Chapter V

Communist Movement in Manipur and Neighbouring Areas

This chapter covers the period when the Communist Party was formed as an underground party under the leadership of Irawat till the announcement of his death. The circumstances leading to the formation of the underground Communist Party; the tactical lines that the Central Committees of the CPI were following; the measures that the GOI had taken up to check the advancement of the Communist Movement, not only in Manipur, but in the entire South and South East Asia; the advancement and regression of the movement; Irawat’s role in bringing about unity among various Communist parties of Burma; (Myanmar) and his demise in Burma and after are being analysed.

5.1 Pungdongbam Incident

Amidst the post-election atmosphere, the political situation of Manipur became more serious. Under the policy of the GOI, Sardar Patel strongly urged for the formation of a *Purbanchal Pradesh* (North East Frontier Province) comprising of some of the north-eastern states of India, such as, Manipur, Cachar, Lushai Hills, and Tripura. Irawat was strongly against this plan. Members of the MPS and MKS carried out many meetings and propagandas among the people. Allegations began pouring out by the authority against Irawat that he was responsible for all the upheavals in Manipur and hill areas. Krishak Sabha, Praja Sangha, Mahila Sanmeloni, and Student
Federation were all banned from organising meetings without permission and rallies, volunteer trainings etc. were not allowed.¹

A protest meeting was called under the leadership of Irawat by MPS and MKS at M.D.U. Hall, Imphal, on 21st September, 1948, against the proposed formation of a Purbanchal Pradesh. Irawat’s view was that as Manipur being a state having her own well defined history, culture, and tradition, expressed his desire for the State to remain a separate state within India, instead of merging with other states. On the other hand, Socialist Party was strongly demanding for the merging with Assam, while the HPC, which later became Congress very heartily supported for the formation. For the meeting Irawat had obtained the requisite permit and arranged for its successful conduct.²

On that day many peasants and sympathisers of MPS and MKS, from all directions, started moving towards the meeting venue. From the northern eastern side of the Manipur Valley, people from Telou, Chana, Nongdam, Lamlai, Pungdombam, Sekta, Pukhao etc., organised a big rally towards it. In a place called Yorbung, just before Pungdombam, it was stopped by a police team led by O.C. Naranbabu. A scuffle broke out between the rally participants and the police team. In the ensuing melee, ostensibly in order to intimidate the former, a shot from the police side had accidentally hit the police O.C. and he died instantly. As a consequence people were subjected to massive arrestment and inhuman torture for many days. People of the

northern area had to face lots of hardship. The 21st September, 1948, incident came to be known in the history of the Communist Party as the *Pungdonbam Incident*. The meeting at M.D.U. was cancelled. Irawat and his associates went underground and sowed the seed for the establishment of an underground Communist Party in Manipur.³

However, the version of the Communist about the incident was contested by the Government. Government’s point was that, Naranbabu had gone to arrest some Krishak Sabha activists who had threatened some local people and not to obstruct the rally. He was shot from the side of the Sabha on that faithful day. Subsequently, many Krishak Sabha activists including leaders like Maimon Madhumangol (Nambol Basti), Nongmaithem Budha (Keisampat Basti) and Netra Singh (Pungdongbam Basti), all together numbering around 162, were arrested by 22nd September, 1948.⁴ Meanwhile Tomal Singh, a Manipur State Congress leader, sent a telegram on 23rd September, 1948, to Sadar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of Indian Union, writing, “ONE EXCONVICT RECRUITED BY COMMunist KRISHAK SABHA SHOT DEAD ONE POLICE OFFICER. STOP COMMunist. MOPPED UP LEADER. IRABAT SINGH GOES UNDERGROUND. NOTHING ALARMING = TOMAL SINGH” [sic].⁵

Almost instantaneously, the IGM issued warrant to arrest Irawat along with the workers of the MKS and the MPS. However, the bid to arrest Irawat proved to be

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Whereas, the banning of Communists before arresting the leaders was criticised by Gopinath Bardoloi, Premier of Assam, as a poorly thought out execution on the part of the IGM.  

The Working Committee of the MKS held a meeting on 28th September, 1948, condemning the ‘reign of terror’ unleashed by the IGM to the peasants of North-Eastern side of Manipur Valley. It strongly condemned the inhuman torture of many of its members, the unrest subjected to the women and children of many villages. It fully disapproved the enquiry made by police alone and demanded: Immediate formation of an Impartial Enquiry Committee; Release of all the peasants then detained in the Imphal Jail without trial and lifts the warrants against them. The copies of the Proceedings of the meeting were sent to: The Governor General of India; The Prime Minister of India; The Deputy Prime Minister of India; The Governor of Assam; The Prime Minister of Assam; and The Maharaja of Manipur.

N.K. Rustomji, Advisor to the Governor of Assam, sent a Confidential Report to the Secretary to the GOI, Ministry of States, New Delhi, on 4th October, 1948. It expressed the comments made by the Governor of Assam, that the banning of the MKS and the MPS, and the arrest of some of the principal Communist leaders had a sobering effect. The Chief Minister had been instructed to keep the closest watch on Communist activities. Arrangement was also made whereby sections of the Assam

Rifles to check, and if necessary to arrest travelers crossing into Manipur from Burma regarding whose antecedents of character might be of any doubt.⁹

The Interim Ministry resigned instant on 18th October, 1948, when the first sitting of the Manipur Legislative Assembly took place. The Constitution, unlike others laid down that, the Assembly would elect Ministers according to the rules of business to be passed by them. The rules being non-existent, the Assembly was adjourned till 25th October, 1948, leaving the works of framing the rules to a Select Committee of 9 M.L.As. On the Second sitting on 25th October, 1948, rules of business having been put up adjourned for 3 days to enable the M.L.As., to study. In the meantime the Interim Council had been ordered to carry on the administration as a Care Taker Council.¹⁰

5.2 Formation of the underground Communist Party in Manipur

There had been repeated proposals for establishing the Communist Party in Manipur, from the side of Assam POC. However, the consequence of sidelining of these by Irawat was realised only after the Pungdongbam Incident. Even though there was a Communist Party, it did not have proper programmes and policies and moreover, due to the dissertation of many of its members after the Incident, it became inconsequential.¹¹ Strong pressure from Student-Youth group coupled with the realisation felt due to the absence of Communist Party immediately after becoming underground, it came into being since 29th October, 1948, at the D.O.C. level under

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¹⁰ National Archives of India, “Report on Manipur State for the Fortnight Ending, 31st October, 1948, made by the Chief Minister of Manipur”, ibid., p. 60.

the Assam POC. The first Secretary of the Party was Thokchom Boro Singh.\(^\text{12}\) In the underground Party Irawat did not take any post, even though he was the leader.\(^\text{13}\) (See Appendix No. 4)

Many students who were studying in Calcutta and Gauhati, such as, Moirangthem Meghachandra, Lamabam Ibotombi, Ningthoujam Binoy, Ngangom Mohendra, Thokchom Bira, Longjam Gyanendra, K. Haridas Sharma and youths like Thokchom Boro, Moirangthem Ibohal, Arambam Nipamacha, and others associated with Irawat while building up the Party.\(^\text{14}\) Many women had also participated in the establishment of the Party, such as, Tongbram Sabi, Heishnam Rajani, Piyai, Kameng Jati, Konsam Ibemhal, Maibam Kandabini, Moirangthem Urirei, Keinahal (Arambam Ongbi), Thangjam Thaninmacha, Mutum Kamal, Thambal Leima, and many others.\(^\text{15}\)

The Manipur D.O.C. had taken new memberships and started the formation of ‘Party Cells’ in many of the villages of the State. In the mean time, the then IGM made efforts to nib in the bud, the nascent Communist Party. On the other hand, it became a Party appreciated by the people of Manipur and many hard struggles were carried out in the interest of the people.\(^\text{16}\) In the D.O.C. Circular No. 3 (Tak) \([sic]\), dated 13\(^\text{th}\) December, 1948, well defined guidelines for all the revolutionary leaders were enumerated as “Tek Policies”, which warned them from becoming too complacent and wayward in their behavior. A well discipline life style for every Tek

\(^\text{13}\) Personal Interview of Langoljam Tiken Singh, Khundrakpam, a close associate of Irawat, dated 19\(^\text{th}\) January, 2015.
leader was emphasised. They were urged upon to uphold the high ideal of revolutionary path shown by Lenin and Stalin.\textsuperscript{17}

The IGM made tremendous efforts to nab the “Big Tiger” as Irawat was known in the Government circle. In 1949 a reward of Rs. 10,000/- was announced on the head of Irawat. Still all their efforts proved to be unsuccessful. Perhaps, the peasant masses of Manipur saved Irawat from the hands of the enemy as a repayment of their dept to him for the sacrifices he made for their cause.\textsuperscript{18}

The D.O.C. organised the peasant masses under many slogans of the peasants, such as: Paddy would not be given on the basis of the sangbai (a Manipuri grain measuring bamboo basket) with the capacity of more than 64 utong (measuring container) brought by the landowner; The peasant would not deliver the paddy at the land owner’s house, rather, the landowner should come and take the paddy himself; The landowner could not take away the right to cultivate the land from a peasant at whatever time he pleased; Tax on Lakes will not be paid and so on. Under such slogans, in many villages along with the peasant masses, it launched movements and benefited many peasants from their success.\textsuperscript{19}

5.3 Appointment of Dewan of Manipur State

Meanwhile the Intelligence Bureau (IB) prepared a note by T.G. Sanjevi, Director, on the activities of Communists in Manipur State, dated 31\textsuperscript{st} January, 1949, and was issued to States Ministry. It stated that Communist activities were spreading in Manipur and in the areas around the State. Irawat had a large following, and he was

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\textsuperscript{17} D.O.C. Circular No.3 (Tak), D.O.C. Tak Committee, Samusang, dated 13\textsuperscript{th} December, 1948, pp. 1-3.
\textsuperscript{18} Babu, 2003, Loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., pp. 13-14.
\end{flushleft}
an avowed Communist. The proximity of Assam to Burma (Myanmar) had been causing them considerable concern for some time, and special measures had to be adopted against infiltration of ‘dangerous agents’ from China and Burma. The over-all indications in Manipur and the neighbouring areas were that Communism should then be stopped strongly.\(^{20}\)

The one step that can effect it is the appointment of an officer from the Government of India as Dewan of Manipur State. It is only an officer from outside who can see the position in regard to Communist infiltration and activities in their proper perspective. It is my considered view that the present Chief Minister being a person of the locality, cannot bring himself up to deal effectively and firmly with Communist in that area.\(^{21}\)

Rawal Amar Singh, Ex-Home Minister of Jaipur, had been listed on 9\(^{th}\) April, 1949, by the GOI for the appointment as the Dewan of the Manipur.\(^{22}\) Prior to that Prakasa, the Governor of Assam, had two rounds of conference with the Maharaja of Manipur, first on 22\(^{nd}\) March, 1949, and the second on 23\(^{rd}\) March, 1949, held at the Imphal Rest House to discuss the appointment of an Administrator from the Centre for Manipur State.\(^{23}\) Vallabhai Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Dominion India, expressed his gratefulness to Prakasa on 13\(^{th}\) April, 1949, about the latter’s skilful manner in which he carried out the negotiations with the Maharaja of Manipur, which brought him round to their scheme of things.\(^{24}\) What is worth to note here is that Patel was of the view that the earlier reports of Communist influence in the State


\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 172.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., p.26.

might be somewhat ‘over sanguine’. From the GOI’s perspectives, the State being dangerously close to Burma needed to be kept under constant supervision. Moreover, the Communists, the tribal areas, the development of the State and the improvement of the State and the improvement of the intelligence and security were to be looked after.  

