

# A REVIEW OF THE THIRD GENERAL ELECTIONS IN INDIA

by KAILAS CHANDRA

The bourgeois politicians all over the world have acclaimed the general elections just concluded in India — the third since she achieved political independence in 1947 — as a big triumph for parliamentary democracy in the East.

The Congress Party led by Mr. Nehru, the party of the Indian bourgeoisie, has won an overwhelming majority of seats in the Lok Sabha (House of People) and has also emerged as the ruling party in all the 15 State Legislatures and three territorial councils in the country. This is a matter of satisfaction for the capitalist world which views with indulgence the experiment of "parliamentary" democracy in India as a bulwark against communism. India has a relatively stable capitalist economy among the newly independent countries of Asia which gives her a unique status.

It is also a feather in the cap of Mr. Nehru that this regime should be in a position to ensure the cooperation of more than 210 million voters to go to the polls to elect as many as 3,797 representatives to a "sovereign" Parliament and the various provincial legislatures especially when the ruling bourgeoisie in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia etc. have to resort to periodic military coups to keep their regimes in power.

But despite this "triumph" of bourgeois democracy, there is a powerful section of capitalist politicians in India, both in the Congress Party and outside it, which is concerned about the outcome of parliamentary elections. These politicians do not conceal their admiration for military dictatorships and also advocate the need for a "strong dictator", ostensibly as a means to liquidate the "corruption" and "red tape" of a parliamentary democracy. The open expression of this neo-fascist tendency is to be found in the politics of the Hindu communal party, the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra Party sponsored by the former feudal princes and landlords.

While the Jan Sangh indulges in Muslim-baiting as a part of its campaign to revive "Hindu nationalism", the Swatantra Party's main plank of agitation is unfettered free enterprise as opposed to the "mixed economy" of the Congress party. Both these parties which spearhead the drive of the Indian bourgeoisie against revolutionary Marxism have registered spectacular gains in the recent elections.

As opposed to them the Left has at best managed to retain the status quo in some parts of the country while in others it had to suffer serious defeats. The opportunist class collaborationist politics of the traditional left parties like the Communist Party of India and the Praja Socialist Party contributes to the electoral debacle of the Left.

It is only in the states of West Bengal, Andhra and Kerala that the CPI and its left allies have been able to retain their position. But in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat, strong-holds of the semi-feudal landed interests, the reactionary Swatantra, Jan Sangh combination has scored spectacular gains at the cost of the left.

The so-called camp of "democratic socialism" as represented by the petty bourgeois Praja Socialist Party and the Socialist Party has emerged a considerably weakened force on a national scale and in some states it has been virtually liquidated. As a sequel to their electoral defeat these two parties are explaining the possibility of a merger.

Another peculiar feature of the elections, was the

emergence of strong regional and separatist tendencies in some states. They were symbolised by the Akali Dal, which advocated the creation of a Sikh-dominated Punjabi speaking State, the Hill Leaders' Conference clamouring for a separate Hill State in Assam and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Madras advocating a "sovereign" Dravidaastan consisting of four southern states.

There is thus no common national political pattern emerging in the country. The election results illustrate the theory of uneven development in relation to a multi-lingual and "multi-national" nation like India.

## NEW PARLIAMENT - ITS COMPOSITION

In the new Lok Sabha of 507 (there are seven nominations by the President and elections for six constituencies still to be held) the Congress has won 358 seats this time as against 347 it had in the old house.

There is no officially recognised opposition in the Lok Sabha which requires a strength of 51 members for recognition. But the CPI has once again emerged as the biggest opposition group with 35 members, including six elected as "independents". The united front allies of the CPI the Revolutionary Socialist Party (Kerala and Bengal) and Forward Bloc (Bengal) have secured two seats each. There are four or five independents who have been elected with the support of the CPI and other left groups.

But the emergence of the Swatantra Party as the second major opposition group with 22 members in the Lok Sabha is a counterweight to the Left. The group includes four members returned to the Lok Sabha by the Ganatantra Parishad of Orissa — a regional group of feudal landlords which recently merged with the the Swatantra Party. The Jan Sangh has improved its strength of four members in the old house to 15 in the new.

