CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

This chapter is devoted to the theoretical conclusions arrived at after the descriptive analysis of our findings in the previous chapters. As this study is confined to the primary and secondary data relating to the working of the Communist Party in Punjab, our conclusions are in the nature of generalizations limited to one of the Indian states which has its own peculiarities.

We made it clear at the outset that we do not subscribe to the "dependency view" of Indian communism propounded by scholars like Kautsky, Overstreet and Windmiller. Instead, we argued that with the acceptance of the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism and the consequent need of mobilizing support in a competitive political situation, the working of the CPI has come to be increasingly influenced by the national
environment. To say this is by no means to imply that the international environment has no influence at all. All it implies is that the critical factor is the societal environment in which the party has to operate. The imperative of adjusting itself to the local situation for effective participation in the electoral process has brought tremendous changes in the working of the party. In order to probe these changes, we decided to examine the organization, ideology, strategy and support structure of the Communist party in Punjab. Our main objective was to study the interaction among these dimensions and to find out how far the working of the party has been influenced by regional considerations. The findings of the study in this regard are summed up below.

Our analysis has indicated that there has been a significant interaction among the organization, ideology, strategy and support structure of the party in the state. Changes in one of these dimensions led to corresponding changes in others. It has further been noticed that the regional environment played an important role in shaping this interaction and influencing the working of the party. The detailed description of the interactional pattern among the organization, ideology, strategy, support structure and the regional environment is as under.

As the communist movement in the state arose in the wake
of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia (1917), the ideological and theoretical formulations of the party and its organizational structure and operative dynamics, during the early years of its existence, were considerably influenced by the international environment. This phase, however, did not last long and gradually national and regional considerations became more important in shaping the policy and activities of the party. The year 1956 marked a watershed in this regard. The 20th Congress of the CPSU (1956) made some new ideological formulations and considerably modified the earlier Marxist theory on such ideological issues as the nature of the epoch, peaceful coexistence and peaceful transition to socialism. However, the most important formulation made by the 20th Congress of the CPSU was relating to the role of national bourgeoisie in the newly independent countries. The national bourgeoisie in the newly independent countries, it was pointed out, was capable of playing a progressive role in the fight against imperialism. These ideological changes were accepted by 12 communist and workers parties in the Moscow Declaration (1957) and became a part of the ideological heritage of the International Communist Movement.

The new developments in Marxist ideology, generated by the international environment, interacted with the strategy of the party in the state. The CPI had been following an anti-
Congress line in the state since 1948. The analysis of the party was that the bourgeoisie in India was collaborating with imperialism. As the Congress government was a bourgeoisie landlord government led by the big bourgeoisie, it could not be expected to pursue progressive internal and external policies. The main task before the party in this situation, therefore, was to work for building a united front from below with the non-Congress left parties against the Congress government with the ultimate aim of forming a people's democratic front under the leadership of the Communist party. The new developments in Marxist ideology presumably came into clash with the prevailing line of the party. If the cooperation of the national bourgeoisie was to be sought in the fight against imperialism and for the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, there was no sense in keeping up the relentless opposition to the Congress government. Similarly, if socialism and imperialism could peacefully coexist, there was no harm in the coexistence of the working class with the national bourgeoisie and its government. Similarly, acceptance of the possibility of peaceful transition implied that increasing emphasis should be placed on the use of parliamentary tactics.

Realising the implications of the new developments in ideology for the strategy of the party, the central leadership
of the CPI proposed certain changes in the prevailing line of the party at the time of the Falghat Congress (1996). The crux of the proposed changes was that the contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism had increased. As a result, there was a progressive shift in the policies of the government and they were motivated by a desire to develop India along independent capitalist lines. The party should, therefore, leave its old policy of uniting the anti-Congress forces alone and try to bring the masses following the Congress into the united front.

The proposed changes in the strategy and tactics of the party were opposed tooth and nail by the dominant leadership in the Punjab party during the inner party debate at the time of the Fourth State Party Conference held at Jandiala in 1996. It was not prepared to accept that there was a progressive shift in the policies of the government. An apprehension was expressed that such an attitude would lead to complacency and seriously jeopardise the task of fighting against the anti-people policies of the government. It would also harm the independent existence of the party. The dominant leadership in the Punjab party thus strongly argued that the party should continue its old line of opposition to the Congress. The minority faction in the Punjab party, however, not only supported the proposed changes in party strategy but also demanded some modifications in them in the other direction.
It demanded that the party should form a united front with the progressive elements inside the Congress as represented by Nehru.