5.4 Expulsion of (ex-) Krishak Sabha M.L.A.s and after

The MKS made an announcement on 16th April, 1949, about the M.L.A.s of the Sabha. In the aftermath of the Pungdongbam Incident, the Sabha was banned without any proper reason and consequently, Maimom Madhumangol Singh, General Secretary of the MKS, and Thokchom Shyamo Singh of Kakching, who had been elected as M.L.A.s were arrested and spent some time in jail, where they signed an undertaking that they had joined the organisation out of ignorance and promised never to join it again. Thus, they were released from jail. Waikhom Anganghal Singh another MKS M.L.A. had announced his leaving the organisation in the ‘most reactionary’ Congress paper Ngashi. Takhellambam Bokul Singh, the fourth M.L.A. of the Krishak Sabha and the former 3 were then in league with Praja Santi, the royalist Party, who were vehemently against MKS. The said 4 M.L.A.s, were elected with the blood of the poor peasants, however, they were then hand in glove with the reactionary Government in suppressing the MKS. It declared that, all the 4 ‘opportunist’ M.L.A.s were expelled from the organisation and no more related with them.  

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25 Ibid.
26 Manipur Krishak Sabha, Announcement of the Manipur Krishak Sabha, regarding the four Krishak Sabha M.L.A.s, dated 16th April, 1949, p.1.
The treacherous manner of the erstwhile Krishak M.L.As., ditched their former party/organisation would certainly be a great setback for the Communists. However, henceforth they (Communists/Krishaks) had taken the development on their stride and concentrated on rebuilding their party. The MKS issued an organisational circular on 19th July, 1949, in which the international, national and local political situations were addressed. The directives given to the local krishaks were namely: Strength of the Sabha should be increased; New Committee should be set up; Should work ceaselessly for increasing the number of volunteers; The existing Committees and volunteers should remain in high alert. Number of informants and intelligence personnel should be increased. Enemies’ police, C.I.D., reporters should be closely observed and reported their activities quickly; and so on.27

There was a lull briefly in the Communist activities at the branch committee level during the March-April of 1949. Apparently the nascent Party in underground was facing some difficulties to co-ordinate with its mass front organisations such as, Student Federation, Krishak Sabha, Mahila Sanmeloni, etc. A Secretariat was formed for the smooth functioning of the D.O.C. It urged the Cell leaders to discuss and digest the directives of the Party. Whatever being discussed by the Cell leaders was to be disseminated in the form of circulars among the rank and file comrades; not to waste any paper; then keep a clear account of the fund drive; a fund drive was to be carried out in different areas for helping the Pungdongbam Camp; urged some of the members not to be carried away by the propaganda of others and if there was any, should promptly inform the D.O.C. and so on.28 An interesting feature of Irawat’s

security measures taken up was such that, even top leaders of the Party were not given free access to meet him, without prior notices.  

### 5.5 Inner-Party Struggle and other Activities

Basna, deputed by the Assam POC to help the formation of the D.O.C., using his alias/tek name “Ranjit” wrote to Irawat, seeking his clarification on the issue of a Krishak Sabha Working Committee Member saying that the Sabha was not tailing the Manipur D.O.C., as a reply to D.O.C. Circular No. 3 (Tak) of 13th December, 1948. Interestingly, this letter also reveals the resolution of the Secretariat for self-criticism of important members of the Party which was not carried out till then.  

Apparently, Basna was critical about the functioning of the Party in underground and perhaps he was not happy with the way Irawat was conducting the affairs of the Party.

During this phase of the Communist movement in Manipur, some serious inner-party struggle broke out. Allegations and counter allegations began to hurl within the leadership, especially against Irawat. The most serious ones against him were raised during the month of April, 1949, by 3 D.O.C. secretariat members namely, Tonjam Basna Singh alias Ranjit, Thokchom Boro Singh alias Robin and Takhellambam Ibotombi Singh alias Kunja. Their allegations were centered on the issue of ‘corruption’ indulged by him, that he had misused the Party fund for personal use; that he had neglected many Working Committee meetings which resulted in fiasco, and it was his habit; he had used foolish people to monitor other D.O.C members. Even they issued warning that, if he had not complied on their scheme of things, complaint would be lodge to the POC. Moreover, threat was issued that they would

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30 Ibid.
inform the State police about his whereabouts. Irawat expressed with heartfelt shock to all these. In fact, he categorically negated them, as unfounded and rather they were taking the side of the enemy. It was indeed shocking that, such allegations were raised against someone who had sacrificed his all since 1934 onwards in the service of the people, who had been to jail for 3 years, another 3 years in exile out of which 7 months were in Silchar Jail. Moreover, he was leading a life of a fugitive for the cause of the down-trodden peasants and general masses.

Nevertheless, Irawat continued to guide the party and its frontal organisations. The MKS had issued a circular letter to all the branch committees, stating the challenges ahead for the Sabha, dated 13th July, 1949. It emphasised on two issues namely: The proposed satyagraha to be organised by the Manipur State Congress for the removal of the Maharaja of Manipur; and The by-election of the Manipur Legislative Assembly for the Utlou Constituency.

Here it is worth to remember the fate of Irawat, who had been elected as an M.L.A. from Utlou Constituency but could not take the oath. By-election was held on 19th and 20th September, 1949. Kuber from Changangei, who had already contested from Changangei as an independent candidate but defeated, was made to contest it for the vacant seat of Utlou. He was also one of those persons who became rich from war-time contract. The Communists persuaded him, through Moirangthem Ibohal Singh, who was one of his classmates in their school days, to contest it with the MKS ticket. He won, and on the same day was taken to underground. The Communists

31 Irawat’s letter addressed to the Communist Party members, Krishak Sabha and Students’ Federation clarifying himself on the allegations raised by three D.O.C. members, dated 2nd May, 1949, pp. 1-4.
(Krishaks) had taken a pledge that the seat provided for Irawat in the Manipur Legislative Assembly would never be allowed to be seated by anyone. Ibohal expressed that he had a very exhilarating feeling from that. (See Appendix No. 3)

Meanwhile things were moving very fast for the underground Party. The inner-party struggle that had been going on for some time had intensified, apparently due to the repressive measures from the Government on the one hand, and lack of proper understanding of party ideology among the leadership on the other. These resulted in the giving of *Self-Criticism* by Irawat.

Irawat gave his Self Criticism, probably on 10th October, 1949, (or before?) owning responsibility for all the debacles that the Communist Party had faced in Manipur, realising the grave mistake of not establishing the Party earlier, in spite of repeated proposals of the POC. He stated that, he was completely ignorant about the fact that the Party stood for Internationalism; Existence of class division in a society and revolution was about Class War; He was very much afraid of initiating Communist terminology amidst the people of Manipur, and did not fully understand that it was the role of the Communists to make people understand. He knew that his policies were wrong and could not move forward in the changing situation, however, remained adamant with the belief that he alone could improve the situation. That made him disillusioned regularly. Perhaps due to ignorance about the intent of practicing ‘criticism’ and ‘self-criticism’ within the Communist parties he wrongly interpreted the ‘well-meaning’ guidelines of POC as some sort of personal instigation against him. He believed that those who criticised him would keep quite when his

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34 Second Personal Interview of Moirangthem Ibohal Singh of Top, a close associate of Irawat, dated 20th January, 2015.
work had improved and the then simmering factionalism inside the Party would fall in line when his work would improve. He realised that the path he trotted was the path taken by Marshall Tito, the Yugoslav leader, who had been expelled from the Party (Comintern). He agreed that the path of Marxism-Leninism was the only path for survival for all the Communists. Lastly, he stated that he would give all his strength for the fulfillment of the goals adopted by the new D.O.C.35

Basna made Irawat to give his Self Criticism, in a meeting held one night at the residence of Sairem Lalit Singh of Awang Jiri. Lalit was said to have had attempted to kill Basna with a thengu (club) but was restrained by others who were there, saying that it would not be proper and discourteous on his part as the meeting was held at his residence. Basna was sitting silently looking downward while Lalit told him, “You alleged that Ahal (Irawat) as wrong while he is not”. By that meeting Kaviraj, Kanhai and Bijoy, who were long time friends of Irawat and Krishak activists, were expelled from the Party for their alleged disloyalty. Since then, they maintained a position of neutrality from the Party activities. (See Appendix No. 5)36

The expulsion of Kaviraj, Kanhai, Bijoy and others, belonging to the group regarded as ‘Old Guard’, by the above mentioned meeting could be a formality only. The process of walking the line adopted by the ‘New Guard’ had already been initiated by a D.O.C. meeting held at Chingkhu, organised by Langoljam Tiken Singh under the directive of Irawat. At the Chingkhu meeting Irawat was said to have taken an ambivalent position, taking into consideration his inability to decide whether to

35 D.O.C. Circular No. 8., dated 10th October, 1949, “Irawat’s Self Criticism”, p. 1. Note: In the said D.O.C. Circular, the date for giving the Self Criticism is not mentioned.
36 Personal Interview of Meitram Shamu Singh of Awang Jiri, a close associate of Irawat, dated 17th September, 2015.
stick to the old line or go for the new line. Nonetheless, ultimately but reluctantly, he was apparently in favour of adopting the new line.\textsuperscript{37}

The PB and CC were pursuing a \textit{Left Sectarian Adventurist} line during this period. An apparent feature of the functioning of the Party Centre was, that of severe curtailment of inner-party democracy and any dissent or differing opinion from the Provincial Committees (PCs) were regarded as anti-party activity. During this period the entire POC of Assam headed by Achintya Bhattacharya was branded as reformist ("Joshism") by the Party Centre (PB and CC) for not entirely accepting the \textit{Political Thesis} adopted by the Second Congress of CPI in February-March, 1948. Among others, the main issues which differed were: The ‘wrong attitude on the question of self-determination’ by the Assam POC; Its ‘failure to take a firm stand in the unity’ of the working class; Its ‘tailing behind the Assamese bourgeoisie on all relevant matters’ which affected the ‘unity and revolutionary organisation’ of the working class.\textsuperscript{38} Subsequently, by a PB resolution adopted on 13\textsuperscript{th} August, 1949, the Assam POC was dissolved and Achintya was removed from the post of Secretaryship. On the contrary the D.O.C. of Cachar, a subordinate unit of the Assam POC, was praised for following the CC line.\textsuperscript{39}

B.T. Ranadive was the initiator, executor and dogged defender of the Titoist method of Left Sectarian political line. PB was dissolved and he was removed from the post of Party Secretaryship, for various political reasons that the Party was facing.

\textsuperscript{37} Tiken, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{38} Central Committee, Communist Party of India, \textit{P.B. Note on the Assam P.C., Reformism in Assam, Supplement to the Note on March I}, dated 13\textsuperscript{th} August, 1949, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{39} Central Committee, Communist Party of India, \textit{P.B. Resolution on Assam P.C.}, dated 13\textsuperscript{th} August, 1949, p. 6.
when a new CC was provisionally reconstituted in May 1950. When Irawat gave his Self Criticism, Ranadive was still the Party Secretary of CPI. This perhaps partially explains, if not fully, the reason for Irawat confessing that he had walked the Titoist line. On the other hand, mentioning of Tito in his Self Criticism has been considered as unnecessary appendage and inconsequential extraneous part by some of his associates. However, considering the period and circumstances under which he gave his Self Criticism, it apparently carries certain meaning into it.

