CHAPTER I
PROBING THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE LEFT CULTURAL ACTIVISM

The term ‘culture’, in its early use in English, was associated with ‘cultivation’ of animals and crops and with the religious worship (hence the word ‘cult’). From the sixteenth century until the nineteenth, the term began to be widely applied to the improvement of individual human mind and personal manners through learning. During this period, the term was also used for the improvement of society as a whole. One of the most widely used definitions of culture was offered by Edward Burnet Tylor in his *Primitive Culture*: “Culture... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”¹

The cultural debates of the modern times led to various interpretations of the term and its usages. Raymond Williams, the Welsh cultural theorist and former Professor of Drama at Cambridge University, famously described ‘culture’ “as one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language... because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct systems of thought.”² In his major work *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, he drew attention to four important kinds of meanings attached to the word; an individual habit of mind; the state of intellectual development of a whole society; the arts; and the whole way of life of a group of people.³ Later, he redefined the usages of the term ‘culture’ and assigned three current uses to it:
(i) To refer to the intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development of an individual, group or society.

(ii) To capture a range of intellectual and artistic activities and their products (film, art and theatre). In this usage culture is more or less synonymous with “the Arts” hence we can speak of a Minister of Culture.

(iii) To designate the entire way of life, activities, beliefs and customs of a people, group or society.\(^4\)

The notion that ‘culture projects the whole way of life’ led to further debates and Stuart Hall explains that “the culture of a group or class is the peculiar and distinctive way of life of that group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs.... It is the way the social relations of a group are structured and shaped but it is also the way these are experienced, understood and interpreted”\(^5\).

With the growing debates on culture and its link with society, economy and polity, Cultural Studies emerged as one of the most significant academic growth during the last quarter of the 19\(^{th}\) century, especially in its last decade. ‘Cultural Studies’, first associated with Richard Hoggart, the individual who coined the term in 1964 and the founder of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), rose to importance as a social scientific field under Stuart Hall who succeeded Hoggart as director of the center. ‘Cultural Studies’ examines the links between culture, politics, and economics, using one or more of the following approaches: Marxism, culturalism, structuralism, post structuralism, the politics of difference and psychoanalysis.
Cultural studies have always been a multi or post disciplinary field of enquiry which blurs the boundaries between itself and other ‘subjects’. For Stuart Hall, what is at stake is the connection that the cultural studies seek to make to matters of power and cultural politics. That is, to an exploration of representations of and ‘for’ marginalized social groups and the need for cultural change.\textsuperscript{6}

The new and fast developing discipline of cultural studies and post-modernist insights has accorded greater importance to culture in public life and the power structure of society. The history of the working class and socialist movements testifies to the fact that the pioneers of these movements recognized the decisive role of culture, literature and the arts in the preservation and transformation of social structures.

The emergence of the Left ideological currents in the world politics gave rise to serious debates about the role and importance of culture in political affairs. The cultural movements were then viewed as a step to attain cultural hegemony, which gives a platform to build political hegemony. The cultural programmes were also viewed as a tool to carry political propaganda for mobilizing the proletariat and other marginalized sections of the society. In this regard, the Leftist theoreticians made serious efforts in shaping a theoretical base to the cultural strategies.

**Marxist Cultural Theory**

Marxism is a science which provides the Communists with guiding lines of action not only in political matters but in the cultural spheres also. Marxist cultural theory provides one important resource for understanding culture.
Marx and Engels rarely wrote in much detail on the cultural phenomena that they tended to mention in passing. Marx’s notebooks have some references to the novels of Eugene Sue and popular media, the English and foreign press, and in his 1857-1858 *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy*, he refers to Homer’s work as expressing the infancy of the human species, as if cultural texts were importantly related to social and historical development. In 1848, *The Communist Manifesto* was published in German language. Although often seen purely in economic terms, *The Communist Manifesto* represents Marx’s and Engel’s attempt to raise awareness about the existing culture. While dealing with various subjects, it also had some observations on literature and art. The revised edition of *The Communist Manifesto* was published on 1897. It was divided into four parts and the third part gives importance to the debate on art and literature, entitled “Socialist Literature and Communist Literature”.

For a Marxist perspective, everything in life is determined by capital. The flow of money affects our relations with other persons, with nature and with the world. Our thoughts and goals are the products of property structures. Every cultural activity (culture in its widest sense) is reduced to a direct or indirect expression of some preceding and controlling economic content. In another terms For Marx, the physical – or material (hence ‘materialism’) – world around us is reality, and our ideas and perceptions are determined by our relationship to that reality. How we see that world – how we interpret material reality – varies according to who we are, and when and where we live.

Thus Marx’s deterministic economic conception divides the society in two layers or levels: *base* and *superstructure*. 
The first is composed by the material production, money, objects, the relations of production, distribution and the stage of development of productive forces. The palpable and tangible world plus the economic relations that capital generates. The second is where we can find the political and ideological institutions, our social relations, set of ideas; our cultures, hopes, dreams, spirit, art, religion, law, and so on.\(^\text{10}\)

The essential Marxist view is that the latter things are not ‘innocent’, but are ‘determined’ (or shaped) by the nature of the economic base. This belief about culture, known as economic determinism, is a central part of traditional Marxist thinking.

According to Marx, “we can understand the superstructure in three senses:

- Legal and political expressions which expose existing relation of production;
- Forms of consciousness that express a particular class view of the world;
- The processes in which men become conscious of a fundamental economic conflict and fight it out.”\(^\text{11}\)

The economic base of society for Marx and Engels consisted of the forces and relations of production in which culture and ideology are constructed to help secure the dominance of ruling social groups. The dynamic of a society can only be understood in terms of a system where the dominant ideas are formulated by the ruling class to secure its control over the working class. The latter, exploited by the former, will eventually try to change this situation (through revolution), producing its own ideas as well as its own industrial and political organisation.\(^\text{12}\)
In general, for a Marxian approach, cultural forms always emerge in specific historical situations, serving particular socio-economic interests and carrying out important social functions. A culture is organized in relation to sets of interest within the society and dominant interests are the articulation of power. In relation to culture Marx is telling us about the connection of ideas with the predominant system of stratification. “The idea of the ruling class are in every epoch ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is ruling the material force of the society, is at the same time ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.” Marx talks of the ideas of the ruling classes as legitimating and disguising their domination. Ideologies can be regarded as forceful explanatory devices which serve and continue to serve, a number of functions within the tradition of culture and materialism.

The word ideology has several meanings in Marxian cultural perspective. An ideology is a body of ideas that license, enable, and direct social action. Ideology also consists of what are called “ruling ideas”. These are ideas that ruling social groups force into a position of centrality in a culture. The ideas generally reinforce the power of the ruling group by making their rule or their claim on social wealth seem natural, legitimate, and uncontestable. For several centuries, social groups that have laid claim to excess social resources have used the ideas of freedom and liberty to justify such inequality. Ideology also refers to mistaken cognition that helps secure the subordination of poor people to a wealthy and politically powerful economic elite. The elite, as part of their economic power, controls the mechanisms of cultural production such as television and
newspapers that provide the filters and frames through which many people view the world. The owners of the filters control what will be seen or how reality will be perceived. This sense of the word *ideology* places more emphasis on the way poor people, who often lack training in critical thinking skills because of underfunded education, are led to perceive the world in ways that go against their own economic interests and serve the interests of those with wealth and power in a society.\(^{15}\) Thus the cultural ideas are clearly not just ideas. They have force, and they can change how we think about the world.

