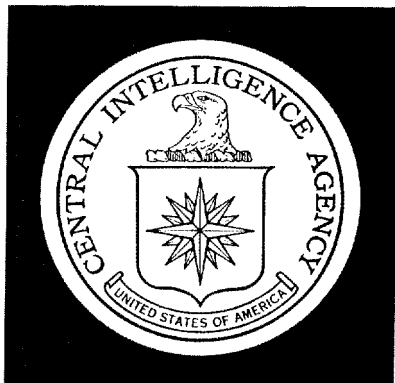


Secret

25X1



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

India's Divided Communists

Secret

№ 44

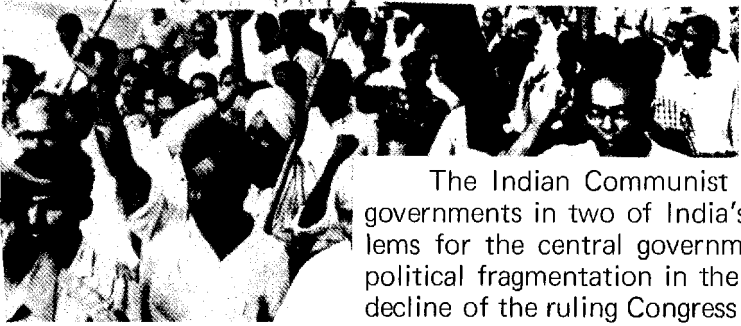
2 May 1969
No. 0368/69A

25X1

Approved For Release 2006/04/13 : CIA-RDP79-00927A007000070002-8

Approved For Release 2006/04/13 : CIA-RDP79-00927A007000070002-8

DS OFF VIETNAM
LEET, FLEET OF AGGRESS

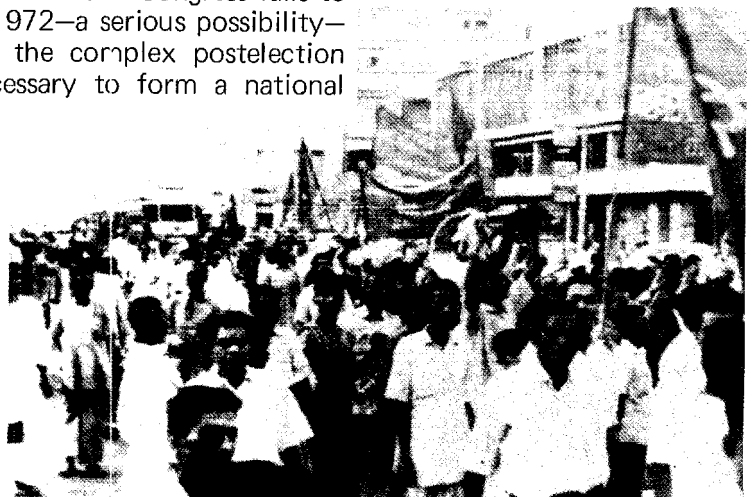


INDIA'S DIVIDED COMMUNISTS

The Indian Communist movement dominates coalition governments in two of India's 17 states, posing serious problems for the central government as it deals with increasing political fragmentation in the country and tries to arrest the decline of the ruling Congress Party. Kerala, where a Communist-led government took control in 1967 for the second time in a decade, is a small and relatively insignificant state in India's extreme south. But West Bengal—headed by a Communist-led front since February 1969—is vital economically and is the key to the security of India's strategic eastern region. New Delhi's ability to intervene against the Communists in these states is limited by the local unpopularity of the Congress Party and by the increasing sympathy all over India for guarding states' rights against the central government.