Possible fallout from the Self Criticism Irawat gave vis-à-vis his relation with the CC as well as POC could be some modification in the formulation of the policies of D.O.C. Hitherto, it seems that the D.O.C. under the leadership of Irawat had been more or less pursuing an autonomous line, largely compelled by the ground realities of Manipur. Another noteworthy consideration could be the correlation of the various D.O.C.s, including that of Manipur, vis-à-vis the Assam POC during this period. It has been mentioned earlier, in Chapter IV, that Irawat became a member of the Assam POC, just before attending as a delegate to the Second Congress. During this period, apart from his political activities in Manipur, he continued to address peasant and allied party activities in various parts of Assam. Cachar and other parts of Barak Valley continued to be the main areas where he regularly supervised the political situations, as a POC member as well as a Kisan Sabha leader, till he went underground after the Pungdongbam Incident.

From the above mentioned situations, few points could be deduced. Perhaps the D.O.C.s of Manipur and Cachar followed the Political Thesis adopted by the Second

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Congress in principle with certain modifications, considering the ground realities and Irawat could be the factor into it. Chronologically, Irawat’s Self Criticism (10th October, 1949?) was given after the Assam POC was dissolved by a resolution of PB (13th August, 1949.). The main issue lingering on between the Assam POC and Irawat was that of not establishing the Communist Party in Manipur immediately after he returned from exile in March, 1946. With the establishment of the over ground Party first on 23rd August, 1948, then the underground D.O.C. on 29th October, 1948, that issue ceased to exist anymore. Another possibility could be that of Irawat by-passing the POC while formulating the policies and programmes of the D.O.C., while adhering to that of the CC. The question is whether he continued to follow the CC line thereafter or not?

A public meeting sponsored by the D.O.C. was held in Imphal on 7th November, 1949, in observance of the 32nd Russian October Revolution Day, presided by Binoy, Secretary of the D.O.C. People were asked to follow the principles of Communist Party to achieve real democracy. It was addressed by M. Meghachandra Singh, L. Tiken Singh, and Ibochouba Singh.41 Perhaps, they were still operating as over ground members during that time even though the Party was functioning as an underground organisation.

The Working Committee of the MKS held a camera meeting on 17th November, 1949, at the residence of Sairem Nobin Singh, Awang Jiri. It touched on many pressing issues which were both political and economic such as, To make the masses of Manipur State understand that, law was made by men and if all the people be

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united, they could form another law and regulation of the State as they like; To point out the public that unity would strengthen them; To make propaganda in the interior villages of Manipur for unity. It was the only organisation which was representing the poor people of the State; To start a Civil Disobedience movement in the State, in the month of January or February 1950, if the State Authority refuse to pay War Compensation on time to the people of the State.42

Meanwhile, Himat Singh K. Maheswari took over charge of the Chief Commissioner, Manipur, on 18th November, 1949, and officiating Chief Commissioner Rawal Singh left Manipur.43

Thokchom Bira Singh, General Secretary of the Students’ Federation of the Manipur State, R.K. Singhajit Singh, Nongmaithem Nripen Singh, Jayanta Kumar and others, about 8 members, had been to Changangei on the 19th November, 1949, and helped the peasants of the locality in reaping crops. In return they got some quantity of paddy for their works. In that way they gained over the minds of the peasants of Manipur. They were planning to go to Porompat the following day to help the peasant party of the locality.44

About 100 persons attended the meeting of the All Manipur Youth League (AMYL) Convention arranged by the Students’ Federation held at Gandhi Maidan on 9th December, 1949. It was chaired by Kuber Singh, Ex. M.L.A. of Utlou, and also joined by N. Benoy, M. Megahchandra, N. Babu, Th. Bira, R.K. Sanatomba, Ng.

43 Ibid., p. 3.

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Mohendra, Kh. Iboyaima, S. Chatradhari and other members of the Federation. It criticised the Nehru Government as undemocratic and Fascist, as well as the Congress Party and other political parties; declared that only 12 pots of paddy would be given to the owner of land for each pari of land; supported the Russian Government and the Red China.  

Around 400-500 people attended the first public meeting of AMYL on 15\textsuperscript{th} December, 1949, held at Chalou Bazar. The League expressed that the development had frightened the bourgeoisie Government of Manipur and its virtual mouth pieces, the vernacular dailies viz., Ngashi of Kunjabihari and Prajatantra of Maipaksana, raised a hue and cry as to, “Why the Youth League had not been banned?”, “that the League mocked the administration”, therefore, “they did not have place to stay” and so on. These papers served as the C.I.D. to ban and suppress the organisation. It declared the bourgeoisie Government, C.I.D., police and people who help them as its enemies. Moreover, Yubati Devi, who had been instructed to sabotage the organisation of 12\textsuperscript{th} December Day celebration, her husband, ‘deserter’ Bokul and the ‘pseudo’ MKS activist Kanhai had published the inner information of the organisation in the paper Ngashi which resulted in the arrestment of many important leaders of the organisation. It regarded them as their big enemies. The goal of the League was to help the release of their important leaders and appealed to the people to support in making the organisation become strong.  

The Manipur D.O.C. had issued an undated appeal (presumably, during the same period as the Youth League activities were going) to the Hills and Valley peoples of

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45 S. Palit, Superintendent of Police, Manipur State, Imphal, “Fortnightly Confidential Report ending the 18\textsuperscript{th} December, 1949, Manipur, Imphal” dated, 15\textsuperscript{th} December, 1949, p. 2.
46 All Manipur Youth League, Circular No. 2, dated 18\textsuperscript{th} December, 1949, pp. 1-2.
Manipur who wanted democracy. It started with the slogans such as, Murderer of the poor, murderer of women, remove the administration of the murderous Congress; Remove the Congress administration which abrogated the belief of the people; and so on. It denounced the declaration of Independence of the State Administration by the unscrupulous State Congress who had surreptitiously conspired for ministry berth during the period of F.P. Pearson. Again 15th August, 1947, was declared as Independence Day with attainment of democratic administration. During the time of the establishment of the Manipur State Legislative Assembly, it was again declared as attainment of Independence. And lastly, merger of Manipur with India (21st September, 1949) was also declared as Independence. The Communist Party questioned, how many times the Independence of Manipur and democratic administration would be considered.47 Here, it is worthwhile to remember that during that period, at the all India level, the CC of the CPI was relentlessly pursuing a Left Sectarian Line, also called B.T. Ranadive Line, taken after the name of the then General Secretary of the Party.

Some of the democratic programmes enumerated by the D.O.C. were as follows: a) It was of the view that the demand of the Hill peoples to merge with their own kinsmen should be accepted if the State to which they wanted to merge was following a democratic form of Government; b) All the agricultural land belonging to the big landlords, State, and in the name of different deities should be confiscated and distributed to the peasants; c) All the ethnic nationalities should have equal rights; and so on. If such democratic programmes were to be achieved, there was the need for

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47 Appeal made by the Manipur State Communist Party to the peoples of Hills and Valley who wanted democracy (u. d.), pp. 1-2.
striving for carrying out a democratic revolution. These programmes are a clear reflection of the resolutions adopted by the Second Congress of the CPI. (For details see Appendix No. 8) Perhaps, the D.O.C. had by then started endeavouring for accomplishing the democratic programmes adopted earlier by the Second Congress.

Meanwhile, in Kakching, 26 miles South of Imphal, R.K. Sanatomba Singh and Kh. Iboyaima Singh of the Communist Party carried out propaganda that Irawat would establish a Communist Government in Manipur soon. The former was, however, arrested on 16th December, 1949, and put behind bar. On 17th December, the houses of 4 other active Communist workers were searched but could not arrest any of them. On the night of 21st December, the S.P. raided a village, 11 miles North-East of Ukhrul on receipt of information that Irawat was hiding there, however, was unfruitful. Meanwhile, Moirangthem Meghachandra Singh, ex-President of the Students’ Federation and Thokchom Bira Singh, General Secretary of the organisation, were arrested. Following the above arrestments, 4 Communist workers, wanted by the police had gone underground.49

Awang Jiri was raided on 7th January, 1950, by the Circle Inspector along with a Police Party and half a Platoon of Manipur Rifles to supervise Case No. 6 (I) 50 U/S 341, I.P.C., a case originated from Communist activities. In the raid 4 Communists, including their leader were arrested. Women folks of the village numbering around 150 to 200 obstructed on their way, about half a mile from the spot, and attempted to

48 Ibid.
rescue the arrested persons. With reinforcement of a section of Manipur Rifles from Nambol Police Outpost, the police were able to take them away.50

Manipur Police continued its drive against Communist student activists. S. Palit, the S.P. of Manipur, wrote to the Head Master of the Johnstone High School, on 9th January, 1950, to expel N. Nirpen Singh from the school for being an active member of Students’ Federation, a branch of the D.O.C. He stated that their activities were anti-government and prejudicial to the public safety and maintenance of public order.51

The Communist and the Krishak Sabha had organised a party at Porompat known as “Cell Party”. Moirangthem Ibohal Singh of Top was the leader. He made propaganda in his locality for the Red-Rising in his village. That organisation was still a secret one.52 On 25th January, 1950, the Superintendent of Police, acting on an information, about the entry of 2 men from different villages, from D.C. Mitra, Deputy Central Intelligence Officer (D.C.I.O.), surrounded the house of Thokchom Boro Singh at Keisampat, at 6.45 p.m. and conducted a thorough search. Many ‘incriminating’ documents of the Party, including posters and bulletins, Communist literatures, important letters of the Party, account of money received and spent, list of

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Party members, addresses of the Party members at different places and other important documents were recovered.\textsuperscript{53}

On 31\textsuperscript{st} January, 1950, the D.O.C. issued a leaflet warning to those informers, who pass out organisational secrets to the police, giving ultimatum to stop their acts immediately. Many women (mothers, aunties and sisters) shed their tears due the arrestments and tortures of their sons and brothers from the treacherous activities of the informers. In it, the Congress Government at the Centre, led by Nehru was branded as Fascist, and anti-people. It stated that no amount of police actions would be able to suppress the Communist movement in Manipur. It appealed to the peoples of Hills and Valley to support in its endeavour to establish socialism and democracy in the State.\textsuperscript{54}

5.6 Red Guard Council and Arms Struggle Movement in Manipur

With the formation of the Communist Party in Manipur at the D.O.C. level in underground, the struggle of the peasant-proletariat and toiling masses was considerably intensified. The Party was able to raise far reaching demands such as, not more than 12 bags of paddy per hectare should be paid to the landlords. Rather the landlords should come and collect from the field or from the tenants’ home. On the other hand, the state machinery tried their best to suppress the Communist Movement in the State. Many Communists, peasants, students, youths were put behind bars under various legal Acts, mainly for lootings. Apparently, during this period there was considerable amount of political awakening of the toiling masses and the peasants,

\textsuperscript{53} Office of the Superintendent of Police, Manipur, Imphal, To the Chief Commissioner, Manipur, “Inauguration of the Indian Republic in Manipur on 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 1950”, Memo No. 38, D.I.B., dated, Imphal, the 27\textsuperscript{th} January, 1950, pp. 1-2.

\textsuperscript{54} A leaflet issued by the Communist Party of Manipur State, dated 31\textsuperscript{st} January, 1950, p. 1.
and they started to assert for their rights. An intense class struggle was witnessing in Manipur and the Communist Party felt the need for setting up a special volunteer force to safeguard the interest of the peasant-proletariat masses.