The opposition of the dominant leadership in the Punjab party to the proposed changes in party strategy was presumably due to the nature of its support structure. The main support of the party in the state, right from its inception, came from the rural Sikh peasantry and trade union workers. In fact, the communist movement in the state arose out of the failure of some peasant based anti-imperialist movements like the Ghadar Movement and the Akali Movement. The anti-landlord policies pursued by the party during the period 1948-55 seem to have further strengthened its support among the lower and middle sections of the peasantry. The peasantry in the state had a strong anti-Congress feeling. In the rural-urban interest contradiction, it considered the Congress party as a protector of the urban interests. The stand of the Congress on the demand for Sikh homeland and its agrarian and taxation policies further alienated the rural Sikh peasantry from the Congress party. In this situation, the dominant leadership of the party in the state could hope to retain and further expand its support among the Sikh peasantry only by following an anti-Congress line. The support of the minority faction, which largely consisted of trade union leaders, to the proposed
changes in the strategy of the party was also due to the nature of its support structure. It could hope to get concessions for the trade union workers by advocating a line of unity with the progressive sections inside the Congress. It seems that the support structure of the party interacted, through the party leaders, with its ideology and strategy.

The political resolution finally adopted at Falghat resolved, to some extent, the contradiction between the proposed changes in strategy and the support structure of the party in the state. It laid down that the CPI would follow a policy of unity and struggle towards the Congress. It implied that the party would support the progressive measures of the government and also oppose its anti-people policies. The duality in this approach enabled the dominant leadership of the party in the state to continue with its line of opposition to the Congress in practice.

Apart from the question of attitude towards the national bourgeoisie, the issue of peaceful transition to socialism also posed some problems. Should the party attach more importance to parliamentary tactics, keeping in view the formulations of the 20th Congress of the CPSU and the Moscow Declaration (1957) on peaceful transition to socialism? The dominant leadership in the Punjab party was not prepared to accept the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism and opposed the formulations of the 20th Congress of the CPSU.
in this regard. Some of the leaders of the party presumably had a fascination for an armed revolution due to their earlier association with terrorist activities in the state. However, the electoral victory of the CPI in Kerala during the Second General Elections in 1957 strengthened the position of those who favoured the peaceful transition line. An Extraordinary Congress of the party was held at Amritsar in 1958 to discuss this issue. The Congress decided that henceforth CPI would work as an open and mass party. Parliamentary tactics were raised to the strategic level.

However, the proper implementation of the peaceful transition line required a new type of organization. The existing organization of the party was designed for the conduct of revolutionary activities. It was a closed, well knit and highly centralized structure. The Extraordinary Congress of the party, therefore, decided to make drastic changes in the party organization. Recruitment to the party was liberalized and membership and powers of the units at each level were increased. A considerable amount of decentralization and democratization was introduced in the party organization. It thus appears that changes in the ideology and strategy of the party led to changes in organizational structure and processes.

Emphasis on parliamentary tactics not only brought
changes in organization but also increased the importance of the support structure in the working of the party. The policies of the party after 1958 were directed towards the expansion of its support structure. For the realization of this objective, the party leadership changed its tactics on different fronts and started emphasizing the demands of all sections of the social strata except the landlords and the big bourgeoisie.

The controversy over the peaceful transition line, however, was again renewed in the party as a result of the dismissal of the Communist Ministry in Kerala by the Congress government in 1959. It also strengthened the position of those who were demanding an anti-Congress line. The differences in the party over these issues were further sharpened as a result of some new developments in the international communist movement. The ideological rift between Moscow and Peking came out in the open. The CPC started advocating an alternative general line for the international communist movement in which it took an orthodox Marxist position on such ideological issues as the nature of the epoch, peaceful coexistence, inevitability of war and peaceful transition to socialism. There ensued an ideological debate among the communist parties of the world on these issues. While participating in the debate on these issues, the dominant leadership in the Punjab party supported the stand of the CPC and the minority faction
that of the CPSU. In fact, the strategical and tactical implications of the CPC line were more suitable to the support structure of the dominant leadership of the party in the state.