The PSP had 17 members in the old house but its strength has been reduced to 12 while the Socialist Party has managed to retain its strength of six.

Among the variety of other groups represented in the new Lok Sabha are: Hindu Mahasabha (another Hindu communal party) one, Ram Raja Parishad (an obscurantist religious group in Madhya Pradesh) two, the Muslim League (Kerala) two, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Madras) seven, Akali Dal (Punjab) three, Jharkhand Party (a group of tribal interests in Bihar) three, Nutan Gujarat Parishad (Gujarat) one, Hindi Rakshak Samiti (a Hindu communal group pledged to the retention of Hindi as the official language in Punjab) one, Lok Sevak Samiti (Bengal) one, the Republican Party (representing scheduled caste masses) three, and independents twenty.

In terms of the percentage of the total votes polled for the Lok Sabha as compared to the 1957 elections, the CPI and the Jan Sangh among the four "national" parties recognised by the Election Commission are the two that have improved their position while the Congress Party and the PSP have considerably reduced electoral support.

About 54 per cent of the total electorate of 210 million exercised their franchise. The Congress Party has secured 45.06 per cent of the total votes polled this time as compared to 47.78 per cent in 1957. The CPI improved its position from 8.92 per cent last time to 10 per cent now

and the Jan Sangh from 5.98 per cent to 6.38 per cent. The PSP's voting strength has fallen from 10.41 in 1957 to 6.88 per cent now. The Swatantra Party, though a

comparative newcomer, has secured 8.84 per cent of the total polled while 25.21 per cent of the votes went to other parties and independents.

## LOK SABHA

Electorate : 21,60,47,643 ; Polled : 11,44,25,547

Percentage : 52.96 (1952 : 45.70 ; 1957 : 49.60)

Party	1952		Polled	1957		Polled	1962	
	Polled	Percent- age.		Percent- age.	Seats.		Percent- age.	Seats.
Congress . . . .	4,76,65,875	45.0	5,75,79,593	47.78	371	5,15,12,243	45.02	356
Communists . . . .	52,99,095	5.0	1,07,54,075	8.92	27	1,13,99,268	9.96	29
P.S.P. . . . .	1,73,73,377	16.4	1,25,42,666	10.41	19	78,29,997	6.84	12
Swatantra . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	77,84,495	6.80	22
Jan Sangh . . . .	32,46,288	3.1	71,49,824	5.83	4	73,63,772	6.44	14
Socialists . . . .	—	—	25,00,000	2.07	7	28,12,795	2.49	6
D.M.K. . . . .	—	—	7,44,128	0.62	2	23,15,610	2.01	7
Republican . . . .	25,01,964	2.35	24,30,324	2.02	7	10,59,886	0.92	3
Akalis . . . . .	—	—	—	—	—	8,29,129	0.72	3
R.R.P. . . . .	21,51,603	2.03	4,28,183	0.35	—	6,29,823	0.55	2
Mahasabha . . . .	10,03,034	0.95	10,43,094	0.87	2	5,02,115	0.44	1
Jharkhand . . . .	—	—	8,99,835	0.75	7	4,99,950	0.43	3
Forward Bloc . . . .	9,11,096	0.85	10,06,351	0.83	3	4,31,007	0.38	2
Muslim League . . . .	—	—	3,96,140	0.33	1	4,19,761	0.37	2
R.S.P. . . . .	3,93,984	0.37	8,43,007	0.70	1	1,99,337	0.17	2
Others . . . . .	2,53,98,219	23.95	2,21,96,695	18.42	43	1,88,36,359	16.46	25
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>10,59,44,495</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>12,05,13,915</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>11,44,25,547</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>489</b>

1952: The Socialist Party and K.M.P.P. votes have been combined to give the P.S.P. total.

The Republican Party figures include the votes polled by the S.C.F. in 1952 and 1957.

1962: Five constituencies—four in Himachal and one in Punjab (Kangra)—will go to the polls in the latter half of April.

N.B. Above figures are divided into Lakhs, Indian numerical measurement (Editor)

### RESULTS OF ELECTIONS TO STATE LEGISLATURES

The reverses suffered by the Congress Party in the elections to the state legislatures especially in the "Hindi heartland", consisting of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are attributed to the internal squabbles within the ruling party. The rightist parties — notably the Jan Sangh — took advantage of the Congress rift in the absence of a strong leftist movement in these states.