The Second Congress of the CPI resolved that the Indian Independence was not real and in certain areas even arms struggle could be carried out for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie led combined Government of the Imperialist-Bourgeoisie-Feudal. In some areas general strikes, demonstrations and other forms of movements were launched. In the Kakdwip of West Bengal and Telangana of Andhra Pradesh arms struggle movement had already started. While in Manipur, on 3rd March, 1950, by establishing the Red Guard Council (RGC), preparation for the arms struggle movement had started. It was formed comprising of 6 members namely, Thokchom Boro Singh; Ngangom Mohendra Singh; Ningthoujam Binoy Singh; Moirangthem Ibohal Singh; Lamabam Ibotombi Singh; and Langoljam Tiken Singh.

With the formation of the RGC, the Communist Party under the leadership of Irawat had fulfilled the second condition, as a logical next step, following the formation of the underground Party in October 1948. During the period of 1949-50 the strength of the Communist Party was increased tremendously, that in some of the Party areas even the police and the paramilitary forces could not enter freely. Thereafter, in the Communist stronghold areas, many military camps were established one after another. On the other hand, Village Militias were established under the Red Guard Council and imparted guerrilla training.

56 Tiken, op. cit.
Under the direction of Binoy a meeting at the hill side of Napet, on 10th and 11th April, 1950. It was attended by Sapam Gourahari, Thiyam Tomba, Soibam Mani, Moirangthem Leibakmacha, Nitai Singh, Konsam Tombi, Kshetri Bira, Mangi Singh, Khaidem Iboton, Sapam Phaja, Kh. Mani, Huidrom Indramani, Irom Tomba, Ngairangbam Thambou, Moirangthem Ibohal, Maibam Kokngang, Brahmacharimayum Samungou, and other 6/7 persons. It resolved to carry out a series of fund drive during the then waning-moon, for their Party members, as some of them were forced to leave their Party due to financial difficulty. They also decided to find out the informers, who pass out information to the police, for the arrest of Chatradhari, Jankinath and others. Irawat had since then shifted to more secluded hideouts and none of the Party members was allowed to utter a single word of his whereabouts. He was still reported to be in Napet but exact location could not be pointed out by the police. By that time except for Irawat and Tombi, all the members of the organisation were then busy in the Hill Areas.58

Fund drive is a political strategy and tactical method of the Communist Parties throughout the world, employed as a means of improving their financial position when the need arises from time to time, for running their organisations. Fund drives are conducted by the Communist under certain ‘ethical lines’ drawn from their experiences, depending on the responses that they deem required from the people. Communist parties are organised political parties following strict ideological orientations propounded by Marx, Engels, and Lenin for establishing world-wide socialist society.

5.7 Capture of C.I.D and subsequent repressions

Communist activists of Top and Naharup captured C.I.D. constables Iboton Singh and Ibobisana Singh along with 2 other suspected informers on 18th April, 1950. Search operations were conducted simultaneously by Assam Rifles, Manipur Rifles and Civil Police at Naharup, Top and Wakha on the morning of 20th April, 1950, for the rescue of those persons. At Naharup, some of the villagers got the scent of the approaching police and started to blow the conches and a red light was fired upon, when the team led by the Deputy S.P. reached there. As a result of that, large numbers of females and children came out. However, before they could assemble, police searched four houses and 8 persons were arrested. About 400 females backed by a few males, started attacking the police party with sticks and pelted stones, in order to rescue the arrested persons. The police resorted to baton charge and firing, resulting in injuries on both sides. Nevertheless, the police could manage to take away the arrested persons to the police station. Later, when the Assam Rifles and Manipur Rifles teams joined the Naharup operation they came under fire of about 15 rounds, presumably from Japanese rifles.59

The combined team of Assam Rifles, Manipur Rifles and Civil Police continued search operations at different suspected areas and arrested many persons but could not find the captured persons by the Communist.60 However, many articles related with Communist movement were seized from the house of Kangjam Bijoy of Keisampat,

60 Ibid., p. 2
According to Langoljam Tiken Singh, the ‘4 captured C.I.D.s’ were taken to the Andro hill top by the Red Guard volunteers. During that time Lamabam Ibotombi and he were the only Red Guard Council members present near Andro area and the 2 of them could not decide whether the C.I.D.s would be released or killed. Soon they contacted Irawat at his hideout at Chandrakhong and 3 of them decided to release them on certain modalities. That decision was conveyed to the volunteers and they were released at a different place.  

On the morning of 3rd May, 1950, the 2 kidnapped constables and 1 ‘civilian’ reported to the S.P. From their detailed statements the police could obtain valuable information about the Communist volunteers, their supporters, places of shelters and arms and equipments etc.  

Subsequently identification parades were held at Naharup and Taretkhul on 4th May, 1950, and 10 Communists workers were arrested.  

Juge Singh of Kongpan Chanam Leikai was arrested on 5th May, 1950, in connection with the C.I.D. Constables Confinement Case along with some ‘incriminating’ documents. The Government achieved a major success with the arrestment of Communist leaders Thokchom Boro Singh and Ngangom Mahendra Singh on 7th May, 1950, with 2 associates, along with 1 revolver, 56 cartridges,
cyclostyle machine and other prejudicial documents.\textsuperscript{66} Thoibi Devi, one of the most active female Communist workers, surrendered to the police on 9\textsuperscript{th} May, 1950, with a written undertaking that she would never participate in any political organisation or any agitation or associate with any political agitator in future.\textsuperscript{67}

Binoy attended a meeting of the underground Communist leaders on 10\textsuperscript{th} June, 1950, held at Moirang Kampu. The following resolutions were adopted: To reorganise the Communist Party of Manipur; To establish a watch tower on Tinsid hill, 5 miles east of Imphal, in order to watch the movement of police; and To recruit members and to start a civil disobedience movement in August or September. Meanwhile the Students’ Federation also held, on the same day, a secret meeting at the residence of N. Ajit Singh (brother of Binoy) and decided to recruit members for the present and wait directions from the CPI leadership. From the Government side there was no raid against the Communist due to lack of adequate arms support for the police.\textsuperscript{68}

Throughout the period of 15\textsuperscript{th} - 30\textsuperscript{th} June, 1950, underground Communists were active. Sami, a Tangkhul Naga of Sanshak (a hill village in Ukhrul Sub-Division) was taking an active part in Communist propaganda among the Tangkhuls. The Red Guard Council of Manipur attempted to form a branch of its organisation in Ukhrul, in which Jayant Kumar Singh was particularly active. In the Awang Jiri area lands were ploughed without the consent of the land-owners. The village was raided on the night of 30\textsuperscript{th} June, 1950, by a detachment of the Manipur Rifles and the Police on the early morning of 1\textsuperscript{st} July, 1950, in which Ningthoujam Binoy was arrested along with a few

\textsuperscript{66} Memo No. ST/127/4/50, Wireless Telegram of Himat Singh, Chief Commissioner of Manipur, to the Adviser, Shillong, dated, Imphal, the 7\textsuperscript{th} May, 1950, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{67} S. Palit, Superintendent of Police, Manipur, Imphal, Memo No. 549, D.I.B., dated, Imphal, the 24\textsuperscript{th} May, 1950, Office of the Superintendent of Police, D.I.B., Manipur, Imphal, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{68} Himat Singh, Chief Commissioner, Manipur, Fortnightly Confidential Report for the Period Ending, 15\textsuperscript{th} June, 1950, pp. 1-2.
confederates. A lot of valuable documents were seized from his possession, throwing light on the aims of the organisation, names of the active members, its funds, attempts to rescue detenues from jail etc. 69

Irawat convened a D.O.C. meeting held at Louren on the Tinsid Road side and discussed the incident of the arrestment of Binoy (the third Secretary of Manipur D.O.C.). The Communist workers who were in Awang Jiri area decided that keeping Binoy and Basna at Kangmong village would be much safer, as it was larger than Awang Jiri. On that fateful night, both of them were shifted to the residence of Konsam Thawaijao from different houses in the village, with the plan of shifting them to Kangmong at the early morning of the following day. All those activities were apparently seen by the C.I.D. which they did not notice and it was their mistake. In that manner they were arrested. It co-opted both Meitram Shamu Singh and Ningthoujam Chaobi Singh into the D.O.C. and they were handed over the responsibility of the fund drive for the Party. 70 Here the Government version slightly differs, pertaining to the house from where Binoy was arrested, which puts that he was arrested from the house of Konsam Pishak Singh of Awang Jiri. 71

Langoljam Tikendra Singh, a D.O.C. member, was arrested along with some others from Top, on 7th July, 1950, by the Police and Manipur Rifles. From his possession some prejudicial documents were seized. In the early morning of 10th July, 1950, the Communist hideouts of Andro area were raided by the Police and Manipur

69 Himat Singh, Chief Commissioner, Manipur, Confidential Report covering the Period 16th June to 15th July, 1950, dated, Imphal, the 23rd July, 1950, pp. 2-4.
70 Shamu, op. cit.
Rifles and a hidden dump of arms was found in the house of Tebanda from where a range of arms and ammunitions were seized; from the house of Surchandra more arms and ammunitions were seized. Amu Singh was arrested as he was reportedly handed over to the police by the villagers.\textsuperscript{72}

Relying on the documents seized from Binoy, Ukhongsang and Chandrakhong, another Communist centre, were raided on 14\textsuperscript{th} July, 1950, by the Police and the Manipur Rifles, and arrested 6 persons. Many other areas such as Keibi and Sajirou were also raided on 15\textsuperscript{th} July, 1950, where Irawat was suspected to be hiding, but was not found. After the arrest of Binoy (1\textsuperscript{st} July, 1950), Ibohal became the Commander of the Red Guard. Steps were being taken by the authority to apprehend some of the other important members of the Party. Drastic purge of the Jail Establishment had been made and the jail was then being guarded by 4\textsuperscript{th} Bn. Assam Rifles and other necessary arrangements were made in order to avoid possible jail break by Communist detenues.\textsuperscript{73}

Thoibi Devi, released earlier after submitting a written undertaking, was rearrested on 7\textsuperscript{th} August, 1950, for actively helping Binoy and other Communists.\textsuperscript{74} The Communists kidnapped 2 constables of the Manipur Police Force, stationed at Thoubal outpost on 19\textsuperscript{th} September, 1950, while on duty at Chandrakhong.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72} Confidential Report, 16\textsuperscript{th} June to 15\textsuperscript{th} July, 1950, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{74} Himat Singh, Chief Commissioner, Manipur, Confidential Report for the Fortnight Ending, 15\textsuperscript{th} August, 1950, dated, 20\textsuperscript{th} August, 1950, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Hindusthan Standard}, Shillong, dated 20\textsuperscript{th} September, 1950, p. 3.
5.8 The *Left Sectarian Adventurist line and the Chinese path*

In fact the tradition of the CPI, especially in the post “People’s War” period had been to swing from one extreme to another – right and left deviations. The Party was practically trailing behind big bourgeoisie and Congress leadership for over 2 years after the Second World War. By the end of 1947, it started taking up the *Left Sectarian Adventurist line* which had brought the Party and the mass movement into a virtually total disruption. As a matter of fact, during the long period of 1942 to 1948, every time the CC met, it used to come out with one blunder after another. There were many short comings in the policies and programmes, which needed corrective measures. What the party failed to establish, *inter alia*, either in the ‘reformist period’ or in the ‘sectarian period’, was the ‘inner party democracy’. There was a mechanical division of political and practical functions of the party. It was contrary to one of the cardinal principles of Marxism, i.e., “unity of theory and practice”.  