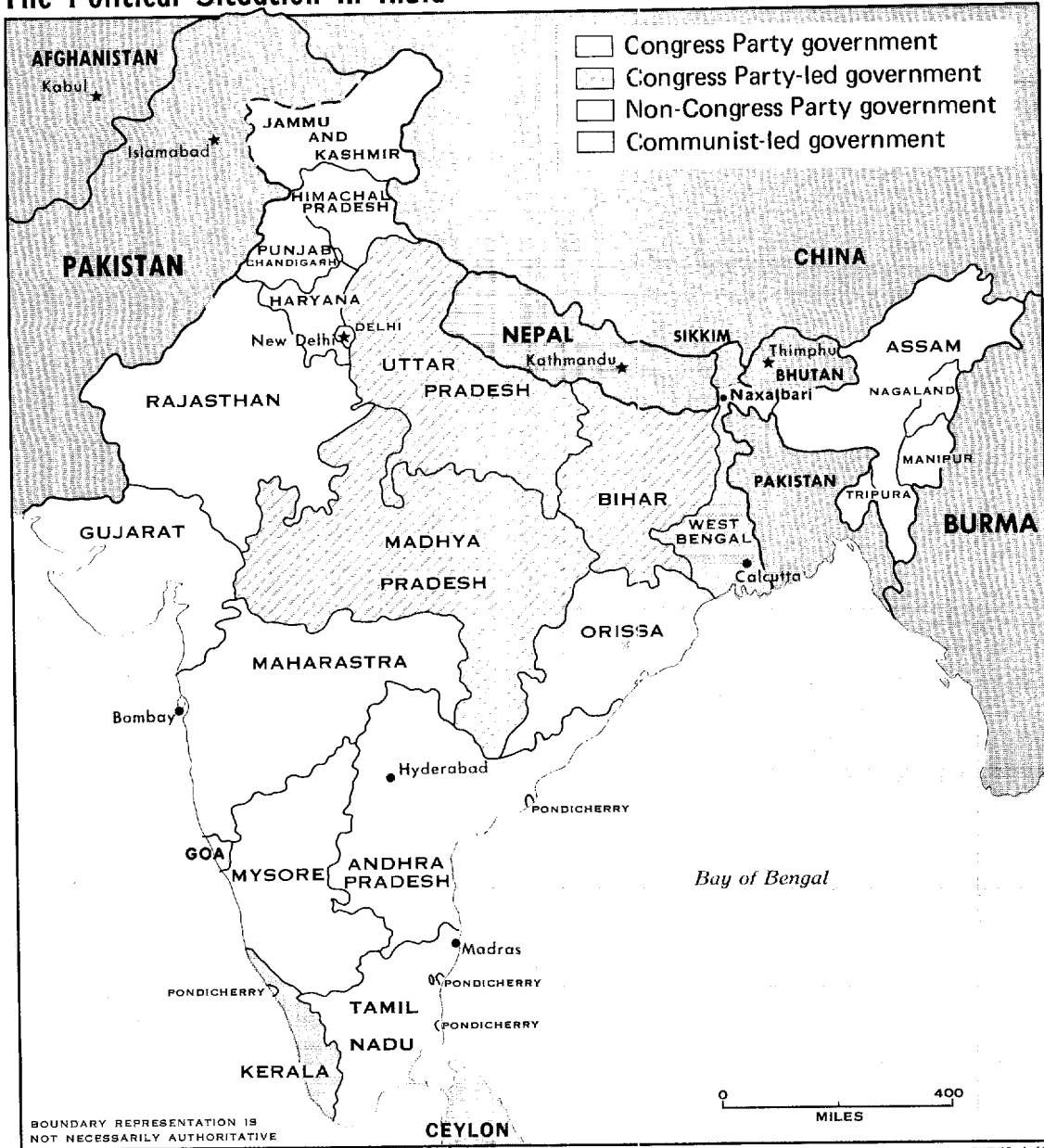
Outside of Kerala and West Bengal, however, Communism in India is not strong. This is partly because of endemic divisions among the Communists that in 1964 caused a split in their ranks from which the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India/Marxist (CPI/M) emerged. Neither party threatens to take power in another Indian state or to win a majority in the national parliament. Both are presently incapable of mounting sustained, nationwide revolutionary agitation, nor are they likely to attempt it for fear of being totally suppressed by India's effective security forces. Communist extremists, who oppose CPI and CPI/M participation in the constitutional system, talk of rebellion, but they, too, are divided into several groups and have thus far undertaken only minor actions.

The CPI and CPI/M may win a more important role nationally if the decline of the Congress Party continues. The greatest gains made at the expense of Congress in recent elections were by the nonideological regional parties, but the CPI and CPI/M could succeed in arranging alliances with regional groups to do further damage to the Congress Party's prospects in the 1972 general elections. If Congress fails to win a majority in parliament in 1972—a serious possibility—the Communists may influence the complex postelection negotiations that would be necessary to form a national coalition government.



SECRET

The Political Situation in India



94750 4-69

SECRET

THE INDIAN COMMUNIST MOVEMENT TODAY

The Indian Communists' domination of coalition governments in Kerala and West Bengal makes them the only third-world Communist movement to have achieved even this limited power through the democratic process.