It is worthwhile to note that the Jan Sangh's appeal has been confined to the Hindi speaking states and despite all its efforts it has failed to secure even a single seat in the non-Hindi speaking states. This is possibly because the Jan Sangh and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a semi-military organisation which constitutes its inner core, have been able to muster support only in those areas where the Muslim League propagated its two-nation theory during the independence struggle. The Hindu communalism of the Jan Sangh also tends to be identified with a "Hindi chauvinism" which is resisted by the people in the non-Hindi speaking states. (The Jan Sangh has been able to return

a Muslim to the Rajasthan legislature but this is considered more of a freak than a deliberate attempt by the party to be "secular").

In no State has the Congress polled so poorly as in Uttar Pradesh where it has been returned to power with less than 35 per cent of the total votes cast. The Jan Sangh has replaced the PSP as the main opposition in the Legislative Assembly by acquiring a strength of 49 members as against 17 it had in the old house while the PSP has reduced its strength from 44 to 38 and the Socialist Party from 25 to 24. The CPI has also taken advantage of the Congress debacle to improve its position from nine to 14.

Madhya Pradesh is another state where the Congress Party's poll registered a sharp decline from about 50 per cent of the total in 1957 to about 39 per cent this time.

This is the only state where the Congress has failed to secure an absolute majority of seats in the 288-member legislative assembly. Here again, the Jan Sangh with a strength of 41 has replaced the PSP as the main opposition. But the PSP and the SP have both improved their position by winning 33 and 14 seats respectively in the assembly as against 12 and 8 members respectively

they had in the old assembly. But the CPI which had three members in the old assembly has been able to return only one this time although it has managed to get one of its nominees elected to the Lok Sabha as an independent with the support of dissident Congressmen.

Both in UP and in Madhya Pradesh the Hindu-Muslim communal riots fomented by reactionary elements on the elections seem to have helped the communal parties. The strained relationship between India and Pakistan over Kashmir and border disputes is used by capitalist parties in both these countries to foment periodic communal riots to divert the attention of the masses from their real economic problems.

The Swatantra Party has emerged as the main legislative opposition to the Congress in the states of Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan and Gujerat which were once strongholds of feudal landed interests. The main support to the party has come either from the former feudal princes or the big landlords affected by the limited (bourgeois) land reforms of the Congress governments...

The Swatantra Party has secured 50 seats in the 318-member state legislative assembly in Bihar pushing the PSP to the third position with 29 seats while in Rajasthan it has emerged as the main opposition with 36 seats in a 176-member assembly. The Congress Party has managed to secure only 50 per cent of the seats and 40 per cent of the total votes cast in the elections to the Rajasthan assembly.

Among the Hindi states the pattern in Punjab is somewhat different. The Akali Dal agitating for a separate Punjabi-speaking state has secured 19 seats in a 152-member state assembly and nearly 20 per cent of the votes cast, mostly in the Sikh majority areas. But in the Hindi speaking areas of the Haryana region the Hindu communalists (Jan Sangh and Hindi Rakshak Samiti) have bettered their position at the cost of the Congress. The main opposition in the state legislature is formed by dissident congressmen who contested the elections as independents.

The CPI has also improved its position from six seats in the old Punjab assembly to nine in the new but this is attributed to the electoral understanding the party had with the Akali communalists in some of the rural constituencies. The PSP has been liquidated while the SP has managed to win four seats in the state assembly. The Congress has managed to win a majority of 90 seats (although the votes polled by it has been reduced to 43.80 per cent of the total) in a 152-member house.

In the elections to the Lok Sabha from the centrally administered Delhi region the Congress Party has emerged victorious by annexing all the five seats and 50.68 per cent of the total votes cast. But the Jan Sangh which polled nearly 33 per cent of the total votes cast is a serious threat to the ruling party. The CPI supported the Congress candidates against Jan Sangh. The elections to the Lok Sabha from the centrally administered Himachal Pradesh (a frontier region bordering Tibet) are still to be held because of the weather conditions.