*Ideology* is a critical term for Marxian analysis that describes how dominant ideas of a given class promote the interests of that class and help cover up oppression, injustices, and negative aspects of a given society. On their analysis, during the feudal period, ideas of piety, honor, valor, and military chivalry were the ruling ideas of the hegemonic aristocratic classes. During the capitalist era, values of individualism, profit, competition, and the market became dominant, articulating the ideology of the new bourgeois class that was consolidating its class power. Ideologies appear natural, they seem to be common sense, and are thus often invisible and elude criticism.\(^{16}\)

Marx and Engels began a critique of ideology, attempting to show how ruling ideas reproduce dominant societal interests serving to naturalize, idealize, and legitimate the existing society and its institutions and values. In a competitive and atomistic capitalist society, it appears natural to assert that human beings are primarily self-interested and competitive by nature, just as in a Communist society, it is natural to assert that people are co-operative by nature. In fact, human beings and societies are extremely complex and contradictory, but ideology smooths over contradictions, conflicts and
negative features, idealizing human or social traits like individuality and competition which are elevated into governing conceptions and values.

Marx has provided a major element in contemporary thinking about society and culture. Indeed one might go as far as to say that all subsequent theorizing about culture has to be read and understood in relation to what Marx and his interpreters have deposited for us. Any modern approach to a Marxist theory of culture must begin by considering these propositions of a determining base and a determined superstructure. Almost every Marxist author and particularly those concerned with cultural issues make an effort to conceive this dependence more dynamically, in order to assume that the analysis of history supposes a social and cultural approach, as well as an economic consideration. With this platform, the Marxist view of culture ‘is the expression of a group consciousness directed towards changing institutionalized social and political structures’, was widely debated.

The Marxist tradition of the analysis of social and cultural formations was further carried on by the Italian Marxist theorist, Antonio Gramsci, through his original discussion of the nature and function of ideology through his concept of ‘hegemony’. It was Gramsci who, in the late twenties and thirties, with the rise of Fascism and the failure of the Western European working-class movements, began to consider why the working class was not necessarily revolutionary, why it could, in fact, yield to Fascism. From Gramsci’s view, the supremacy of the bourgeoisie is based on two equally important factors: economic domination and intellectual and moral leadership. Thus class struggle
must always involve ideas and ideologies, ideas that would make the revolution and also that would prevent it.\textsuperscript{18}

In the Gramscian perspective, “Dominant groups in society, including fundamentally but not exclusively the ruling class, maintain their dominance by securing the ‘spontaneous consent’ of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups.”\textsuperscript{19} It can be pointed out as:

- A class had succeeded in persuading the other classes of society to accept its own moral, political and cultural values;
- The concept assumes a plain consent given by the majority of a population to a certain direction suggested by those in power;
- However, this consent is not always peaceful, and may combine physical force or coercion with intellectual, moral and cultural inducement;
- Can be understood as “common sense”, a cultural universe where the dominant ideology is practiced and spread;
- Something which emerges out of social and class struggles, and serve to shape and influence people’s minds; and
- It is a set of ideas by means of which dominant groups strive to secure the consent of subordinate groups to their leadership.

Thus the ruling intellectual and cultural forces of the era constitute a form of hegemony, or domination by ideas and cultural forms that induce consent to the rule of the leading groups in a society. Gramsci argued that the unity of prevailing groups is
usually created through the state (as in the American Revolution, or unification of Italy in the 19th century), the institutions of “civil society” also play a role in establishing hegemony. Civil society, in this discourse, involves institutions of the church, schooling, the media and forms of popular culture, among others. It mediates between the private sphere of personal economic interests and the family and the public authority of the state, serving as the locus of what Habermas described as “the public sphere.”

In Gramsci’s conception, societies maintained their stability through a combination of “domination” or force, and “hegemony”, defined as consent to “intellectual and moral leadership”. Thus, social orders are founded and reproduced with some institutions and groups violently exerting power and domination to maintain social boundaries and rules (i.e. the police, military, vigilante groups, etc.), while other institutions (like religion, schooling, or the media) induce consent to the dominant order through establishing the hegemony, or ideological dominance, of a distinctive type of social order (i.e. market capitalism, Fascism, Communism, and so on). In addition, societies establish the hegemony of males and dominant races through the institutionalizing of male supremacy or the rule of a governing race or ethnicity over subordinate groups. All elements of superstructure contrive to exert ideological hegemony within the culture, from religion to education, the mass media, law, mass culture, sport and leisure and so on.

Gramsci argued that the working class can develop its own hegemony as a strategy to control the State. If the working class is to achieve hegemony, it needs patiently to build up a network of alliances with social minorities. These new coalitions
must respect the autonomy of the movement, so that each group can make its own special contribution towards a new socialist society. The working class must unite popular democratic struggles with its own conflict against the capitalist class, so as to strengthen a national popular collective will.

Gramsci suggests that it will be an organic intellectual (or intellectuals) who represents the interests of the proletariat to the traditional intellectuals who have power to change the rules. Autonomous revolutionary potential on the part of the proletariat could only be realized, argued Gramsci, through political and intellectual autonomy. A mass movement alone was insufficient: also, initiated through a vanguard with working-class roots and sympathies, this class “must train and educate itself in the management of society,” acquiring both the culture and psychology of a dominant class through its own channels: “meetings, congresses, discussions, mutual education.” The transformation to a socialist state cannot be successful without the proletariat’s own organic intellectuals forging an alternative hegemony. The notion of hegemony is effectively a metonymic affirmation of the dialectical connection between economic and superstructural spheres, stressing the transformative role of human agency rather than relying on the ‘inevitability’ of economic determinism.

In Gramsci’s view, the organized bourgeois culture must be counteracted by an equally resolute organization of a working class culture. Hence, the political forces aiming at social change can only gain the upper hand if they are able to mobilize and take charge in society on their own premises.
The way of challenging the dominant hegemony is political activity. Here Gramsci proposed two different kinds of political strategies to achieve the capitulation of the predominant hegemony and the construction of the socialist society. It can be summarized:

**War of Manoeuvre:**

- Frontal attack;
- The main goal is winning quickly;
- Especially recommended for societies with a centralized and dominant state power that has failed in developing a strong hegemony within the civil society (i.e. Bolshevik revolution, 1917).

**War of Position:**

- Long struggle;
- Primarily, across institutions of civil society;
- Secondly, the socialist forces gain control through cultural and ideological struggle, instead of only political and economic contest;
- Especially suggested for the liberal-democratic societies of Western capitalism with weaker states but stronger hegemonies (i.e.: Italy);
- These countries have more extensive and intricate civil societies that deserve a longer and more complex strategy.