The Communists have enjoyed wide popularity in these two states ever since independence, consistently winning 30 to 40 percent of the vote in Kerala and 20 to 30 percent in West Bengal. New Delhi has intervened twice in the past to thwart Communist-led coalition governments, in Kerala in 1959 and in West Bengal in 1967, but these moves have only served to increase Communist popularity. In Kerala, the present Communist-led united front holds 117 of the 133 legislative assembly seats; in West Bengal, where special mid-term elections took place in February 1969, the united front has 214 of the 280 seats.

The Communists have made little progress elsewhere in India despite the country's widespread poverty and its great linguistic, cultural, and social divisions. When the Congress Party suffered losses in the 1967 general elections, dropping from 44.7 percent to 40.9 percent of the popular vote, it was not the Communists who gained the main benefits but the conservative Swatantra Party and essentially regional parties like the Hindu-nationalist Jan Sangh and the Tamil Nadu - based Dravida Munnetra Kazagham. The Communists gained locally in Kerala and West Bengal—in part because they effectively exploit regional sentiment in these states—but they were displaced by the Swatantra Party as the largest opposition group in the national parliament. Their percentage of the national vote actu-

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT ELECTION RESULTS

	1962	1967
Congress Party	361	279
Swatantra Party	22	44
Jan Sangh	14	35
CPI	} 29	23
CPI/M		19
Samyutka Socialist Party	} 12	23
Praja Socialist Party		13
Dravida Munnetra Kazagham	7	25
Other parties and independents	49	54
Total	494	515

ally dropped slightly between 1962 and 1967, from 9.9 percent to 9.4 percent. In most Indian states, the Communist vote has remained below 7 percent and, except for Kerala and West Bengal, the Communists have not threatened to take power.

Several factors have inhibited the growth of the Communist movement. Ideological infighting and personality clashes have hurt the Communists since the movement was formed in the 1920s, and these factors caused serious divisions in the late 1950s. In 1964, the Communists finally split into two separate parties, the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India/Marxist.* The parties have cooperated occasionally since the split—for example, they participate jointly in the Kerala and West Bengal coalition

**These party names conform to Indian usage and are now used by all US Government agencies. Previously, the CPI was often called the Communist Party of India/Right (CPI/R) and the CPI/M was known as the Communist Party of India/Left (CPI/L).*

SECRET

path to power. CPI/M leaders now call themselves independent Communists, as distinct from the still pro-Soviet CPI, and they criticize both the Soviets and Chinese. Peking has switched its propaganda backing to some of the extremist groups, and it attacks the CPI/M-led government in West Bengal.

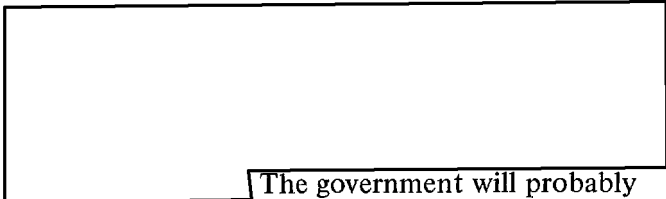
Nationally, the CPI and CPI/M are about even in strength—the CPI has about 55,000 active members and the CPI/M 65,000—but the CPI/M is much the stronger party in Kerala and West Bengal, where the Communists are a political threat. Of the 110 Communists in the West Bengal assembly, 80 are from the CPI/M; in the Kerala assembly, there are 52 CPI/M members to 19 for the CPI. The CPI is stronger in most other states, and won 23 seats in the national parliament elections of 1967 to 19 for the CPI/M, but nowhere is it a serious contender for power.

WEST BENGAL

The CPI/M-led government in West Bengal poses an unprecedented dilemma for New Delhi. It cannot be toppled easily, as was the case with the bare majority coalition in 1967, and, unlike Kerala, West Bengal is vital to India, economically and strategically. It produces one third of India's metal products, 40 percent of its iron and steel, and at least 25 percent of its transport equipment, engineering tools, electrical machinery, and scientific equipment; Calcutta handles 41 percent of the country's export trade and 28 percent of its imports. West Bengal forms India's eastern frontier with Pakistan and is the only link to Assam, where India has a long and vulnerable border with China and where eastern tribes are in rebellion.

The CPI/M has moved decisively to dominate the West Bengal government. Ajoy Mukerjee, [redacted] who heads a group of Congress Party defectors—the Bangla

Congress—is chief minister, but the CPI/M has taken nearly all other important government posts. Jyoti Basu, one of the CPI/M's most skillful and pragmatic leaders, is deputy chief minister with responsibility for the police and general administration divisions of the Home Ministry. Other party leaders have the labor, education, excise, land revenue, and relief and rehabilitation portfolios, areas vital to the CPI/M's efforts to increase its support among laborers and peasants.