In order to strengthen its position against the CPC in the ideological controversy, the CPSU convened a conference of communist and workers parties in Moscow in 1960. The statement issued at the end of the conference (popularly known as Moscow Statement), apart from extending support to the line of the CPSU, made certain new theoretical formulations. It laid down that the communist parties in the newly independent countries should work for the creation of a state of national democracy. For this purpose they should form a broad national democratic front, comprising all patriotic forces from the working class to the national bourgeoisie. The Soviet theoreticians later interpreted that the leadership of the working class was not to be a precondition for the formation of the national democratic front. The communist parties in the newly independent countries were thus asked to further strengthen their collaboration with the national bourgeoisie.

These new developments again renewed the controversy in the Punjab CPI over strategy and tactics. It reached its climax at the time of the Vijayawada Party Congress (1961). The majority rightist faction in the central leadership of the party proposed that the CPI should form a broad national democratic front with progressive elements inside the Congress
and work for the establishment of a national democracy in India. The dominant leadership in the Punjab party struck to its earlier stand and opposed the proposed changes. It supported the draft documents of the minority leftist faction in the central leadership of the party which favoured an anti-Congress line. The minority faction in the Punjab party, however, supported the pro-Congress line. The views of the majority and minority leadership in the Punjab party seem to have been once again influenced by the nature of its support structure.

The political resolution adopted at the Vijayawada Congress (1961) considerably strengthened the position of the minority faction in the Punjab party. It gave priority to the fight against the rightist parties. But the dominant leadership of the party in the state, while formally agreeing with the Vijayawada Resolution, continued its opposition to the Congress. It entered into an electoral alliance with the Akali Dal against the Congress during the Third General Elections in the state in 1962. The proper implementation of the Vijayawada resolution created friction among the majority and minority factions in the Punjab party. These differences were further accentuated as a result of the India-China border dispute and ultimately led to the split in the party in 1964. A majority of the party leaders working on the peasant front
joined the CPM after the split and the majority of those working among the trade unions joined the CPI. It thus appears that the difference in the support structure of the majority and minority leadership in the Punjab party led to the formation of two different perspectives on issues of ideology and strategy and intensified factional conflict in the party organization.

The controversy in the CPI over issues of ideology and strategy was considerably settled after the split. The party extended full support to the stand of the CPSU on all ideological issues. It also adopted a new party programme which favoured a pro-Congress line. The new leadership of the party in the state, keeping in view the direction given in the party programme, decided that its main fight would be against the rightist and communal parties.

In spite of this broad consensus on issues of ideology and strategy, the constraint of support structure continued to operate, though in a different way. The support base of the CPI was considerably shrunk as a result of the formation of the CPM. As a result, the main emphasis in the strategy and tactics of the party was laid on the expansion of the support structure. It could be possible only if the party paid due regard to public opinion while taking stand on political issues and extended support to the demands of the masses. In pursuance of these objectives, the party leadership abandoned
its accepted party line and adopted an anti-Congress stance during the period 1965-69. The unpopularity of the Congress among the masses seems to have made it difficult for the party leadership to implement a pro-Congress line in the state. The party also supported the demands of different sections of the social strata without realizing the inherent contradictions among them.

The expansion of support structure, however, was not an easy task. It was rendered all the more difficult as a result of the intensification of competition among the political parties in the state after the reorganization of the state in 1966. Political survival in such a highly competitive political situation appears to have reduced the importance of ideology in determining the strategy and tactics of the party. Electoral success and temporary political gain became more important in determining the policies of the party. The participation of the CPI in the United Front ministry (1967) along with the Akali Dal and the Jan Sangh, whom the party leadership had hitherto denounced as rightist and communal parties, is a case in the point.

In spite of the adoption of a pragmatic approach by the party, the interaction between strategy and support structure seems to have continued. The participation of the party in the United Front ministry strengthened its support among the peasants, intellectuals and other sections of the
middle class who were disillusioned with the Congress rule. But by the same token the party lost some support among the rural and the urban poor who were the worst sufferers of middle class domination. Keeping in view the nature of its support structure and also for lack of a viable alternative, the party leadership continued to lay emphasis on the unity of the opposition parties against the Congress till 1969.

However, the unpopularity of the Akali-Jan Sangh Coalition and the split in the Congress in 1969 again brought a change in the tactics of the party in the state. The party leadership now laid more emphasis on unity with the progressive sections inside the Congress. This policy culminated in the Congress-CPI electoral alliance during the Lok Sabha elections in 1971 and again during the State Assembly election in 1972. Improved electoral performance of the party during these elections further strengthened its belief in the pro-Congress line.