For Gramsci, the revolutionary intellectuals should originate from within the working class rather than being imposed from outside or above it. “They are not only
thinkers, writers and artists but also organizers such as civil servants and political leaders, and they not only function in civil society and the state, but also in the productive apparatus...”

In “Cultural Themes: Ideological Material”, Gramsci notes that in his day the press was the dominant instrument of producing ideological legitimation of the existing institutions and social order, but that many other institutions such as the church, schools, and different associations and groups also played a role. He called for sustained critique of these institutions and the ideologies that legitimate them, accompanied by creation of counter institutions and ideas that would produce alternatives to the existing system.

Among the many insights which Gramsci put forward regarding culture, was the view that culture encompasses the whole of social life, not only its ideational aspects and that it is embodied in social practices and communal modes of living. He wrote of the ‘common sense’ of a community, the largely unconscious way in which people perceive the world. Common sense includes myths and symbols, ideas and experience and it can often be confused and contradictory. Its social function is to help to reproduce structures of dominance by encouraging an un-critical acceptance of an existing state of affairs. A further insight which Gramsci offered was that culture and ideology express the worldview and thinking of a class or group, linked to its history and experience. If culture is seen as linked to class it can no longer be understood as outside power but as participating in the maintenance of systems of power. Political struggle then should include struggle through, and with, culture.

George Plekhanov, who was one of the founders of the Russian Social Democratic Party, also contributed to the realm of Marxian cultural thought through his
writings. In his book, *The Role of the Individual in History*, he argues that the role of gifted individuals, such as Napoleon, in history has been exaggerated. Plekhanov’s own position is that such persons appear ‘wherever and whenever’ social conditions facilitate their development: “every talent which becomes a social force is the fruit of social relations.”

Moreover, individuals can change only the individual character, not the general direction, of events. Hence particular trends in art or literature do not depend exclusively on certain individuals for their expression; if the trend is sufficiently profound, it will compensate the premature death of one individual by giving rise to other talents who might embody it. The depth of a literary trend is determined by its significance for the class whose tastes it expresses, and by the social role of that class. In *Art and Social Life*, Plekhanov raises the crucial question of the relative values of “art for art’s sake” and a “utilitarian” view of art which sees it as instrumental in promoting the improvement of the social order. Plekhanov refuses to approach this question by abstractly asserting the priority of one or the other. Rather, he inquires into the principal social conditions in which each of these attitudes arises and arrives at the thesis that the “art for art’s sake” tendency arises when an artist is “in hopeless disaccord with the social environment.” The utilitarian attitude, which grants art a function in social struggles as well as the power of judgment concerning the real world, “arises and becomes stronger wherever a mutual sympathy exists between the individuals... interested in artistic creation and some considerable part of society.”

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin occupies a central role not only in the revolution of 1917 but also in the unfolding of Marxist aesthetics towards a more politically interventionist stance. In the latter respect, Lenin’s most celebrated and controversial piece is his “Party
Organization and Party Literature”, which led to the theory of “socialist realism”, adopted in 1934 as the official party aesthetic. Written shortly after the general strike of October 1905, it belongs to a politically volatile period in which the work of revolution was far from complete, as Lenin emphasizes: “While Tsarism is no longer strong enough to defeat the revolution, the revolution is not yet strong enough to defeat tsarism.”

Moreover, free speech and a free press, as Lenin points out, did not in any case exist. It can come as no surprise, then, that Lenin insists that literature “must become part of the common cause of the proletariat, ‘a cog and screw’ of one single great Socialist-Democratic mechanism.” Lenin is well aware that art cannot be “subject to mechanical adjustment or leveling, to the rule of the majority over the minority.” But he is not prescribing partisanship (partinost) for all literature, only literature which claims to be party literature. He grants that freedom “of speech and the press must be complete.” What he is suggesting is that “freedom of association” must also be complete: the party reserves the right to circumscribe the ideological boundaries of writing conducted under its banner.

Lenin also points out that in bourgeois society the writer cherishes but an illusory freedom: “The freedom of the bourgeois writer... is simply masked... dependence on the money-bag, on corruption, on prostitution.” The writers imagine themselves to be free but are actually dependent upon an entire prescriptive network of commercial relations and interests, “prisoners of bourgeois-shopkeeper literary relations.” In contrast, the free literature that Lenin desires “will be openly linked to the proletariat.” Also underscoring Lenin’s arguments is his recognition that literature “cannot... be an individual undertaking,” as liberal-bourgeois individualism would have us believe.
It can be seen from the foregoing that the early debates on art during and after the revolutionary period in Russia focused on questions such as the degree of party control over the arts, the stance towards the bourgeois cultural legacy, and the imperative to clarify the connections between the political and the aesthetic. A related question was the possibility of creating a proletarian culture. The other major protagonist in the Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky, played a crucial role in these debates. In *Literature and Revolution* Trotsky stressed that only in some domains can the party offer direct leadership; the “domain of art is not one in which the Party is called upon to command. It can and must protect and help it, but can only lead it indirectly.” He states quite clearly that what is needed is “a watchful revolutionary censorship, and a broad and flexible policy in the field of art.” Trotsky also urges that the party should give “its confidence” to what he calls “literary fellow-travelers”, those non-party writers sympathetic to the revolution. What lies behind this is Trotsky’s insistence that the proletariat cannot begin the construction of a new culture without absorbing and assimilating the elements of the old cultures.

Christopher Caudwell, who was killed at fighting in the Spanish Civil War at the age of thirty, though had a very brief career as a Marxist culture theorist, produced prodigious output. For Caudwell as for Marx, art is the act of social production which makes humans human, non-animal. Art thus is guaranteed its place as a necessary feature of human social life. Art achieves this end by creating an “illusion” of reality which many people can participate in together. It draws out what is common in people’s socially formed, yet idiosyncratically experienced thoughts and emotions.
Caudwell recognizes, however, that in a class society all art is class art, or, the life experiences of people and their interests are class specific. The shared pool of experience and thus art’s potential reach is limited. This brings up the question of which art is “good” art. For Caudwell “art which encourages co-operation in the revolutionary class in any era is the period’s progressive art. Only art that can help people move forward in human social evolution is the art that can free people.” Caudwell categorizes most contemporary art as “high” or “low brow” art, where bourgeois or “high brow” art is refined and artistic, and “low brow” art is escapist and trashy, art only “for the proletariat”. For Caudwell, “low brow” art is less significant as art than bourgeois art. To him, such popular art is only an expression of the poverty of the proletarian intellectual and emotional life that helps to perpetuate that poverty. “High brow” art, on the other hand, is more sensitive to thought and feeling, and more technically innovative, and so offers something worth saving for socialism.

