Chapter III

Electoral Politics

Nehru's relations with the communists acquired a new dimension with the introduction of parliamentary system and electoral politics on the basis of adult franchise. The conversion of both the Congress and the Communist Party of India into mass electoral parties had significant impact on their relationship. Electoral calculations of winning votes and power considerations affected both parties. Nehru at the head of the ruling party was seeking his first popular mandate to stay in power. The Communists were the principal challengers since all other parties had just been formed.

The Communist decision to participate in the elections meant their acceptance of the legitimacy of representative government and their agreement to work within the system of Parliamentary politics. Their decision needs explanation in view of the fact that Parliament was an abomination in the communist thinking. Destruction of Parliament was considered an indispensable part of proletarian revolution to which the communists were committed. The Communist policies in Russia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia pointed to the fact that whenever the communists had triumphed they completely smashed the representative apparatus of 'bourgeois' government.

democracy. The Communists in India were also on record as strong critics of the electoral system and adult franchise as embodied in the Constitution. They regarded adult franchise futile on the ground that the propaganda apparatus was in the hands of the ruling classes and the capitalists. They rejected the notion that franchise would give equal opportunity to the rich and the poor to compete for political power. They rather called it a 'double falsehood' and believed that elections would be a farce under the constitution.  

Interestingly, in spite of their disagreement with the broad framework within which elections were to be held they decided on participation because by ignoring the elections they would have otherwise isolated themselves from their supporters and the current politics of the country. By losing an opportunity and means to propagate their programme they would have been politically weakened. They also feared the diversion of the masses to the socialists and the Congress. Considering that elections were a vital issue the Communist Party thoroughly re-examined its past policies and decided to end its isolation from the masses and emerge as a powerful force on the Indian political scene.

The basic objective now formulated by the Party was to develop a mass movement against the ruling Party (class) by

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mobilizing and defending the interests of the masses. They intended to help the masses in the overthrow of the congress government. This suggests that the communists considered Congress a major force in country and accepted its strong position. To weaken the Congress they became the apostles of alliance politics and preached its manifold virtues. They emphasised on the necessity to build a united front of all democratic and left parties. Except for the Hindu Mahasabha and other communal parties they agreed to join hands with all parties with the belief that no single party could form itself as an alternative to the Congress rule. The party thus assumed the character of an electoral party and accepted the system adopted by the Constitution which they had earlier described as a 'constitution of Landlord Capitalist State tied to foreign imperial interests.' This was the beginning of the change of the Communist Party from a cadre to a mass party to build the unity of the left parties.

The electoral propaganda was a struggle of competitive ideas and objectives. While Nehru propagated that every vote

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for the Congress was a vote for secularism, and against communalism, the communists declared that 'vote for the Congress is a vote for hunger.' In his election campaigns Nehru made verbal attacks on the communists. He rarely concealed his contempt for them underlining their past record particularly, in reference to the Second World War, Quit India Movement, their expulsion from the Congress in 1945, their activities in Telengana and their anti-government attitude outlined in the Political Thesis adopted by the Communist Party in 1948.

Nehru also referred to Communism and communist activities in India in his electoral campaign. While he recognised the fine ideals and sentiments of Communism he also condemned them because they were based on violence and anarchy. He considered Communist tactics as disruptionist and injurious to the very ideals they put forward and rejected their approach as impracticable. He emphasised that Communism as preached in India was completely at variance with the fundamental principles of Communism. He said, "a distressing feature of the situation is when people who know nothing about Communism talk and shout about it. . . . When I say I sympathise with communist theories and objectives, I mean there is no essential difference between Socialism and Communism.

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7 Nehru's Speech at Pathankot, Statesman, Nov. 16, 1951, p. 1.

8 Crossroads, December 7, 1951, vol. iii (30), pp. 8-9; Another slogan was 'Vote for Congress is a vote for Illiteracy, For Pickpockets,' Crossroads, Dec. 14, 1951, vol. iii (31), p. 7.
except in certain techniques and practices."9

Nehru enumerated his grievances against the communists because he considered their policy to be one of hatred between classes, of disruption and petty violence. This in his view could never help the communists to achieve the aims they professed. He charged that their attitude towards the Government was an open revolt resulting in violent,10 anti-social activities, creating chaotic conditions to gain their objectives and force the spread of their ideology.11 He viewed communist methods as the most violent activity completely lacking integrity and decency and called the party 'the stupidest party there had ever been anywhere.'12

He made it clear that the attitude of the government towards communists was not tender13 because, in his view, they had become terrorists, devoid of any moral standard or any thought of India's good.14 He decided to suppress with a heavy hand,


those who carried the rebellion in the country. He reiterated his firmness to suppress sabotage and violence not because of any feeling against Communism or communists as such but mainly for India's security. He had seen destruction of parliament as an indispensable part of the communist organized society. Events in communist countries like, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia had proved communist triumph by smashing the representative apparatus. As the Prime Minister he could not tolerate violence from any quarter. He made it clear 'that no government could tolerate any rebellion, because if it did, it would sound its own death knell.'

To Nehru Communism was a weaker force than nationalism. He emphasised that Communism gained strength where it went hand in hand with nationalism, but was weak where it opposed it. He believed that in no Asian country argument counter to nationalism would carry weight. A movement had to define itself in terms of nationalism in order to become real to the people. Specifically relating these ideas to India he said, 'the Communist Party of India has done more damage to communist ideals than any opponents of Communism because it has set itself out to fight natural nationalist urge of the Indian people. It has set the whole of the nationalist movement


against it. Not only this he was convinced that the communists intended to defame India by the repeated charge that India was not free, being dominated by the Anglo-Americans. He rejected their criticism of the present structure. Their emphasis to destroy it resulted from their failure to see the consequences.

He considered communists utterly reactionary in outlook because their tactics based on their philosophy were reactionary. As reactionaries he equated them with the communalists and saw no question of co-operation with either of them, because they did not believe in the unity of the country. Moreover, Nehru believed that a Socialist or a Communist system could be established only when the people were ripe for understanding them and not through legislation alone or by shouting slogans or repeating certain political phrases. He criticised the communists for pursuing a technique of terrorising those who disagreed with their policy.


Nehru refuted the communist charge that the government did not give them a fair chance and other forms of civil liberties.  He rather complained that they wanted to uproot the political freedom by interfering with the freedom of others.  He did not favour a ban on the party unless it violently indulged in political activities because he apprehended that this would rather intensify their underground activities.  He rather suggested a calm and dispassionate attitude but when they indulged in violent activities he never hesitated to do so.

He noted that, 'some people in other parts of the world get pulverized by the mention of the word Communism, thereby becoming less effective in dealing with it. If you want to deal with danger, what you consider as a menace, why not think about it rather calmly and dispassionately and not get excited.' The best safeguard against Communism was social stability, by raising the standard of living.

