

PERFORMANCE OF LEFT AND DEMOCRATIC FORCES

In the first and second general elections the democratic opposition came out with flying colours, and most of the losses of the Congress were turned into gains of the democratic opposition. In the 1951-52 elections, the CPI, ULF, PDF together polled six million votes. The Socialist Party, the KMPP and others of the democratic opposition polled well over 18 million votes. The total tally of the democratic opposition came to roughly 25 per cent of the polled assembly votes. But the actual gains, politically and otherwise, were greater than these figures would show. In Madras

and Travancore-Cochin the Congress failed to get majority in the assemblies. In the Andhra area of the composite Madras state, the Communist Party emerged as the first party with 41 seats as against 40 for the Congress. In Hyderabad, the CPI and the PDF won 45 seats. In Bengal, the CPI alone won 30 seats. The Socialist Party in Bihar secured 18.2 per cent of the assembly vote and 23 seats.

In the second general election the poll of the democratic opposition rose to 31 million and it secured 75 seats in the Lok Sabha as against 56 in the first Lok Sabha. Once again, the CPI was in the lead and it formed the government in Kerala.

In the third general election the poll of the democratic opposition somewhat declined. (There were mid-term elections in Kerala and Orissa) and so did its seats in the Lok Sabha (60) but there was an overall improvement in seats in the state assemblies. The progress of the democratic opposition, as has already been pointed out, had slowed down since the second general election. Even so, the democratic opposition was clearly ahead of the combination of the Jana Sangh, Swatantra Party and others with them. In this connection, it needs to be mentioned that in our previous reviews we did not include the DMK in the category of democratic opposition.

The results of the third general election made it abundantly clear that unless we checked the anti-congress masses from shifting their support to the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra by drawing them towards the democratic movement, the democratic opposition would not be able to regain the initiative and the lead which it had enjoyed in the first two general elections. Our fear has unfortunately proved true.

The correlation between the left and democratic opposition on the one hand and the Jana Sangh and Swatantra Party on the other has further changed in favour of the latter. This is however not to minimise the great political gains the left and democratic forces have registered in the fourth general election or their significant electoral successes. In fact, it is they who have spearheaded the offensive against

congress misrule and emerged with greater strength and prestige than the Swatantra and Jana Sangh put together.

Taking the all-India parties into account, the position is as follows:

	<i>Assembly votes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Seats</i>
SSP	7,403,294	5.12	179
CPM	6,607,235	4.64	126
CPI	6,079,240	4.27	122
PSP	4,802,335	3.37	106
RPI	2,171,148	1.52	24
Total	27,063,252	18.44	557

The above figures do not include the votes of the Bangla Congress, the DMK, the Sant Akali Dal, Forward Bloc, RSP, PWP—all important constituents of the democratic front.

For example, the DMK had polled 6,221,866 votes and secured 138 seats (48.82 per cent of the votes in the state or 4.41 per cent of the total assembly poll). The Bangla Congress has won 34 seats.

The two right-wing all-India parties have the following figures to show in the fourth general election:

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Seats</i>
Jana Sangh	12,454,500	8.74	267
Swatantra	9,481,995	6.66	255
Total	21,936,495	15.40	522

Even adding only DMK and Bangla Congress, the democratic opposition has a lead of over 200 assembly seats. If the smaller democratic parties are added, the figures would be still higher.

In the Lok Sabha the corresponding position is:

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Seats</i>
SSP	12,851,242	8.59	23
CPI	7,277,708	4.80	23
CPM	6,405,520	4.28	19
PSP	4,446,738	2.97	13
RPI	3,744,879	2.50	1
Total	34,726,087	23.14	79

Adding to these the seats of the DMK and the Bangla

Congress, it comes to 109 seats in the Lok Sabha. Then there are the RSP, PWP, Sant Akali Dal, Forward Bloc, Socialist Unity Centre together making 10 seats. This makes the strength of the organised left and democratic parties in the Lok Sabha 119 as against the Swatantra-Jana Sangh:

Party	Votes	Percentage	Seats
Swatantra	12,482,856	8.34	42
Jana Sangh	13,397,065	8.95	35
Total	25,879,921	17.29	77

Actually the proportion will be still more in favour of the left and democratic opposition if we take into account the progressive individuals and other small components of the united fronts at the state level.

There is no doubt that the democratic opposition has been considerably reinforced in the fourth general election. But the stature of the left and democratic parties cannot be measured merely in terms of the polled votes, percentages or seats. The biggest blows to the Congress party have as we noted earlier come from the left and democratic parties. In Kerala the Congress has been virtually wiped out by the left front in which, again, the communists are in a preponderant position. In West Bengal it is again the left parties which have brought down the Congress and given the state a clearly left government. In Bihar the SSP and the CPI with their 67+24 seats dominate the victorious united front. To this may be added also the four seats of the CPM and the 18 seats of the PSP and also the seats of others including the democratic segment of the Jana Kranti Dal. In Punjab, the democratic elements are in a stronger position than others in the united front. In Uttar Pradesh the left and democratic elements make a broad bloc of about 80 but there the lead is with the Jana Sangh. In Madras the Congress has been virtually routed by the DMK which is in sole control of the government. Only in Orissa is the non-congress government in the hands of the rightists. The congress defeat in Rajasthan was achieved mainly by the Swatantra-Jana Sangh combine.

In the non-congress governments which have come into

existence and are destined to play a great role in shaping the future, it is the left and democratic parties which are in the lead. This is a major positive achievement of the democratic movement.

All the four chief ministers who were defeated in the election fell at the hands of the left and democratic opposition including the CPI. The most notorious and hated among the congress leaders like S. K. Patil, Atulya Ghosh, C. Subramaniam have been defeated by the democratic opposition. It may be noted in this connection that all the left and democratic parties have improved their position both in Parliament and in the state legislatures taken as a whole, though the advance has not been what was expected. Despite the disastrous split in the CPI, both the communist parties have improved their representation in the Lok Sabha and, in aggregate, in the state assemblies also.

The prestige of the left and democratic parties has enormously gone up as a result of the election results and the formation of the non-congress governments in so many states. This enables the left and democratic parties to influence the future course of the development more than any other anti-congress force, particularly in view of the fact that the left parties are based on organised working class and mass movements.

Having said this much, we must now frankly admit that the results of the left and democratic parties barring local exceptions have not at all been what they could have been in the situation. The greatest advance among the left and democratic parties has been registered by the DMK and the SSP. Others have not kept up.

The democratic opposition has lost in Andhra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tripura. And these losses are shared mainly by the CPI, CPM, SSP and PSP. The gainer has been the Congress. The main reason for the relatively slow advance in the election results of the democratic opposition is of course division and disunity among the left and democratic opposition parties in many states. For example, 55 assembly seats were lost in UP on account of the disunity of the CPI, SSP, CPM, etc. The division

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.