For the Hungarian Marxist Philosopher, Georg Lukacs, the relation between politics, art and culture is inextricable. A philosopher’s view of the world, like that of the creative artist is interwoven with the class struggle. This, of course, directs us to the centrality of aesthetics and the singular obsession and indeed axiom. In Lukacs’ ideas, that ‘realism’ in art and philosophy produces not just another version of the world, but actually portrays the world (the concept that Lukacs employs is to ‘reflect’ the world). ‘Realism is not one style among others; it is the basis of literature’. Critical realist art and literature has to be dynamic, it projects its characters into the historical process and provides them with direction, development and motivation and intention to create change.
For Lukacs, socialist realism was a mirror of the dominant movement of its time and all great art is to provide a picture of reality.47

Cultural Marxism was highly influential throughout Europe and the Western world, especially in the 1960s when Marxian thought was at its most prestigious and procreative. Marxist cultural theories were also taken up by Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno of the Frankfurt School and provided many valuable tools for cultural criticism. With this Marxian tradition, theorists like Roland Barthes and the Tel Quel group in France, Galvano Della Volpe, Lucio Colletti, and others in Italy, Fredric Jameson, Terry Eagleton, and cohort of 1960s cultural radicals in the English-speaking world, and a large number of theorists throughout the globe used cultural Marxism to develop modes of cultural studies that analyzed the production, interpretation, and reception of cultural artifacts within concrete socio-historical conditions that had contested political and ideological effects and uses. One of the most famous and influential forms of cultural studies, initially under the influence of cultural Marxism, emerged within the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England within a group often referred to as the *Birmingham School.*

Moreover, the forms of culture described by the earliest phase of British cultural studies in the 1950s and early 1960s articulated conditions in an era in which there were still significant tensions in England and much of Europe between an older working class-based culture and the newer mass-produced culture whose models and exemplars were the products of American culture industries. The initial project of cultural studies developed by Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and E.P. Thompson attempted to preserve working class culture against onslaughts of mass culture produced by the culture
industries.\textsuperscript{48} Thompson’s inquiries into the history of British working class institutions and struggles, the defenses of working class culture by Hoggart and Williams, and their attacks on mass culture were part of a socialist and working class-oriented project that assumed that the industrial working class was a force of progressive social change and that it could be mobilized and organized to struggle against the inequalities of the existing capitalist societies and for a more egalitarian socialist one. Williams and Hoggart were deeply involved in projects of working class education and oriented towards socialist working class politics, seeing their form of cultural studies as an instrument of progressive social change.

In the Anglo-American world a “cultural materialist” criticism was first revived by Raymond Williams’ work, notably \textit{Culture and Society 1780–1950}, which analyses the cultural critique of capitalism in English literary tradition.

Williams rejected a simplistic explanation of culture as the efflux of material conditions, but stressed the contribution of cultural forms to economic and political development. He is best known for pioneering the study of popular culture and the media. His twenty-odd books of cultural criticism widened the accepted definitions of literature and culture, and helped to establish media studies as a recognized subject in the process of popularizing a radical and critical approach to the mass media.\textsuperscript{49} More importantly, his work has popularized a radical and critical approach to the arts and the mass media, and at the same time had a powerful influence on the development of the Left’s attitude to culture. He saw the cultural sphere as the key to regenerating the Left and even radically reforming society.
Cultural materialism was always, for Williams, a Marxist theory – an elaboration of historical materialism. “Latent within historical materialism is... a way of understanding the diverse social and material production... of works to which the connected but also changing categories of art have been historically applied. I call this position cultural materialism.” Cultural productions is itself material, as much as any other sector of human activity; culture must be understood both in its own terms and as part of its society. Williams’ conception of cultural materialism went further, however. The key question was how the relationship between society and culture was understood. In his 1958 essay “Culture is ordinary” Williams cited the Marxist tenet that “a culture must finally be interpreted in relation to its underlying system of production” and glossed it as follows: “a culture is a whole way of life, and the arts are part of a social organization which economic change clearly radically affects.”

Cultural Marxism thus strengthens the arsenal of cultural studies in providing critical and political perspectives that enable individuals to dissect the meanings, messages, and effects of dominant cultural forms. It can empower people to gain sovereignty over their culture and to be able to struggle for alternative cultures and political change and thus constitutes a part of the struggle for a better society and a better life.

The Communist International and Cultural Strategy

An observer of the Communist Party is confronted with a special problem of analysis, for a party functions not in one environment but in two. It is both an element of the international Communist community and an element of national political community.
It interacts with both of these contexts, and it is thus enmeshed in an exceedingly complex web of influences. The founding of the Communist International was a milestone in the history of international Communist movement. With its foundation, it gave a very clear guideline to the methods and activities to be adopted by the Communist Parties of the different nations. Through various theses and resolutions, which were presented in the different Congress of the Internationals, it formulated theories and strategies to be adopted for the Communist movements. Through its cultural interventions and strategies, it also could arouse the writers and artists of the world over to take up political positions. It was quite evident during the 1920s and 30s, when arts—especially literature—were affected by international political developments. Writers throughout the Europe took up political positions—the younger ones overwhelmingly on behalf of the Left and frequently used their work to promote political causes, such as support for the Soviet Union, for unemployed workers during the great depression (1929-34) and for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39).

The First International (1864-72) laid the foundation of an international organization of the workers for the preparation of their revolutionary attack on capital. It also laid the foundation of the proletarian, international struggle for socialism. The Second International (1889-1914) was an international organization of the proletarian movement, which marked a period in which the soil was prepared for the broad, mass spread of the movement in a number of countries. The Third International has gathered the fruits of the work of the Second International, discarded its opportunist, social-chauvinist, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois dross, and has begun to implement the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Third International actually emerged in 1918, when
the long years of struggle against opportunism and social-chauvinism, especially during the war, led to the formation of Communist Parties in a number of countries. Officially, the Third International was founded at its First Congress, in 2 March, 1919, in Moscow. The most characteristic feature of this International was its mission of fulfilling, of implementing the precepts of Marxism, and of achieving the age-old ideals of socialism and the working-class movement.

Through its resolution, the Communist International observed that; “with the coming of war, human culture has been destroyed and humanity is threatened with complete annihilation. There is only one force able to save humanity and that is the proletariat. The proletariat has to establish real order – Communist order. It must break the rule of capital, make wars impossible, abolish the frontiers between states, transform the whole world into a community where all work for the common good and realize the freedom and brotherhood of peoples.”

The Communist International calls the whole world proletariat to the last fight. The Congress of the Communist International declares that the chief task of the Communist Parties in all countries were: to explain to the broad mass of the workers about the historic significance and the political and historical necessity of the new, proletarian, democracy which must replace bourgeois democracy and the parliamentary system; to extend the organization of workers and peasants and to build a stable Communist majority inside these organizations. It also formulated the forms and methods of work which includes; to inspire the proletarian masses a high level of class consciousness and a firm commitment to engage in the revolutionary class struggle, the
struggle of all humiliated and oppressed people against the bourgeoisie and the struggle for Communism and to involve them in a conscious and dedicated way in the joint work needed to build a Communist society. An urge for a conscious cultural intervention is implicit in these methods of activities.

The Thesis on the Organization and Structure of the Communist Parties, adopted at the 3rd Congress of the Communist International in 1921 clearly states the principles of party organization and the strategies to be adopted to mobilize the proletarians. It clearly indicates the necessity of Party’s intervention in the cultural realm in order to mobilize the proletariat. On the task, it stated that “the principal task of our organizational work must be – education, organization and training of efficient Communist Parties under capable directing organs to the leading place in the proletarian revolutionary movement”.