With these impressions of the Communist Party it was no surprise when Nehru challenged the basics of the communist

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22 Nehru seems to have formed his idea on the experience of the communist activities in Telengana where he felt that the communists wanted full freedom to seize power forcibly; See Government of India, Communist Violence in India, op. cit., pp. 3-7.

23 Because of their violent activities in Bengal and Hyderabad, he did not hesitate to ban the party.

24 Nehru, Public Address, Madras, Nov. 27, 1951, Statesman, Nov. 29, 1951, p. 5.
programme to popularise the virtues of alliance politics. It was merely to counter the strong position of the Congress. He described the electoral alliances as marriages of convenience, a kind of bigamy and polygamy going on among new parties having no objectives and negative approach. He generally viewed leftism in India an infantile phenomenon, a collection of odd elements united by frustrations and a dislike of the Congress.

The criticism was not unfounded in view of the Communist Party's election manifesto. The crux of the electoral plan was to defeat the Congress and the electoral alliances were directed chiefly towards that end. Their objective to oppose imperialism, internal monopoly of capitalism and landlordism was reduced to an endeavour to bring a united front of left and democratic parties against the 'anti-people, capitalistic policies of the Congress.' They were ready to receive the electoral support from all sections to expose 'the objectionable and hypocritical' Congress policies. The manifesto was a good example of their compromises. They agreed to utilise the aid

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28 CPI, Election Manifesto, April 1951, Crossroads, April 24, 1951, vol. ii (8), pp. 6-8.
of nationalised capital with a cooperation of private industrialists and assured legitimate profits and protection of their interests. They also proposed to establish trade and economic relations with all countries on the basis of full equality and mutual benefit. It was clear that the communists had designed their electoral plan to oppose the Congress by trying to minimise bourgeois opposition.

Nehru obviously became the chief target of their attack not only because they were his chief rivals but also because the harsh treatment in Telengana was fresh in their mind. They particularly attacked his speeches during elections as 'insipid and lifeless' reflecting no programme except pious extortions to return to principles, an example of bankrupt ideas clothed in such beautiful words. Nehru stood for a democracy that was meant for princes, landlords, blackmarketers acting as a screen and cover for the worst reactionaries in India. They countered Nehru's claim of achievements by exposing the failures of his government's policies. Their manifesto accused Nehru of subjecting his policy to the influence of the British imperialism and condemned India's relations with the United States and Commonwealth countries. Nehru Government was dubbed as a government of 'national betrayal', of landlords and monopolists, a government of

The results of the 1952 parliamentary election, though not spectacular were also not disheartening to the communists. They emerged as the largest opposition in Lok Sabha with 16 seats won out of 49 contested. They were next to the Socialists in the Vidhan Sabhas having 106 out of the 465 contested. They succeeded so well because the party did not scatter its resources and concentrated in a few states. According to Madhu Limaye the Communists were able to make a good showing at the elections because 'sufferings and violent campaign against the party' brought them mass support. Indiscriminate police repression visited upon the people by the Congress governments did not exactly reduce the communist popularity among them.\textsuperscript{32}

Nehru watched the communist successes in Madras, and Hyderabad carefully and asked Congress members to take a lesson from the Congress reverses. He wanted his partymen to see their faults and shortcomings instead of worrying too much about what others did or did not achieve. Communists became more critical of Nehru's attitude towards Communism particularly after his visits to the United States and Britain in 1949. This was because American officials in an attempt to assess the effects of Nehru's month long visit believed that Nehru had clearly shown his sympathies for the U.S.A., Britain and other Western democracies in the cold war against the USSR to block the further spread of communism throughout the world. They believed that he had gone as far as he could under the circumstances to indicate where he stood, Hindustan Times, Nov. 8, 1949, p. 1.\textsuperscript{31}

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\textsuperscript{31} See Appendix I.

\textsuperscript{32} Madhu Limaye, \textit{Indian Communism Today} (Bombay: The Book Centre Ltd., 1954), pp. 9-10.
on the other hand interpreted their electoral success not merely as an electoral victory but their emergence as a major political force. The victory 'had shown the real path to people's welfare.' They especially welcomed the verdict against the Congress in Telengana and reported. . . . 'Telengana has torn to its bits all the pretensions, all the arrogant claims of the Congress rulers. . . . If Nehru and other Congress leaders had any shame left they would have cast their heads down in humility before the people of Telengana.'

Communist electoral victories created world sensation as a result of which the progress of communism in India began to be observed keenly. Outside India many explanations were given for the success of the party. It was interpreted not entirely as a genuine vote for the communists but in some parts a vote of protest against the Congress. The victory in Travancore Cochin (now Kerala) was considered a protest of Hindu nationalism against the Christian hold of the Congress. Mrs. Roosevelt pointed out that success was not because Communism was deep

35 Ruth Fisher, One time Chairman, Central Committee, German Communist Party, Quoted in The Tribune, Feb. 6, 1952, p. 5.
rooted but because of frustration. In the West the elections were seen as a revelation of democratic trend in India but none wanted any increase in Communist vote in the future. Nehru was acknowledged as a leader who held the balance in India, and deserved a sympathetic understanding from the West so as to check the advance of Communism.

The results of the elections revealed the political position of the contestants. The Communist party had no doubt emerged as the biggest opposition. However, the Congress was still immensely powerful and was the single biggest force in the country. Communists argued that no single party could provide an alternative to the Congress. Only a coalition of progressive parties of all democratic forces could replace the Congress. The Congress was considered to be the representative of the old while the United front would be of the new. It was argued that the Congress was getting isolated from the people by its transformation from the position of being the leader of

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the Indian nationalist movement to a party representing only a minority of the people. The Congress had proved strong and won where the United Front could not fight strongly. Besides, bogus voting and other tactics used by the Congress Communists were also convinced that it was the undemocratic voting system that gave the Congress its present majority on a minority vote. Though the Congress won the majority of seats the majority of people had voted against it. R. Palme Dutt held a similar view and contended that the real measure of the Congress defeat was concealed by the undemocratic electoral system. He was sure of the Congress defeat in face of the left unity. He considered democratic front victories to be a powerful blow to Asian and world reaction.

Encouraged by their electoral success the Communists stressed on the need to further broaden the mass movement. This required the building of the party, the mass organization and the democratic front. They underlined the need to have ideologically developed and politically trained cadre, effective agitators and journalists. All these developments meant a mass

42 EmM.S. Namboodripad, Crossroads, April 4, 1952, vol. iii (47), p. 3.
political party. The concept of the United Democratic front, a decisive national force politically and geographically was a group of classes linked together by common interest with its edge directed against the landlords and the British imperialists. This meant a countrywide United Front organization without sacrificing the independence of particular parties or groups.

