Introduction

Nehru's role as one of the principal builders of modern India has been assessed and reassessed by historians. His contribution to the building of modern India is not the least diminished by the paradox of bullock cart co-existing with the satellite Rohini. In fact this Janus like paradox represents the two faces of India which confronted Nehru during his long public life spanning nearly fifty years. One was his legacy as an Indian, the other his handiwork as a modernist. It was the traditional, caste and poverty ridden India and her cowdung technology that he endeavoured to change into a forward looking industrialised nation. The policies and strategies that he evolved to achieve this broad goal were guided as much by his ideological preferences as by the objective necessities of India's socio-economic and political conditions.

The compromise between preferences and possibilities that he made and the long way he travelled as a doctrinaire socialist in the thirties to a pragmatist leftist in the fifties - provide a key to an understanding of Nehru's policies.

From his initiation into the Indian politics in the 1920s until his death in 1964, Nehru often came into contact with the communists in India and abroad. Historians have rightly concentrated on the study of the left movement in India because of its importance in the Indian politics during pre and post independence periods. Although a number of studies are available on Nehru and on the Communist movement in India, the interaction
between the two has not been studied except for stray references.

The relationship of the Communists with Nehru is a reflection of the growth of the Communist movement in India that was guided by international communist movement. In the early 1920s the policy of the Communist International was that the communist parties, working through the nationalist movements should do everything in their power to develop these movements. To promote revolution in India and to take over the nationalist movement the Indian National Congress was to be captured by working within the body. Nehru's sympathies with the left and his admiration for Soviet experiment in particular and socialist ideas in general led the Indian communists to look forward for the eventual capture of the nationalist movement. But the ultra Leftist course prescribed by the Comintern in 1928 foiled this opportunity and the Communists had to isolate themselves from the Indian nationalist movement. Co-operation apart the Communists severed all connections with the Congress and launched a full scale attack on Gandhi and Nehru. Though from 1933 onwards they were to emerge from their isolation and shed the extremism which had characterised their orientation since 1928, the communists had lost the opportunity to adopt nationalism as a part of their creed.

Since 1935 the Communists were instructed to adopt united front tactics to pursue an anti-imperialist struggle in

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collaboration with bourgeois nationalist movement. The party formed an alliance with the Congress and preliminary contacts were established with the Congress Socialist party. This gave a legal cover to the communists to work in the national struggle, and although they improved their position among the masses they could not capture either the nationalist movement or the Congress. The tactics during the Second World War and their role in the Quit India Movement destroyed even the facade of good relations with the Congress. In line with the changed Comintern policy the United front tactics gave way to 'Peoples War' tactics.

Nehru's relations with the Indian Communists represent two broad ideological streams of thought and action namely nationalism and communism. Both had definite views and ideas about the nature and content of these ideologies and proposed different methods of action to implement them. Their relations represent an interesting study of interactions between nationalism and communism. These interactions constitute an important link in the evolution of Nehru's policies and gives us an understanding of the historical basis of modern Indian politics. The division of modern Indian History into pre and post independence periods is merely a matter of convenience. However, empirically there is a close link between the two periods. We have therefore given equal importance to both periods. While the post-independence relations will be studied in depth, the pre-independence relations will be used to lay the

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foundation for the study. The importance of such a study lies in the simple fact that Nehru, along with Gandhi, dominated the Indian political scene during the pre-independence period and almost exclusively during the post-independence period.

To understand communist attitude towards Nehru's policies it is imperative to outline their view of the class character of the Indian National Congress. Before they infiltrated in the national bodies, labour and students organisations, they formed resistance movements and attacked the Indian National Congress. In the early 1930s they considered the Congress to be the most harmful and dangerous obstacle to the victory of Indian revolution. The communists argued that although the Congress was headed by national reformist bourgeoisie and landlords, the masses looked upon it as an organisation representing the national opposition against imperialism. The Civil Disobedience of 1930-31 revealed and confirmed the non-revolutionary character of bourgeois nationalism. The Congress was thus denounced as an organisation of the Indian bourgeoisie working in alliance with princes, landlords and zamindars. When the communists attitude changed on the instructions of the Comintern, they gave due attention to Nehru's call for a common front of anti-imperialist forces to rally against the British imperialism. The Communist Party of India exhorted the communists to come out as the organisers

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of the broadest possible anti-imperialist United Front. British Communists also regarded the Indian National Congress as the principal existing mass organisation seeking national liberation. At this time the Communists identified themselves with the objectives of the Congress.

