

in the ranks of the communists has presented many seats to the Congress particularly in West Bengal and Andhra.

Another feature of the fourth general election is that communists no longer occupy the first position among the parties of the democratic opposition on a national scale. This is a clear negative break from the past. In the Lok Sabha, the CPI and the CPM occupy the fourth and the sixth positions respectively in the opposition. In Andhra, they have lost their status as the principal opposition, singly as well as both together.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The results of the CPI in the fourth general election are to be viewed not only in the background of the general political situation but also of the split of the party and the communist movement. With big sections of the party gone outside it, with the formation of a rival party and with that party ranged against the CPI in many ways in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and several other states, it became a problem for the party even to maintain its position after the split. Many thought that CPI would emerge from the election with diminished strength. As for the CPM leadership, it fed its ranks on the hope that the CPI would be turned into an insignificant force, with their party coming out as the real representative of India's communist movement. None of these has however happened. The overall performance of the CPI has not been an insignificant one and it has been certainly better than that of the CPM in most states. The latter has gained more seats or votes than the CPI only in Kerala, West Bengal, Tamilnad and in the union territory of Tripura.

The CPI has improved its position in the Lok Sabha and its aggregate assembly seats are also now higher than what remained with it after the split. The CPI now holds 23 (+1) seats in Lok Sabha as against 18 and 115 as against about 110 seats including the 27 pre-mid-term Kerala election after the split in the assemblies. In seven states and in one union territory it has definitely improved its position.

The party has come down only in two states and in one union territory. In assembly the gains have been substantial in Bihar, Assam, Kerala (compared to the mid-term election) and Maharashtra. In Parliament it has improved its position from Bihar, UP, Maharashtra, Assam and Manipur.

The pride of place in these elections has gone to Bihar which leads as far as the CPI's position in legislatures is concerned.

The overall poll of the CPI in assembly election is 6,079,240 or 4.27 per cent. In the case of Lok Sabha the figure is 7,277,708 or 4.80 per cent. The party contested 612 assembly seats and 101 Lok Sabha seats. The statewise break up is given in the table below:

CPI PERFORMANCE IN THE 1967 ELECTION

State		Votes	Percentage	Seats	
				Contested	Won
Andhra	LS	1,551,223	11.42	20	1
	AS	1,027,643	7.48	101	10
Assam	LS	247,107	8.88	4	1
	AS	152,482	4.90	22	7
Bihar	LS	1,262,158	9.35	17	5
	AS	931,434	6.88	97	24
Guj.	—	—	—	—	—
Haryana	LS	51,758	1.70	3	—
	AS	27,739	1.00	13	—
J & K	—	—	—	—	—
Kerala	LS	501,322	7.90	3	3
	AS	537,824	8.50	22	19
MP	LS	131,533	1.42	6	—
	AS	96,576	1.06	31	1
Madras	LS	273,253	1.77	6	—
	AS	256,140	1.68	31	2
Maharashtra	LS	701,074	4.90	7	2
	AS	669,827	5.13	41	10
Mysore	LS	—	—	—	—
	AS	47,956	0.65	7	2
Orissa	LS	156,282	3.85	3	—
	AS	200,158	5.04	30	7
Punjab	LS	183,341	4.26	3	0
	AS	205,916	4.85	20	5

State		Votes	Percentage	Seats Contested	Seats Won
Rajasthan	LS	20,987	0.30	1	—
	AS	64,327	0.95	20	1
UP	LS	710,462	3.26	17	5
	AS	732,776	3.43	96	14
W. Bengal	LS	1,155,171	8.99	11	5
	AS	1,039,790	8.05	62	16
Himachal	LS	16,205	4.89	1	—
	AS	24,744	3.54	16	2
Manipur	LS	91,131	28.05	1	1
	AS	17,062	5.47	6	1
Tripura	—	—	—	—	—
	AS	34,562	7.97	7	1
Pondicherry	LS	42,725	26.69	1	—
Delhi					
Chandigarh					
Dadra Haveli					
Andaman Nicobar					
Laccadives					
TOTAL	LS	7,277,708	4.80	104	23
	AS	5,952,563	4.23	612	122

The greatest set-back, the only statewide one the party has suffered, is in Andhra. In Tamilnad it has not lost any seat for it retained the two seats which was our gain in the third general election. But with its 256,140 votes it has suffered a political debacle. These are really the two states where the party's results have been extremely bad. The reasons are not however the same. In most other states the party has more or less maintained its position or registered a definite advance. In Rajasthan, Mysore and Tripura it has lost ground.