The post-election conception of the United Democratic Front was wider socially and geographically than the pre-election alliance that they had formed. Before we study why the communists widened the concept of united front after the first elections and the Andhra elections in 1955 and included even the masses under Congress influence we will briefly refer to the political developments in the post-election period. This becomes essential because the communists were not going to contest general elections with a clean state. A formidable record of past activities and events unfolded itself for the contesting parties. As such communists were not unmindful of the influence of political developments, hence in defining their approach to the second general elections in 1957 they acknowledged that the political climate had not been static since the first elections. India experienced fairly rapid changes after the introduction of the Avadi resolution of 1955, Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 and the Second Five Year Plan. Economic policies defined in the light of these could not be ignored and deprived the communists of the claim of being the only party which could establish
socialism in India. With a programme of socialist reconstruction presented by the Congress, the Communist Party could not overlook or dismiss these manifestations of the Government lightly. The Party had to take into account India's enhanced position and prestige in world affairs her developing relations with communist countries, particularly the Soviet Union and China, evident by the reciprocal visits of the leaders of India, Soviet Union and China and the enunciation of Panchsheel principles. These developments weakened the communist argument that India was dominated by Anglo-American influence. Soviet description of Nehru as an outstanding statesman, appreciation for his foreign and domestic policies and Pravda editorials also confounded the election strategy of the communists. 45

The Communist position had also been weakened by Andhra elections of February 1955. They had entered the elections with high expectations but suffered a debacle particularly in the defeats of T. Naga Reddi and M. Hanumantha Rao to the United Congress Party nominees in straight contests. P. Sundarayya won against his Congress rival by only 830 votes from Gannavaram constituency in Krishna District. 46 It was argued that 'the intelligentsia and the middle class among the Andhras wanted the Communist Party only as an effective opposition to check


the Congress ministry whenever it went wrong but were not prepared to vote the communists into power, and those who had previously voted for the communists were now forced by the landlord clique to change their minds to vote for the Congress. The communists claimed that the hearts of the voters were with them, though their votes were caste against them. The communist assessment of the debacle was an overestimation of their popularity of people's political consciousness and an underestimation of the strength of anti-communist forces. It was also argued that the Congress created confusion among the middle class intellectuals and small businessmen by raising the 'bogey of communism.'

The Andhra defeat of the communists had, as Nehru believed, not only a national but an international significance. The Congress saw its victory as a rejection of totalitarian communist methods. The communist successes in the past were looked upon not so much as a public vote in favour of the communist ideology as an expression of disappointment over the record of Congressmen in Andhra.

As a result of these developments the communists reappraised the class character of Nehru, the Congress, and the Government.

47 The Party tally in the new house was: United Congress Party, 146 (119 Congress + 22 Krishikar Lok Party + 5 PSP); CPI, 15; PSP 13; Independent, 22; The strength of the CPI was reduced from 48 in a House of 140 to 15 in a House of 196, though it was the second largest Party, Hindustan Times, March 10, 1955, p. 1.

Hence, the concept of the United Front was widened to include in it the United front of the masses even under the influence of the Congress. All Congressmen were not considered to be reactionary and it was felt that possibilities existed for retrieving disillusioned Congressmen. Moreover they could not ignore the record of the government specially foreign policy that was based on peace and was becoming distinctly anti-imperialist.

Despite the weakening mass base of the congress it was recognised to be strong because of the influential leadership particularly of Nehru. The communists thus found themselves in a dilemma. They could not praise Nehru and win votes. As a strategy, therefore, they chose Nehru's domestic policies for criticism though opting for a milder tone to express their grievances. They saw nothing progressive in economic and social programmes though they were willing to support policies that strengthened national freedom and national economy against imperialist, monopolist and feudal interests.

They felt that the struggle for peace and defence of national freedom for democratic rights and vital interests of the masses inseparably linked each other. To pursue a revolutionary and flexible policy and to play the role of the builders of the democratic movement, the communists decided to come forward as an independent national force. This indicated a change because so far the communists had followed the USSR lead on ideological considerations and regarded the Soviet road to socialism as the only road. As a result they had
defended everything done by the USSR and condemned those who criticised any aspect of the Soviet policy. As Ajoy Ghosh pointed out, 'one of our gravest failings in the past has been not to act in accordance with the Marxist-Leninist precept that socialism could be realised in each country through a movement which while being based on the principles common to all countries could also recognise specific features and traditions of each country. Also that the Socialist society itself will reveal a variety of forms and the path to socialism will differ from country to country.'

This changed formulation found reference in the election manifesto of the party in 1957. Peaceful ways were emphasised to eliminate the impression of being violent. Immediate establishment of socialism was not demanded in view of Indian circumstances. But their assessment of the Indian situation lacked quality because they recognised changes only when it was difficult to ignore them. Attacks against capitalists became milder and they decided to support the Indian capitalists whose capability to contribute towards the economic development was recognised against the foreign capitalist. Their legitimate rights were ensured and protection was advocated.


50 CPI, Election Manifesto of the CPI, Jan. 1957 (New Delhi: New Age Printing Press, 1957), p. 29. Note for this the statement, "In the present stage of our development patriotic minded Indian capitalists can make important contribution towards the economic development of our country . . . Indian industries should be protected against foreign competition. All legitimate rights of the capitalists should be ensured and their active cooperation should be secured for the implementation of . . . reconstruction."
They adopted this attitude towards the capitalists to secure maximum support.

The Party pledged itself to a determined struggle for the modification of the Second Five Year Plan in accordance with national interests. It was felt that though the declared aims and objectives of the plan were laudable and some of the proposals beneficial to some extent, the major proposals and measures were not such as would enable the realization of those aims and objectives.

The communists also alleged that the Government crushed every manifestation of popular resistance. The main victim was their own party, 'the most consistent champion of the working people.' As they pointed out 'the most alarming feature of our political life is the manifestation of authoritarian trends and the tendency of the ruling party to equate the interest of the state and the nation with its own partisan interests.'

In his criticism of the communist election campaign Nehru repeated his well known line and said, that the communists in their approach looked for their party benefit against the benefit of the country and defamed the country abroad. His basic charge related to the external influence

51 Ibid., p. 20.

on the communists. He described the communist parties as the international groups tied up psychologically emotionally and intellectually with other nations, and national groups while they acted as the opponents of the national groups in their own country. Reiterating his earlier charge, Nehru frankly submitted that communism did not frighten him nor did he consider it to be a threat since he was confident to prevent it.

He considered them to be disloyal to the country and charged them for running to Moscow and Peking for consultations and enlightenment. In his view they had failed to realise that traditions and masses in India were not similar to those in the Soviet Union. To him the way the CPI functioned showed it had no reality, no purpose, no creative ability but only an imitative capacity. Nehru condemned them for being rigid, outdated and reactionary in their approach. He complained that the communists always clung to their notion of bloody revolution because Russia passed through a bloody revolution


54 Nehru in an interview with Margaret Chase Smith on television, 15 March 1955. See, S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, vol. ii, op. cit., pp46235. This also confirms Churchill's opinion that Nehru had 'a great role to play as leader of free Asia against communism, a role that he wanted to play since "ehru, in his view, had 'a feeling that communists are against him" ... M. O. Mathai, Reminiscences of the Nehru Age, ("New Delhi: Vikas, 1978), p. 55.

forty years ago. He charged that no work of national reconstruction could be achieved that way and it would fritter away much of their strength and bring the country on the brink of disaster. He pointed out 'the world and its problems change but not so the Communist Party which lives firmly and rather romantically entrenched in a past age. . . . It is a surprising example of how reliance on others leads to incapacity to see or think for oneself.'