On the duty of the Communist activity, it stated that; “the Communist Party must be a training school for revolutionary Marxism. The organic ties between the different parts of the organization and the membership become joined through the daily common work in the Party activities”.

It urged to form Communist nuclei for the daily work in the different branches of the Party activities; for timely agitation, for Party study, for newspaper work, for the distribution of literary matter, for information service, for constant service, etc.

The Thesis vividly described the importance of Communist propaganda work among the workers and stated that: “Our chief general duty to the open revolutionary struggle is to carry on revolutionary propaganda and agitation.... Communist propaganda and agitation must be made to take root in the very midst of the workers, out of their
common interests and aspirations, and especially out of their common struggle. The most important point to remember is – *that Communist propaganda must be of a revolutionary character*. Therefore, the Communist watchword (slogans) and the whole Communist attitude towards concrete questions must receive our special attention and consideration.”⁶⁰ It underlines the followings should be the principle form of the Communist propaganda;

1. Individual verbal propaganda.
2. Participation in the industrial and political labor movement.

It is notable here that the Communist cultural activism began as a part of this ideological propaganda.

To achieve the confidence of the working class, the Communists were asked to “pay great attention to the concrete questions of working class life. They must help the workers to come to a right understanding of these questions. They must draw their attention to the most flagrant abuses and must help them to formulate their demands in a practical and concise form. In this way they will awaken in the workers the spirit of solidarity, the consciousness of community of interests among all the workers of the country as a united working class, which in its turn is a section of the world army of proletarians.”⁶¹ It also suggests organizations like dramatic societies, sporting clubs, co-operative societies, etc may be used as intermediaries between Party and the workers.
In order to win the semi-proletarian sections of the workers, as sympathizers of the revolutionary proletariat, the *Thesis* asked “the Communists must make use of their special antagonism to the landowners, the capitalists and the capitalist state in order to win those intermediary groups from their mistrust of the proletariat. This may require prolonged negotiations with them, or intelligent sympathy with their needs, free help and advice in any difficulties, also opportunities to improve their education, etc., all of which will give them confidence in the Communist movement. The Communists must also endeavor to counteract the pernicious influence of hostile organizations which occupy authoritative positions in the respective districts, or may have influence over the petty-bourgeois working peasants, over those who work in the home industries and other semi-proletarian classes. These are known by the exploited, from their own bitter experience, to be the representatives and embodiment of the entire criminal capitalist system, and must be unmasked.”

While presenting the *Thesis* on Communist party activity in the sphere of education, it declared that the “*Educational work in the ideas of Marxism is an essential task* for all Communist Parties. The aim of such educational work is to improve and strengthen the educational activity of Party members and organizers.... To extend the Communist educational activity of the Party as opportunities and circumstances permit, *central and local Party schools, day and evening classes* should be set up, teachers and lecturers invited for the various groups, libraries organized, etc.” The *Thesis* stressed the importance of Party press and argued that “The Communist paper must in the first place take care of the interest of the oppressed and fighting workers. It must be our best agitator and the leading propagator of the proletarian revolution.”
Most of the policies of the cultural propaganda and engagement of foreign intellectual emanated from the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, popularly known as *Agitprop*, within the Comintern’s Executive Committee (IKKI). The revolutionary messages had to be disguised and it had to reach the western publics without exposing Comintern as its source. This requirement resulted in the proposal to use culture as a means of propaganda. The programme was to include: publication in the foreign press; translation of Soviet literary fiction; sending Soviet artists and other cultural emissaries abroad; encouraging the creation of nominally non-political Comintern-run organizations (i.e. Communist front organizations); and securing the cooperation of western intellectuals. The *Agitprop* propaganda sub-department of IKKI was responsible for the creation and supervision of many cultural organizations.

In this sense it is noted that the IKKI, had made some contacts with the Indian Communist Party as a part of its international policy. The Middle Eastern Sub-Department of IKKI contacted the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India through a letter dated Moscow, 22.10.1928 regarding the development of Communist movement in India. It was signed “On behalf of the Chief of the Sub-Department” by Glemons Palme Dutt and is countersigned by V. Tivel on behalf of the Secretary. The letter asked the Communist Party of India to strengthen its ‘Agit-Prop’ section and concentrate on the mobilization of trade union activities among the workers. Further, it exhorted: “Do not consider armed resistance to arrest, affrays with the police, vengeance against the oppressor-official, to be unnecessary and injurious actions. Consider them exclusively from the point of view of their utility in revolutionizing the masses and terrorizing the criminal authorities.”
The prohibitory notifications of different periods, issued by the British Government in India, on the Communist propaganda literature from outside, reveals the strict measures adopted by the government in preventing the entry of Communist ideology in this land. The Comintern with its international policy, published propaganda literature and it reached India from its founding years onwards. To check the entry of the literature published by the Communist International in India, the British Government issued a notification on 22 April 1922, “prohibiting the entry of any publication issued by the Communist International.”

But the Communist International continued its work of carrying propaganda literature in India through its ally organizations. By observing this through the intelligence report, the British Government revised the prohibition notification which prohibits: “the bringing into British India of any copy of any publication issued by or emanating from (a) the Communist International or (b) any organization affiliated to, or controlled by, or connected with the Communist International.”

Later on 10-Sep-1932, the Government, through another notification, widened the scope of the prohibited materials. It includes “(1) any document issued by or emanating from – (a) the Communist International, or (b) any organization affiliated to or controlled by or connected with the Communist International, or (c) any person holding office in any such organization, or (2) any document containing substantial reproduction of the matter contained in any such document.”

Through this general Communist notification, the Government placed all the Communist publications within its scope. Facing some struggles against this from the Publishers’ Association, the Government prepared a list of books, which fell within the 1932 notification. The list contained almost
all available books on Communism, Socialism, Marxism, Capitalism, Fascism, Bolshevism, Imperialism and people’s movements.\textsuperscript{73}

Under this circumstance also, the Indian Communists managed to get certain international Communist publications and the notable among them are; (1) \textit{The International Press Correspondence} (2) \textit{General News Service} (3) \textit{The Communist International} (4) \textit{The Labour Monthly}. Noticing its circulation in India, through a notification dated on 29\textsuperscript{th} May 1937, the Central Government prohibited the bringing of these four documents into British India.\textsuperscript{74} In order to strictly prevent the entry of Communist documents to India completely, the Government also took initiatives to provide special rewards to the preventive officers, those who seized the Communist documents vigilantly.\textsuperscript{75}

The Communist International was a molding source for the world Communist movement. It gave revolutionary strategies to build up Communist parties and guided all of its socio-political and cultural interventions. The number of printed documents on Communism, which disseminated in India, after the formation of the Communist International, shows its active interventions in shaping the Communist groups here.

\textbf{The October Revolution and the Soviet Union Factor}

The October Revolution of 1917 was a landmark in human history. It marked the beginning of a conscious process in history by transforming what was natural evolution until that time to social revolution. A basic change took place in the world view of the masses. The rule of the proletariat became the slogan of all freedom-loving peoples. The
October Revolution fulfilled that dream and the Soviet Russia showed the model and set the example for all oppressed peoples. It awakened the humane conscience and invigorated the revolutionary forces to struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed and toiling masses from colonial domination, exploitation and slavery throughout the world in general and in colonial Asian and African countries in particular. In colonial and semi-colonial countries this revolution articulated the human aspirations for liberation.