During the late phase of *Left Sectarian Deviation line*, the PB or the CC of the CPI was apparently in political confusion, the details of which could be very vast and exhaustive to be presented here. The critical situation facing the Party during that period was the onslaught of the great repressive measures launched by the Central Government, backed by the imperialists and their agents. The wave of ‘fascist terror’ was unleashed against the Communist strongholds, throughout the country such as, Telangana and Andhra districts of Madras province, parts of Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Manipur, Tippera (Tripura), as well as Mymensingh district of East Pakistan (present Bangladesh), and other border regions between India and Pakistan. Apparently, under

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the guidance of the Anglo-American imperialists, the Congress Government at the Centre was making serious efforts towards forging an understanding with the Government of Pakistan, for stemming the tide of the Communist Movement, not only in the Indian Subcontinent, but also that of revolutionary-liberation movements in the countries of Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{77}

It was during this critical situation that, the CC of the CPI started searching for methods, to rectify the past mistakes and evolve a new line. The \textit{Left Sectarian Adventurist line} pursued relentlessly for over 2 years since the Second Congress of the CPI, held in February-March, 1948, had to be abandoned. It realised the grave mistake of following dogmatically the principles of organisational methods and style, laid down by the third Congress of the Communist International in 1921. That realisation was the necessity to give a strong warning about the simultaneous fight the Party had to conduct against both the right- and left-deviations.\textsuperscript{78} Perhaps, the success of the Chinese revolutionaries inspired the Indian Communists and new slogans were given – “China’s Way is our way”, “Road to Shanghai is our road” and “Make Calcutta the Second Shanghai”.\textsuperscript{79}

In May, 1950, the CC met where it reconstituted itself and changed the leadership based on the proposals of Andhra Communists. C. Rajeswara Rao became the General Secretary in place of B.T. Ranadive. A new PB of 3 members was set up to lead the

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\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., pp. 662-663. \\
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 940. \\
\textsuperscript{79} National Archives of India, Copy No. 72, SECRET, Communist Survey No. 13., p. 7., cited in File No. 14(46)Eur II/49(Secret), Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Europe II Branch, Subject: Communist Surveys Issued by the Intelligence Bureau, 1949.
Guerrilla warfare along the line of Chinese Revolution.\textsuperscript{80} The new CC was fixed at 11 members as a provisional arrangement till the plenum was convened. Initially the Committee consisted of the 9 members only, as they could be chosen from the old CC members who were outside jail. In the new CC the first 3 members were of the PB given as: C. Rajeswara Rao (General Secretary), M. Basavapunniah, Biresh Misra, P. Sundarayya, D. Venkateswara Rao, Somnath Lahiri, Moni Singh, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, S.V. Parulekar.\textsuperscript{81} On 1\textsuperscript{st} June, 1950, the reconstituted CC issued a document entitled, “Letter of the New Central Committee to All Party Members and Sympathisers”, after the CC meeting of 20\textsuperscript{th} May to 1\textsuperscript{st} June, 1950.\textsuperscript{82}

Biresh Misra, incidentally became the first PB member of the CPI (PB is the highest decision making body of a Communist Party) from Assam. He was admitted to CC, though after lots of badgering for being a part of the previous POC of Assam. In the new CC he was mainly entrusted with the role of organising armed guerrilla struggle on the basis of his experience. On the other hand, Moni Singh belonged to Mymensingh district of East Pakistan (Bangladesh).\textsuperscript{83} Another notable feature of the new CC, which could be regarded as flaunting the norm of accepted principles of a Communist Party is, that of not making a distinction between the ‘Politburo’ and the ‘Central Committee’. Rather, both were combined and functioned as a single unit in the new CC. Nevertheless, it is not a big surprise considering the prevailing situation and it was formed on a provisional nature till the plenum meeting which was the final authority.


\textsuperscript{81} M.B. Rao, \textit{op cit.}, pp. 656-657.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., p. 656.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 657.
The PB Draft Statement of 15\textsuperscript{th} November, 1950, of the CPI, put forward steps for building a mass party capable of playing its historical role in building the people’s democratic front and leading the armed guerrilla struggle for achieving the final victory in the war of national liberation for freedom, independence and democracy. It stressed on the necessity of building a strictly illegal mass party as under:

Building up of a strictly illegal party is a precondition to unifying the party by chalkling out a correct political line; such a party organization alone can undeviatingly hold on and further develop the present bases of armed resistance such as Telangana, Andhra, hill-border regions of Mymensingh, Tripura and Manipur and boldly initiate the agrarian struggle and armed guerilla warfare wherever possible; such an illegal party alone can boldly popularize the slogan of armed struggle amongst the people as to make it their common consciousness that it is the only way to defeat the imperialists and native reaction.\textsuperscript{84}

It shows that the Party continued the same tactical line of waging an arms struggle movement, in the middle of November, 1950, wherever the situation permitted. The newly reconstituted PB and CC followed the \textit{Chinese path} i.e. the Guerrilla warfare and was not entirely different from the earlier path of Left Sectarianism. The new line however, differed in the interpretation of the stage of the Indian Revolution from the earlier one, as it considered the stage as a democratic stage. However, its shortcoming was that of considering the Indian situation in a ‘mechanical parallel with China’.

The Andhra document, while correctly arguing that the stage of Indian revolution is democratic, made a mechanical parallel with China, argued that India is now a semicolonony like China and the course of the revolution in India would be along the Chinese path, i.e.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 1064. Note: A draft policy statement was issued by the Politburo on 15\textsuperscript{th} November, 1950. This document of 108 cyclostyled pages consists of 13 chapters.
peasant partisan warfare developing into guerrilla resistance and liberated areas and finally armed forces liberating the towns. [sic] 85

5.9 Continuance of Anti-Communist Drive in Manipur

The anti-Communist drive of the Government of Manipur met with substantial success, during the second half of November, 1950. Moirangthem Ibohal Singh, the Commander of the Red Guard was arrested on 25th November, 1950, in a raid on village Kongpal with a loaded revolver and 12 live cartridges. Among the useful documents recovered from his possession was a letter disclosing the names of the persons responsible for the kidnapping of 2 constables of Thoubal Police Station, September last. In other raids of the Police and Assam Rifles, many underground Communist workers were arrested namely: Achou of Takhel, Yaima of Takhel, Ibotombi (wanted in the constable kidnapping case of Thoubal), Tolen Singh (rejoined the Party after furnishing an undertaking), Selung and Sekho of Moirangkampu. 86 On another day-raid on village Top on 30th November, 1950, Ibobi Singh, an active Communist worker, was arrested along with large quantity of arms and ammunitions and several ‘incriminating and prejudicial’ documents. 87

On 21st December, 1950, 3 rifles and a Tommy gun were snatched away from the sepoys (personnel) of Manipur Rifles when they visited Khabi on duty. 88 It was carried out by underground Communist workers following the police intervention, in a case of women of the area, protesting against the catching of fish by the patchaba (person who owned the right over the lake by virtue of auction), in a nearby lake

85 Central Party Education Department, CPI, op cit.
87 Ibid., p. 2.
called “Line Thabi Pat”. The group of Communists led by Lakshman, disguised as women wrestled the policemen and snatched their arms. Subsequent to the incident police forces from Nambol, Heikrujam and Phoijing sides rushed in and pursued the Communists up to the hillock of Moidangpok Khunou where Chingsubam Budhi, a Communist worker, while trying to respond to nature’s call near a drain on that night was shot at point blank on the forehead, by police personnel who was hiding there.\textsuperscript{89}

The Government continued its relentless pursued for apprehending the Communist activists in this areas. In this regard, on 5\textsuperscript{th} January, 1951, the Circle Inspector (II) proceeded towards a hillock near Moidangpok Khunou with two platoons of Manipur Rifles. There was an exchange of fire between the Communists, who were taking shelter there, and the police party. Subsequently, after a hot chase the Police party was able to arrest 8 persons and 125 round of ammunition, which were left at a spot in haste.\textsuperscript{90}

Following these incidents, the Government of Manipur issued a Proclamation, dated, Imphal, the 23\textsuperscript{rd} January, 1951, declaring that the villages of Awang Jiri, Kangmong excluding Mamang Leikai, Heikrujam, Moidangpok Khunou and Sajirok as ‘disturbed and dangerous’ areas. From the conduct of the inhabitants of those villages the Government considered it to be expedient to increase the number of the police force. Exercising the powers conferred by Section 15 of the Police Act and all other powers, Himat Singh, the Chief Commissioner, proclaimed that the above mentioned villages were in a disturbed and dangerous state. He directed that the inhabitants of those villages should meet the cost of the additional Police Force to be

\textsuperscript{89} Shamu, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{90} National Archives of India, Memo No. 948, D.I.B. of 19\textsuperscript{th} March, 1951, \textit{op. cit.}
stationed in those areas, by 1 Inspector, 3 Sub-Inspectors, 6 Assistant Sub-Inspectors and 8 constables, for a period of 3 months from the date of issue of that proclamation. The S.P. was also authorised to employ additional forces above the specified strength.  

On 15th February, 1951, a petrol party of the Manipur Rifles under Sub-Inspector Nadiya Chand Singh encountered with underground Communist workers at Kangmong. The police returned fire and chased them in which Chingsubam Kala of Kangmong injured his forehead and was arrested with a rifle and a hand grenade. Police also seized other arms and ammunitions, documents and articles. The documents apparently revealed the plan for attacking the Awang Jiri outpost. On the evening of 30th March, 1951, a section of Assam Rifles of Moirangkampu camp, on patrol was ambushed by a party of 15 armed Communists at Sanjembam village. In the exchange of fire 1 sepoy of the Assam Rifles and 3 Communists were killed and 2 Communists were also injured. Arms were recovered by the Assam Rifles from the death Communists. In the search operation following the incident the 2 injured persons were arrested.