It is important to note that Nehru considerably admired the Russian and Chinese achievements but condemned the communists for drawing their inspiration from beyond the borders of India. In fact Nehru proposed to adopt methods that answered India's needs. He believed that communism and socialism mutually effected and in turn were affected by nationalism.

Nehru used Socialism and Communism as synonymous concepts in expressing agreement with communist theory and objectives. But when he referred to the practical aspects of the communists' role in India he saw little difference in communism and communalism. He believed that socialists and communists had imprisoned themselves in the cage of socialist terminology. He


felt that they were so tied down to their old doctrines and arguments that they missed the main currents of life in the present. Hence he saw no possibility of co-operation with either of them. Referring to communists he said that they were facing a dilemma and were betraying signs of nervousness after events in Hungary. Even though they realised that it was no good to stick to old dogmas they were not willing to change their tactics of agitational politics and violence. He openly declared that ‘in communism or communist Socialism there is no democracy.’

Considering communist activities merely a measure to oppose, obstruct and criticise the works undertaken by the Government he pointed out that communists concentrated on spreading hatred, disunity and chaos in the country. The Communist party in his view was intellectually bankrupt.

Nehru strongly challenged the communists' objective of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and contended that it was 'sheer non-sense and hum bug.' It was against the idea of a Parliamentary system of Government which ruled out one class rule. He said, 'communists in India had little following and if they had their way then there would have been


59 Ibid., p. 4.

civil war and strife among the people resulting in the
destruction of the country . . . Communists in the country
wanted trouble and strife.' Some how they wanted to capture
power, 'capture through force, coup or any other dishonest
and violent means.' 61 The communists election campaign
charged Nehru of evading the real issues facing the country,
'of claims unsustained by facts, of wild accusations and cold
blooded provocations of scaremongering and threats.' 62 It
was complained that the CPI was especially ridiculed during
elections.

Criticising his views on the dictatorship of the proletariat,
the communists said, that Nehru's challenge would appear to be
wholly irrelevant because the issue was not whether to have a
dictatorship of the proletariat or not, but whether the present
monopoly power of the Congress should be allowed to continue
or it must be broken. Ajoy Ghosh explained the concept of the
dictatorship of proletariat as power in the hands of the people
led by the working class and this vanguard is essential for
the building of Socialism. But the function of the dictatorship
of proletariat can be exercised by a broad alliance of the
common people and of all forces standing for socialism
represented by communist, socialist and democratic parties.
It was pointed out that Ajoy Ghosh made it clear long before

61 Ibid., p. 1.

62 Bhupesh Gupta, 'No Good Keeping Us, Pt. Nehru Meet us
(18), pp. 2, 13.
THE GOOSE THAT LAYS THE GOLDEN EGG

New Age, February 10, 1957. vol. iv (20) P.9
Nehru's spate of electioneering campaign that "the Parliamentary form of Government will be retained in the Socialist India of our concept together with all legitimate rights of parties if they prefer to remain in opposition and conduct their activities in a peaceful and constitutional manner." To counter Nehru's attacks against their party the communists emphasised their desire to make the Parliamentary system a success in the country. His severe criticism was an indication that Nehru was disturbed by the left unity as a challenge to the Congress monopoly hence his attempt to isolate them from other left parties. Regarding their objective to establish a socialist order the communists made their position clear by distinguishing themselves from Nehru. To build socialism and to lay its foundations were two separate issues which Nehru according to the communists had confused. They felt that Congress had not laid the foundations of socialism. They denied Nehru's charge that they wanted to bring socialism in a violent way. On the other hand they stressed on the desire to bring it through peaceful means.

Criticism against each other was obvious in view of the fact that they were rivals in the elections. Election


campaigns depicted no sudden change in their evaluation. A deeper study however reveals that communists had become a little mild in their attacks against Nehru though the overall picture remained unchanged.

The Communists thought in terms of being an alternate government in Kerala and West Bengal and intended to concentrate their resources there. However, they decided not to make any alliance with the Congress in any State. To avoid the splitting of anti-Congress votes the Communist Party made electoral adjustments with leftist parties. While the Congress convassed for votes on the ground that it alone could ensure stability and unity, the communist slogan was, 'the vote for the congress means a ruin.'

The 1957 elections were important for the Communist Party as it experienced its first major triumph in parliamentary politics. Apart from maintaining itself as the second largest party in Parliament it was also elected to power in Kerala through the ballot box, though they failed to gain an absolute majority, there. However, they agreed to take office and run the government within the framework of the democratic Constitution with the help of the independents. This was not unique as the Congress too followed this method. However, in case of the communists the assumption of office in Kerala reinforced the belief that the party had transformed itself into a party pledged to the values and mechanisms of parliamentary democracy. It was an attempt to practise constitutional and parliamentary communism as an adventure in
the field of practical politics.

The communists offered various interpretations for their victory. They felt that their desire to work in a constitutional manner, their opposition to violence, the strengthening of democratic forces and socialism and radicalisation of the Indian political life had brought them to the victory stand. The victory was not an isolated phenomenon but an index of far-reaching developments in the country. While Ajoy Ghosh hailed the victory as a 'new dawn', Namboodripad described it as an inspiring experience. It was natural for the communists to widely hail the victory because it was the first of the kind. It was a second landmark in party's history after Telengana. The Parliamentary system based on adult franchise which they had earlier condemned had brought them success. Ideological analysis of the Indian situation had given way to the practical realities. Kerala was not only a state of India but also the 'outpost of Indian Communism.'

Nehru could not have been silent spectator of the communist victory especially when far reaching importance and consequences were being claimed for their victory. Nehru, too regarded it as unique because it was the first communist government in power through democratic voting. He was proud

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of the fact that India provided the world with the first such instance. However he also saw local causes in the victory and took it more as Congress defeat than a victory for the Communist Party. He saw no prospect of any marked advance by the communists elsewhere.

The Kerala Experience

In order to study the communist rule in Kerala it has to be borne in mind that they controlled only the apparatus of a state government functioning within a federal set-up in which over-riding powers rested in the hands of the Congress party controlling the federal government. The communists had to work within the limitations of State government under the Indian Constitution. They frequently referred to the limitations and the dark designs of other parties including the Congress when they had to explain their performance. In fact immediately after coming to power they began to realise that they could not implement the various measures, which the party manifesto had promised, because of the constitutional limitations. This becomes clear from Namboodripad's comment "smaller landholders would receive sympathetic treatment but it does not mean conceding all their demands." He laid stress


on the need to reconcile the interests of both landholders and their tenants and 'both should be prepared to give and take.'\textsuperscript{71} Nehru accepted the communist assurance to function within the constitutional framework but of course not without suspicion as he pointed out that "... according to the declaration of Communist Party itself (about their functioning within the constitutional framework) it can hardly be a purely communist government."\textsuperscript{72} He watched their working with considerable interest.