The Indian national leaders like M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were considerably influenced by its message to humanity. The writings of these leaders in English attracted the intellectuals of Kerala also. Gandhi, writing in his popular journal, *Young India*, in 1928 observed: “There is no questioning the fact that the Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up everything for its sake; an ideal that is sanctified by sacrifice of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain”. Nehru, after a visit to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1927, wrote a series of articles entitled, “Wither India” in appreciation of the Soviet system. At the beginning of the thirties, Rabindranath Tagore broke new ground by publishing his Letters from Russia. These were Tagore’s first-hand impressions of the practice of socialism in the Soviet Union. This book and some other writings on the Soviet Union by intellectuals in the country created inspiration and interest among the elites.

When the Bolshevik regime came to power in Russia, they showed much interest in India. By way of India, they thought that they could weaken an enemy who represented the chief obstacle to the global revolution and menace to the security to the
Soviet government itself. Moreover, apart from offering a weapon against Britain, India in itself presented an attractive object for the export of revolution. The spectacle of an oppressed colonial people was a strong stimulant to the revolutionary zeal of the Bolsheviks in these early years. Writing of the prospect in India in 1919, one commentator, Kerzhentsev, showed both the calculation and the ardor that were characteristic of the Bolshevik outlook. India, he said, is the “most profitable” of the British colonies and when it throws off the imperialist yoke, Britain will be deprived of “huge revenue”. But more than that, he said, “When India rises up against imperialism; it will ignite revolutions throughout the colonial world.” Further, he states, “the country is ripe for revolution and the revolutionary movement will grow increasingly stronger in the coming months.” For the fulfillment of their aspirations the Bolsheviks adopted a revolutionary plan for India and Bolshevik documents were widely circulated in India.

The co-existence of the worst world economic crisis in the history of capitalism and the breath-taking speed with which a backward country - Russia - was modernizing itself was an eye opener for every Indian. Soviet Union at that time emerged as the inspiring model in eradicating poverty, unemployment and other social and economic problems. October Revolution stirred and inspired the Indian intelligentsia. In spite of the strict censor on the news about the October Revolution, the Indian writers were eager to be acquainted with the radical changes that followed the great event. For example, Gorky’s *Mother* was translated in Indian languages by Congressmen in the late 1920s and early 1930s and was one of the most widely read books of the time. The Indian writers, devoted the cause of liberation and man’s emancipation from exploitation, were also inspired by the ideals behind the October Revolution. The ideas of socialism or Marxism
not only fascinated but influenced the thought of the most prominent writers of the twenties and early thirties like Prem Chand, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, Vallathol Narayana Menon and Narul Islam.

The young generation of the writers that appeared on the scene in the third decade had a closer and deeper understanding of scientific socialism. Hence they were in a better position to read the Indian political and social reality, in the perspective of the fast changing world. Most of the revolutionaries of this period like Bhagat Singh were inspired by the success and achievement of the Russian Revolution. The Literature about Soviet Union and Marxist philosophy had started pouring into India through various channels. It also gave a new revolutionary spirit to the writers of the world with its new style-realism. \(^{84}\) Its ideas produced tremendous impact upon Malayalam literature, which is evident with the writings and with the establishment of progressive literary movement in the language.

The impact of revolutionary ideas on young Indian writers was so strong that in spite of rigid censorship they could not resist expressing their feelings of revolt and repulsion against the British repression and exploitation. They created revolutionary and patriotic characters struggling for national independence and socialistic order of the society. Almost in every language of the country, the young poets explored the facts of political, social and economic oppression of the masses. They fought revivalism, obscurantism, communalism and the evil of caste system contaminating Indian society. \(^{85}\)

The sensitivity reflected in the responses of various sections and individuals towards the Russian Revolution is quite significant in the development of the radical
movements in Kerala also. E.M.S. Namboodiripad wrote on the impact of Soviet Union that: “Political developments in the country and the world with the evolution of my own life, however, made such an impact on me that, within less than a decade after I first heard the word Bolshevism, I became an ardent admire of the Bolshevik Party and its Government in the U.S.S.R. The rapid advance of socialist planning in the first land of proletarian dictatorship, co-existing with a crisis-ridden capitalist world, made me, like tens of thousands of my generation, look up to Bolshevism as the path for India to follow. It did not take me long after that to declare myself a Communist and work as one... while getting disillusioned with Gandhism and moving towards the Left, we heard and read about the Soviet ‘experiment’ and about the anti-Communist Meerut conspiracy case trial.”

It has been the Communist movement, headed by Moscow that has most fervently championed the idea of culture as propaganda, each art a weapon, a weapon of the working class, a weapon of world Communism. With the establishment of the socialist state, the Soviet Union tried to make cultural contacts with the foreign countries. For this, an organization called, the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (V.O.K.S) was created in 1925 and officially tasked with cultural exchanges with other countries, but was criticized by western Government officials and press as being a propaganda organization. It mainly carried out cultural propaganda through its magazine and it reached India also. Knowing this, through a notification dated on 28th July 1930, the Government added the V.O.K.S. magazine to the list of publications and newspapers issued by the Communist International or affiliated organizations, and hence thereby prohibited its entry in India.
It is an established fact that the Great October Revolution has been fully considered as a people’s movement for all times. It has brought about radical change in more than one-third of the world’s population by helping in the establishment of the socialistic pattern of society in their countries. Though the revivalist and Fascist forces are desperately trying to preserve the age old system of exploitation and oppression of the toiling masses, the counter movement to establish socialist order of the society in India has been invigorated with the active help and co-operation of the Soviet Union. The Great Depression in the capitalist world, success of the Soviet Five Year Plans, the anti-Fascist wave the world over, and the turn to Marxism among many British intellectuals were major positive influences.\(^\text{88}\) The impact of the Russian Revolution was felt widely and immediately and a Left current developed from early 1920s within the ranks of the Indian national movement and soon became a part of its ideological spectrum. Beginning with late 1920s, bourgeois ideological hegemony over the national movement was challenged in a serious manner by early Communist groups. The peasant and working class movements were gaining momentum in the country. It was the result of this phenomenon that the Left wing of the Indian National Congress, organized in the form of “Congress Socialist Party” declared in 1934 that, “the complete independence of India is our goal and by the complete independence, we mean, India’s liberation from British imperialism and establishment of a socialist society.”\(^\text{89}\)

**Formation of the Communist Party of India and its Cultural Modulations**

The emergence of the Left movement in India coincided with radical trends in the anti-imperialist movements in several other colonial and semi-colonial and dependent
countries, particularly Asia, after the October Revolution. Although the exact starting point of the Communist Party in India has been a polemical issue, it could be safely said that its foundation was laid at the Second Congress of the Communist International. M.N. Roy, then the leading Marxist and an emigre revolutionary envisaged “the Indian Revolution originating from the workers and peasants on Russian model”. For that purpose, he pleaded, for the Comintern’s exclusive assistance in the formation of Communist Party of India (CPI) since that alone “could organize the masses for the class struggle, end the British imperialism as well as destroy the European capitalism and thus accomplish the Indian Revolution.”