25X1

The government will probably retain incumbent senior civil servants who hold top administrative posts in government departments, but it is expected to employ reliable



West Bengal's Chief Minister Ajoy Mukerjee (right) and Deputy Chief Minister Jyoti Basu

25X1

sympathizers in second-level posts and in many of the other 250,000 jobs in the state bureaucracy.

To deny New Delhi a clear pretext to intervene, the CPI/M will probably try to avoid the widespread disruption that brought economic havoc during the first united front government. The party may want a prolonged period of power to establish a grip [redacted] and to loosen the central government's influence, especially the hold New Delhi still has on the bureaucracy after 20 years of Congress rule in the state.

Long-term stability is unlikely, however. Interparty rivalry may weaken the front despite its large majority and could bring the government down. The Bangla Congress, the Samyukta Socialist Party, and the CPI have already expressed alarm at the CPI/M's aggressive take-over of the key government ministries. The Bangla Congress and CPI, with 33 and 30 seats respectively, could jeopardize the government by withdrawing, but this is not a step they will take lightly. Neither party wants responsibility for undermining the popular coalition, and no alternative government is possible unless front members should decide to work with the discredited Congress Party.

The Communist extremists are another threat to stability, as they were during the period of the first front government. There are at least five different factions in the state, divided as much by personality clashes as by ideological differences, but all plan to use terrorism to disrupt the CPI/M-led government.

Most of the extremist leaders are urban-based students or would-be intellectuals, but they talk mainly about fomenting rebellion in the countryside. They have pockets of support among peasants in the area south of Calcutta and may have provided light arms and some guerrilla train-

ing to poor, landless tribesmen in the Naxalbari region of north Bengal.

The extremists may, nevertheless, be more of a nuisance in the cities than in the rural areas. Despite numerous rumors of impending rural uprisings, none has occurred since the one in Naxalbari in mid-1967, and in late 1968 the most able of the extremist rural organizers was captured by security forces. Urban student groups, however, particularly in Calcutta, have been able to mount violent demonstrations, such as the one during World Bank President McNamara's visit last November. Several recent clashes have been reported in Calcutta between extremist students and CPI/M activists, and these will probably increase.

The CPI/M in West Bengal may be unable to avert an all-out confrontation with New Delhi. In early April, the front organized a one-day general strike to protest the killing of five workers by security guards during labor demonstrations outside a central government - run munitions factory. The successful strike against a central government entity provoked a hostile reaction from Congress members in parliament, especially since it stopped operation of such central government services as trains and airlines. This could well be a harbinger of tense incidents that probably will occur periodically.

Tension among the parties in the front, protracted difficulties with the extremists, and lack of progress in solving the state's overwhelming social and economic problems will encourage the CPI/M to divert local political attention by maintaining tension with New Delhi. Left-leaning CPI/M members are urging further agitation, ostensibly to counter the appeal of extremists among students and other young people. The front won power on an anti-Congress, anticenter platform, and pressure to dramatize this issue will increase if cracks appear in the state government or if popular support appears to be waning.

KERALA

The Communists in Kerala have been in power or have been a serious threat to take power for more than a decade. The state is a small, overpopulated coastal area in the extreme south of India, however, and is virtually ungovernable. It has a serious and persistent rice deficit, large-scale unemployment, and a diverse population, including significant Muslim and Christian minorities.

New Delhi has treated Communist strength in Kerala as a nuisance, viewing it as an isolated phenomenon caused by the state's unusual problems and not as a threat to the country nationally. The government's fears that the victory in 1957 was a forerunner to increased Communist strength elsewhere—especially in other states of south India—largely subsided as divisions developed in the movement and the Communists failed to make other electoral gains.

The present united front government, elected in 1967, enjoys an overwhelming majority, but it has been less reform-minded than its predecessor. It has maintained a costly rice subsidy, made a few gestures in the direction of land reform, and cut down on the use of police to break up illegal strikes and demonstrations; it has accomplished little else. The moderate chief minister, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, a veteran CPI/M leader who led the government in 1957, has been hard pressed to hold the coalition together, especially in the face of squabbles between CPI/M and CPI ministers. Concessions have been made to the Muslim League, another member of the coalition, in order to maintain the support of the Muslim community.