In 1939 the Communist Party worked within the Congress and opposed the British declaration making India a belligerent country in the war. They argued that the immediate issue in India was the fight for a true democracy and not the fight against Fascism.\(^6\) The Communists worked hard to popularise the anti-war Congress resolutions.

By 1942, however, the Communists had again changed their attitude towards the Congress primarily because the Soviet Union had joined the Allies. They declared that the Imperialist war had become a people's war. Their line of approach to the war was diametrically opposite to the Congress' approach and widened the gulf between the two. After the arrest of the Congress leaders in the Quit India Movement they denounced the popular movements against the British and supported the British war effort.\(^7\) To the Communists, Indian freedom fighters were now 'Fifth Communists' and

\(^6\) P. Sundarayya, National Front, April 3, 1938.

\(^7\) Soli S. Batliwala explained how the Communists helped the British and refers to P. C. Joshi's efforts in this connection. See Bombay Chronicle, March 17, 1946 and Soli S. Batliwala, Facts Versus Forgery (Bombay: National Youth Publication, 1946).
traitors who were criticised for their old ideas and old habits of thoughts. For them even Nehru could not give a new policy though he was aware of the new reality. The gulf between the congress and the communists widened during this period and culminated in their expulsion from the Congress in 1945.

The Communist Party's decision to contest the 1945 provincial elections confirmed their independent role outside the Congress. The decision was important in the evolution of Indian Communism not only because it brought the CPI closer to constitutionalism but also because it brought to the surface the differences among the communists. During this period the Communists were aware of the strong anti-communist sentiments in the Congress. In their efforts to appeal for the restoration of good relations with the Congress the Communists recognised the Indian National Congress as their parent organisation. The majority group led by P. C. Joshi interpreted the Communist activities from the point of view of the Congress and presented themselves as representatives of Congress policies and principles.

The majority led by P. C. Joshi made a distinction between the reactionary right-wing of the Congress and the progressive left forces in it. Nehru was declared to be the leader of the latter wing. They offered their support and greeted him as the

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one man who had kept the traditions of nationalist movement alive. 10

However, the radicals inside the party were not satisfied with the cooperative attitude towards the Government. To them while the Congress was reformist the Communist Party was revolutionary. 11 Ranadive group began to assert its opinion in the Party culminating in the Political Thesis of 1948, which made no distinction between progressive and reactionary sections of the Indian bourgeoisie as was made in the resolution. Nehru was the leader of the national bourgeoisie on which the Communists declared class war.

It was repeatedly emphasised that the entire Congress leadership represented bourgeois vested interests who had turned away from masses and gone over to collaboration and followed anti-masses, anti-democratic policies. Since the Congress was declared to be a bourgeoisie party, its policies corresponded to the bourgeois vested interests and not to the anti-imperialist and democratic aspirations of the vast masses that it claimed to represent.

According to the Communist Party the Congress consisted of non-proletarian and bourgeoisie elements and Nehru was their


representative plus an ally of the imperialists, acting as the stooge of Anglo-American imperialists. The Congress was considered a tool of the blood suckers\textsuperscript{12} having anti-national, treacherous and repressive policies.

After the inauguration of the Constitution and on the eve of the 1952 elections, the Communists made a major policy change. The new programme of 1951 broadened its appeal to include the middle level bourgeoisie and decided to discard the tactics of violent revolution. While the perception of the Congress remained unchanged and the Government was a 'Government of landlords, bourgeoisie and the big capitalists tied to imperialists,'\textsuperscript{13} they made a distinction between the different levels of the bourgeoisie. Only a part of the big bourgeoisie had joined hands with imperialism. The rest—national bourgeoisie—were progressive. They concluded that the Nehru Government did not base itself on the bourgeois-landlord class but also on the United front of all classes that the Communists wished to build.\textsuperscript{14} Congress was considered the single most powerful organisation in the country with immense influence.

