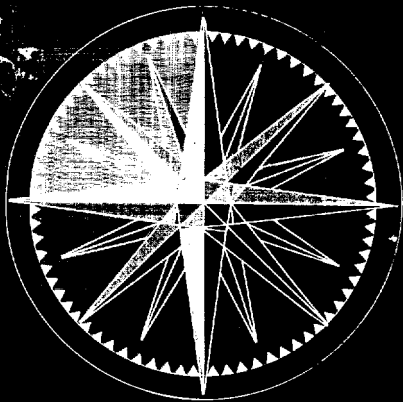


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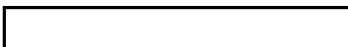
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SPECIAL REPORT

FACTIONALISM AMONG INDIAN COMMUNISTS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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FACTIONALISM AMONG INDIAN COMMUNISTS

Since the Chinese invasion of 1962, the Indian Communist movement has gradually split into two parallel and contending organizations. The so-called "rightist" official leadership continues to speak for a majority of the 160,000 members of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and remains tactically committed to the parliamentary route to power, to selective cooperation with the ruling Congress Party on specific issues, and to subservience to Soviet tutelage. The leadership is opposed by a loosely organized group of vigorous centrists and leftist dissidents who--though still divided among themselves over tactics--favor a more militant opposition to the Congress Party's moderate socialism. Although probably not under Chinese control, many leftist dissidents tend to look to Peiping for ideological direction and inspiration. The breach in the CPI stems mainly from domestic differences, many of them as old as the party itself but heretofore tolerated in the interests of unity. Outside pressures, such as the Chinese attack on India and the split in the international Communist movement, have served primarily to deepen the divisions already existing in the CPI and to reduce the value placed on unity.

