

'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' Group's Understanding of Fascism

A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders

(Part – IV)

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13. Sukhwinder's Account of Rise of Fascism in Germany: An Assault on History and Theory

Sukhwinder has outdone himself in presenting a brief historical account of the rise of fascism in Germany, as compared to what he had done with the historical account of the rise of fascism in Italy. He gives no respite to the readers from his "bare-naked" attacks of ignorance and political illiteracy. His brief account of fascist rise in Germany is theoretically preposterous and historically analphabetic. We cannot present here a point-by-point criticism of his account because that would require me to write at least a 100 printed pages. The beauty of idiocy is that it is generally very brief like a dumb grin, but warrants an aeonian response, which, in turn, demands considerable patience and fortitude, and we want to save it for more important theoretical points in the criticism. Consequently, we will focus only on those points which are theoretically important. Let us begin this Sisyphean endeavour.

A. *The Cases of the German Fascist Rise and the Italian Fascist Rise: Sukhwinder's Blindness to Specificities and Particularities*

Let us see the very first paragraph where Sukhwinder starts his historical account of German fascism:

"The economic condition of Germany, emergence of fascism, contemplation regarding resisting fascism etc., was quite similar to that of Italy. Capitalist development was not only delayed but also backward in Italy. Capitalist development in Germany too started late but then progressed at a quick pace. Germany's capitalist development was uneven but not backward like that of Italy. Germany, rapidly emerged as a modern capitalist and imperialist country on the world's map." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 34, *emphasis ours*)

The very first sentence is incorrect from the historical perspective. It appears that Sukhwinder did not read any notable Marxist work on the history of rise of Nazism. The economic condition, the emergence of fascism, and the contemplation regarding resisting fascism, were qualitatively different from each other in the cases of Italy and Germany. Except two things: first, two commonalities in the trajectory of development of capitalism in both countries, that we have mentioned above, namely, the places that these countries occupied in the imperialist chain, and, the nature and pace of capitalist development in both countries; and second, the type of political crises faced by Germany and by Italy, that is, a crisis of the 'power bloc', namely, the inability of any fraction of the bourgeoisie in establishing its political hegemony over other fractions, in order to collectivize *the long-term general political interests* of the bourgeoisie as a political class. Except these two generalities of fascism in general, the actual historical experience of fascism was very different in Germany from Italy. Let us see what some of the specialists of the subject say on this issue.

After discussing the case of Germany in his book *Fascism and Dictatorship*, Poulantzas moves on to discuss the case of Italy. This discussion is in the context of the peculiarities of the economic

history of Germany and Italy and their place in the imperialist chain at the beginning of the Twentieth century. Poulantzas points out:

“Let us now turn to the case of Italy, which is quite different from that of Germany, though a similarity can be established if, and only if, we consider its position in the imperialist chain.” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 29, *emphasis ours*)

While discussing the nature of ‘unevenness’ in economic development, Poulantzas argues that the nature of ‘unevenness’ in Germany was the unevenness of *capitalist development*, whereas, in Italy, the nature of unevenness was that of a ‘breach’ between capitalist North and feudal and semi-feudal South. Poulantzas points out:

“The same unevenness was present in Germany, but in Italy it had the nature of a real breach, and took a yet more concrete shape in the emergence of the problem of the South. The near total absence of agrarian reform... and the persistence of the great landowners’ feudal exploitation of the South, not only retarded primitive capital accumulation, but above all deepened the breach in the uneven internal development, and aggravated its secondary effects on the internal market and on industry.” (*ibid*, p. 31, *emphasis ours*)

Even the process of bourgeois democratic revolution and capitalist development in both the countries was qualitatively different:

“The process of the bourgeois democratic revolution emerged in Italy in the midst of the vast counter-revolutionary movement which followed the upheavals of 1848 in Europe. At the time of this development, the Italian bourgeoisie was very weak: it suffered firstly from economic weakness, its position being far inferior to the economic position of the German bourgeoisie. Cavour’s historical role in this was to begin the process of national unification by means of an alliance of the nascent Northern bourgeoisie and the largely feudal big landowners of the South. Bismarck’s role was above all to bring the German bourgeoisie into political power from above; Cavour’s was rather to create the conditions for the economic power of the Italian bourgeoisie, to ‘manufacture manufacturers’, as Gramsci said.” (*ibid*, p. 32)

Further:

“By contrast with Germany, this process could only be accomplished if the bourgeoisie had decisive political weight over the Southern landowners within the alliance...” (*ibid*, p. 32, *emphasis ours*)

Finally, the political implications of this economic difference for the class struggle, too, were very different in the two countries:

“A passive revolution: the very words indicate the similarity to Bismarck’s revolution from above, pointed out by Gramsci himself. Yet it was very different. The Italian bourgeoisie capitalized on the broad popular movement, reaching political power in spite of its weaknesses, but guaranteeing the landowners a thorough suppression of the movement by the State apparatus. These features of the Italian process explain both the existence of movements of the Jacobin type (e.g. Mazzini’s Action Party and the Garibaldi movement) and their inability to take a real hold over the Italian bourgeoisie.” (*ibid*, p. 33)

Also, in the very process of the rise of fascism, we can trace many important differences:

“In Italy, for reasons explained above, we also find crisis and contradictions within the power bloc. On the one hand, these contradictions are deeper than in the German case; on the other, following from this, fascism as a means of achieving the hegemony of big capital meets with stronger resistance from the other

members of the power bloc. So although the rise of fascism was quicker than in Germany, beginning between late 1920 and early 1921, reaching the point of no return during 1921 and taking power in 1922, the process of stabilizing fascism in power was much slower. It was only in 1925, three years after its installation in power, that Italian fascism was stabilized, with the ultra-fascist laws, and entered its second phase in power.