Kerala gave the communists the first taste of governmental power. Use of official machinery by the ruling party for furthering personal and party gains is not an uncommon phenomenon in India. Kerala was no exception. However, two things complicated the politics in Kerala which by the standards of other states was after all politics as usual. The communists had cried themselves hoarse charging Congressmen of corruption, nepotism and misuse of power. They themselves were now victims of the same temptation. The lid was getting as black as the pot. Second it was rather uncomfortable and annoying for Congressmen, habituated to use power for their own benefits to see it being used against them. Habituated to the role of the

\textsuperscript{71} E. M. S. Namboodripad, \textit{The Tribune}, May 14, 1957, p. 2.

ruling party the Congress in Kerala could not adjust itself to the role of a constitutional opposition. Soon after the installation of the communist ministry the Congress started a campaign and adopted tactics which would create a situation leading to the dismissal of the ministry. The communists on their part redoubled their efforts to make use of power so long as it lasted.

Cases of defiance of law with impunity, withdrawal of criminal cases where the accused happened to be a communist, interference of partymen with the court of justice were reported by Congressmen who carried the impression that there was a consistent effort on the part of the Communist Party to undermine the current and accepted notions of law and order and to practise discrimination for political ends. It was alleged that political murders took place in the state and an atmosphere had been created where people were afraid and had no sense of security. Counter charges were made by Congressmen and communists against each other. Replying to Nehru's allegations against murders Namboodripad pointed out that 'there had been political murders in the state and were committed with the full blessing of prominent leaders of the State Congress and the victims were the communists ...' 73

73 Nehru complained about political murders at a Press Conference in New Delhi on Aug. 7, 1958; see Times of India, Aug. 8, 1958, p. 1; and for E. M. S. Namboodripad's Reply, see, Indian Express, Aug. 9, 1958, p. 1.
Reports of break down of law and order piled up from different sources and appeared more to be a game of charges and counter charges. We are, however, left with little scope to doubt that law and order was not intact and feeling of insecurity was widely apparent among the common people. Even though Nehru expressed faith in the communist Government, relations between the centre and the state did not develop amicably and were not coordinated. For illustration, we shall refer to one such issue for our analysis, namely, the Kerala Education Bill.

The introduction of the Education Bill by the communist Government in July, 1957 evoked widespread resentment in the State. It is not within our scope to go into the details of the provisions incorporated in the Bill. Briefly, the Bill intended to promote and protect the dignity and rights of the teachers, to create and establish institutions for the attainment of free and compulsory education. The aim was to bring the whole system under state control by eliminating all educational agencies other than those belonging to the State. The Bill included provisions to nationalise school text books and aimed particularly to reduce the role of private management in education. This was strongly resented because the efforts of the Church, Nairs and Muslims had contributed substantially to the high percentage of literacy in Kerala. The Bill was also challenged on the ground that its provisions were an encroachment on the rights of the minorities as provided for in the Fundamental Rights.
The Congress and the Muslim League firmly stood behind the emerging anti-education Bill campaign launched by the Christians, who dominated the educational scene and opposed the Bill. The intensity of the agitation indicates that the Bill effected the interests of many more and not only the private managers. The Bill created history being the first of its kind to be referred to the Supreme Court for its advisory opinion by the President. Communists strongly resented it and considered it to be blind opposition to the communist led Governments' policies. Nehru justified the reference on the ground that since the Bill entailed so much controversy it would be challenged by private parties, hence required the advice of the Supreme Court. Nehru's main concern was to see if 'in the exercise of its autonomy the Kerala Government had done something which was an infringement of the constitution.' The communists were, however, not convinced and considered it to be a measure to support the objection of the private parties who supported the Congress. Despite Nehru's repeated assertion that he had no anti-communist feelings to discriminate and contradict his earlier stand of liberal co-existence with communism, the

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74 The Bill required President's assent who because of the controversy and agitation preferred to refer it to the Supreme Court.


communists saw in it the misuse of power and provisions of the Constitution for the interest of the ruling party and as a case of political discrimination against a communist led government. In their view, "there can be no more blatant example of a party in power abusing its State power and the provisions of the Constitution to further the selfish interests of its own party." 77

In the handling of Kerala we can see divergent trends in the attitudes of Nehru and the communists that had marked the course of their relationship. During the initial stages Nehru intended to develop an attitude of liberal co-existence with communism provided the communists conducted their affairs within the constitutional framework. He refrained from being led by the attitude of his partymen and adopted a different tone to deal with the Kerala Government. He expressed his reluctance to interfere in the internal administration of the State and offered full opportunities to the communists to administer the State, a fact duly supported by the communists themselves as we shall see. But he had to change in attitude when reports of repeated communist misrule left him with little choice.

For the communists the problem was two folded. The Communist Government had to deal with a strong opposition and mark itself distinctly from the party to carry on the administration of the State. Nehru did not opt for a coarse tone like his

party men to deal with the communists and offered them ample
ground to distinguish him from the opposition offered by his
party. In the attack and scathing criticism of the opposition
the Communists saw a greater threat to communism than to their
government. This was not unfounded because they saw Kerala more
as an 'Outpost of communism' than merely a State. This clearly
implied their preference for ideology and theoretical
formulations. Their emphasis was to consolidate power and then
to use it in the interest of the party. Due to this, the
opposition found the administration subservient to the party;
hence, the clash. The communists did not recognise the party
opposition and evaded its threat by merely seeing it as an
attempt to oust them from power.

In view of the later developments leading to the dismissal
of the communist Government, Nehru's earlier lukewarm attitude
towards the communists and what later convinced him to take
action needs to be explained. There is ample evidence to support
his earlier non-intervening and lukewarm attitude. Nehru
strongly dismissed Namboodripad's argument that if the opposition
parties united, people will be further divided in to communist
and non-communist groups preparing the ground for civil war.
Nehru maintained that people were generally peaceful. He
dismissed the whole problem with a criticism of Communism in
general and denied that it posed any threat to India.\(^78\) Nehru
did not give much credit to early reports of lawlessness and

\(^78\) "Kerala Conflict only Local: Nehru Rejects Civil War
disorder but this was not to continue for long. The shift in approach was inconsistent and ambiguous to many but Nehru had a reason to change the policy. Apart from the insistence of the non-communist opposition, Nehru's own understanding of the affairs was supplemented by Governor's report on the situation and the dissatisfaction of some of the communists themselves.