It may be recalled that even before the First World War, revolutionary organizations led by Indian emigres were set up during 1905-1913 in places like London, Paris and San Francisco. Later with the success of the October Socialist Revolution, contacts between various centers of Indian revolutionaries in exile and the young Soviet Republics were established. This marked the spread of the first wave of Marxian ideology amongst the national revolutionaries. M.N. Roy, who at that time represented the Communist Party of Mexico in the Second Comintern Congress (Moscow, 1920) and who was later elected to its (Comintern) executive committee in that capacity was the key figure who co-ordinate the activities of various revolutionary groups that existed during this period. Later, on 17th October 1920, Roy along with Abani Mukharjee and some other revolutionaries also formed a party called the Communist Party of India in Tashkent in the erstwhile Soviet Union. M. N. Roy, then helped the dissemination of Communist ideas in India through his letters, articles, messages, etc., addressed to the Left-inclined Congressmen and budding Communists.
The revolutionaries, most of whom were abroad, were the first to respond to Communism. “By the end of 1922 through emissaries like Nalini Gupta (an ex-terrorist) and Shukat Usmani (who had been a mujahir)” writes Sumit Sarkar, “Roy had been able to establish some tenuous and often intercepted secret links with embryonic Communist group which had emerged from out of the non co-operation and Khilafat experiences in Bombay (S.A. Dange), Calcutta (Muzaffar Ahmed), Madras (Singaravelu) and Lahore (Ghulam Hussain).”

Until 1930, Roy conducted his struggle from abroad, using revolutionary techniques learned from Europe. He not only directed Indian Communist activity from abroad, but also interpreted India to the Comintern and thus played a major role in determining its strategy for India and for other colonial areas. Publishing Communist propaganda and smuggling it into India and the building of an organization in India which would distribute the material and form a Communist Party were the important tasks of Roy. Indian Communists were few and widely dispersed and most of them had only the most elementary understanding of Marxism and world Communist strategy. Roy’s contribution was that he drew them together both organizationally and ideologically and linked them directly to the Communist International. Roy also outlined the strategies and methods for the Communist groups in India.

While writing on the “Organization and Programme”, he stressed the necessity of the formation of a working class party and stated that “Our party must not only lead the working-classes in their everyday struggle for existence, but should also formulate the demands which correspond to the permanent interests of the toiling masses. Such
demands will open up a new vision before the working-class, which will thus develop the will to fight.”

While understanding Roy’s efforts, through a notification dated on 7th July 1923, the Governor General in Council prohibited “the bringing by sea or by land, into British India of any copy of any publications issued by M.N. Roy or Evelyn Roy, wherever and in language they may be printed.”

It is thus clear that the formation of the Communist Party of India took place in two stages-first on October 17, 1920 at Tashkent which had been given representation with consultative status in the Communist International. A Soviet scholar who has made an intensive study of all the materials available in the CPSU Archives tends to agree and says that “the Indian Communists who organized themselves in Tashkent and Moscow were the first Communist group which tried to create a Communist Party in exile and by that act alone, had laid the ground for the Indian Communist movement.” The work done by Roy and his organization made a big contribution to the second stage of the formation of the CPI, namely, the Kanpur Conference of 1925, where the Communist Party of India was formally constituted on Indian soil.

The conference of Indian Communists at Cawnpore (Kanpur) itself, held openly in December 26, 1925 at the invitation of a local “National” Communist, Satyabhakta. The conference elected M. Singaravelu as president, Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta, a member of the AICC, as general secretary, and put Muzaffar Ahmad (released from prison owing to serious illness) and S.V. Ghate and others on its executive committee. The defiantly open attempt to organize the conference was matched in the resolution of solidarity with
thirteen named Communist victims of the Peshawar and Cawnpore cases. The definition of the Party’s ‘object’ in its constitution was also stated without equivocation: “the establishment of a workers’ and peasants’ republic based on the socialization of the means of production and distribution, by the liberation of India from British imperialist domination.”\textsuperscript{103} In a significant statement on the declaration form, it was added: No one who is a member of any communal organization shall be admitted as a member of the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{104} The Communist Party was, perhaps, the first political party of any significance to exclude persons belonging to communal organisations.\textsuperscript{105}

While considering the aim of the Party, it is stated that: “To educate and organize the working class namely peasants, labourers and servants engaged in other occupations, for the abolition of capitalism.”\textsuperscript{106} As far as the methods to achieve this goal the document outlined the strategies: “(a) To support working people of every occupation in their struggle against oppressive conditions; (b) to start unions of peasants, labourers and people engaged in other trades; (c) to organize lectures, schools, reading rooms and to distribute pamphlets and newspapers and (d) to bring all the working class organizations under their own control.”\textsuperscript{107}

In his presidential address M. Singaravelu used several poetic lines and quoted several poems in order to convey his ideas clearly and easily and to arouse the spectators. While regarding the history of humanity from the dawn of ages and the persecutions which are facing the Communists at present, he quoted the following lines of American poet Walt Witman,

“Those Corpses of young men
Those martyrs who hang from the gibbets,
Those hearts pierced by the grey lead
Cold and motionless as they seem live elsewhere with unslaughtered vitality,
They live in other young men, O kings,
They live in brothers ready to defy you,
They were purified by death; they were taught and exalted,
Not a grave of the murdered for freedom but,
Grows seed for freedom, in its turn to bear seed
Which the winds carry a far and the rains and snows nourish,
Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let loose
But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering, counseling and cautioning.”

While making an appeal to the peasants, M. Singaravelu addressed them as the real salt of the earth and asked them: “Oh! You the forlorn, the oppressed and the suppressed, let us all march together in weal or in woe singing the song international,

“Away, with wreckage of past nations
Enslaved crowd-rise to the call
The world shall change from its foundation
We that are nothing shall be all.”

In his concluding remarks, he pointed out that: “The future of India is in our hands. A better India lies in our dreams. Let us therefore try to realize the dream of a free India, free from the exploitations of the weak over the strong, free from drudgery which killeth our life, free from starvation, disease and death, free to express our thoughts without let or hindrance, free to enjoy the highest produce of art, science and culture, and free to sing the song of Labour:

Now beneath the rule of robbers the world grows sad and old,
The people bound and fettered in chains of glittering gold,
Yet when the trumpet soundeth, the world shall see a sight,
The golden chain is broken on the coming of the light,
Oh! The coming of the light, oh! The coming of the light,
The golden chain is broken on the coming of the light.”

After the formation of the Party, in the next year itself, the Party tried to make contact with the international Communist movements and import propaganda literature through proper channel. On 2nd July 1926, Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India, wrote a letter to the Home Member, Government of India stating that “Whereas the Communist Parties are the International organizations of the working class, the Communist Party of India desires to seek a close co-operation of the parties in the foreign land, particularly in England and other British Colonies, for the promotion of their common cause.” He also enquired, “if the Government of India will have any objection and whether our correspondence with these parties or persons like Messrs. M.N. Roy, S. Sanklatwala, M.P. George, Lansbury M.P and others interested in Indian affairs will be intercepted and stopped.” Further, he asked permission to import literature for distribution and requested to a list of proscribed literature in India. He concluded his letter by stating that “the matter is of purely public interest.”

