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CIA/ONE/STAFF MEMO/37-64

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

14 August 1964

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 37-64: (Internal ONE Working Paper --
CIA Distribution Only)

SUBJECT: The Breakup of the Communist Party of India

SUMMARY

The Communist Party of India has now split into two mutually hostile parties of roughly equal size. The schism, which has been in the making since 1959, was brought about by the refusal of a large element of the party leadership to obey Soviet directives to give substantial support to the present government of India. The rightist faction continues to accept the guidance of the USSR, supports most of the present Indian government's domestic and foreign policies, and condemns the Chinese Communist ideological stand and its claims to Indian territory. The leftists advocate total opposition to the Congress government, support the Chinese in their dispute with the Soviets, and call for a compromise settlement of the India-China border dispute. The right-wing party will probably decline in strength as it has little chance of receiving any reciprocal support from the Congress Party. The leftist party, on the other hand, may increase in importance if it is able to capitalize on the discontent engendered by the government's inability to resolve India's serious social and economic problems. However, the Indian government may outlaw the leftists, in such case, their effectiveness as an underground organization is likely to remain limited.

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1. The Communist Party of India (CPI) has now suffered an open and apparently irreversible split. The schism is in part linked with the Sino-Soviet conflict, with one faction (called the "rightists") remaining closely identified with the USSR, and the other (the "leftists") at least sympathetic to the aims and concepts of the Communist Party of China (CCP). However, the split is basically the result of previously existing disputes in the CPI itself over its stance vis-a-vis the government of India.

2. Factionalism has long been endemic in the CPI, but seemed, for various reasons, successfully muted in the early 1950's. During this period, the party was directed by a group which later came to be called the "centerists." The latter, led by Ajoy Ghosh, stressed the need for unity at all costs and pushed the line of (for the moment) peaceful, parliamentary opposition to the Congress government. Ghosh's efforts appeared successful; party membership grew from 30,000 in 1950 to over 250,000 in the latter part of the decade. In 1957 the CPI won 10 percent of the national vote (double its 1952 total) became the leading opposition to the ruling Congress Party, and won control of one of India's 14 states, Kerala. Its future seemed bright. Membership continued

to expand. The leadership -- with some reason -- expected to win two more states in 1962, and hoped for a nationwide electoral triumph within ten or fifteen years.

3. However, factional differences re-emerged in the latter 1950's, when the Soviet Union, seeking India's friendship, instructed the CPI to endorse not only Nehru's neutralist foreign policy but much of his domestic program as well. Many party leaders could not bring themselves to regard the Congress government as other than a bourgeois reactionary regime. After New Delhi's removal of the Communist-led Kerala government in 1959, these leftists exerted increasing pressure for a return to a more militantly anti-government party line, and soon became a cohesive, well organized group. At first, the fact that Communist China was attacking Nehru in somewhat similar terms was an embarrassing coincidence for the leftists. However, over a period of time the leftists were more and more drawn to Peking. This was particularly so because, as the Sino-Soviet dispute erupted,

the Russians came to regard the Indian government as a potentially valuable Asian ally. Accordingly, Moscow directed the CPI not merely to support some of the Congress Government's policies, but to seek a united front with all but a few of its "non-progressive" elements.

by the Soviets and centerists

4. Despite a series of efforts to head off a split, the struggle between the two rival wings of the party, which broke into the open in 1961, became steadily more acrimonious. The centerist faction, which had previously served as a steadying element, was progressively eroded away, particularly after the death of Ghosh in 1962. When the Chinese Communists invaded India in October 1962, the right-wing CPI leader S. A. Dange actually aided the Indian government in the arrest of over a thousand left-wing Communists as potential traitors. By December 1963 the pro-Chinese leader of the Indonesian Communist Party, D.N. Aidit, was urging the leftist leaders (virtually all of them by then out of jail) to set up their own newspapers and organizations with a view of establishing an entirely new party -- advice which they soon began to follow.

5. The break finally came after Dange returned from Moscow in April 1964. When the leftists produced an alleged 1926 letter by Dange offering his services to British Intelligence, Dange suspended 32 of their leaders. Rather than submit, the leftists redoubled their preparations for a walkout. These culminated in July 1964 when a meeting of over 100 leftist leaders formally announced the formation of a new Communist Party which would hold

its own National Congress in Calcutta in late 1964 -- at the same time the old CPI was scheduled to meet in Bombay.

6. The right wing, comprising those who continue to accept the Moscow-backed party line in favor of a united front of all "progressive forces" (including all but the most reactionary elements in the ruling Congress Party) probably totals about 60 percent of total Indian Communist strength, which by the time of the split had probably declined to about 140,000. It is in clear control of the old party machinery both at the national level and in all but one of the states -- in part because of the free hand provided by the arrest of most leftist leaders in October 1962.