Nehru tried to judge the communist performance by the standards and the yardstick of individual liberties, freedom and security. He could not approve of the ways by which the communists kept up the class conflict. He pointed out that by pretending to accept bourgeois democracy as a legitimate move the communists were adopting the Leninist tactics in the struggle to establish communist supremacy. Suspicious of the supremacy of the Communist Party in the internal administration of the state he warned the communists, 'I do not want communism here... Its concept for what might be called the moral and spiritual side of life deprived human behaviour of standards and values and ignored what was basic in man. Its unfortunate association with violence encouraged a certain evil tendency in human beings... Its language is of violence, its thought is violent and it seeks change by coercion and indeed


80 Namboodripad saw every possibility of achieving Communism through Parliamentary Democracy, National Herald, Jan. 21, 1959, p. 19.
by destruction and extermination. Only shortly before the dismissal of the ministry he is reported to have expressed the reluctance of the government to interfere in any State Government, "in the sense that we are anti-Communist or anti anything. But when the freedom and security of the individuals were affected it becomes the matter of serious concern to us." 

His own reading of the affairs convinced him to see communists out than in. But he hesitated to take action arguing 'that things had to get, much worse before he could advise the President to act.' He waited for Kerala Government to collapse with the force of events rather than the action of the Congress Government. In some quarters this was also interpreted to mean an incentive to stir the trouble. As was reported, "Panditji has given us his blessing for stirring up violence, but he has done so privately in such a manner that he is not personally committed." Nehru however, denied any possibility of either President's rule or any other precipitate action by the Government. And when he did act, he did so

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84 Ibid.
85 Indian Express, Aug. 8, 1958, p. 1.
after long discussions relying on reports and complaints.

The Congress opposition was not alone in criticising the communist ministry. There were communists too in the anti-Namboodripad chorus. Dissatisfaction against the communists substantially convinced Nehru of the need to take action. He could not ignore the warning of the communist leaders themselves against misrule. S. A. Dange had warned communist Government against the incident of police firing at Quilon in July 1958. He called upon the Government to resign if they failed to prevent the recurrence of police firing in the state. This was confirmed by Namboodripad when he exposed the role of the communists and challenged the disruptive game played by them. But it is also important to note that even Namboodripad's explanation of the incidents and of the general situation did not satisfy Nehru. He opposed the communal elements being brought into the political struggle. He described the movement in Kerala as a vast mass upsurge the like of which he had not seen before, exhibiting the unity of the opposition composed of the Congress, the P. S. P., the Muslim League and

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86 Indian Express, July 27, 1958, p. 1. Later on he was censured by the CPI Executive at Trivandrum, Aug. 11, 1958.


the Christians and the Nairs. He wanted the Kerala Government to have talks with the opposition and other interests on the issues arising out of the Kerala Education Act and the other charges against the Government. Public inquiries into the firings and mid-term elections were suggested as the only way out of the political impasse in the State. 89

As a result, talks between Nehru and Namboodripad were initiated to reach an amicable settlement which included a proposal to hold mid-term elections, but yielded no result due to lack of coherence in the party and government ranks of the CPI. While Namboodripad expressed his readiness to hold elections the Communist Party had the opposite view. 90 The Communists accused the Congress leadership of adopting highly undemocratic and reactionary tactics, rousing communal passions and instigating violence for overthrowing the popularly elected communist government in Kerala. 91 Suggestions for elections were rejected as nothing but a democratic garb to a discriminatory demand which the opposition parties sought to enforce through


illegal means. It was evident that difference had widened further between Nehru and the communists over the issue of elections. He wanted opposition to function within democratic conventions and the Government to treat opposition with consideration. Namboodripad too wanted Nehru and the centre to use their good offices to persuade the opposition for mutual discussions. However, against these intentions, Governor's analysis of the situation was unfavourable to communists. The opposition insisted on holding fresh elections. Indira Gandhi also tried to invoke centre's intervention and made a strong case for the dismissal of the communist government. Dissatisfaction was also expressed by some communists. All these worked strongly against the Ministry and supported the case for dismissal which the President announced on July 31, 1959.

Nehru defended the dismissal on grounds of internal security and peace and believed that it was better from the viewpoint of their own (communist) government. He felt that there was a desire even among the communists for the dismissal of the government or otherwise it would have been

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93 R. Sankar, Transcript of Interview, Recorded on Oct. 28, 1970, pp. 9-10, 22. NMML.

forced to resign. He added, 'every one concerned whether he said it or not, wanted this done in the totality of circumstances. . . . It was not a question of the Kerala Government asking for it but the difficulties of the situation were becoming so great that they wanted some one to relieve them of these difficulties.' Nehru, on his own, was convinced that even though the communists did not propose intervention in clear words they left the impression that nothing could be more welcome to them than intervention and felt relieved after the dismissal.

This interpretation was unacceptable to communists, they had asked for intervention to save democracy. It meant the demand for action and it was wrong to interpret this demand as a measure to seek central intervention. However, they did not specify what action they expected from Nehru, central intervention, mid-term election, or a check on the role of the opposition.

The communists strongly condemned the action and accused

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95 Nehru to B. R. Rao, Aug. 1, 1959, Ibid.
98 Ibid., col. 3131-7.
the centre of deliberately misusing the constitution. They believed that the anti-government movement was sustained from the beginning on the basis of hopes to impose central intervention. The communists treated the whole question from the standpoint of politics. What had happened was not in accordance with the tenants of democracy. The whole process was a deep laid conspiracy to put an end to the communist government. Nehru and the Congress were accused of giving political and moral support to the opposition. Though they distinguished Nehru from his Congress colleagues to some extent but ultimate action suggested otherwise. In successive statements and utterances they anticipated central intervention in view of the deteriorating law and order in the State. Dange regrettingly remarked, 'His reputation is lost and it is a loss to democracy, because now there is no one whom people can trust.'

The communists now became stronger and

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99 'CPI condemns Intervention in Kerala,' CPI, NCC, Statement, New Delhi, Aug. 9, 1959, Indian Express, Aug. 10, 1959, pp. 1, 7.

100 S. A. Dange, August 17, 1959, A. K. Gopalan, Aug 19, 1959, Lok Sabha Debates, op. cit., cols. 31-37

101 Namboodripad too pointed out that Nehru differed from Mrs. Indira Gandhi and U. N. Dhebar. 'He did not give his blessing to the Liberation Struggle,' he even criticised some aspects like caste and communal approach of the opposition camp. But he did not 'denounce the shamelessly unconstitutional struggle,' did not put his foot down on the attempt to paralyse the administration. E. M. S. Namboodripad, Kerala: Yesterday Today And Tomorrow (Calcutta: National Book Agency Pvt. Ltd. 1967), p. 299, As Nehru pointed out, '... in Kerala the Communists ever since they formed a government have been functioning with extreme propriety. I don't know about the future,' Nehru, Press Conference, Helsinki, June 19, 1957, Amrita Bazar Patrika, June 21, 1957, p. 7.