CPI's cooperation with the Congress during the period 1971-75 probably again brought a change in its support structure. The party gained new support among landless labour and poor peasants but lost its support among upper and middle sections of the peasantry and other sections of the middle class. CPI's support among the richer section of the peasantry was further eroded as a result of the green revolution in the state. In order to compensate this loss the
party devoted increasing attention to strengthen its support structure among the landless labour and poor peasants by supporting their demands.

Adoption of the peaceful transition line and frequent changes in the strategy and tactics of the party not only brought changes in its support structure but also in the working of party organization. Participation in bourgeois parliamentary institutions has completely changed the behaviour of party members. They have lost their earlier enthusiasm for dedicated party work. Instead of militant mass movements, electioneering and lobbying have become the main centres of their activity. The entry of uncommitted persons in the party has resulted in indiscipline and seems to have rendered the implementation of collective decisions difficult. Frequent changes in strategy and tactics have intensified the factional conflict in the party leadership. However, it must be stated that this factionalism is nothing compared to the factional fights in other parties in the state. And there is far greater discipline in the CPI as compared with the non-communist parties. But there is no denying the fact that the party organisation has become considerably loose. It may act as a constraint on the adoption of revolutionary tactics by the party in future, should the party consider such tactics as vital.

The above study of the interactional pattern between organization, ideology, strategy and support structure leads
us to some theoretical propositions on the relationship of the four dimensions. Ideology provides the party leadership with a world view, fixes the guidelines for strategy and determines long range organizational goals. Strategy is concerned with devising the means to achieve organizational goals and takes into consideration universal as well as particular factors. It links ideology with the support structure. While ideology tends to push strategy in the dogmatic direction, the support structure pulls it in the direction of pragmatism. Organization reconciles the conflicting pulls of ideology and support structure on strategy. The effectiveness of organization depends on how efficiently it synthesizes the requirements of ideology with the demands of the support structure while formulating and implementing strategy. The support structure interacts with ideology and strategy through organizational leadership. It acts as a constraint in the interaction between ideology and strategy. The interaction between strategy and support structure is constrained by ideology.

Our discussion has also indicated that regional considerations played an important role in shaping the interaction between organization, ideology, strategy and support structure and influencing the working of the party. The most distinctive regional aspect of the working of the party in the state is its continued recruitment of leadership.
from a regional elite - the Sikh peasantry. The dominance of the landowning peasants in the leadership positions, from the early period to the present, considerably influenced the policies of the party and the nature of its support structure. The peasant leadership of the party in the state did not show as much subservience to national and international communist leaders as one is often led to believe. It kept the requirements of its support structure and the regional predicament of the party in view while reacting to the proposals of national and international communist leaders for changes in ideology and strategy. However, when a new line which did not meet the requirements of the local situation, was imposed on the state unit by the central organs of the party, the leadership of the party in the state tried to dilute it in actual practice. Such dilution was essential both for ensuring the control of the dominant leadership on party organization and to minimize the damage which the proper implementation of the new line may otherwise have caused to the political fortunes of the party in the state. Apart from the socio-economic background of party leaders and the nature of support structure, a host of other regional factors like the historical circumstances associated with the growth of the movement in the state, socio-economic composition of the population, the level of economic development and the nature
of political party competition, influenced the working of the party in the state.

The failure of the communist party to acquire political power in the state has not thus been the result of its over dependence on Moscow or Peking but has instead stemmed from the plurality of the regional environment and the failure of the regional and national leadership of the party to devise suitable means to revolutionize it. The failure of the CPI in Punjab, however, is not as marked as in the case of some other Indian states. The party has succeeded in carving out significant pockets of influence in the rural and urban areas of the state. Its electoral performance has also improved over years, particularly in comparison with the CPIM. In the bipolar competition between the Congress and the Akali Dal for dominance in the politics of the state, the CPI enjoys the privileged position of playing the swing role and thus influencing the outcome of electoral contests. Given its influence among the masses and flexibility of approach in choosing allies, the party is likely to continue to play an important role in the future political developments in the state.

The present study has thrown some light on the working of the Communist party in Punjab. However, it has raised certain new issues and problems which need further investigation and research. Now has the pace of modernization and
development influenced the prospects of communism in India? What is the relationship between the socio-economic background of the CPI leadership and its policies? How has different regional communist movements interacted with one another and influenced the working of the party at the national level? All these topics need immediate research. At a time when communism is becoming more and more variegated, there is an urgent need to study the regional diversities within individual communist movements.