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978-0-521-04785-2 - Development Policy of a Communist Government: West Bengal since 1977

Ross Mallick

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West Bengal has the longest ruling democratically elected Communist government in world history. Since 1977 the Left Front has governed a population of 68 million people and has received considerable world-wide attention as a positive example of Third World development and change. In this book, Dr. Ross Mallick convincingly challenges this view of the Left Front government, arguing that it has been a failure in terms of redistributive development reforms.

Using interviews with government officials and ruling party members as well as internal government and party documents, the author concentrates upon the Left Front's rural development policy and compares and contrasts this with their policy towards industrial labor, the state bureaucracy and big business. He explores the role of different classes in formulating and directing the Communist party's policies and explains why communism developed in Bengal, but not in neighboring states. The author also assesses why the communism that has developed is not of a revolutionary character, but of the most minimal type of reformism in which the lower classes have had a peripheral role and which has not significantly improved their standard of living. Mallick concludes that, although the powers and policy options of the state government were necessarily limited, a great deal more could have been achieved had the ruling party not been impeded by the elitist nature of its political base.

Development policy of a Communist government will be widely read by students and specialists of South Asian studies, Third World development and comparative communism.

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Glossary

AIKS	All-India Kisan Sabha (CPM Peasant Organization)
<i>Bargadar</i>	Sharecropper
<i>Benami</i>	Property transferred to another only nominally
<i>Bhadralok</i>	Literally “gentleman,” normally refers to high caste upper class Bengali
<i>Biga</i>	1/3rd of an acre in Bengal
CADP	Comprehensive Area Development Program
CC	Central Committee
CITU	Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CPM Trade Union)
Class 1–IV employees	Grades of Government employees with Class 1 being the highest
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPI	Communist Party of India (previously “pro-Soviet”)
CPM, CPI (M)	Communist Party of India, (Marxist), independent
CPI (M-L)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), Maoist commonly referred to as Naxalites
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
<i>Crore</i>	Ten million
FB	Forward Bloc
Hectare	2.47 acres
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IPS	Indian Police Service
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Program
<i>Lakh</i>	One hundred thousand
Panchayat	Village Council
PB	Politburo (CPM)

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RSP	Revolutionary Socialist Party
Scheduled Castes	Untouchable castes listed or “scheduled” in the constitution of India
SFI	Student Federation of India (CPM)
SUC	Socialist Unity Centre
WBCS	West Bengal Civil Service
Writers Building	Secretariat, seat of West Bengal government
Zamindar	Landlord and colonial revenue collector

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District map of West Bengal