The period under study happens to be the most crucial phase in the history of the CPI. It was a time that was marked by sharp twists and turns. Every political party had to cope with unusually tricky situations and take appropriate steps on concrete issues in the rapidly changing circumstances. In handling those situations, some adopted a compromise-pressure tactic, some sided with the British rulers and some aimed at a radical transformation of society and polity. There is no scope for a researcher to retell the drama of the freedom movement and come to concrete conclusions regarding the historical role played by different parties. He has to remain satisfied with the available historical data and thus has to come to tentative conclusions.

First, it should be noted that the CPI for the first time in its chequered history came out of its theoretical as well as practical inertia during 1937-1947 and tried to intervene, in its own way, in the anti-colonial liberation movement. The guiding princ-
iple was, of course, nationalism. But for a communist party it is not enough to be a nationalist organization; it has simultaneously to be a champion of proletarian internationalism. There was a variety of opinions on this issue among the leading marxists, i.e., Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Stalin and N.N. Roy. Much of the confusion regarding the role of the CPs in the national-liberation movement was cleared by Lenin in his many writings on the right of self-determination. As we have seen in Chapter I that for Lenin it was the bounden duty of the CPs of the colonies to support the national liberation movements even though they were led by the bourgeoisie. He thought that in the anti-imperialist movements the bourgeoisie of the colonies still could play a progressive (of course, up to a limit) role and the CPs should form a united front with the bourgeoisie and thus by participating in such movements they would be able to popularise their cause among the masses. But it was made clear that this kind of co-operation - though much needed because of the small size of the CPs and their weak organizational base among the masses - was, in essence, conditional in nature, since the colonial bourgeoisie, according to Lenin, was incapable of playing a consistently revolutionary role. Secondly, he also pointed out that the main ally of the communists in the colonies would be the peasants, besides the working class which was still in its infancy.
But it is an irony of history that the Indian communists missed the thrust of Lenin's theory and quite often mechanically stuck to the idea of a socialist revolution under the leadership of the proletariat. The Lenin - Roy debate clearly reveals the dogmatic position of the latter and the theoretical suppleness of the former. Even after the adoption of Roy's Supplementary Theses Roy did not get rid of his dogmatism as it became evident in his subsequent writings. It needs emphatic stipulation that it was M.N. Roy who during the formative stages of the CPI played a vital role in shaping its strategy and tactics till his dissociation with the Comintern. The rigid, dogmatic and undialectical understanding is amply evident in the available party documents prior to the Seventh Congress of the CI. The Sixth Congress of the CI, especially, did much harm. In fact, Stalin in the late 1920s willy nilly stood for Roy's line inside the Comintern, though Roy was out of the scene. The Indian communists mechanically followed the Sixth Congress line which resulted in political wilderness. Besides the faults of leadership, one has also to take into account the splintered nature of the communist party and the severe repression, harassment and censorship which they had to undergo under an imperialist and repressive government. A researcher cannot even overlook the extremist background of many of the then communist leaders who had, in the main, been activists of revolutionary
organizations like the Jugantar and Anushilan. These leaders who thought that the Gandhian method of achieving freedom had strong class limitations moved towards revolutionary terrorism and ultimately found the solution in marxism when they were behind the prison bars. Quite a number of them went to the USSR, inspired by the ideals of the October Revolution. This fact establishes the indigenous character of the Indian communist movement and repudiates the mistaken view that the CPI was an agent of the USSR and/or CPGB for carrying out their national interests. But on the other hand, this fact also reveals the inherent weakness of the Indian communist movement. Living far away from India for years, coupled with the fact that many of them in India were under arrest, these leaders lacked concrete understanding of the Indian situation, of the strength of the communist organizations, of the peasants and workers. And, obviously, they were incapable of comprehending the nature of influence the INC had over the Indian masses. Naturally, their writings and adopted strategies were not contextually specific. Moreover, the propaganda of the imperialist press against socialism, the fear of communism of the nationalist leaders and the social backwardness of the masses explain the failures of the communist strategy till the mid 1930s.

Secondly, though the Seventh Congress of the CI later repudi-
ated the line of the Sixth Congress and swung back to the original
leninist position the CPI took long time to take note of the real
implications of the policy shift. Though it is evident that in the
eyear 1930s the CPI sent self-critical assessments to the Cominter-
n and was gradually coming to realise its political isolation it
was only after the issuance of the letter of the three parties
(the CPC, CPG and CPGB) and the Dutt - Bradley thesis that the CPI
changed its line. Hindsight tells us that excessive dependence on
the Comintern did much harm and incapacitated the Indian communis-
to act on their own.