We have already referred to Bihar where our assembly seats have doubled and Lok Sabha representation raised five-fold. In Assam the party was eliminated from the assembly in the third general election. On its own symbol it has now 7 seats and it is the biggest opposition group in the assembly (PSP 5, SSP 4). Together with the supported independents the party in Assam constitutes the main opposition bloc. For the first time Assam and Manipur have returned one communist member each to the Lok

Sabha. This is something which we could not achieve even when the party was united. We have got back to the Manipur assembly from where we had been eliminated in 1962. Thanks to the united front in Kerala, our number in assembly has now risen to 19 (compared to 3 in the mid-term election) and we have won all the 3 Lok Sabha seats we contested. In Maharashtra the addition is 4 in the assembly and 2 in the Lok Sabha (we had been eliminated from Lok Sabha in 1962). In Orissa we have added 3 seats to the old strength and in UP our number in the assembly is now the same as after the third election but it has returned 5 to the Lok Sabha on CPI symbol as against 2 in 1962. Several assembly seats we lost there by very narrow margin. We have made up the loss of 2 at the time of the split. In Himachal Pradesh we are back in the assembly with two.

From the above table it is clear that in so far as the elections go the CPI has emerged as a negligible force in 7 states where it has not received even 2 per cent assembly votes (4 per cent needed for official recognition for the party symbol). In UP it is still 3.43 per cent. This calculation does not take into account the votes where a party loses its deposit. These votes (not adequate to save deposits) are not taken into consideration by the Election Commission for recognition at the state level.

In the absence of reviews by the state councils it is not possible to go into details. But certain things may nonetheless be tentatively noted.

Let us start with the positive side of the picture. In Bihar our party has emerged as a powerful force and our overall election results would not have been substantial but for the commendable contribution the Bihar unit of the party has made. The achievement would seem all the greater in view of the split of the party and the CPM's effort to spite our party by cutting its nose. It is not merely in terms of electoral successes that the party there has made its impact. The party's position and authority among the masses stand considerably heightened. For the first time we have a sizable party contingent in the Lok Sabha from

the vast Hindi-region of Bihar and UP. In this respect our party in UP has certainly done well, having regard to its serious organisational weakness.

By pursuing a sober and correct line the party in Assam has been able to offset the aftermath of the split and achieve good results. In West Bengal our party has done well in the Lok Sabha election, though this cannot be said of the assembly results. In Maharashtra the party has scored a notable victory by returning the Party Chairman to the Lok Sabha and winning another seat in the Lok Sabha. In Punjab the defeat of the congress chief minister at our hands has enhanced the prestige of the party. There our party played the most constructive role in building the united front. The sober and far-seeing stand of the party in Kerala in the face of CPM's cussedness and unreasonable attitude has yielded good results and foiled the plan of the die-hard anti-CPI elements. Although our party was not allotted a single seat in the whole of Malabar, our comrades, however, earnestly campaigned for the united front candidates and this had a very good effect. Relations between the CPI and CPM have improved and our party membership has substantially increased, belying our fears that the party would lose ground in Malabar since we had been shut out from any contest.

We must now frankly note where specially our results have been very unsatisfactory and bad. There are certain states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Mysore where the party is weak and where our election results have never been significant. But we have to take a serious view of our failures in the state where the party has been strong with a mass base.

In ANDHRA PRADESH where existed one of the strongest bases of the communist movement and where our party unit is one of the strongest even after the split, most certainly the democratic opposititon should have shown better results and the congress rule should have toppled in this election.