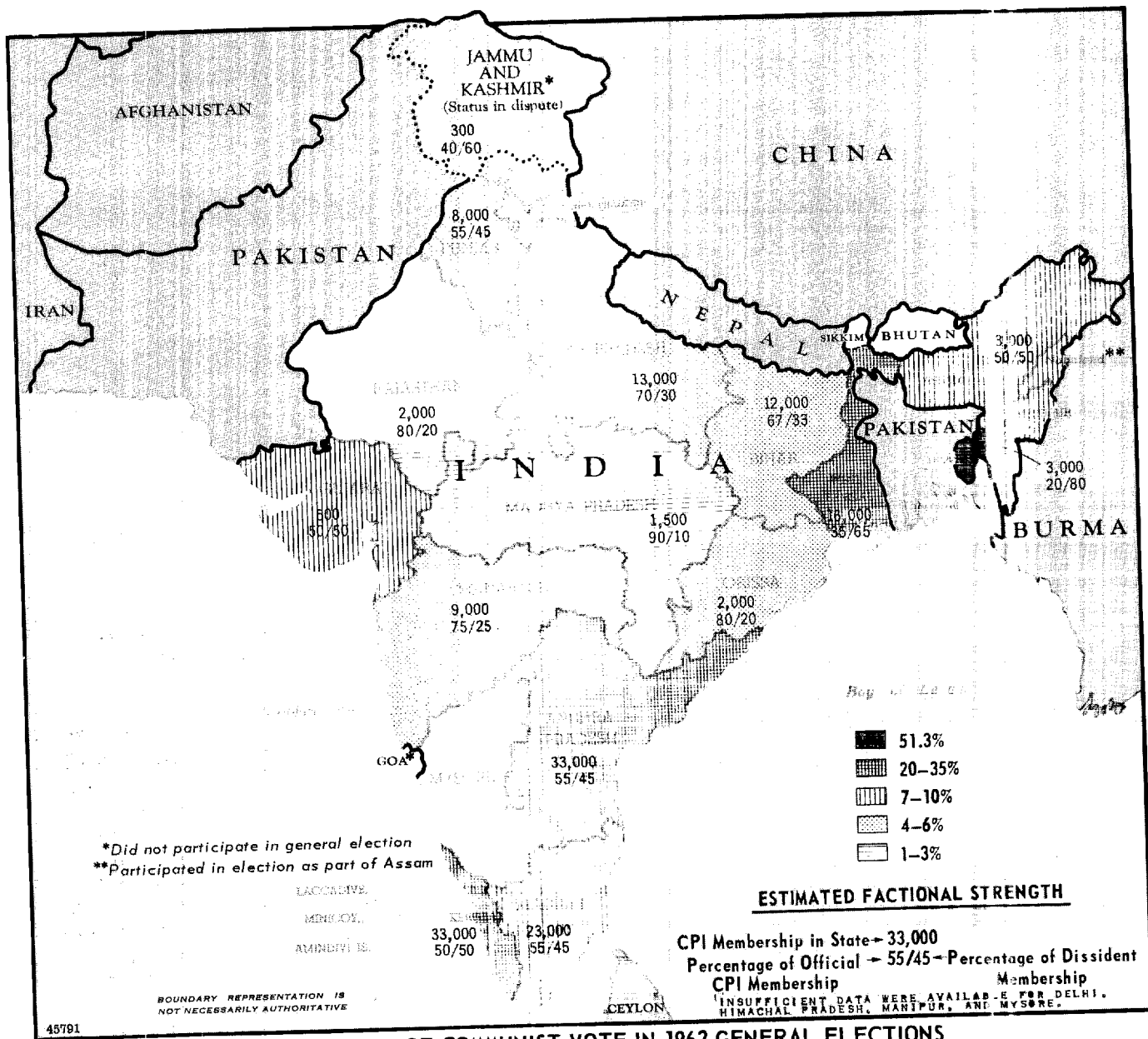
Communist Strength

The CPI, even though factionalized, is composed of dedicated, hard-working, and--at the lower levels--well-disciplined members, qualitatively equal to those of any other Indian party. Like other Indian parties, the core of this membership is drawn from high and middle caste urban clerical and rural land-holding middle classes; the rank and file of both factions, however, is composed of low and middle caste laborers and peasants. The 60,000 hard-core members and especially the 2,000 full-time employees have stood by the party even in periods of government suppression and public censure

such as that immediately after the Chinese invasion of 1962.

The Communists were strongest in 1957 when they polled 10% of the national popular vote and actually came into office in the populous south Indian state of Kerala. Their two-year rule there was inconclusive--Nehru dismissed the Communist government because of its inability to control mounting civil disorder. In the 1962 general elections, before the Chinese invasion of that year, 11 million Indians (again about 10% of the vote) supported Communist candidates. In most areas, however, the CPI was already stagnant, and it has not regained the dynamism of the middle 1950s.

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Unable to influence national policies directly, the CPI has been forced to rely upon indirect pressures--labor disturbances, passive resistance campaigns, propaganda demonstrations, and to a lesser extent, covert action--to hinder and embarrass the government. The vigor of extraparliamentary, "anti-imperialist" activity has undoubtedly at times conditioned government policy, and has often attracted the support of many Indians with ambivalent feelings toward the West.

Advocates of a militant and possibly illegal policy and proponents of a more moderate and even cooperative approach toward India's Congress Party have divided the CPI since its early days. Each faction has at times been dominant, and each has at those times received the support of the Soviet Union. Neither militants nor moderates, however, have ever been a threat to the dominance of the Congress Party. The discouragement and indiscipline resulting from the Communist Party's seven-year stagnation, the rise of an alternate pole of Marxist orthodoxy in Peiping, and the post-invasion suppression of the leftist militants have combined to split the movement organizationally into official and dissident parties.

The Official Party

The official party, headed by S. A. Dange, remains the dominant group. It has an established national status which the dissidents lack. Its authority, however, is most secure in those areas where Communist

strength is least. The dissidents challenge the "officials" in the long-standing centers of Communist activity--Kerala, Andhra, and West Bengal--and in these states the rank and file may already be committed to the new leftist party. The rightist "officials," however, control most of the formal positions in the CPI, and will therefore also continue to occupy the majority of those state assembly positions to which Communists have been elected.

By their policy of selective support for the Congress Party, the Communist rightists have avoided having the party outlawed and have even managed to acquire a degree of respectability. In exchange for this status and security, however, they have lost their role as dynamic advocates of social and political change. The official Communists in many areas can scarcely be distinguished in program or tactics from leftist or moderately leftist Congressmen, especially at election time. In militancy, the CPI has often taken second place to the Hindu-communal Jan Sangh. The CPI, consequently, is not looked upon by the mass of voters as the major revolutionary alternative to the Congress Party. This position is held by the rightist communal parties, a fact tacitly acknowledged even by Nehru in the 1962 elections.

Despite the CPI's aura of respectability, it remains essentially a conspiratorial organization operating within guidelines determined by Moscow. This has had its advantages and disadvantages. Loyalty to Moscow

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--going back 36 years--has been rewarded by direct and indirect financial support as well as by Moscow's use of its economic and political influence to temper New Delhi's often stringent domestic anti-Communist policies.

On the other hand, this loyalty has occasionally dictated policies contrary to India's strong nationalistic sentiment with high cost to the party's effectiveness and reputation. Under Soviet direction, the CPI enthusiastically supported the British war effort in World War II while nationalist Congress leaders opposed Indian participation from their jail cells. After the war, the CPI followed the Soviet lead in advocating the creation of what was to become India's principal enemy, Pakistan. A subsequent three-year program of armed insurrection--which ended when Moscow finally sanctioned a switch to parliamentary methods in 1951--nearly destroyed the party.

Moscow's support now is a net asset for the right wing, supplying funds, affording some protection from the government, and--to the extent that the USSR has identified itself with India's economic development and defense--permitting the rightists to draw upon the considerable good will which the Soviet Union has in India.