5.10 Irawat’s Burma visit

In the immediate neighbouring country of Burma, from 28th March, 1948, onwards, Communists had been carrying out an arms struggle movement. The news of these developments was repeatedly heard in Manipur. The revolutionaries of

91 Government of Manipur, Manipur Gazette, No. 111, Published by Authority, Imphal, Wednesday, 31st January, 1951, pp. 3-4.
93 National Archives of India, File No. F 5(21) – PA/51, Ministry of States, Political (A) Branch, Question in Parliament by Pandit Munishwara Dutt Upadhay regarding a clash between a detachment of the 4th Assam Rifles and Communists in Manipur on 30th March, 1951, p. 9.
Burma were making great progress, their ability to establish widespread liberated zones and others were discussed many times in secret meetings of the Manipur D.O.C. It was resolved that, along with the arms struggle movements going on, in that country the Party should also explore political opportunities for the Indian and Manipuri revolutionaries and establish relationship for the future. Irawat should be deputed to Burma immediately. For deputing Irawat to Burma immediately a few reliable persons, who were well versed in Burmese language and route to Burma-Manipur border, were sent off to collect correct information in detail.\(^\text{94}\) That party left Manipur on 14\(^{\text{th}}\) or 15\(^{\text{th}}\) June, 1950, and returned on 25\(^{\text{th}}\) June, 1950.\(^\text{95}\) Mutum Kesho, Thaonaajam Lila, and Maibam Bormani were the 3 persons who formed the first batch.\(^\text{96}\)

The matter of deputing Irawat to Burma was kept in utmost secrecy. For establishing relationship with the Burmese revolutionary parties, especially with that of the Thakin Than Tun led BCP, consent was taken from the CC of the CPI. When the situation became so critical for keeping Irawat even for a day longer, as decided earlier, in the first week of September, 1950, he was escorted by 5 well armed Red Guard cadres to Burma via crossing the eastern hill ranges. Those who had taken part in escorting Irawat to Burma were: Moirangthem Leisang of Heirok; Thangjam

\(^{95}\) Himat Singh, Chief Commissioner, Manipur, “16\(^{\text{th}}\) June to 15\(^{\text{th}}\) July, 1950, dated, Imphal, the 23\(^{\text{rd}}\) July, 1950”, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 2.
Lilasingh of Ukhongsang; Moirangthem Bira of Heirok; Arambam Mera of Kangmong; and Maibam Maimu of Salungpham.\textsuperscript{97}

They reached Burma in the border village of Minda (Mintha or present Min Thar?), known to \textit{Meiteis} (Manipuris) as Mangsa. By leaving Irawat and Moirangthem Leisang, his associate who was well versed of the Burmese language and routes, the 4 Communists returned to Manipur. From them, it was confirmed that Irawat had reached Burma on 11\textsuperscript{th} September, 1950, without any untoward incident. The news was reported to Lamabam Ibotombi, the Secretary of the Party (he became the fourth Secretary of the Party after Binoy was arrested).\textsuperscript{98}

This date is also concurred by a letter written by Irawat to Ibohal seized by the police from Ibobi Singh on 30\textsuperscript{th} November, 1950. Irawat had established contacts with People’s Volunteer Organisation (PVO) Communists of Mawlaik, Paunbyn, Headquarters and Thangdut and obtained assurance from them. It revealed that arrangements were made with Communists in Burma for an attack on Kabaw Valley, in the middle of January, 1951. The Burmese Government had no hold over the area of Paunbyn and Thangdut. It also mentioned about the contacts with the hill-people of Manipur and the availability of ammunition from Moreh.\textsuperscript{99}

In the Manipur D.O.C., Irawat was always lovingly called as “Comrade Ahan” (“Elder Comrade”). That name was also used lovingly by the Burmese people and revolutionaries as “Aphoji” which means elder.\textsuperscript{100} When Irawat reached Burma, there

\textsuperscript{97} Babu, (n. d.), \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} Confidential Report, 30\textsuperscript{th} November, 1950, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 2.
he found that Communist Parties waging arms struggle for peoples’ liberation, namely: Communist Party of Burma (CPB); Burma Communist Party (BCP); and Peoples’ Comrade Party (PCP). There were also many groups carrying out arms struggle in Shan, Karen, Mon, Arakan and others. They fought against U Nu’s Burma Government as well as among themselves.101

Spending few months in PCP area (Mawlaik District to Tamu), Irawat discussed thread bare many issues, and proceeded to the CPB area (Mingyan district in Mandalay Division). In the CPB area he carried forward the discussion with the PCP about the advancement of the revolutionary arms struggles carried out by the two parties. Then he toured the liberated areas of the Party, spending for a long period to establish relationship with the Manipur D.O.C. He came out towards the border area and returned to the Mawlaik District in the PCP area. In the Bureau No. 1, he discussed with important leaders of PCP of what he saw and learned in the CPB area and mutually agreed for keeping a base of D.O.C. in the Minda (Mintha in Kabaw Valley?) area. In fact, CPB also expressed its desire that the PCP should pay more attention to the Manipuri Communists who were their immediate neighbours.102

Meanwhile in a dramatic development, 50 PVOs, succeeded in driving Burmese officials from Tamu, a town close to Burma border in Manipur State, on 23rd January, 1951.103 On 24th The PVO raiders who occupied Tamu had left for Kalewa outside

102 Ibid.
Indian border. What is interesting here is the reference of Tamu which is now in Burma as a town inside the Manipur State border. The letter (dated 27th September, 1950) cited above indicates that Irawat was aware of the plan for the PVO attack of Tamu, or perhaps even taken part in chalking out the plan with Communists in Burma. The motive behind the raid could be part of the larger plan for expanding the liberated zones of the Communists and also for the establishment of the proposed base camp of the Manipuri Communists.

Irawat in the beginning of 1951, started working among the Manipuris residing in the adjoining areas of Burma and Manipur. He was able to recruit some new members from those areas. After completing the necessary ground work, along with the report of the party work in Manipur, he asked for a batch of party members for training purpose. Soon, a batch of youths (6 Manipur Communists) was sent by the Party, and met Irawat at Matsa (Mintha?). After arranging for their training, he had gone to establish relationship with one of the bureau of PCP. It was during this period that he suddenly suffered from typhoid and after a few days of treatment he died on 26th September, 1951, at Taungbo village.

The report of Irawat’s death was appeared in Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, on 13th October, 1951, stating that he died in Burma. 18 of his followers were still absconding. The reward of Rs. 10,000/- declared for his arrest or for information

104 National Archives of India, O.T.P., TOP SECRET, TELEGRAM No. GAT/12 from Secga, Shillong to Foreign, New Delhi, D.1048/-P/51., CCB. No. 847., dated JR(23) 25/1, cited in Group.I. File No. 11(4)-P/51, Ministry of States, Political Branch, Subject: Communists activities on the border of Manipur and Burma, 1951, p. 1.
leading to his arrest and the warrant of arrest against him had not been cancelled. However, it was first came to the knowledge of the Communists outside Burma, when Soyam Chatradhari found from a Bengali daily, Jugantar Patrika, published from Calcutta, on his way to the Silchar Airport from Gauhati, after attending a Party Conference. He relayed the news to Achintya Bhattacharya and the latter told him that actual news would be obtained when the former reached Manipur, but it was not to be.

The matter was discussed exclusively among Chatradhari, Lamabam Ibotombi and Thokchom Bira and decided that it should be kept in top secrecy, among 3 of them only. The suggestion for keeping the matter as secret was made by Bira, as he wanted to contest the forthcoming Parliamentary election of 1952 and disclosing before the election was thought to have negative impact. During that time canvassing in the name of Irawat was considered to get favourable support from the people. Even though the Communist Party had already started functioning, both from underground as well as over ground, Ibotombi, Secretary of the Party in underground, agreed to support Bira, taking into consideration the Party’s interest. The Assam POC also agreed to the decision of not disclosing the news till the election was over. Perhaps other than the election prospects, there was no other major reason.

The news of the death of Irawat in Burma had reached Manipur gradually. The then Government of Manipur and anti-Communists forces had started spreading the

107 National Archives of India, Class. B. File No. 22(134) – PA/52., Ministry of States, Political (A) Section, Nos. (1) – (8), Question in the House of People by Shri Rishang Keishing regarding Shri Irabat Singh and his associates of Manipur, 1952, p. 11.
109 Tiken, op. cit.
propaganda of Irawat’s death strongly. His funeral ashes, wrist watch, spectacles, fountain pen, and dresses were brought by Arambam Nipamacha and handed over to Lamabam Ibotombi, the Party Secretary. After his death there was a huge vacuum in the D.O.C. Due to lack of guidance, many Communists remained scattered in Burma. The requirement to investigate the activities of Irawat after he established relationship with the Burmese revolutionaries and to re-establish it was greatly felt in the Party.\textsuperscript{110}

\section*{5.11 Manipur Communist Conspiracy Case}

Earlier, by March, 1951, many leading Communists of Manipur had already been arrested. However, the ‘Big Tiger’, an epithet used within the Government circle for Irawat, as seen above was still eluding their dragnet, along with many of his followers. Meanwhile, Himat Singh, the Chief Commissioner of Manipur had sought the sanction from the Ministry of States, GOI, for the prosecution of the persons mentioned in a report of the S.P. under u/s 121 A, 122 and 123 of the I.P.C. During that period the Criminal Procedure Code (C.P.C.), (V of 1898) had not yet been extended to the State of Manipur and therefore, sanctioning of any prosecution under it did not arise there under the then existing position. A list of 45 persons were put up, out of which 24 were stated to be already arrested while, 21 were still absconding, including Irawat.\textsuperscript{111}

Meanwhile, on 28\textsuperscript{th} April, 1951, the Ministry of States replied the letter No. C/8/51, dated March 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1951, of the Chief Commissioner of Manipur stating that the C.P.C. had not been extended to Manipur and the question would, therefore, be governed by the provisions of the corresponding law in force in the Manipur State. If

\textsuperscript{110} Babu, (n. d.), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{111} National Archives of India, SECRET, Group.I. File No. F.9(3)-P(A)/51., \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 1-6.
that law provided for previous sanction of the Manipur Darbar, then the power to accord that sanction would be exercisable by the Chief Commissioner (vide Manipur Administration Order). It also mentioned that the question of extension of the C.P.C. to the Valley was under consideration. When the Code was extended, necessary powers under it would be delegated to him.\textsuperscript{112}

Kuber of Changangei, suspected to be the leader of the Mayang Imphal Police Station ambush of 28\textsuperscript{th} April, 1951, was arrested on 2\textsuperscript{nd} June, 1951.\textsuperscript{113} It is worth to note that, Mayang Imphal and Bishnupur Police stations were on the radar of the Red Guard for some time as possible targets. Attempts were made to ambush these two Police Stations earlier. However, both had to be aborted because of inclement weather as well as from the fact that they were spotted by the local people while taking shelter in nearby groves from heavy rain that particular day. In the earlier plan the intended Mayang Imphal ambush was led by Khomei of Changangei and Sapam Ibohal. On the other hand, the Bishnupur operation was led by Meitram Shamu of Awang Jiri.\textsuperscript{114}

With the arrestment of many Communist youths one after another, the trial of the \textit{Manipur Communist Conspiracy Case} was taken up by Mr. E.P. Moon, the Chief Commissioner of Manipur, on 13\textsuperscript{th} October 1951, donning the post of ‘more empowered district magistrate’. It was taken up under I.P.C. Section 121(secretly conspiring to wage war), Section 122 (procurement of arms to wage war), Section 123 (the plan to wage war was kept secret waiting for an opportune moment) and other sections related to taking up of arms, against 17 persons. The accused were: Ngangom

\textsuperscript{112} National Archives of India, “Express Letter No. D.523-PA/51, dated, 28\textsuperscript{th} April, 1951, To the Chief Commissioner, Manipur, From DSI, Subject: Sanction for the prosecution of Communists”, cited in ibid., p. 1.
\textsuperscript{113} Manimohan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 396.
\textsuperscript{114} Shamu, \textit{op. cit.}. 249
Mohendra Singh; Thokchom Boro Singh; Langoljam Tiken Singh; Moirangthem Ibohal Singh; Maibam Bormani Singh; Longjam Gyanendra; Ningthoujam Binoy; Konsam Rabei; Chingkham Teban; Moirangthem Amuyaima; Khumbongmayum Lobi; Konsam Apabi; Ningthoujam Ajit; Thingbaijam Nongyai; Yumnam Gokul; Athokpam Chourajit, and Bhramacharimayum Samungou. At the trail Gyanendra was found to be not guilty and therefore, acquitted. The other remaining accuses were convicted to various terms of imprisonment.115

There were also many other cases which were not included in the Conspiracy Case. Notable among them, peasant Communists Ram Singh of Kangmong and Khomei of Changangei were sentenced to 13 years in jail. Chingkham was sentenced to 3 years in prison with a fine of Rs. 200/- by the Session Judge. In another case, Kuber of Changangei and Sapam Ibohal were sentenced to 7 years and 3 years respectively.116 The Chief Commissioner of Manipur felt that the Imphal Jail being small and also for other reasons, the Communist prisoners could not be kept in Manipur. Initially 16 prisoners were sent to West Bengal from Manipur, who were lodged in the Midnapur Central Jail.117 It was constructed by the British for keeping political prisoners, one of the most dreaded in India with small rooms with no light and only one door. Rabei Singh, one of the Communist prisoners, who had been suffering from heart ailment, died there due to nightmare.118