Our party was aware of this political opportunity and it was this that guided our unit there in its efforts to bring

about the unity of the left and democratic parties and elements for a united confrontation with the Congress in order to defeat it.

In conditions of Andhra Pradesh where left and democratic parties outside the communist movement are very weak, the unity of the two communist parties acquires added emphasis. We therefore approached the CPM, as early as six months before the election for unity the basis of a common programme, stoppage of all polemics and mutual support. But the CPM rejected these proposals and wanted to discuss merely the question of adjustment of seats.

The CPM had a totally reformist view of the political situation and did not think that it was possible to dislodge the Congress from power in that state. This was stated by M. Hanumantha Rao, their secretary, in an article in *Jana Shakti* even after the election.

The CPM was guided in its approach by the splittist ideology that 'the defeat of CPI was a condition precedent to the defeat of the Congress', as was stated by their leader Nagi Reddy at a press conference before the election.

Eyen in adjustment of seats their attitude revealed a gross overestimation of their own strength and a contemptuous underestimation of **our strength**.

They followed an electoral objective of routing our party. Towards this end they sought agreements overt and covert with Swatantra Party and congress groups with their edge directed not against Congress but against our party. In pursuance of such tactics they turned down all the reasonable proposals made by us or by mediators including the SSP. Again and again they declared that Kerala mid-term election of 1965 would be enacted in Andhra Pradesh. They indoctrinated their ranks with a spirit of hatred for our party under the illusion that they could win.

We warned then that they were building castles in the air and were only playing with fire. Mutual conflict would not only harm both the parties but would also mean a serious blow to the democratic movement and putting life into the tottering Congress.

Our last minute efforts to bring them round to a reasonable adjustment consisted in our submitting a list of only 65 seats which we thought we should reasonably contest on the basis of our strength. They claimed as many as 15 of our strong seats even in this list.

They were in no mood to adjust with us and were out for a confrontation with the CPI.

Our efforts even in Krishna district for local adjustment and withdrawal in two seats was not responded to by them. They broke their word and set up their candidates against us. They tried to paint this withdrawal by us as a sign of our weakness and an admission of failure on our part.

In these circumstances a confrontation with the CPM in Andhra and an accentuation of conflict with it had been inevitable.

The CPM therefore has to be squarely blamed for this mutual confrontation by the two parties. They went to the extent of setting up a candidate in our stronghold where they could secure only 350 votes. But the election results have proved that our positions were correct;

- that both of our parties had almost equal strength, while we had a slight edge over them;
- that they could not claim to be the spokesmen of the communist movement in this state;
- that their high and mighty attitude, wrong political positions and disruptionist stand led to the worst betrayal of the democratic movement and a chance to dislodge the Congress from power in Andhra Pradesh was lost.

The election results have with one stroke blown up the facade of their propaganda that they represented the majority in the communist movement in this state. Their ranks have been shaken.

But the lessons should be driven home. The ideology of split and the politics of confrontation have only helped to prolong the congress misrule.

In the post-election situation in Andhra Pradesh even though the two parties have suffered heavily, the emergence

of Jana Congress in the assembly, the continued dissensions in the Congress, the widespread discontent among the people, developments in the country all go to indicate that the congress government could not claim stability.

Our party has again taken the initiative and called upon the opposition to unite inside and outside the legislature on a programme and mobilise the people for economic relief and alternative administration.

The political-ideological positions of the CPM have received a battering but the leadership is still not responsive.

Nevertheless it should be seen that our party has also suffered from serious failings on its part.

It could be seen that even in the 65 seats we had proposed, in about 4 or 5 seats our estimate has gone wrong. It should be noted that in Nallagonda, Khammam, Guntur, Krishna and West Godavari districts in the traditional communist strongholds, the performance of the party has been relatively poor when compared with that of the CPM.