7. Controlling only the important West Bengal state party before the split, the leftists have set up new organizations both in New Delhi and in the other state capitals. While all members of the new party favor a position of frank opposition to the present Indian government, they are not agreed among themselves over the best tactics to follow in the long run. Few advocate an immediate campaign of terrorism or insurrection but many probably expect it will eventually be necessary. In any event, all are agreed on the present need for a vigorous effort to rally anti-government forces by means of demonstrations and electoral campaigns.

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The Prospects for India's Communist Parties

8. The immediate effect of the schism will be a further weakening of the Communist political position throughout India, and a lessening of any possible Communist threat to the new post-Nehru government. The Communist delegations in Parliament and in the State Legislatures will be split into two smaller, less effective factions. Further, in the only Indian election of any importance in the near future -- that for the Kerala State Legislature in February 1965 -- the Communists have probably destroyed what appeared to be an excellent chance of making a comeback. Non-Communist forces there are badly fragmented, and until the split, the CPI/^{was} still the strongest party in the state. However, the two Kerala Communist Parties have already fought each other in municipal elections, and both lost ground as a result.

9. The future of the various Communist front groups is still uncertain, but most will probably also split. At the present time, it appears that the central apparatus of the Communist controlled All India Trade Union Congress, /^{which has} about 500,000 members, remains in rightist hands. However, many prominent trade unionists are in the leftist camp and a rival left-wing

organization will probably be set up. The Communist controlled Kisan Sabha (Peasant Front), on the other hand, has long been dominated by leftist leaders, and appears likely to remain so. The control of other fronts, such as the CPI controlled youth federation, the "peace Partisans," etc. has not yet been determined.

10. Over the long run, the rightists probably have a bleak future. Undisciplined, preaching doctrines which may be high in intellectual content but ^{which} are low in popular appeal, they appear to be becoming more a debating society than an instrument of political protest. They are ^{also} increasingly isolated. Their most important potential non-Communist allies -- the "leftist" Congress faction led by Krishna Menon -- now has little power of its own and probably can anticipate less in the future. While Nehru may have been at least sympathetic with the aims of a united front of progressives, the present leaders of the Congress Party are not. Basically conservative on domestic issues, they will likely rebuff any Communist effort at coalition as an ill-disguised attempt at infiltration. However, as long as the USSR seeks to cultivate the Indian government for its own purposes, Moscow will probably insist that its Indian supporters go slow about criticizing the present government and hence make it difficult

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for them to compete with their leftist rivals in picking up protest votes.

11. The new Leftist Party seems to have more advantages than do the Rightists -- as long as it is not outlawed. Its members are militant and dedicated -- many to the point of fanaticism. Though smaller, the new organization being set up is more tightly disciplined and probably more effective than its rival. Leftist chances of winning election victories will be enhanced by their stated willingness to establish tactical alliances against the Congress with groups the simon-pure right-wing Communists shun as "nonprogressive" -- such as the south Indian separatist Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (DMK) in Madras, and the reactionary and sectarian Jan Sangh and Muslim League throughout the country. Accordingly, the leftwing Communists are likely to have a stronger position in the state and national legislative bodies than the rightists after the 1967 elections.

12. Fundamentally, the leftists are reasserting leadership of an extremist protest movement of the left, a role substantially abandoned by the Communists since the latter 1950s. In so doing, they will probably be able to take advantage of some very real

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discontent which does exist in India, and which in the 1962 elections was exploited mostly by the right-wing extremist and separatist parties. That will particularly be the case if the ruling Congress Party is unable to satisfy the aspirations of its followers. Given the major economic, political, and social problems that the Indian government faces, the Congress will find it difficult to maintain its present level of popularity even in the Hindi-speaking areas where its strength is greatest. And, while the left-wing Communists cannot expect to attract all the Congress defectors, they may expect to get many of them, and to repeat, at least in part, their victories of the mid-1950s.

13. However, the leftists cannot feel that their future is assured, either. Their efforts to dissociate themselves from Chinese claims to Indian territory through talk of peaceful negotiation, mutual understanding, and Asian friendship have not been ^{completely} / successful. Condemned to keep the millstone of China round their necks, they continually risk, at the least, patriotic castigation; at the most, suppression. Indian memories of the attempted Communist rebellions in 1948-1949, and the leftists' continued identification (and probably clandestine collaboration) with the Chinese will keep them in the government's eye as a subversive and potentially dangerous force which may have to

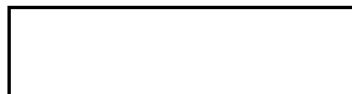
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be outlawed. While the leftists have probably prepared for this eventuality (some may even be tempted to go underground before the government acts against them) their effectiveness would likely be limited. For the foreseeable future, the efficient Indian military and security services will be able to blunt the efforts of any such underground movement -- either in trying to carry out sporadic terrorist outbursts or to stage a large-scale insurrection. Thus, the likelihood of one or the other Communist factions coming to power either by violence or free elections will remain remote for some time to come.



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