### MIXED PATTERN IN EASTERN STATES

The Congress Party has improved its position in the eastern region, having won a larger ratio of votes in West Bengal, Orissa and Tripura and a larger number of seats in Assam than in 1957.

The United Left Front consisting of six left parties (including the CPI, RSPI, RCPI, Forward Bloc, Marxist Forward Bloc and the Bolshevik Party) gave the slogan of an "alternate Government" but managed to secure only 81 seats in a 252-member state assembly. The Left Front

could make some inroads into the rural areas although some seats were lost in the traditional left constituencies in the greater Calcutta region. Among the constituents of the United Front the CPI has secured 50 seats while the seats won by other parties include Forward Bloc 13, RSP 7, RCP 2 and independents nine, representing 38 per cent of the total votes polled in the state. The Congress Party has secured 47.19 per cent of the votes and 157 seats. The PSP has won only five seats as against 21 it had in the old house.

The CPI has also given a better account of itself in the Tripura where it has won both the parliamentary seats and 13 out of 30 seats for the territorial council. As against this the CPI has failed to win a single seat in the Assam legislative assembly and has lost heavily in Grissa and Manipur. (Tripura and Manipur are centrally administered regions bordering Burma near Nagaland).

The Congress Party seems to have consolidated its position in Assam as a result of the chauvinist anti-Bengali agitation that broke out in the state last year, and has secured 48.32 per cent of the total votes cast and 79 seats in the 105-member state legislative assembly. The dubious ("neutral") role played by the CPI has cost it the limited support it had in the state in the past. The CPI had won 8 per cent of the votes cast and four seats in the Assembly in 1957 whereas this time 12 of the 21 candidates set up by the party forfeited their security amounts. The RCPI which had put up 17 candidates for the state assembly and one for the Lok Sabha managed to win only one seat in the assembly although all but one of its candidates secured enough votes to retain their deposits (ten per cent of the total votes cast in each constituency). (The RCPI is not officially recognised by the Election Commission and its candidates were therefore listed as candidates).

The PSP in Assam has reduced its strength from eight to six members in the Assembly while the Hill Leaders Conference has emerged as the main opposition with 11 members. From the Bengali majority areas two anti-Assamese chauvinists have been returned to the State assembly.

In Orissa only the elections to the Lok Sabha were held in February. The mid-term elections to the legislative assembly were already conducted in the state in 1961 following the dismissal of the former Congress ministry by the Centre. The Congress has secured 55.53 per cent of the total votes cast while the Ganatantra Parishad (now Swatantra Party) has secured 17.42 per cent and the PSP 15.50 per cent. One significant development in the Orissa elections was the general apathy of the voters. Only less than 25 per cent of the voters exercised their franchise this time as against 34.5 per cent in the 1961 mid-term elections.

The come-back staged by the CPI in Kerala, the striking gains made by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the total rout of the leftist controlled Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti in Maharashtra are among the more notable features of the elections in the southern states. In Andhra the CPI vote has gone down quite sharply, compared with 1957 or even 1952-despite the fact that 23 independents have been returned to the Andhra assembly with the CPI support. But the CPI has improved its representation in the legislature from 37 to 51 (plus 23 independents supported by the party), because of the triangular or multi-cornered contests caused by the Swatantra, and some local parties.

The Congress Party in Andhra has improved its total vote from 41.54 per cent in 1957 to 47.25 per cent this time although the total number of seats won by it in the 300-member assembly has fallen from 187 to 177.

The Kerala Lok Sabha elections (elections to the state legislative assembly were held in 1960 after the CPI min-

istry was dismissed by the Central Government) show that the Congress-PSP coalition now ruling the state does not have the support of a majority of the electorate. The CPI polled 35.46 per cent of the votes cast but if 10.54 per cent polled by three CPI backed independents and 3.60 per cent polled by the RSP (in alliance with the PCI) are added to the CPI total the percentage polled by the United Leftist Front comes to 49 as against 44 polled by the ruling coalition. The Muslim League which has been able to return two of its nominees to the Lok Sabha has its political influence confined only to this state. It was till recently a part of the anti-communist Congress-PSP coalition.