Among the seats contested by the party, it could be seen from the results that the contest in about 20 seats was unnecessary and resulted in frittering away of energies and resources and perhaps adversely affecting the organisation and the chances in certain other marginal constituencies.

We have also failed to take adequate steps to develop the unity with other parties like the SSP, the Praja Party and the RPI and have gone to the impermissible extent of dishonouring our commitments to SSP and RPI and setting up candidates in two seats, one against each of them.

We must recognise that the political and organisational weakness that had continued for years, the lack of mass struggles, the poor state of affairs in the mass organisations led by us, and so on, have all contributed to our poor performance in certain cases.

TAMILNAD is another unit of the party where we claimed 15,015 members after the split as against the CPM's 4,300. Here we have, as has been already said, suffered a political and electoral debacle with no redeeming feature at

all. In Andhra we polled 7.48 per cent of the assembly votes (of course contesting more than three times the seats we contested in Tamilnad) but in Tamilnad our poll is barely 1.68 per cent or 256,140—a most distressing show. We lost deposits in 23 out of 32 contests. The reason for our failure is not to be found in any 'operation wipe out' line by the CPM or any one else. We have permitted ourselves to be wiped out because of the wrong political understanding, wrong electoral tactics, etc. on the part of the state leadership. It is shocking that when the Congress has been literally trounced in Tamilnad our party should have been reduced to such a position. It is our isolation, complete and all pervasive, that has brought us down in this manner in Tamilnad. The error there was more fundamental and grave.

In WEST BENGAL our party's line has won in the eyes of the masses and this has been a momentous gain not only for the future of the broad democratic movement but also for the unity of the communist movement.

Our performance in the Lok Sabha election has also been on the whole good, notwithstanding the loss of what turned out to be prestige fights in Barrackpore and Howrah. But our assembly results have been far from what was even modestly expected. As against 13 seats in the old assembly, our strength is now 16. But the total assembly seats have been raised from 252 to 280 and the congress strength reduced from over 160 to 127. It has to be further noted that we have won seats only in four out of West Bengal's sixteen districts (Midnapore 8, Calcutta 4, 24-Parganas 3, Nadia 1). In the background of the mass upsurge and fall of the Congress, this achievement cannot be considered at all adequate. We are now the third party in the united front, the CPM with 44 seats being the first and Bangla Congress second with 34. But the most disturbing aspect of our election results is that we have been defeated in most of West Bengal's industrial belts, notably in Durgapur, Raniganj, Asansol as well as Howrah-Hooghly. Our poll is poor and some of the seats have even gone to the Congress.

We have referred to the above aspects of the results of these three states because each has in its own way some

instructive lessons to offer. Of course, politically the results in West Bengal stand on a different footing. Our political achievement in West Bengal in the given situation has been magnificent. This cannot be said of what has happened in Andhra.

THE SPLIT AND THE ELECTION

The fourth general election has been the first one after the split of the party in 1964. The election results stand out as the completest repudiation of the theory of split. Nothing has damaged the communist and left movement in the country more than the split. The split has helped the Congress and other reactionary parties; it has seriously limited the gains of the working people and their cause in the election battles; it has made it possible for the Swatantra Party to undo the gain of the communist movement in the past three general elections and attain the status of the first opposition party in Parliament. All these today are no longer a matter of debate. They are writ large on the election scoreboard. People are rightly cursing us—both the communist parties—on this score. Their curse, however, is born of affection and love.

The basic negative side of the split was particularly aggravated by the election strategy of the CPM in relation to the CPI. Instead of trying to minimise the harmful effects of split even in relation to the election battles, the CPM leadership took the line of bringing down our party in as many places as possible and thus proving to the people here and the international communist movement outside that it is the CPM and not the CPI which represents the main body of Indian communist movement and of what was once a united communist party. Except for reasons of local expediency the need for the two communist parties joining in the election was not accepted as a question of principle. Exaggeration of their own strength beyond all proportions was a built-in feature of this disruptive strategy. Without exaggerating their strength, seats could not be claimed and without entering such claims against us even where our