116 Ibid.
118 Tiken, op. cit.
Following the death of Rabei, the worried parents as well as some of the convicts themselves submitted representations. Their main requests were that the prisoners should be treated as Political prisoners and remove from the hot climate of West Bengal to the cool climate of Manipur. The Government’s view was that the Communist elements might be behind the move of the submission of the petitions.\textsuperscript{119}

What is discernable from the Manipur Communist Conspiracy Case is the exercise of State power to suppress the movement of the oppressed class. V.I. Lenin puts a class angle towards the use of coercive State power. He puts that State is a mechanism for furthering class rule, for oppression of one class by another. It establishes a system under which the oppression is legalised for further perpetuation of status quo in favour of the ruling class.\textsuperscript{120}

Terms which connote derogatory sense such as ‘conspiracy’, ‘dacoity’ ‘incriminating’ etc., are regularly used by the authority for the purpose of maligning the Communists. The question here is who conspired against whom? In fact, it all depends on the paradigm through which an issue is looked into. The established set up would caste the entire activities of Communists as a conspiracy or conspiracies to overthrow the establishment. However, a shift in the paradigm would give just the opposite perspective. From the Communists perspective, they strive to replace a redundant system with a new and better one, a classless society, through force or otherwise. In the class struggle some violence might be unavoidable, but generally the Communists are not propagating the cult of violence. They view established

\textsuperscript{119} National Archives of India, “M.H.A., Memo No. 139 – D/53 P (I), dated, 8\textsuperscript{th} January, 1953”, cited in Class ‘C’/10 yrs, 1953, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1.

bourgeoisie regime as reactionary force, always conspiring to suppress the progressive movements.

There is nothing conspiratorial about the methodology applied by the Communists. It is rather a difference in the perception between those who want to maintain the status quo and those who want to bring about changes. In this regard, Marx exhorts to rebel for the establishment of Socialism throughout the world in the *Eleven Thesis on Feuerbach* (Engels edited from the original version, first published in 1845.): “Philosophers have hitherto interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it”\(^{121}\)

**5.12 Thaw in the political line of the CPI**

There was a change in the political line of the CPI, the *Telangana path (Chinese path)* was discarded and adopted the *Constitutional* line. However, it was not accepted initially. Therefore, in 1951 Communist leaders went to meet leaders of Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) and in particular Stalin to discuss the political line of the CPI.\(^{122}\) The CC delegation was comprised of Rajeshwar Rao, General Secretary, Dange, PB member, Ghosh, PB member and Punnaiah, CC member.\(^{123}\) From April-May 1951, both the draft programme and the statement of policy of the Party were circulated to the ranks for inner-party discussion. In October 1951, the underground conference was held in Calcutta, which adopted and gave final shape to the *Draft Programme and Policy Statement*. It criticised both the Ranadive line and the later

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\(^{122}\) Central Party Education Department, CPI, *op cit.*, p. 86.

\(^{123}\) Gunachandra Kakchingtaham, comp., “Record of the Discussion of the Members of the Committee of the CC A-UCP(B) with the Representatives of the CC Communist Party of India, on 4\(^{th}\) and 6\(^{th}\) February 1951”, in *Leingaklongi Lamda Lamyanba Irawat*, (Manipuri language), Irawat Foundation Manipur, 2013, p. 208.
one as a hindrance in building alliance of the working class and peasantry. The new line was invariably adopted mainly to enable the Party to participate in the first general election of 1952.\textsuperscript{124}

It came to an understanding with the GOI and became over ground by participating in the first General Election held after India got her Independence. In Manipur also after the release of Thokchom Bira, Moirangthem Meghachandra, Soyam Chatradhari, Nongmaithem Nirpen and others from Preventive Detention, a section of Party started to function in the over ground. Those who were working in the over ground tried strongly to facilitate for those in the underground to become over ground. By the beginning of 1952 the Manipur Communist Party unit became CPI, MSC, as a separate unit directly under the Central Party.\textsuperscript{125} It implies that the underground section of the party still remained as a D.O.C. of the Assam POC. It is the first sign of the split within the ranks and file of the hitherto united Communist Party of Manipur, though not in the formal sense. Lamabam Ibotombi was still leading that section.

Though, there was an agreement between the CPI the GOI for the former’s denouncing the arms struggle movement path, the policy of granting general amnesty was to be carried out on the state to state basis, which needed time. The Manipur D.O.C. discussed for the continuance of the activities (works and plans) in Burma for some further period. By the end of February, 1952, the D.O.C. and the Red Guard Council had discussed in detail the changing political line of the Party. The issue of

\textsuperscript{124} Central Party Education Department, CPI, \textit{op cit.}, pp. 86-92.

\textsuperscript{125} Gyanendra, 1981, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 7
the Party functioning from both over ground and underground due to the changing policy of the CPI was also discussed thread bare.\footnote{126}

\textbf{5.13 Visit of “High-Powered Team” to Burma}

The Manipuri Communists who stayed back in Burma after the death of Irawat, faced difficulties in implementing in full swing of receiving various trainings, which would be beneficial for the future of Manipur. There were cases of illness among the Communists remaining scattered in far flung areas; lack of consolidation under the guidance of a leader and other problems were also arisen. As a consequence, Yengkokpam Tunan of Top Moirangkampu, left Burma on his own accord along with arms. While returning to Manipur he was arrested in January, 1952, with a Sten gun from Leibi village. From him the Government of Manipur came to learn, about firm relationship between the Manipur Communists and the revolutionaries of Burma.\footnote{127}

The D.O.C. of the Manipur Party dispatched to Burma, in the beginning of January 1952, Maibam Basanta Kumar (alias Iswar) of Naharup and Thangjam Lilasingh of Ukhongsang, under some specific duties. They were: to investigate the activities of Irawat in Burma; to consolidate the Manipuri Communists remaining in Burma; and to re-establish further relationship.\footnote{128} They met some prominent Burmese Communists such as, Tin Hlaing, Kyaw Zan, and Than Hline (See photo of Basanta/Iswar).\footnote{129} They discussed with the leadership of CPB, many political issues in minute detail \textit{inter alia} the changes in the policy and programme of the CPI; its

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\begin{footnotes}
\item 126 Babu, (n. d.), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 6.
\item 127 Ibid.
\item 128 Babu, 2008, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5.
\end{footnotes}
resolution to come out over ground and face the election; the Burmese revolutionary movement that was going on in Burma; and training of the Manipuri Communists remaining scattered all over Burma.\textsuperscript{130}

On 25\textsuperscript{th} April, 1952, a “High-Powered Team” of the Party, composed of 8 persons, including 2 student Communists, gathered at the residence of Mutum Kamla of Chandrakhong. Waikhom Kula was the team leader, and along with the arms and ammunitions left for Burma in the evening. On 29\textsuperscript{th} April, 1952, the team reached the Phayang village in the Burma-Manipur border. Soon, they collected detailed report from Ningthoujam Chaobi, who was already there. Then they met the PCP cadres (Yebo) who were in charge of the area and a get together meeting was organised.\textsuperscript{131}

On 30\textsuperscript{th} April, 1952, the news of the imminent attack by the Burmese Government forces had arrived and the 10 Communists of Manipur left the Mangsa area. Amidst the fleeing from the war, \textit{May Day} was celebrated. On that very day, trekking across the Ango hill reached the Taungbo village, settled on the eastern foothills. At the entrance of the village, on the right side, the memorial stone pillar for Irawat erected by the Communists was still there. There it was written – “Comrade I Singh Died on September 26, 1951”. All the Communists turned towards the memorial stone and paid their respect by giving \textit{Red Salute}.\textsuperscript{132}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{130} Babu, 2008, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., pp. 6-7.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p. 7.
\end{flushright}
On 1st June, 1952, along with the PCP cadres, 4 Communists of Manipur had reached the meeting place of the 3 major revolutionary parties of Burma. Thereafter, they held separate meetings with the leadership of the 3 parties, one after another.\textsuperscript{133} 

The effort taken up by Irawat while he was alive, to stop skirmishes among the 3 Communist parties in Burma, by bringing an understanding and his proposal to hold a conference for unity, bore fruit. In June, 1952, the Tri-Party Unity Conference was held at Khenta of Mongyam (Maingnyaung?) District, which lasted for 3 months. After that conference the 3 parties - CPB, BCP, and PCP could keep a united military and political leadership. Immediately, after that conference a military training centre could be established for the concerned parties.\textsuperscript{134} 

Meanwhile, the Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of External Affairs (M.E.A.) received unconfirmed reports that the hard core of the BCP led by Thakin Than Tun, numbering around 300 was seen moving westwards across the Irrawaddy from Myingyan district to be on the borders of Pakokku and Chin Hills districts. At the same time Thakin Soe, the Red Communist leader, was also seen in the same area. It further puts that, the Communist organisation in Central Burma was liquidated and if the Communists could not find a way of escape to the north-east Burma, they were likely to enter Manipur.\textsuperscript{135} Apparently, it was a reflection on the part of the Indian authorities on their concern that the Burmese Communists would infiltrate Manipur and other parts of Assam and eventually strengthen their movement in the entire North Eastern region of India. In this regard, on 8th July, 1952, N.V. Padnabhan,

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p. 6.  
Deputy Secretary, M.E.A., GOI conveyed his concern, seeking the comments from M.A. Rauf, Ambassador for India in Burma; E.P. Moon, Chief Commissioner of Manipur; and N.K. Rustomji, Adviser to the Governor of Assam respectively.\(^{136}\)

One discernable development from the above mentioned reports is that important factions of Communist parties in Burma were congregating in the same area, hitherto were fighting bloody factional skirmishes among themselves. Perhaps, it could be a manifestation of positive results, which Irawat strived for bringing unity among the warring factions of the Communists in Burma.