Thirdly, the United Front Tactic adopted in 1936 was in tune
with the leninist line adopted in the Second Congress of the Comi-
ntern. But the very tactic was self-contradictory in nature. The
CPI now had to follow a line which meant co-operation (with the
colonial bourgeoisie and the nationalist forces) and non-co-opera-
tion at the same time. That is, they were to work within the INC,
organize the peasants, workers and youth on class line and unmask
the compromising, anti-peasant and anti-working class character of
the INC simultaneously. This paradoxical situation came to the
fore when the CPI supported the Congress ministries in eight prov-
inces for wrecking the Constitution of 1935 from inside and carry-
ing on class struggle through the assemblies. Very soon, after the
acceptance of office by the Congress the peasants and the workers saw to their dismay that they had been hoodwinked. Nehru's Socialistic gimmicks and pro-peasant/pro-working class resolutions of the Faizpur Congress created some hope that the Congress would be an instrument for serving the interests of the poor. The true nature of the Congress rule became amply clear when the British Government praised them for efficient maintenance of law and order.

Gandhi and the rightist sect vehemently opposed the peasants' and working class militancy, advised the ministers to take appropriate actions whenever necessary, asked Congressmen to dissociate from the AIKS, used Gandhi Seva Singh and Major Mahajan - two organizations founded on Gandhian principles - to counter the communists and socialists. Given this situation the socialists and the communists were forced to criticise the anti-people character of the INC and of the provincial ministries. Even there was a tendency to come to some sort of compromise on the issue of federation, at least among some of the lesser Congress leaders. All this made it obligatory for the CPI to oppose Congress policies. The result was obvious. By 1939 almost all communist and socialist elements were ousted from the Congress Working Committee. Some has criticised the left for their excessive emphasis on class issues ignoring the need of unity. Even they have gone to the extent of saying that
the Congress was a 'people’s' organization, not a class organization and Gandhi, the master strategist, followed combined strategies of 'war of movement' and 'war of position' (we have discussed it in detail in chapter II, section VII - U.G.) which the left failed to note. But recent writings and correspondence between Birla and Thakurdas make it clear that in the aftermath of the civil disobedience movement the capitalists favoured a legal-constitutional battle rather than a popular movement of civil disobedience type. Obviously, the turbulent situation inside the country and growing hostility between the Government and the leaders were telling upon their purses. Especially, Birla’s initiatives for acceptance of office is an eye opener. They continuously followed compromise-pressure-compromise tactic. Again, the private papers of Rajendra Prasad show that their agrarian policy, especially in Bihar, leaned towards the landlords. And the INC did not hesitate to oust the entire left from inside the INC when they had been attempting to consolidate on vital issues like land, fair wages, shorter working hours, federation etc. There is no denying the fact that the left, including the CPI gained during the united front period (1937-1939) It got support of the socialist-minded Congress leaders, organized the peasants, workers and students which still remained to be the communists’ strongholds. But, on the other hand, they also learnt
a good lesson that the rightists would not allow the left to make
the Congress a platform for carrying out class struggle. At this
point one issue needs clarification. Did the CPI put more emphasis
on class struggle than on fighting British imperialism? Available
archival sources suggest that during 1937-1939 the Congress did not
have the fighting mood. It is apparently difficult to say whether
office acceptance was a breathing space for putting pressure from
within or it was a 'war of position' against British imperialism.
However, Congress attempts to disorganize the left strongholds
viz., the AIKS and AITUC, repressive laws made by the provincial
ministries and behind-the-scene rapport between the Congress leadership
and the top capitalists make it very difficult to view the parlia-
mentary tactics followed by the INC as a form of 'war of position.' The
anti-people laws and policies of the Congress ministries were rig-
htly opposed by the CPI. But in 1939 the unity from below line came
in sharp conflict with the line of unity from top. And this contr-
adiction ultimately isolated the CPI and the left from the nation-
al political scenario as these two could not be dialectically fus-
ed.

Fourthly, it was a paradoxical situation for the CPI. The de-
cision to dissociate from the INC meant political wilderness, esp-
sically at the end of the 1930s when the world was faced with the
menace of fascism and India was declared a belligerent country.

