The Communist Party and the democratic forces, in general, if they unite and undertake their mass tasks seriously right from now," can establish as in Kerala "alternative democratic governments in some other States." If there is "selfless work, initiative and sacrifice," the Party will lead "the masses in their onward march towards socialism and a joyous and prosperous life."

What are the chances of India's winding up with the Communist version of the "joyous and prosperous life?"

As has already been mentioned, with the Congress becoming more discordant and less popular, and weakness and disunity among those who could provide a democratic alternative to the Congress, the Communists are on a correct if not obstacle-free path.

There are other facts about the corpus politic of India that stand in their favor:

In the first place, the fact that India is a democratic republic provides the Communists with a great advantage. The liberal, democratic Indian Constitution permits them, as others, freedom of association, expression, press and political organization, without interference or harassment. The Communists, on all its fronts, use the democratic guarantees as protection and the democratic machinery itself as means to undermine democracy.

Secondly, the Nehru Government, by dint of its insouciance towards Communism, provides indirect assistance to the CPI. For all the good works of India as a mediator in international affairs, the neutrality of India's foreign policy plays into Russia's "peaceful co-existence" and merges in the Indo-Chinese Panch Shila. The mutual exchange visits of

Nehru and Krushchev and Bulganin, and Nehru and Chou, the "warm welcomes" provided to the succession of visiting Communist Prime Ministers, the acceptance of large-scale (and dramatic) financial-technical aid, provide the Indian Communists with the aura of innocence-by-association: "If those Communists are all right, these Communists must be all right too."

To its own disadvantage, the Congress as a political party does not take pains to disprove this illogical deduction.

To begin with, Congress regards the Communists, as it does all its opponents, as apostates, or rather back-sliders, but not much more than that. In pre-Independence days, the Communists, the Praja Socialists, the Jana Sanghis, were all in the Congress (E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Kerala's Chief Minister, was once a Joint Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party), and they are all in the category of Those Who Left the Fold. Sometimes one gets the feeling from an old Congressman that he dislikes the Communists more for having opposed Gandhi and countered the Independence movement, for working with the British during World War II and for supporting the proposal for the creation of Pakistan, than for any present reason.

More to the point, however, there is the belief of the Congress leadership that India must avoid the extremes of Capitalism and Communism by taking the path of democratic Socialism---but all three "isms" are vaguely defined.

They are pessimistic about Capitalism. They hold generally antiquated and often absurd notions about Capitalism in the West, and they have been more impressed by the shortcomings of Capitalism in India than by the achievements, especially the urban squalor born of the workers-be-damned! attitude of industry, and the "unplanned," haphazard nature of a laissez-faire system.

They have yet to take an honest look at Communism---how can it be done? ---but viewing the USSR and China, fellow-Asian countries, from long range and with a fuzzy focus, they see the economic progress and political power without having to live with the accompanying inhuman social oppression.

For all the talk about "Indian socialism" and "our own socialism with its roots 10,000 years deep in Indian history," the fact is that India's leaders got their socialism from nobody else but Karl Marx. For them as young men, Marx was liberator and pathfinder (Nehru's appreciation of Marx is recorded in his Autobiography and The Discovery of India). They are still more impressed by Marx than appalled by Stalin.

While Indians try to figure out what is meant from the Congress slogans "Socialist Pattern," "mixed economy" and "Socialist cooperative commonwealth," the Communists confuse the definition of socialism ever more. At Amritsar, Comrade Hiren Mukerjee, the Oxford-graduated, star-debater MP, presented to a group of 300 Punjabis crowded into the Temperance Hall his notions on the "Crisis of the Second Five Year Plan and the CPI." (I sat next to a college boy who explained that he had come because the next day he had a final exam in economics and would certainly have a question on the Plan. He took notes furiously.) While on a huge cloth banner hanging over the platform five baby angels held up a scroll announcing the "Amritsar Temperance League," below, on the platform, Prof. Mukerjee held up "the socialist world," namely USSR and China and "the other people's democracies," as the ideal economic society, neither subject to the ups and downs "of American capitalism" nor checkered by monopolistic enclaves as

"in India." The point is that the Professor used the words "socialism" and "Communism" as synonyms. If he made the orthodox distinction---socialism as the stage preceding Communism---he made it only in his own mind.