102 S. A. Dange, Lok Sabha Debates, Aug. 17, 1959, op. cit.
harsher critiques of Nehru and in treating him as a unique and the most respectable leader in the country. Earlier opposition to the Communist Government was thus not seen as an attempt to overthrow the communist Government by invoking Central intervention. But they disapproved the proclamation of July 1959. 'I disapprove of this Proclamation but I say that it was as a result of a conspiracy to overthrow the Government by using the words democracy and other things.'103 While the Communists rejected the dismissal, Nehru put the responsibility on their "party's failure in its chances in Kerala because its members could not adopt themselves to Indian context or fit easily into a democratic structure."104

Following the dismissal of the Kerala Government and the imposition of President's rule in July, 1959, elections were held in February, 1960. The Communist Party contested alone supporting some independents against the alliance of the Congress, the Praja Socialist Party and the Muslim League.

The electoral campaign was hectic by any standard because the main point to be settled by the elections was to demonstrate that democracy in Kerala was not doomed and that the democratic forces could unite to elect a workable government which could

present a viable alternative to communist rule. Communists were
the major target of attack in the Congress election manifesto
which declared that their 'extra territorial loyalties' and
totalitarian methods of functioning were a menace to independence
and democracy. Moreover in its view, the record of the communist
ministry in Kerala had amply demonstrated that their professions
of loyalty to the Constitution and parliamentary democracy
could not be trusted at all. The Congress proposed to amend
the Education Bill in accordance with the declared policies
of the party.

The manifesto of the Communist Party on the other hand
asserted that the dismissal of the communist government was
a betrayal of provincial autonomy and parliamentary democracy
claiming that only the Communist Party was capable of providing
Kerala with a stable and progressive government.

Nehru observed that the elections were viewed in India and
abroad as more than a mere state election. He pointed out
that the 'CPI in Kerala had the reputation of not being above
certain dubious methods.' The Communist Party in his opinion
did not represent nationalism or the ethos of the Indian people.
"Communist leaders suffered the crisis of conscience on the
Sino-Indian border issue... If any group in India in a
moment of crisis forgets that its basic loyalty is with India
then that group does not represent India whatever else it might
be."105 Referring to the basic difference between the Communist

105 Nehru, Public Address, Ernakulam, Jan. 18, 1960, Amrita
Party and the Congress and other parties he charged that CPI talked lightly of civil war in India. Other parties might quarrel among themselves but they did not talk of civil war. In his view communist approach turned to be disruptive and often allied to violent methods when the nation was in a need to forge a certain unity of outlook and approach.

The elections undermined the position of the Communist Party. The Congress alliance emerged victorious and was able to form a government. The triple alliance won 95 seats out of 126 (Congress, 64; PSP 20, and Muslim League, 11). Compared to the results of 1957 and in terms of seats the Congress won 20 more while the CPI lost 34 and Independents 2. This was a significant drop of 60% seats. The Congress Party won 25 seats from the CPI and lost 4 to it. Due to the increased electorate, from 7.5 million in 1947 to 8.1 million in 1960, the Congress polled 582,004 more votes than in 1957. 106 Communists were virtually scuttled in Cannanore, Trivandrum and Trichur districts, each of which had given them 8 seats in the last assembly. Out of 36 members elected, 24 were communists. But in 1960 it was slashed to five. In Alleppy and Quilon too the party position was sorely depicted. The only district that reposed confidence in them was Palghat which

106 For Details see Appendix II.
gave 10 seats to the communists out of 15.\textsuperscript{107}

From the results of the elections we may draw the inference that the liberal democratic parties were given an opportunity to correct the errors of the past and to prove that they could rise above self-seeking intrigues and give the state a clean, efficient, and progressive administration. Before the elections the Congress and its allies had joined to defeat the communists but had failed to conclude a binding agreement about the post-election cooperation. The Congress was ready to form a coalition with the PSP but rejected the League as a partner because of the fear that any cooperation with the League in Kerala would have its repercussions in the rest of India. Nehru defended the Congress opposition to form a coalition with the League by arguing that he had not judged the League from the standpoint of policies.

However, the Congress included the League in the ministry. Nehru blamed the local Congress for accommodating the League under stress of great pressure and excitement.\textsuperscript{108} It is difficult to accept his statement at par as it was obviously an unprincipled alliance and could not have escaped his notice. The Communists admitted that their defeat in elections was severe. However, they noticed that the increased votes


disproved the basics on which the communist ministry in the State had been dismissed from office. The United Front victory in the opinion of the Party's Central Secretariat essentially represented a temporary gain for political reaction and communalism. At the same time they were aware of the electoral reverses the party had suffered. They admitted that despite good work of the ministry during its 28 months rule they lost not only against the PSP-Congress-League alliance but also failed to secure even half the number of seats it had in 1957 elections. 'It is useless trying to ignore the gravity or minimize the seriousness of the defeat.' The party had failed to gauge correctly the influence of the alliance on the people of the state.

Kerala events thus assumed significance in the communist developments as the Kerala pattern influenced the evolution of main political line of the Communist Party at the Amritsar Congress in 1958, which outlined the broad features of the policies followed in Kerala. The Congress underlined the important fact that the functioning of the communist regime in Kerala had demonstrated the practicability of the peaceful road to power. Nehru welcomed it as an embodiment of reasonable approach in Indian terms and stated that if they could think more and more in Indian terms they could cease to be a

communist party on international lines.\footnote{110 Nehru, Public Address, Trivandrum, April, 24, 1958, \textit{National Herald}, April 25, 1958, p. 1.}

The new constitution of the party at Amritsar Congress sought to pursue a peaceful policy in order to achieve Socialism. It accepted peaceful methods \textit{neither} as a creed nor as tactics but as seriously meant policy.\footnote{111 Ajoy Ghosh, \textit{Articles and Speeches} (Moscow: Publishing House for Oriental Literature, 1962), p. 2. Ghosh at Amritsar Congress, May 18, 1958.} The idea was to create further breaches in the Congress monopoly of power by carrying forward the process initiated in Kerala in alliance with democratic forces. The Congress was still accepted as the main challenge because of its dominant position though its influence on the masses was weak.\footnote{112 CPI Political Resolution, Amritsar, April, 6-13, 1958, \textit{Asian Recorder}, April 19-25, 1958, p. 2009.} The Congress policies were basically in the interest of big capitalists and speculators. They defined the constitution of the party very much on the lines of the Constitution of the Indian National Congress with a greater emphasis on wooing the Indian masses.\footnote{113 \textit{The Tribune}, April 10, 1958, p. 1.}

Kerala experiment was a stimulating factor in advocating a change in strategy. To some extent, in the context of Kerala, the Communists interpreted the political developments with a different preception. They defended democratic principles with a great emphasis on idea of negotiation and condemned the
overthrow of government by force. They went to the extent of
upholding the Congress programme and pointed out that they
had no quarrel with the Congress programme; it was its failure
to implement it that they condemned. 114