But to be with the INC abiding by its terms and conditions would have meant tailing behind the Congress. Moreover, the organizational strength of the entire left - the CPI, the CSP and the AIFB - did not then reach such a height that could challenge the Congress position. Taking all these complexities into account it appears to us that the CPI's decision - perhaps forced by the logic of the time - not to come out of the Congress was correct because in the face of growing menace of fascism the utmost necessity was to constitute a united front against imperialism as well as the Axis bloc. Again, in the late 1930s the relation between the CPI and the CSP got sourcd and the latter ousted the communists from its organization and virtually surrendered to the Gandhian leadership. All these lead us to conclude that though there was a unique chance of consolidation of the leftist forces during 1937-1939 it could not/did not materialize because of intra-party feuds and differences of opinion regarding tactics to be followed, the growing popularity of the left among the masses (as manifest in Tripuri Congress session) notwithstanding. Thus the failure of the CPI to dialectically fuse the two ends (viz., unity from top and unity from below) of the united front tactic gave birth to political frustration. This frustration doubled when the CPI found that the main champion
of socialism inside the INC - Yehuru - went over to the other side of the fence.

This disenchantment and frustration gave birth to sectarianism. And this constitutes the fifth point for consideration. Amidst the War and in the face of Japanese aggression the political parties of India were confronted with a dilemma. As a dependent colony of Britain India could not participate in the War against the Axis powers because to her it was not a war for democracy (as the Allies demanded) as she herself was a victim of imperialist exploitation. So to support the war effort would have meant abandonment of her goal, i.e., freedom from colonial domination. But internationalism demanded that India too should constitute a part of the anti-fascist front. Our study reveals that the CPI correctly understood the imperialist character of the war and refused to participate in the same, though it did not fail to give vent to anti-fascist views.

It is interesting to note that this time the INC was bargaining with the Britishers for conditional co-operation. They demanded a war-time national government and in lieu of that support to war was promised. The CPI rightly opposed the bargaining attitude of the Congress and asked the leaders to lead mass movements against the British making the most of the opportunity the war provided. During 1940-1941 the CPI showed unusual militancy. It gave call
for armed insurrection and guerrilla warfare and a detailed organizational plan was drawn up. By organizing the people on war-time demands like more wages, more dearness allowances and more food the CPI aimed at creating a revolutionary situation and hoped that once such a situation was created the INC should take the lead and using the war crisis make the national revolution possible. It is, however, difficult to understand that conscious of its small size, weak organizational strength and the strong anti-communist attitude of a section of the Congress leadership how the CPI could dream of a national revolution! The only conclusion one can draw is that this was the reflection of a subjectivist and voluntarist understanding of the situation.

Sixthly, we are struck again when the CPI moved forward from a policy of action to one of relative passivity after June 1941 till the coming of independence in 1947. At the outset of the War National Front published some articles which made it clear that the war would be an imperialist war for the CPI even if the Soviet Union joined it. The CPI, however, could not imagine that it would have to take recourse to a completely reverse path. Initially, a confusion prevailed among the leaders of the CPI regarding the position to be taken when the Soviet Union was attacked by Hitler. Ultimately the 'jail document' came to the conclusion that the war
had changed its character because the USSR had joined the Allies. Later, the CPI had to rationalise the fact that the War was a 'people's war'. Most of its arguments, however, appeared to be rather weak. This stance was, we are pained to note, a result of too much reliance on the Soviet Union for guidance. The writings of Harry Politt and R.P. Dutt first made the leaders of the CPI aware of the necessity to change their line and, later, the message that Achhar Singh Chinna brought from USSR and communicated to the jailed leaders at Deoli was instrumental in the adoption of the new line. However, it does not mean that Saroj Mukhopadhyay and M. Basavapunniah are mistaken to refer to the usual practice of inner-party debates and discussions even before the change of line. But one thing is clear that external guidance ruled the day and the CPI could not objectively analyse the perspective of its strategy. The CPI was not wrong, as we have pointed out, in lending moral support to the Soviet Union, because its destruction in the War would have meant virtual destruction of socialism and international working class movement. But it was certainly wrong in putting lesser premium on the struggle against British imperialism and helping British war efforts, sometimes quite actively. Compared to the CPI, the position of the INC was closer to reality. A good many resolutions of the INC betrayed concern for the future of the USSR and
China and Nehru and Azad openly lent their moral support to the Allied cause; but they never put lesser emphasis on freedom struggle. The CPI forgot that as a communist party of a colonial country it was vitally necessary to dialectically fuse the struggle for freedom and the striving for proletarian internationalism.