To anyone oblivious to the discrepancy between the charms of Communist theory and the horrors of Communist practice, and misty about the form that democratic socialism should take for India, the task of deciding what Indian Communism is and what Indian Communists are up to is next to impossible. Critical judgment is a rare phenomenon.

Fresh from having given his blessing to the Communist-inspired Paul Robeson Birthday Celebration, Prime Minister Nehru offered a comment on the Communists' Amritsar congress. Nehru said that he was glad that the CPI had veered around to "what I may call a more reasonable approach in terms of India." He did criticize the Communists for "imitating and copying others without originality," but the severest thing he had to say was that he disliked his "Communist friends because of their tendency to mouth acceptance of anything that another country did."

Nehru is also on record as saying of the Communists that "their aims are good" but "their method is violent." He has never made it clear that the "but" in between is the biggest "but" in the world.

Though Nehru is obviously offended by the foreign allegiance of the Communists and by their use of violent means, he gives the impression that he regards Communism as personally distasteful rather than socially dangerous, and his criticism has an academic ring to it. He is a much more vehement and effective opponent of communalists, the religious bigots and opportunists who threaten the progress of the secular State.

When I returned from Amritsar to New Delhi, I had a long talk about the Communists with U.N. Dhebar, President of the Indian National Congress. He is a gentle, sincere man. He said he had some "questions" about the Communists' understanding of the term "peaceful means" and their ideas of ideal "personal relationships and national institutions."

I asked whether he had answers to these questions at the present time. "No," he said, but he was planning to talk with some of the top Communist leaders and "secure clarification on certain points." I suggested that on the basis of the history of Communism in several countries, including India, there might be some preliminary answer now. His reply was, "The Congress has chosen democracy in India, and we must stand by it." I proposed that the Communists might use the democratic protections and institutions of India to come to power, and then turn around and abolish them. Mr. Dhebar answered, "We have to take that risk. We have burned our boats. I have no fear, provided the Congress leaders are prepared to take the ultimate risk."

From there he sat back in his chair and quoted at length from the Bhagavad Gita, the central Hindu scripture, in Sanskrit. He translated for me: "...You have a right to action, but not to its fruits. Let not the fruits of action be your motive. Fixed in yoga (union) do your work ...giving up attachment, keeping an even mind in success and failure, for evenness of mind is yoga..."

He concluded with a dissertation on the superiority of mind over matter. I came away recalling a conversation I had a long time ago with a swami of the Ramakrishna Mission. We had been talking foreign affairs, and

he was saying that he could not understand how America could be so "inflexibly, obsessively anti-Communist." After all, he said, "The tiger walks in the forest, I walk in the forest. The tiger is not my enemy until he puts his teeth on my throat." "No," I said, "at the very latest, he becomes my enemy when he decides to put his teeth on my throat." His reply was, "How can you tell when that is?"

What Nehru and Mr. Dhebar and the swami are saying is that they believe the Great Indian Truth and share the Great Indian Conceit. The first is the idea that the ideal is superior to the real. The second is the pride that India, like no other land, can grandly assimilate anything and anybody and yet remain fundamentally unchanged, above it all.

The way this works with the appraisal of the Communists is first, They aren't so bad, because they could be better, and second, They are superior to other kinds of Communists because they have been influenced by India.

For myself, I would say that the Indian Communists are bad enough, and, all right, slightly different.

But they are neither humble "agrarian reformers" or Titoist "independents." They stand by the Soviet Union as the Fatherland and look to Moscow for direction and support. (The CPI General Secretary, Ajoy Ghosh, punctually visits Moscow for "medical treatment" of his "leg ailment" before and after all Party Congresses.) Through the years, the Russians have made extravagant demands on the intellectual honesty and loyalty of their Indian juniors, but the Indians have never yet failed to respond with the required sycophancy and subservience.

Lately, however, with the "exposure" of Stalin, the Russian intervention in Hungary, and Krushchev's purges, the work of defending the Soviet Union has become sticky. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the Kerala Chief Minister who also bears the brunt of pamphlet-writing, has come to wonder in print about "how wrong we were in looking upon the Soviet State as an ideal State with no defect or shortcoming of any kind...to have justified every trial, every execution, every repressive step taken by the Soviet State as indispensable for the defence of the first proletarian state in history." There is still obedience to Moscow, but Moscow has lost some of its moral ---Communist style---authority.