The Congress has once again emerged as the ruling party in Madras by annexing 139 seats in a 206 member legislative assembly and 46.09 per cent of the total votes polled in the state. But the success of the DMK which secured 27 per cent of the total votes cast and 50 seats as against 15 seats it won in 1957 in the assembly came as a big surprise. Apart from being a champion of a separate Dravidistan (with right to secede from the Indian Union) and opposed to the "domination of North" (anti-Hindi etc.), the DMK has a "caste" base among the poor peasants and landless labourers in the Tamil districts. Among the other parties in Madras the CPI has reduced its strength from four to two in the state assembly while the Swatantra Party despite the popularity of its founder leader Mr. C. Rajagopalachari has won only six seats. The DMK received electoral support from the Swatantra Party, CPI and even the Muslim League in different districts.

Mysore is the only state in the country where the PSP remains the principal opposition having increased its representation from 13 to 20 seats in the 208-member assembly while the Congress party has been reduced in strength from 150 to 138 seats. The CPI has also improved its position from one to three while the Swatantra Party has got a representation of nine members.

In the western Indian states of Maharashtra and Gujarat which formed parts of the bilingual Bombay state till their bifurcation in 1960, the Congress party has been returned to power with a handsome majority. In Maharashtra particularly where the Congress had suffered a serious defeat in 1957 at the hands of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, a leftist-controlled united front of various opposition parties agitating for the creation of a unilingual Maharashtra, it has considerably recovered its position and raised its strength from 136 in a 264-member assembly to 215 this time.

The Congress which polled only 45 per cent of the total votes polled in 1957 in Maharashtra has secured now nearly 52 per cent. The united opposition front which got 128 (including PSP 32, Peasants and Workers Party 31 and CPI 18) in 1957 has managed to get only 49 seats (PWP 15, PSP 9, CPI 6 and others 19). The PCI leader S. A. Dange failed to retain his Parliamentary seat in Bombay city. The debacle of the leftists in the S.M. Samiti (which consists of CPI, PWP, RCPI etc.) was admittedly due to their failure to take advantage of the militant democratic movement for unilingual Maharashtra to develop class struggle and the illusions some of them entertained about parliamentary forms of struggle.

In terms of the seats won the Congress party has improved its position from 97 seats to 113 in the Gujarat state assembly although the votes polled by it has fallen from 55.92 per cent in 1957 to 49.62 per cent this time. The Swatantra Party has emerged as the main opposition with 26 seats in the 154-member assembly while the PSP has improved its position from four to seven but the CPI has failed to gain any representation in the legislature. Mr. Indulal Yagnik, a peasant leader who led the movement for unilingual Gujarat has once again been returned to Parliament (on the Nutan Gujarat Parishad ticket) defeat-

ing a prominent Congress trade unionist from Ahmedabad city.

One striking feature of the elections is that once again no national opposition to the Congress party has emerged despite the admission even by bourgeois politicians that the Congress is in a state of decay. Says a newspaper commentator: "Exclude Mr. Nehru and the Congress is reduced to an ill assortment of groups warring for power. There is today no party of adequate stature and strength visible as a corrective to the Congress, let alone as an alternative to it. This is not a situation on best calculated to ensure democratic continuity". (*Times of India*, April 5).

This might be an overstatement but it explains the present situation. The bourgeois politicians are indeed apprehensive about the continuity of parliamentary democracy after Nehru. To them the alternative undoubtedly is a military dictatorship, which might be attempted even during the life time of Nehru, unless the revolutionary Marxists are in a position to intervene and lead the country towards a socialist revolution.

If even after the three general elections held under adult franchise the relationship of political forces in this country continue to be confusing, the main cause of it is the CPI which thanks to its Stalinist distortions over the last three decades and the consequent zigzags in its political line has failed to emerge as a revolutionary working class alternative to the bourgeois Congress.