Further, in a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India and the Workers’ and Peasants’ Party, M.N. Roy pointed that: “Our relation is that of Comrades agreeing on the principles and programme of a revolutionary struggle for freedom. This agreement leads us in one party. Our collective task, therefore, is to organize a party that will lead the struggle for the realization of the principles and
programme we all subscribe to.” He also points out the necessity of the international affiliation of the Party. According to him “Indian working class must have international affiliation, because a revolutionary struggle against capitalism cannot be conducted successfully in national isolation. International solidarity which is expressed in organizational relations is a political necessity.” Again he points; “The Communist Party must unquestionably be a section of the Communist International.... A Communist Party must be an organic part of the world Communist organization. It cannot be otherwise and call itself Communist.”

Pointing towards the tools, which have to be used to build the Party, Roy commented: “The Party Press is the main instrument to build up the party.”

By seeing the growing Communist mobilization, on 16th May 1934, the Government of India addressed the local Governments, asking them to make full use of the existing powers in countering Communist agitation, and in particular drawing their attention to prosecutions under section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code and the use of powers conferred by the special emergency Acts at present in force. Later, on 23rd July 1934, the Home Department, through a notification declared the Communist Party of India, its Committees, Sub-Committees and Branches to be unlawful associations within the meaning of Part II of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908.

Though the Party was banned, the leaders conducted vigorous campaigns in order to mobilize the workers, peasants and other marginalized sections of the society. This led to the formation of secret Party groups and trade unions in different parts of the country. This was the period, in which the Left ideologies were applied in all spheres of human
life. With this effort, the Communist ideology achieved prominence in several parts of the country and regions, Kerala is a best example for that.

END NOTES


10. Karl Marx for the first time advocated base/super structural mode of society in *Das Capital*, which was published first in 1867.


17. According to Anne Showstack Sassoon, in “A Gramsci Dictionary” in *Approaches to Gramsci*, ed., by Anne Showstack Sassoon, Writers and Reading Publishing Co-operative Society Ltd, London, 1982, “Hegemony is used in the sense of influence, leadership, consent rather than the alternative and opposite meaning of domination. It has to do with the way one group influences other groups, making certain compromises with them in order to gain their consent for its leadership in society as a whole. Thus particular interests are transformed and some concept of the general interest is promoted. Hegemony has cultural, political and economic aspects and is the foundation of Gramsci’s argument that the


22. According to Sassoon, Gramsci defines intellectuals in a broad sense, to indicate all those people who have an organizational or ideological-cultural role in society, e.g. school teachers, factory technicians and managers, civil servants, social workers, university professors, journalists etc,. He then differentiates between organic intellectuals who perform tasks essential to the reproduction of a particular society, e.g. a capitalist one; and traditional intellectuals whose function derives from an earlier historical period, e.g. priests, but who continue to exist.


40. *Ibid*.


42. His works includes: a reputable book on Physics from a dialectical materialist perspective (*The Crisis in Physics*) and four theoretical works on culture. One of these is dedicated to poetry (*Illusion and Reality*), another to the novel (*Romance and Realism*) and two to general essays in such fields as History, Psychology and Religion (presently combined in a single volume, *Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture*).


44. Quoted in *Ibid*.

45. *Ibid*.


47. *Ibid*.

49. His books in this connection includes *Communication, Television Technology and Cultural Form* and *Towards 2000*.


51. *Ibid*.


56. Vide the details in Alix Holt and Barbara Holland, *op.cit.*, 279.


58. *Ibid*.

59. *Ibid*.

60. *Ibid*.

61. *Ibid*. 
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
66. Ibid., p.37
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. *File No.577*, Legislative Department, Un official, 1927, NA, New Delhi. Notification issued by the Finance Department (Central Revenue) Dated 22-April-1922, Vide Appendix II. A.
71. Ibid.
73. *File No.41/8/35*, Home, Political, NA, New Delhi. List prepared by the Director of Intelligence Bureau of the books detained under the General Communist Notification of the 10th September 1932.
74. *File No.41/12/37*, Intelligence Bureau, Secret Report, Home, Political, 1937, NA, New Delhi. Vide Appendix II. C. *The International Press Correspondence* is
weekly published from London and is an organ of the Communist International. *General News Service*, published from London, is a press cutting service for the *International Press Correspondence*. *The Labour Monthly* is considered to be the organ of the British Communist Party and is published monthly from London.

75. *File No.574-C.E/29*, Central Board of Revenue, Customs Establishment, 1929, NA, New Delhi. Vide a letter dated 29th Oct 1929 to the Secretary, Central Board of Revenue, the Collector of Customs, requested to grant a special reward to the preventive officer, by name, Judd for the successful seizure of a typed copy of a publication by M.N. Roy titled “China – From Confucius to Sun-Yat-Sen and Further”. The seizure of the book was treated as an excellent detective work.


82. For an account of Bolshevik documents, which were circulated in India, Vide N.G. Barrier, *Banned: Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India, 1907-1947*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1976, p.92.


84. Ibid, p.x.

85. Ibid.


92. Apart from M.N. Roy and his wife Evelyn Trent Roy, the following Indians also participated at the Second Congress of Comintern: Abani Mukharjee, M.P.B.T Acharya (the former was mentioned as a left socialist and latter as a delegate from the Indian Revolutionary Association in Tashkent) and Mohammad Shafiq (an observer delegate).

93. The members, who founded CPI at Tashkent on 17 October 1920 consisted of M.N. Roy, Evelyn Trent Roy, A.N. Mukharjee, Rosa Fitingov, Mohammad Ali,


98. *File No.574-C.E/29*, Central Board of Revenue, Customs Establishment, 1929, Notification dated 7th July 1923, NA, New Delhi, Vide Appendix II. D.


101. M.N. Roy arguing that the main demerit of the Kanpur Conference was its organizer, Satyabhattaka was not a Communist. Vide, M.N. Roy’s letter dated March 1926, NMML, New Delhi.


107. Ibid.


109. Ibid.

110. Ibid.

111. File No.181, Home, Political, 1926, NA, New Delhi. Letter from Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India to the Home Member, Government of India dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} July 1926. Vide Appendix IV.

112. Ibid.

113. Ibid.

114. Ibid.

115. File No.190, Home, Political, 1928, NA, New Delhi. Copy of the letter from M.N. Roy to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India and the Workers’ and Peasants’ Party. The letter was issued in the Name of “J” and was dated the 30\textsuperscript{th} December 1927. The Intelligence Bureau is the opinion that it was written by
M.N. Roy in December 1924. Here Roy also criticizes the resolution, which was adopted at the Communist Kanpur Congress for its negation to maintain its affiliation with the Communist International.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.


120. Ibid., Vide, “Notification Declaring the CPI to be an unlawful Association” in Appendix V.