The other major blunder on the part of the CPI during the second phase of the war was its support to the Pakistan demand of the Muslim League which was erroneous to the core. In its literature on the nationality question we find the CPI's strenuous search for signs of capitalist development in different regions and consequent growth of different nationalities. Going one step further, it propagated a theory of seventeen nationalities and seventeen Constituent Assemblies based on the principle of adult suffrage. We have already noted that Stalin's definition and subsequent writings misled the CPI which mechanically followed the lead and put forward an absurd theory of seventeen nationalities. The demand for Pakistan was essentially a religious demand of the League which it doggedly pursued. The League position happened to be a strategic one. The British used it against the INC led movements as a unique tool for its policy of divide and rule. The Muslim bourgeoisie constituted a social base for the League as the former visualised an unhindered economic development in an independent Pakistan.
Similarly, Birla and his associates, as we have seen, did not oppose separation for the same reason. The inelasticity of the Congress tactics for handling the League demands and consequent fear of the Muslims about their minority status in a free India and, moreover, active support of the British to the Muslim League made the issue much more complicated. The CPI was quite wrong to consider the League demand as the product of an urge which was as if democratic in nature.

The decision not to participate in the Quit India movement was another colossal blunder that the CPI committed. Guided by the theory of 'people's war' it vehemently attacked Gandhi and nationalist leaders who gave a call for Quit India movement. There is no denying, however, that the INC had no concrete organizational plan, that the Quit India resolution was more a threat than an actual call for struggle, that the people acted spontaneously, that it was not the INC but the CSP and the FB workers who took actual part in the movement and that the INC later disowned the violent character of the movement. Notwithstanding all these limitations, the political line of the CPI during this phase cannot be justified. Besides this, one cannot justify the CPI's characterisation of the fellow parties as disruptors, fifth columnists or stooges of Japanese imperialism, which they obviously were not. However, it should also
be recorded that most of the allegations, against the CPI—such as they helped the British for arresting the Congressmen, that the British financially backed the CPI, that the CPI virtually turned out to be an instrument of the British—were unfounded. Despite its occasional failures and political shortsightedness on some major issues it can not be said that the CPI was less patriotic than the INC, CSF or FB.

Finally, though the social situation was very grave and numerous movements took place during 1945-1947 the CPI could not properly use them. Many peasant movements took place in different parts of the country; the tribals were also restive. The CPI supported them but could not turn them into large scale political mass movements. It appears that the CPI's role in these movements remained confined to supporting and exciting the economic demands only and all their activities willy nilly took on the character of economicism. Its support to the MIN mutiny and movements against the trial of the INA men, its support to the postal strike and to the strike of the HALF deserved praise, but at the same time it should also be noted that the CPI primarily trailed behind these spontaneous movements. The documents of the CPI during this period reveal that there was a minority within the Central Committee which vigorously attempted to change the party line but only to earn the bad
name of 'Trotskyites' and left adventurists. The "rightist" led by P.C. Joshi, the then General Secretary of the CPI, constituted the majority and put cold water on the attempts of the minority. But at a certain point of time the "leftists" won the race. The August 1946 CC Resolution rightly stressed the need of organizing the growing movements against the British as well as the interim government of Nehru. But this line soon receded in the background when in June 1947 the "rightists" triumphed and the CC adopted the line of supporting the new government, felt proud in taking part in the task of nation building and refused to see in the growing mass struggles the possibility of launching any large scale movement against the new government. This line only helped to sharpen the conflict between the minority and the majority within the Central Committee, especially with regard to the strategy to be taken in the militant struggle of the Telengana peasants.