### THE LINE OF THE CPI

Thanks to the illusions created by the CPI leadership about the "progressive character" of the Indian bourgeoisie, the Congress leadership has successfully utilised Nehru's personality and his pseudo-socialism to a large extent blunt the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. The reactionary capitalist politicians of the Swatantra and other parties have exploited the CPI support to Nehru (because of the his so-called "neutralist" position in the cold war strategy between the Soviet bureaucracy and the imperialist powers) to depict him as a "secret communist", no doubt, for their own factional reasons. In the absence of a powerful all-India revolutionary party emerging as a real challenge to the Congress the anti-capitalist discontent of the masses finds a distorted expression on the various tendencies represented by regional groups like DMK in Madras, the Peasants and Workers Party in Maharashtra or the Republican Party representing the scheduled caste masses.

The revolutionary Marxist tendency as found in the groups like the RCPI and RSPi are too weak to influence the trends in the left movement on a national scale. But the process of Marxist integration has begun and this must be consolidated. As for the petty bourgeois socialist parties, the PSP and SP, they represent a disintegrating force, unable to rally the masses behind them in a determined struggle against capitalism.

The emergence of the extreme reactionary forces and rout of the left in some states has provoked a big discussion among the ranks of the CPI and the right wing leadership supporting the "progressive bourgeoisie" as represented by Nehru is being openly questioned by the ranks of the party.

The class collaborationist line of the CPI leadership was typically illustrated in the line taken by the party in the contest for a parliamentary seat from Bombay City between Defence Minister Krishna Menon and Acharya Kripalani sponsored by the reactionary combination of the Jan Sangh, Swatantra Party and PSP. The CPI leader, Dange sabotaged the possibility of a left candidate being put up by the leftist controlled S.M. Samiti against Kripalani and Menon as insisted by the PWP, RCPI etc. and forced his

own party and other constituents of the Samiti front to support Menon against Kripalani.

The entire big business press and all the reactionary politicians, backed by the American imperialist lobby, campaigned against Menon on the ground that he was a communist or a crypto-communist (agent of China etc.) The left failed to expose the bourgeois character of Menon's "socialism". Prime Minister Nehru utilised Menon's election campaign to bolster up the Congress prestige in the eyes of the masses. The result was that Menon with his pseudo-leftism, was elected to Parliament from Bombay city by a margin of 145,000 votes over his rival and paradoxically enough all the CPI and other leftist candidates with the solitary exception of one were defeated in the traditional working class constituencies in Bombay city. In U.P. Delhi and other states also the CPI identified itself with the so-called progressive Congressmen.

The poll results have undermined the position of the right-wing leadership of the CPI and the left wing is taking advantage of the new situation in its bid to capture the leadership of the party.

The left wing inside the CP identifies itself with the political line of the Chinese CP in the present Sino-Soviet ideological controversies.

The CPI leadership is sharply divided on important issues raised in the international communist movement. A debate on the 22nd Congress of the CPSU postponed on the eve of the general elections is taking place now.

The task of the revolutionary Marxists in the coming period is to participate in the present debate in the Communist movement to bring about a healthy differentiation between the right and the revolutionary left inside

the CPI. This should of course be coupled with a vigorous movement to consolidate the regroupement of genuine Marxists on the basis of an all-India party.

The outcome of the third general elections is bound to result in a realignment, a broad-based polarisation of class forces although in the ideological field a great deal of confusion prevails. Four major political tendencies are crystallising: The extreme right reaction represented by the fascist Swatantra-Jan Sangh combination. The Congress party trying to consolidate capitalism on the basis of parliamentary democracy, petty-bourgeois reformist socialists (including the PSP, SP and right wing of the CPI) and the revolutionary communists (consisting of the CPI left and other Marxist groups). The future of the Indian masses lies with the revolutionary Marxists and their ability to forge into an all-India party of the working class.

Under the pressure of the right reaction the Congress leadership is moving more to the right as is evidenced by the rightist-loaded central cabinet announced by Nehru after the elections. This has frustrated the hopes entertained by a section of the leftists that Nehru might give a left orientation to his domestic policies. The indications are in fact that under the impact of new mass awakening and growing resistance to the capitalist policies of his Government, Prime Minister Nehru will move further to the right and resort to a more repressive policy in relation to workers and peasants movement. The revolutionary Marxists must accept the challenge of the bourgeois politicians, and frustrate their attempts to take the country along the road of a military dictatorship, by the only effective method known to history, a radical transformation of Indian society by means of a socialist revolution.