In addition to the practical experience of working within
the democratic framework, their own understanding of the
situation provided the background for the necessity for a
change. They felt that the growth of 'mass radicalisation and
militancy' was manifested in the swing towards the Communist
Party. They also realised that the influence of the Congress
was waning but the separatist and communal forces were gaining
strength. Explaining in this background, Adhikari emphasised
the urgent need to build a mass communist Party in the new
situation in which the party had grown tremendously and was
considered a rising challenge and an alternative to the Congress
Party. He also referred to the present world situation in which
the possibility of achieving full democracy and Socialism by
peaceful means had arisen. 115

Before the third General Elections in 1962, the CPI
incorporated these changes and outlined their approach at
Vijaywada Congress (1961) which stressed on the need to give
concrete form to the urge for national reconstruction in every

114 S. A. Dange, Lok Sabha, Aug. 17, 1959, Lok Sabha

115 "Adhikari Reports on New Constitution," New Age
April 13, 1958, vol. v (28), p. 4. and The Tribune, April 9,
1958, p. 8.
sphere. It promised to continue its fight for a progressive orientation of government policies in all fields for a decisive shift to the left. To make amends for their past attitude they decided to abandon the narrow and incorrect outlook that in the past had hampered the unfolding of multifarious mass activities. They stressed on the need to revitalize the party with the aim to get control of as many states as possible at the elections and to be the ruling party at a later stage. They realised how their anti-Congress stand in the previous elections had effected their position. The slogan to replace the Congress had limited their capacity to develop wide mass movement and led the anti-national elements to capitalise on the dissatisfaction of masses with the Congress. They understood that their negative policy failed to influence the course of political developments.

The emphasis thus was to intensify efforts to unite all forces for democratic reforms and to defend and strengthen all that was progressive in government policies. They even suggested a joint action by the followers of the Congress and the parties of democratic opposition. The purpose of such a broad 'United Front' was not to expose leaders of the concerned parties but to win them through persuasion.

The Vijaywada Congress and the party manifesto\(^{116}\) clearly

revealed that they had now begun to differentiate the Congress Party from other parties of reaction. They considered it a mistake to adopt common attitude towards all parties. Though, they recognised a large part of rightist forces within the Congress they also saw potential allies within it. Nehru's influence was considered wide and he was distinguished for his approach. It was clearly stated, 'Influence of the Congress though less than what it was in the days of the freedom struggle is vast and exclusive. It extends to all classes including big sections of the working class, to the peasantry, the artisans, the intellectuals and others. Nehru's influence is even wider. We cannot build the national democratic front by ignoring this big reality of the Indian situation.'

In observing the strength of communal and separatist forces they condemned the emergence of the Swatantra Party as a grouping together of all the anti-national elements in India's political life. In fact they apprehended an alliance of the right inside the Congress with the Swatantra which would push the Congress towards the right and the communists felt threatened by this possibility. Perhaps it was this fear more than anything else that had led the communists to reassess Nehru and his policies. They declared, "Enjoying the support of imperialists, backed by many feudal elements and some of the most reactionary big

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businessmen and often acting in close cooperation with communal parties as well as the reactionary elements in the Congress rightly called 'veiled Swatantraites,' the Swatantra Party tries to combat the growing influence of socialist ideas and of the Communist Party."118

The tactical approach on the question of 1962 elections was to fight it as a big political battle. They declared their objective to rout right reaction, to break the Congress monopoly and to strengthen the representation of the party in the legislatures.

However, when the actual fight for elections began we find that the objectives remained mainly in theory and the practical politics of the party and its propaganda remained on previous anti-Congress line to advertise Congress misdeeds without positively expressing what was correct and positive in the Congress policies.

Electoral campaign was in no way different from the previous campaigns. The Congress and the communists being the main contestants. Though the communists had started seeing potential allies within the Congress and characterised some of its measures as progressive they continued to complain about its performances. They pointed out that the Congress monopoly of power had been used to direct the benefits of development towards the rich while it placed the burden on the poor. It

118 Ibid., p. 18.
was precisely the Congress policies of drift and compromise of
broken pledges and authoritarianism that led to the increasing
anger and frustration among the masses.

The communists condemned the Congress in general for its
policies and specifically pointed out its role in ousting their
government in Kerala, which as they alleged was body blow to
the parliamentary democracy. 119 Ranadive questioned the
Congress claim of India's progress and said that there was no
improvement in the economic and social conditions of the
people. 120 Joshi criticised the existence of a pro-Swatantra
lobby within it and for its unprincipled compromise with
reactionary forces. 121

Nehru did not conceal his contempt for the communist
attitude on Chinese aggression. It gave a fresh outlook to
his earlier attacks on the party for their anti-national role.
He accused them for not only wobbling at a moment of national
danger but wobbling the wrong way and of functioning in a manner
completely divorced from truth and patriotism. 122 He pointed out
that they were in quandry because of the Chinese attacks. He
also accused them of maintaining a double standard in regard.

119 CPI, Election Manifesto, op. cit., p. 9.

120 B. T. Ranadive, Address, Jullundur, Statesman, Feb. 6,
1962, p. 5.

121 P. C. Joshi, Press Conference, Bhopal, Feb. 24, 1962,

to their policy towards the Chinese aggression. Expressing his dislike for the communist programme he said, '... the Communist Party has a programme which I for one do not like. It has a programme which brings conflict in its terms. Even today the party is split over its policies in regard to foreign matters because it does not bring to bear a purely national outlook on problems and it cannot decide anything on broad merits of what is good for India.'

He distinguished the approach of the Congress and the Communists by pointing out that the Communist Party relied on class conflict and violence while the Congress sought to build a new society on the basis of harmony and cooperation.

The electoral results once again placed the Congress in majority in Parliament and Vidhan Sabhas. With 361 seats out of 485 in Lok Sabha, the party obtained 73.08 per cent seats and in Vidhan Sabhas out of 2839 it managed 1772, 62.08 per cent seats. In comparison the Communist percentage in Lok Sabha was 5.87 and 5.36 in the Vidhan Sabhas. The Party was the largest opposition.

Nehru was happy that the results had been good wherever the Party's candidates had fought on the basis of principles and programmes. The Congress, he claimed, was the only party

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124 For details, see Appendix III.
which could hold the country together. He called upon the Congressmen to make it stronger and devote themselves wholeheartedly to implement its programme.

After the elections the communists rejected any idea of unity or collaboration with the Congress to fight right menace. They now argued that rightist forces were able to thrive where the Communist Party proved to be organizationally weak or because of the wrong assessment of objective conditions. Election results in Andhra and West Bengal were interpreted to mean that the CPI could challenge right and reactionary elements. In their view the Rightists exploited popular feelings because their party failed to underline Congress' mistakes and defective policy pursued by the party.