China is refreshing the tarnished illusions of some Indian Communists. China is "more Asian" than Russia, its Communist Revolution more recent, its seemingly high-spirited national "reconstruction" more pertinent. Mao's picture hangs in many a CPI office, along with Lenin's and Stalin's, and at least one top-rung Indian Communist has paid a long visit to Peking for "medical treatment." Moscow retains control of the CPI, however, and China is primarily the shining example.

Even so, one senses among Indian Communists of low rank a feeling of initiative---as Communists and as Indians---and freedom. "We are more independent, the Party and we in the Party, than we have ever been before. We have much scope."

There seems also to be the faint rustling of a "loosen up," "liberalize," "share the power" sentiment within the Party. Indications of this are the increase in the size of the upper echelon committees and councils

of the Party; the suggestion of fairly pointed mutual private criticism that goes on among Comrades; and the public commitment, however lined with loopholes, to the parliamentary path.

Minoo Masani, the energetic MP who wrote a brief history of the CPI and is a staunch anti-Communist, passed this story on: The Central Committee of the CPI was meeting to consider the new draft Constitution just at the time than Krushchev was divorcing himself from Bulganin, thus making himself undisputed boss. The clause under discussion was the one about providing, in a future "Communist India," the right of political opposition. One Comrade, defending the right and calling for its inclusion, argued excitedly, "If you're going to be out to 'get' a man (foe) like Masani who disagrees, how do I know when you're going to be 'out' to get me?"

It is possible that under the restraints of the Indian Constitution, the responsibility of running a Government in Kerala, the "corrupting influence" of working in parliaments, and the entry into the "mass Party" of less-hard-bitten types, the CPI will undergo a slight change in personality. Certainly it will be more difficult to control, from Moscow and from Party headquarters in New Delhi.

But it will still be a Communist Party.

The new "peaceful" approach will enable the Party to nuzzle more closely to the "intelligentsia" and their beloved "masses," as they plan to do.

The "full democracy and Socialism" and "mass party" smokescreen is designed to appeal to the sensibilities of the intelligentsia, defined as everyone with a high school education or more. The aim will be to lull them to acceptance of the CPI as a possible "alternative democratic government." This they will attempt to accomplish by playing a heavy "nationalist" line, supporting popular features of the Government's programs while harping on failures, and moreover explaining the failures in terms of a Congress Government "encumbered" by "Big Business and landlords" and "rife with corruption and inefficiency."

The appeal will be to the intelligentsia both as supporters and as recruits for membership. They expect to gain both from the mass of the disgruntled, innocent, patriotic and activist who visualize the future in a rosier shade if Communist.

That means India's future and their own future. At Amritsar I met a 28-year-old man, friendly and bright, from the bania or trader caste, who introduced himself as a "new Communist."

"I am a capitalist," he said with a first-man-to-reach-the-moon smile. He and his father owned a flour mill in the Punjab. I had heard of "capitalists" contributing money to the CPI but none joining it. He explained: "This Government is doing nothing for me. So many taxes are there. Some months the workers all together make more money than we the owners do. Communists are for higher taxes on monopolists and British with more aid to Indian businessmen."

"All right," I said, "what happens to you when the Communists come to power, take over your mill without compensation?" "Thik hai, all right," he smiled. "I'm a Communist. I become Managing Director of the mill and make more money than I'm making now!"

The Communists' approach to the "masses" will take the same "full democracy and Socialism" line, but with an application in local politics and, generally, in local affairs: cooperatives and unions, the Community Development program. It will be accomplished with or without the Communists tooting their own horn.

In fact the work among the peasantry and others in the countryside will appear as the "gift" of "social service," and the Communists stand to gain thereby additional sympathy and authority. This is a most effective tactic, for in India sacrifice, renunciation and selfless public service are highly respected for religious reasons: the Hindu ideal of asceticism, and Gandhi's social-betterment reforms.

No one is more highly regarded in India, even among the fairly sophisticated, than the "social worker," the modern-day sannyasi, who renouncing earthly attachments goes about doing good. The Congress had a throng of social workers in the days of Gandhi's "Constructive Program," but now they are politicians or non-Congress Sarvodayists. Social service was formerly an important part of the Congress' appeal. The Communists are beginning to take up where the Congress left off---after Gandhi, that old "reactionary."