The Dissidents

The emergence of the dissident group as a distinct organization dates from the Chinese invasion of 1962. Initially, the leftists' lack of

support for the government's inflexible and bellicose border policy led to a severe government suppression which drove the leftists underground. They believe party chairman Dange made a deal with the government to protect himself and to identify over a thousand leftists for detention. These leftists, along with some centrists, were forced to organize their own covert group, while the official party, which gave the government its enthusiastic support, continued to function overtly. The official party's condemnation of the Chinese Communists was so unrestrained that Dange was criticized even by Soviet leaders.

The leftists maintained their covert organization after the government relaxed its suppression. At this time the leftists began to establish parallel overt organizations.

Today, a leftist party, paralleling the official rightist organization, exists in all but the least important of India's 16 states. Although some extremists have probably received Chinese money via Nepal and Ceylon, available evidence does not indicate any significant measure of control from Peiping. There is, however, substantial sympathy for the more militant Chinese variety of Communism, even though dissident leaders have at times openly criticized Peiping on nationalist grounds.

The dissidents will probably organize themselves formally into a separate party at their own party congress scheduled for October--a month before the official CPI congress. They will be

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hampered by not having the membership, the financial resources, or the organizational assets of the official party. Moreover, they are themselves divided between an active group of pro-Chinese extremists and a group of independent "centrists" who are the present leaders of the dissidents' movement.

The centrist leaders of the dissident wing are already having some difficulty in controlling the pro-Chinese extremists, who probably constitute a substantial part of their following. Leftist extremism could alienate the more moderate dissidents and lead to a splintering of the dissident group. Centrist leaders have indicated that, although they now support the creation of a new CPI, they are not irrevocably committed to this policy. It would, moreover, only be under the most severe stress that the dissidents would split at such an early date.

The centrist group, represented by such major leaders as former chief minister of Kerala E. M. S. Namboodiripad and Jyoti Basu of West Bengal, therefore probably will dominate the new party at the start. Major leftists such as P. Sundarayya and M. Basavapunniah will, however, continue to exercise major influence, especially in their home state. Although the dissidents will have more of a covert orientation than the official party, their energies will, like the official party's, be primarily directed toward overt activities.

Dissident Tactics

Fundamentally, the dissidents are reasserting leadership of an extremist protest movement of the left, a role substantially abandoned by the official party since the middle 1950s. They therefore can be expected to attack the Congress Party with more frequency, with more vigor, and with even less regard for political niceties than has previously been the pattern. Dissident leaders are likely to try to establish their credentials as the real revolutionary Communist party by organizing demonstrations--violent where feasible--at every opportunity. The leftists can also be expected to ally with India's numerous "nonprogressive" communal and regionalist groups. This type of disruptive but politically rewarding alliance had been strongly discouraged by the rightist-dominated leadership.

A major target of the leftists will be to control the 500,000-member All India Trade Union Congress, India's second-ranking labor organization, now dominated by rightist Communists. By using wildcat strikes, infiltration, and possibly sabotage, the dissidents will attempt to demonstrate their superior militancy in the labor field as in the political. The leftist-oriented Communist-front peasant organization, which has 250,000 members, will be another major area of contention. The allegiance of India's other numerous Communist fronts--most of them led by rightists--will be determined by bitter battles. In their conflicts with the dissidents, these fronts

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will be able to call upon Soviet support and, to a lesser extent, the marginal assistance of the Indian Government. The dissidents, on the other hand, again will be substantially aided by the fact that the centers of front strength geographically coincide with the centers of dissident strength, and also the influence of the fronts has declined under rightist control. If the existing front groups cannot be won over or split, they will be faced with newly created dissident competition.

The key question for the dissidents will be whether the mass of party members is sufficiently dissatisfied with Dange's policies to choose militancy. Dange has, to a large degree, been personally discredited by the discovery of letters indicating that he had offered his services to British intelligence in the 1920s when he was in jail. The public dispute earlier this year concerning the appropriate party response to this disclosure was a major step toward a formal division of the CPI.

New Delhi's Reaction

The government of India has always been quick to suppress illegal domestic Communist activity and may react to the leftists' more militant program by a wholesale suppression of the dissident party, or more likely, it may harass and im-

prison the more radical leftists. Under Nehru, the government tolerated a large Communist party as a counterweight to India's strong conservative and reactionary elements and as a gesture to Moscow. India's new and somewhat more conservative government, faced by a continuing Chinese threat and still insecure in its own authority, will be even less reluctant to crack down on those Communists with pro-Chinese tendencies. India's security forces are strongly anti-Communist

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The dissidents, if they are not suppressed, stand a good chance of becoming the dominant force in the Indian Communist movement. Initially, the split will adversely affect Communist influence. As time passes, however, a new, more vigorous, and more dedicated Communist party, not firmly committed to either the Russians or the Chinese but addicted to a variation of Maoist militancy, could be an even greater threat to India's stability than was the old CPI. If, however, the dissident party succumbs to the disruptive tendencies which seem endemic in Indian political movements, Communist influence in India will have received another serious setback.

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