Center-state agitation has been stirred up sporadically but Namboodiripad has generally kept anticenter agitation under sufficient control to avoid a showdown with New Delhi. He did give

New Delhi a legal pretext to intervene in September 1968, when the Kerala government refused to provide police protection for central government property during an illegal nationwide government employees' strike, but both sides temporized. New Delhi feared the impact of intervention on the Congress Party's chances in the mid-term elections in February in four north Indian states, especially since neither Congress nor other Kerala parties had enough support to form an alternative government.

Namboodiripad's government may now last until 1972, but intermittent turmoil can be expected as the disparate parties in the front fumble



E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Chief Minister of Kerala

with the state's manifold problems. Periodic violence will be caused by Kerala's several Communist extremist groups and by clashes between Communist and opposition vigilante squads. Anti-center agitation is likely again, and may be coordinated with CPI/M action in West Bengal. A top CPI/M official from Kerala met with West Bengal leaders shortly after the February election victory to try to coordinate policy in the two states.

THE NATIONAL SCENE

By itself, neither the CPI/M nor the CPI constitutes a threat to take national power in India. Even if the parties should change policy and decide to organize violent revolution, neither has the capacity nor the popular support for the sustained and coordinated nationwide disruption that would be needed to endanger existing political institutions. The labor agitation they have inspired has been largely hit-and-run, and they have had little success in periodic efforts to influence or take over local separatist groups or even to capitalize on separatist-inclined agitation. Extremist leaders may influence some tribal groups in southern Bihar state and other parts of central India, but agitation by these groups has been very limited.

The Indian security forces, including the army, are loyal and have taken firm action against Communists during periods of serious unrest. They made numerous arrests under emergency and preventive legislation during the Chinese threat of the early 1960s and again when disorders threatened after the fall of the united front government in West Bengal in 1967.

If necessary, the army could rapidly impose order on West Bengal.

The CPI/M and CPI may profit through the constitutional approach, however, if the decline

of the Congress Party continues. Since 1967, Congress has had firm control of less than half of the state governments and the loss of patronage may so hamper the party machinery that it will lose control of the national parliament in 1972. The Communists may therefore be maneuvering to capitalize on the need for a multiparty national government if Congress loses its majority.

PROSPECTS

Despite their rivalry, both the CPI/M and the CPI are calling for a nationwide leftist front as an ideological alternative to Congress. Both parties envisage the other as being part of the front, together with the Samyukta Socialist Party and smaller leftist parties. In addition, arrangements will undoubtedly be attempted with regional parties that might identify with the Communists' strong policy of defending state interests against the center. Both parties have previously joined in electoral alliances with regional groups at the state level.

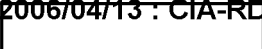
Such a front presumably could not win a majority in the national parliament, but it would reduce the number of multiparty contests in the 1972 elections—thus hurting Congress, which, with only a plurality of the national vote, usually profits most from multiparty fights. Participation in a front would enhance the Communists' chance to have a say in the formation of the national government after the next elections, especially if Congress is far short of a majority and cannot arrange a coalition government of its own.

The Congress Party is stumbling as it reacts to its declining fortunes. After the mid-term elections in February 1969, it formed in Bihar the first Congress-led state coalition government, but the attempt provoked a crisis in the national party hierarchy when it became necessary to solicit support from the followers of a corrupt feudal politician.

25X1

25X6

25X1

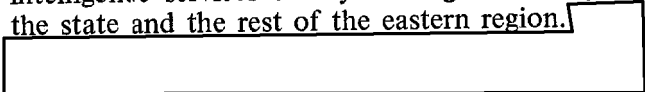


25X6



In the short run, New Delhi will probably tolerate the united front government in West Bengal and hope that intraparty friction will pull it down. If the front holds on, Congress may then hope that popular support will wane as the front proves unable to fulfill election promises. New Delhi may even permit extended disruption in an attempt to give the West Bengalis a lesson in the wages of Communist government.

Premature central government intervention in West Bengal could finish Congress in the state and could have serious repercussions in other states, especially where non-Congress governments rule. Democracy and legality have a strong hold on educated Indians, and pressure for increased states' rights in the Indian federal system is on the upswing. New Delhi's patience will be tested, but it will probably avoid intervention unless West Bengal's economy is seriously threatened or the front's assault on the police and intelligence services clearly endangers security in the state and the rest of the eastern region.



25X1

* * *

Secret

Secret