Early this year near Dehra Dun in western Uttar Pradesh, some tea garden workers had gone unpaid for their labors for some months. Their pleas to the District Magistrate brought no relief. The young Communist Brijendra Gupta offered his services to the workers, presented a unified demand to the garden manager, who faced with a threat of strike began paying the back wages. Those tea garden workers never heard of Karl Marx, but they know that "the Communists" helped them in time of trouble.

In Calcutta University, students are a radical, poor, time-on-their-hands lot. Having little money they do not eat well at all, and their health is shockingly poor. In the absence of any kind of student health service, the CPI, working through a student front, founded a Student Health Home with contributions from students and the donated services of a non-Party doctor. Later, the "students of USSR" donated an X-ray machine and an ambulance came from the "students of Czechoslovakia." While University authorities hedge on plans for an "official" health service, the Communists gain popularity and sympathy through the Health Home. To the Calcutta students, the Home is a reality, University plans are something else.

It is the accomplishments, the trend, the scope in this direction that gives the fillip to the Communists' optimism.

In the face of an intensifying Communist threat, however, India is neither hopeless nor helpless.

The Congress is in office in India and has a great deal of power, popularity and prestige. Quite apart from reference to the Communists, Congressmen have begun to worry about their falling stock. If the Communists show increased gains, the Congress may be goaded into improvement.

There are some Congressmen, high up in the Government, who are wise to Communism. Among them are the Home Minister, Pandit G.B. Pant, and the Finance Minister, Morarji Desai, who are the bugbears of the Indian Communists. These two men, however, do not outrank Mr. Nehru, though one of them may succeed him.

The Praja Socialists bear the brunt of anti-Communist criticism these days, but they don't have the organizational resources or the ideological pull to do an truly effective job.

In defense of Hindu India, the communalist Jana Sangh Party reviles the Communists fiercely, but their motives and methods reveal an authoritarianism of its own.

There are other organized forces which stand against Communism in a sort of religious-political-cultural alliance. The Bhoodan-Sarvodaya movement led by Acharya Vinoba Bhave carries forward the Gandhian revolution, with its insistence on non-violence, on the union of ends and means and on the essentially spiritual nature of man.

The Catholic Church in Kerala, when its private-school system was threatened by the Communist Government's educational reforms bill, organized the first effective opposition of any kind in the State.

In the intellectual sphere, there is the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, which holds occasional congresses and publishes a bi-monthly liberal magazine, Quest. The shrewd Delhi weekly Thought alternately lambasts and pricks the CPI, and there is the influence of the Radical Humanists, a group of academicians and intellectuals who are disciples of the late M.N. Roy, the First Indian Communist, who later became an astute foe.

Moreover, among the intelligentsia generally, and teachers, officials, journalists, businessmen especially, there are many leaders who are not nincompoops about Communism. They see it for what it has been and what it is, not for what it lies about and promises. This is a real strength, and it is most fortunate in a land where there is no long experience in the democratic life and no clear picture of what democracy-in-India should be.

Among the mass of people, there is a loyalty to tradition and an apathy toward innovation of any kind---or to put it another way, inertia and blind adherence to the past living in the present. If this acts as a brake on democratic development, it serves more to withstand the appeal of Communism, and the Communists' tactic of dressing their program in Indian clothing acknowledges.

Throughout India there is patience, tinged with fatalism, that does not expect much, that accepts what is, that endures. But this should not be counted on. There is also new recognition of what can be, notions of what should be, and growing impatience with the discrepancy between expectation and reality.

The hope of Communists in India is to utilize popular dissatisfaction to gain popular confidence that they are the ones who can fulfil those expectations.

The task of democrats in India is to inspire popular support by improving the democratic performance and thus fulfil the expectations.

This is not simply a matter of serving up the Welfare State on a platter. The inclination to share in the benefits of progress already exists among the people. The need is for them to participate in the progress and thus come to a learn-by-doing understanding of the democratic way of life.

No people ever chooses Communism. Communism comes to a nation because of conspiracy and violence, true, but also because of the failure of non-Communists, of democrats.

In the final analysis, Communism will fail in India if democracy succeeds.

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