Though it is a truism that the achievement of political freedom was a positive gain and surely a sign of retreat on the part of the British and the "leftist" section was wrong not to recognize this it can be said that there was no real reason to become jubilant. The gain was achieved through compromise and negotiation with the British. And, as the Transfer of Power volumes reveal, it
was also very difficult for Britain to hold on to India for a long time. It wanted an honourable and peaceful settlement with the Congress so that its economic interests remained intact even after its withdrawal. It also was afraid of the seizure of power by the communists. Besides this, the strong anti-kisan, anti-worker and anti-communist stand taken by the Congress leaders, especially in the penultimate phase, left no scope for amity. So there was no real reason to feel proud of taking part in the nation-building. The CPI had to give a heavy price for this complacency. Thousands of peasants had been killed by the new government in Andhra during 1947-1948 and the AITUC was forced to split. It is, however, not true that the CPI was blind to these facts. The June CC resolution did not forget to mention the true nature of the Mountbatten plan. It rightly noted that the Mountbatten Award would not give any real independence and aimed at disrupting the popular movements; the CC was quite aware of the compromise of the Britishers with Indian big business, and the 'extreme Right wing' of the Congress leadership, over the heads of the people and rightly noted that imperialism was out to save the colonial order for the indigenous vested interests. It also noted that the continuous pressure on the Congress leadership strengthened by 'rising tide of popular struggles' made the transfer of power possible. But the CPI view hot and cold
of the C.P.I. At the same time, stimulating all these things the June CC Resolution vowed full cooperation with the national leadership 'in the great task of nation-building' and suggested formation of 'broadest joint-front based on the principle of fullest cooperation between the popular governments and popular organizations. It gave a call to the working class and the masses to forge unity with the 'National Front' so that the fight for 'real independence' climaxed into final victory. These formulations were made in the background of severe repression and suppression of all popular movements. Given this context a call to all left elements to forget the 'partisanship' and virtual abandonment of the class perspective that a communist party generally champions constitute irony of history. One wonders how the C.P.I managed to forget its costly experiences of 1937-1942 period! In all fairness it can, however, be said that given its small size and the general hostile attitude against it for its 'people's war' policy it was natural for the C.P.I to stress united front/joint front tactic.

It, however, appears that the first part of the June CC Resolution which highlights the true nature of imperialism and its alliance with the right wing was written prima facie with a view to accommodating the spirit of the leftist section and the latter part wherein concrete plans for action were mentioned reflected the opinion of the reformist wing.
However, the June CII correctly noted that Pakistan would remain an imperialist hinterland and would solve no problem but would sharpen conflicts on boundaries and border hostilities.

This failure to objectively evaluate the situation did much damage to the future of the CII. From right reformism and from abandonment of the line of class struggle the CII shifted to an altogether opposite line of left-sectarianism immediately thereafter. The Second Congress of the CII totally repudiated the Jushi line and described the freedom as fake and the Nehru government as a government of the compromised bourgeoisie. It should be noted that this kind of analysis was not correct. It cannot, however, be denied that during 1937-1947 the Indian bourgeoisie followed the pressure-compromise — pressure tactic and utilised the INC for achieving their end.

To sum up, the CII politics during the period under study acquired a good many dimensions. Firstly, from the leninist tactic of united front with the bourgeoisie in the colonies it fell in the ditch of left adventurism. Secondly, putting too much emphasis on proletarian internationalism during 1941-1945 it sidetracked the main issue, viz., the achievement of freedom. Thirdly, during 1945-1947 it failed to correctly utilise the growing mass movements
and virtually trailed behind the movements of the day. Despite all these failures we must note the positive contributions of the CPI in radicalising Indian politics. It was the CPI which, for the first time, along with other fraternal parties, organized the kisans, the workers, the students and the tribal people on class lines. Secondly, its record of anti-fascism was as glorious as that of the INC or CSP. It is a truism that it wronged when it decided to support the British war efforts and denounced the INC, the CSP and the F3. But it is not, however, true that it abandoned the goal of freedom, though during 1941-1944 it put lesser premium on it and lost sight of the class perspective. Thirdly, though it was mistaken to demand separate nationality for the Muslims and other linguistic and cultural minorities its record of fighting the communal menace throughout 1937-1947, especially during 1946-1947 is much more glorious than that of other parties. Fourthly, the CPI rightly supported the INA mutiny, the movement against trial of INA men, the postal strike and the strike in RIAF while the INC and the Muslim League betrayed their cause. In short, by championing the cause of the peasants, workers, tribal, states' peoples, AIF ratings and other underprivileged sections of Indian society, by doggedly fighting British imperialism — except for a short period — and the compromising policies of the INC it added a new dimension
to the radicalisation of Indian politics. However, its small size, weak organizational strength and excessive dependence on the Comi-

tern and USSR created difficulties. Especially, the hostile atti-
tude of many nationalist leaders towards the CPI, the strong infl-
uence of Gandhian ideology over the Indian masses together with
severe repression of British imperialism made its task doubly dif-
cult. Amidst all such hardships and obstacles what it achieved
is not of lesser import. After four decades of independence much
of the confusion centring around the role of the CPI in the freed-

om struggle has been cleared up. Access to archival materials and
private papers of the nationalist leaders has opened up a new di-
mension in exploring this area objectively and it is high time to
put the record straight.