On 31\(^{st}\) July, 1952, S.M. Dutt, D.D., S.I.B. informed N.K. Rustomji, with inputs about the position of Communists in Burma. It affirmed the attack of the Burma Government forces on the Central HQ of the BCP at Taungnyo in Pyinmana area (Yamethin District) during the first week of May last. As a result of this attack, most of the BCP leaders led by Thakin Than Tun dispersed towards Myingyan and Lower Chindwin districts. However, though the Burma Government forces destroyed the Central HQ camps, none of the leaders could be arrested. It also states that Indian intelligence network had the information that after dispersal, the BCP armed forces were regrouped and distributed in six operational areas of, Katha, Shwebo, Mandalay, Myingyan, Pakokku, Popa and Natmauk. Boh Arlawaka was appointed Supreme Commander of the Central Burma, comprising of the said six operational districts. Dutt also discounts the theory that the hard core of the BCP would ever enter Manipur State. BCP’s declared plan was, on the other hand, to liberate the eight districts of

Northern and Upper Burma having a safe rear with Yunnan from where they would
get all help from the Chinese Communist forces.\footnote{137}

On 6\textsuperscript{th} September, 1952, the Manipuri Communists had a meeting with the
temporary Tri-Party Join Committee. Mainly, the agenda discussed included the
issues desired by the Manipuri Communists. The following points were put up: on the
matters of the future relationship between the CPI and the revolutionary parties of
Burma; on Kabaw Valley area, which was in the border of the two countries; on
imparting training to the Communists from Manipur. In the first meeting the two sides
presented a brief report each. First Longjam Gyanendra presented on behalf of
Manipur D.O.C.\footnote{138} (For details see Appendix No. 9)

Shortly after the Tri-Party meeting with the Manipuri Communists, according to
Burma Government reports, there was a clash between a group of 11 well armed
Manipur Communists led by Iswar Singh and a Burma Government patrol party near
Kandin village in Upper Chindwin on 9\textsuperscript{th} September, 1952. In the clash 2 of the
Communists were reported to be killed and seized certain photographs, documents
and letters which revealed efforts made by the CPB to obtain aid from the Manipuri
Communists. It was also mentioned that those documents showed that members of the
Manipur D.O.C. had entered Burma on various occasions via the overland route and


\footnote{138} Babu, 2008, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 8-11.
taken part in the insurrection on the side of their Burmese comrades. Iswar Singh was reported to the main contact between the CPI and the parties in Burma.\footnote{National Archives of India, “SECRET, D.O. No. 60 SB 52/45 81. No. (18) D2094-B/53, EMBASSY OF INDIA, RANGOON, dated 2nd April, 1953”, cited in File No. B/52/1543/4, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1.}

However, the authenticity of the above mention reports could not be independently verified or confirmed, as the death of 2 Manipuri Communists in Burma due to the said clash with Burma Government forces was neither reported nor mentioned by any of the Manipuri Communists who were supposed to be there. Apparently it was rather the Manipuri Communists seeking aid from their Burmese comrades during that period. At the least, Iswar and Lilasing could be among the Manipuri Communists, while the other 9 could be Burmese Communists, as both were said to have been deputed in the month of January to investigate the progresses/initiatives made by Irawat in Burma. Nonetheless, there seem to be 11 Manipuri Communists in Burma during that period, apart from Iswar/Basanta and Lilasingh. It is also not clear whether they stayed back in Burma after their assignments or returned to Manipur.

The Manipuri Communists in Burma had started discussing about returning to Manipur from June-July 1953, onwards. Most of the Communists expressed that it was appropriate time for returning to Manipur. Whatever they had learned, still learning and already conversed with was considered to be enough. With the approaching of 1954 all the 11 Manipuri Communists who were remaining scattered all over Burma started gathering in the northern region of Burma. On 15\textsuperscript{th} August, 1954, Thangjam Babu and Gyanendra, after completing their 8 months’ military training for wireless, medical and instructor course in southern Burma went towards
the north and started living together with their other fellow Manipuri comrades. In June, 1956, arrangement for returning to Manipur was completed, except for Yumnam Tomba, who was suffering from Beri Beri (a disease caused by vitamin B-1 deficiency) along with Babu and Leishang, who were to conditionally remain as Tomba’s attendants. All the 8 Manipuri Communists had completed their arrangement and returned to Manipur. Tomba, Babu and Leishang returned 2 years later on 10th June, 1958.\textsuperscript{140}

\textbf{5.14 Spilt of the Manipur D.O.C. and Confirmation of Irawat’s Death}

When a section of the Party started functioning as a legal political party, there were lots of misunderstanding and tussle on various issues, with those who had warrants on their heads and therefore who could not come over ground. They could not be united and those who had already started functioning as over ground remained under the CPI, MSC. The underground group retained the name of Manipur Communist Party, albeit remaining separate from the CC. Among the members released from jail and returned from Burma the majority had joined the CPI, MSC.\textsuperscript{141} However, the underground faction led by Ibotombi apparently maintained its relationship with the Communist Party in Assam.

From the outset this section led by Lamabam Ibotombi Singh seem to remain ‘marooned’ for some time without any choice, as Thokchom Bira declared himself as the ‘lawful Secretary’ of the over ground section of the Party. This development would perhaps leave each and every member with the choice of joining either the CPI,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{140} Babu, 2008, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 11-12.
\textsuperscript{141} Babu, 2003, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 22.
\end{flushright}
MSC, which started functioning as a legal party or remaining with the underground section or remain inactive for some time.

The Party (or Parties) remained in that fashion till 1956-57, when all the underground Communists were amnestyed by the Government and most of those in jails were released. The news of Irawat’s death was officially confirmed and announced by the Party to the public on 26th September, 1958, at a condolence meeting (function) held at Polo Ground, Imphal, when all the members were also returned from Burma.\(^{142}\) However, according to Chatradhari, the date for the announcement of Irawat’s death to the public is given as 6th March, 1959.\(^{143}\) It is worth to mention that from later part of 1951 to 1958/59 many incongruent policies and programmes were followed by the two factions respectively and perhaps the Party was virtually split by that time, a manifestation of the inner-party struggle, which was brewing for some years. One could imagine the chaotic condition that the Manipur Communists were experiencing during that period. Apparently, the differing in the date of the announcement of Irawat’s death has to do with the above mentioned factor/s.

However, the inner-party struggle in the D.O.C. of Manipur was again the reflection of what was going on at the national level. It was in fact not a sudden occurrence. Already, the two factions were drifting apart due to the difference in their views after the adoption of the new line. As mentioned above that after the adoption of the Left Sectarian Deviation line, the PB and CC of CPI were struggling to find a correct line suitable to the Indian condition, resulting in the adoption of different


policies and programmes. From the middle of the 1951 the party faced a serious rift, when a group led by Dange started pursuing a different line, paving the way for the split.144

The national level frontal organisations of the CPI, by the middle of 1956, such as AIKS, AISF, National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), Youth League, IPTA, etc. were propagating the ideals of Communism to the provincial level. In the North East India (Assam, Manipur and Tripura) they were functioning by adopting different names. AIKS provincial unit of Assam was Assam Provincial Krishak Sabha (APKS); Manipur State Kisan Sabha [sic] (MSKS) in Manipur; and for Tripura it was Tripura Kisan Sabha (TKS). Branches of AISF were Assam Students’ Federation (ASF) in Assam; Students’ Federation [sic] (SF) in Manipur; and All Tripura Students’ Federation (ATSF) in Tripura. While that of the women’s front, in Assam it was Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti (MARS); Mahila Sammillani [sic] (MS) in Manipur; and Ganatantrik Mahila Samaj (GMS) in Tripura.145

Interestingly, the IPTA movement hitherto confined to the Surma Valley, spread out to the Brahmaputra Valley with the convention of the first Assam State Conference of the IPTA from 3rd to 5th May, 1947, in Silchar. It was held under the leadership of Hemango Biswas and Jyotiprasad Agarwala.146 After this conference, inter alia, Bishnu Rabha played a pivotal role in spreading the message of hope, peace, unity, etc. through the medium of culture, throughout the nook and corner of

146 Raktima Hujuri, IPTA in Assam: A Dialogue with Folk Tradition, Ph.D Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University, 2014, p. 62.
Assam, since October, 1947.\textsuperscript{147} With the demise of Jyotiprasad Agarwala in 1951, a new phase in the history of IPTA movement in Assam had begun.\textsuperscript{148} What is worth to note is that both Irawat (1896-1951) and Bishnuprasad Rabha (1909-1969) shared many common traits and incidences in their lives, though the latter belonged to RCPI in his initial years.

From the early part of 1946 onwards, after his return from exile in Surma Valley, the more radicalised Irawat had restarted democratic movement in Manipur, hiding his real identity of being a Communist. At the same time, serving Manipur as his base, he continued peasant and proletariat activities in different parts of North East till the Pungdongbam Incident occurred. In the aftermath of the Incident of 21\textsuperscript{st} September, 1948, he along with many members of MKS and MPS had to conditionally go underground. In sync with the adoption of arms struggle line of CPI which was adopted after the Second Congress of the Party, the D.O.C. formed in the underground had also, primarily for self-defense, taken up arms, albeit in a limited way.

The arms struggle line taken up by the Manipur D.O.C. from 1948 to 1951, had to be conditionally adopted, as a self-defense mechanism from the over oppressive and suppressive policies of both GOI and the State Government. It was the then Interim Government led M.K. Priyobarta Singh which made Irawat to become underground. The building of D.O.C. from the underground under the leadership of Irawat and his works were carried out according to the rules and regulations (ideology) of international working class movement and CPI. Irawat was deeply

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{147} Ibid., p. 71.
  \item \textsuperscript{148} Ibid., p. 78.
\end{itemize}
influenced by the idea of the *proletarian internationalism*, indefatigably believed in the path of world socialist revolution and for this object he worked till his last moment.\(^{149}\) However, even after his death, for those Communists who were still in underground, both in Manipur and Burma were technically, still trudging the arm struggle line.

Nonetheless, on the final analysis, the idea of freedom Irawat envisaged for his motherland, Manipur, could be interpreted, taking cues from the resolutions adopted by the Second Congress of the CPI, 1948, in the form of a *Political Thesis*, as that of *Right to Self-determination* including the *Right to secede* as and when the people thought appropriate. In other words, the merger or union of Manipur State with India was on the nature of voluntary Indian union. For him democratic rights of the people in all sense, viz., political, economic and social, occupied the highest position among others. Nevertheless, the *Political Thesis* itself was not without many vague interpretations of certain conditions and deviated too much on the left, which was again an antithesis of the right deviation of the earlier period.

Another instance of Irawat regarding the Independence of India on the 15\(^{th}\) of August, 1947, as not a ‘complete independence’ could be construed as that of believing in the Marxist-Leninist concept of a state. This is a natural corollary for Communists to regard the independence of the bourgeoisie state as not a real one. For the Communists only a socialist state, where there is no man by man exploitation is the real form of independence. Perhaps, he dreamed of a *Socialist Manipur in Socialist India*, with a right to secede, as and when the people thought appropriate. In

fact Irawat’s own writings in *Anouba Jug*, and many of the resolutions adopted by different organisations he was leading, such as, NMM, Praja Sanmelani, Praja Mandal, MPS, and MKS reflect similar line.

It could be summed up that, perhaps the CPI Central leadership was still struggling to learn from history during that period, in their endeavour to find a correct line suitable to Indian conditions. The Provincial and District level Committees were not consulted properly while formulating Party’s policies and programmes, resulting in formulating many half-backed measures. Yet, the CPI formulated the ‘corrective measures’, following criticism and self criticism of the old line, especially among the Central leadership and adopted a new line in May, 1950, also called *Telangana path* or *Chinese path*. This was again rectified in October, 1951, by a special conference held in Calcutta, adopting a constitutional line, enabling the Party taking part in the first general election of 1952. This new line continued to remain in operation beyond the ending period covers by the present research.

One thing clearly stands out that Irawat, no matter what policies and programmes the CPI central leadership had adopted from time to time, he perhaps pursued them in the spirit of a true revolutionary. In spite of his lack of formal education, he was towering head and shoulders above his contemporaries in terms of ingenuity, sacrificial spirit, dedication, sincerity, farsightedness, mature understanding of complex politico-economic situation of a given time, inspirational, tolerance, secular, democratic and so on. Perhaps there was none like him in the entire North East region that had that uncanny sense of understanding the deep-rooted meanings of different events unfolding during his time. His untimely death in Burma would certainly have
created a huge vacuum to be filled up, perhaps an irreparable lost for the Communists in particular and people in general. During his Communist days, he strived for that cherished goal ‘Socialism’ or as Marx and Engels put it at the end of the Communist Manifesto: “Let the ruling classes tremble at the communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!”\textsuperscript{150} It goes without saying that Marxism is an ever propounding theory.