At the Palghat Congress in 1956 the Communist Party seems to have returned to position of 1930s and 1940s of making a distinction between the different classes in the Congress. It announced their


most energetic and unstinted support for every step to strengthen national freedom. No doubt it adhered to its stand of characterising the Congress as the political party of the bourgeoisie with many landlords in its fold, the Congress had within it a vast number of democratic elements. There had been a growth of radical and democratic sentiments inside the Congress and among masses following the Congress.  

At the Amritsar Congress in 1958 the Communists found the Congress increasingly isolated from the advanced democratic masses, corroded from within by dissensions and factional squabbles. It was argued that its mass base was shrinking even though the Congress carried its influence in the big states. It was noted that communal and separatist forces were gathering strength and the anti-national forces were using the considerable influence inside the Congress to sabotage the implementation of the national programme.

In spite of these observations the Communists acknowledged the influence enjoyed by the Congress. In the Vijaywada Congress 1961, the ruling Congress Party was accepted as an extremely important factor in the political life. It was defined as the organ of the national bourgeoisie joined by the reactionary forces that opposed the national struggle. The Palghat Congress of the Communist Party had noticed a division between the masses

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that followed democratic opposition. In 1961 the Communists considered it a mistake to fully equate the Congress with parties of right reaction and considered many of the declared policies of the Congress as progressive. The Communists had realised the necessity to develop a united mass movement which required them to unite all the patriotic and democratic forces in the country. As a result the communists found not only rightist forces in the Congress but also many potential allies.17 The objective was to wean progressive, democratic and patriotic sections from the Congress.

Only the extreme right wing of the Congress and the upper bourgeoisie were considered to be hostile to the national democratic state which the Communist Party now projected as its immediate goal. It was observed that Nehru's influence was still considerable in the Congress.18

The Sino-Indian border dispute exposed the differences in the Communist ranks. Those who looked forward favourably towards the Congress constituted the CPI group after the split. The other group did not regard the Congress as a progressive force since it was dominated by the reactionary elements and was called CPI(M).

Within this framework the Communists reacted to Nehru's policies. There are three specific issues that clearly reveal


the evolution of the Communist Movement namely the Telengana Movement, the electoral success at Kerala and the Sino-Indian border dispute. Their role as one of the major opposition group in Parliament, in the context of their reaction to Nehru's major policies gives an insight into their theory and line. Economic issues invited their reaction more frequently throughout the period but the Sino-Indian border dispute engaged them more deeply and became a dominating factor in the late 1950s.

There is a close relationship between theory and party line in Communism. As inheritors of Marxism-Leninism, the communists claim the theory to be their guide in determining party's strategy and line. Historically, however, the position appears to be just the opposite. Party line and strategy are formulated first and the change, if any, is justified on the basis of theory. Rarely has it happened the other way round. The general attitude of Indian communists towards Nehru was broadly guided by their theory but almost always, the changes in their attitude towards Nehru appeared first and only later theoretical justifications were offered for the change in various party Congresses. It may thus not be unreasonable to argue that despite appearances, the Communists were only slightly less guided by political considerations in formulating their policies than other political parties. The difference lies in the traditions. The Communists as Marxists must show their policies to have been guided by and based upon Marxism. Other political parties would not have offered any such justification.

In the chapters that follow, we have tried to analyse Nehru's
relations with the Indian communists using Communism versus nationalism as the broad framework. Chapter I deals with the pre-independence period and lays the foundation for the study. Chapter II analyses the early post-independence period, a period of transition from nationalist politics to real-politic. Chapter III discusses electoral politics. Chapter IV discusses foreign policy issues namely Commonwealth and the Western World, Soviet Union and China. Chapter V discusses economic issues concentrating on industrial policy, planning and Five Year Plans and Avadi resolution.