“Firstly, the contradiction between big capital and the large landowners was much deeper than in Germany; it involved the problem of the Mezzogiorno, which partly consisted in the contradiction between the Northern bourgeoisie and the Southern landowners. The backwardness of agriculture in relation to industry was much more serious, in that the existence of a semi-feudal form of agricultural production made the concentration of capital precocious and artificial” (*ibid.* p. 114, *emphasis ours*)

Further:

“In the Italian case, unlike the German, the traditional alliance between Northern bourgeoisie and Southern landowners was seriously jeopardized by the process of capital concentration and by the creation of big capital. Although it held together politically, the explosive seeds it carried at the economic level were brought into the light of day.” (*ibid.* p. 115, *emphasis ours*)

Moreover, Poulantzas points out, in Italy the establishment of the hegemony of the big monopoly industrial capital over bank capital and then establishment of the hegemony of the big monopoly financial capital over entire economy, *happened after the rise of fascism to power*, contrary to the German case. Poulantzas finally summarizes the qualitative differences between the two cases:

“As for fascism in power, the two following characteristics differentiated it from German national socialism:

“(a) Through a whole series of specific economic measures, *Italian fascism intervened even more strongly than national socialism to effect the economic domination of big capital over large landed property.* In Germany, the capitalization of agriculture had begun before the advent of national socialism, and was then only continued and intensified; *in Italy, it was fascism which introduced this process...*

“(b) *Fascist economic policy also intervened massively in effecting capital concentration and the economic domination of big over medium capital, but this was a longer process. Taking into account the economic weakness of Italian big capital, fascism had for a long time to give much more consideration than did Nazism to the economic interests of medium capital* (the early period of fascist ‘economic liberalism’), and secondarily, to the interests of the consumer goods industry.” (*ibid.* p. 117-18, *emphasis ours*)

Moreover, even the cases of German fascism in power and the Italian fascism in power were different, precisely due to the above mentioned factors. It has been pointed out by many scholars that on the one hand the bourgeoisie in Italy was weaker than its counterpart in Germany, while on the other hand, unlike Bismarckian ‘revolution from above’, the Italian bourgeois-democratic revolution had certain elements of mass democratic movement. The reason for this was the alliance that the bourgeoisie formed with the masses against the Southern landlords, though only to crush the masses once it seized power. However, this was a major difference having important repercussions for the political situation in which fascist rise began and finally seized power and existed in power. Poulantzas argues:

“The resistance to this big-capitalist offensive for hegemony was stronger in Italy than in Germany. This determined the particular features of the rise of fascism in Italy:

“(a) The political scene, in this case parliament, where the representatives of medium capital reigned, gave them a State apparatus fashioned to their requirements and continued to be more important than in Germany until the end of the rise of fascism and even after its installation in power. The distinction between State apparatuses expressing different political forces was less evident than in Germany, with the exception of the Southern State within the State which posed a different problem. Here too, of course, there was a dissociation between real power and formal power; but the parliamentary political scene kept its own identity. The big-capitalist offensive and the resistance to it continued to have a big impact on this scene, and Italian fascism was obliged to follow much more of a policy of compromise here than was Nazism.

“(b) The rupture of the representational tie between medium capital and its representatives came about more slowly, chiefly because of the strong positions of medium capital in the State. It was completed only after fascism came to power, and was one of the reasons for the long first period of fascism in power, and for its policy of caution towards these representatives.” (ibid, p. 125-26, emphasis ours)

We can go on to present quotations from various scholars who have pointed to the difference between the German and the Italian experience. Geoff Eley points out:

*“In Italy the process was the more concentrated and dramatic, producing interesting similarities with Tsarist Russia: for example, the massive spurt of growth from the 1890s to World War I; the very high levels of geographical, structural, and physical concentration of industry, which brought masses of workers together in a small number of centers and created new conurbations with politically volatile populations; the interventionist role of the state, linked to a powerful complex of railway, heavy-industrial, shipbuilding, engineering, and hydro-electrical interests, the selective involvement of foreign capital, and a well-knit oligopoly of government, industry, and banks; an exclusivist and oligarchic political system; and a dramatic discrepancy between north and south, between a dynamic industrial sector that in all respects was highly advanced and an agricultural one that was equally and terribly backward.” (Geoff Eley. 2003. “What Produces Fascism: Preindustrial Traditions or a Crisis of the Capitalist State” in Dobkowski, Walliman (eds.) *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany, 1919-45*, Cornerstone Publications, p. 80-81)*

Therefore, Sukhwinder’s belief that Italy’s economic and industrial development was not rapid is misplaced. The difference from Germany lies more in the unevenness of the economic development of the country, manifesting itself as what Poulantzas has termed as a ‘breach’ between the North and the South. The industrial development in the Northern Italy was extremely rapid and concentrated. As Renton points out, “The north, however, contained *some of the most modern areas in Europe*, notably the ‘industrial triangle’ of Genoa, Milan and Turin.” (Renton, D. 1999. *op.cit.*, p. 30, *emphasis ours*)

The political situation, too, was different in Italy in general, to which we have pointed out above, and also in the context of the left movement, in particular. Eley argues that in Italy there was no conventional social-democracy as such and the overall socialist movement in the broadest sense was more on the left side. PSI was not capitulationist and class collaborationist in the same sense in which the German Social-Democratic Party was, even though the reformism of PSI (even its Maximalist faction) was evident in its failure to resist fascism in the concrete sense and its reliance on legalism.

“In Italy, where the socialist movement was generally further to the left than in Germany, and where no equivalent of the SPD functioned as a vital factor of order, this process of right-wing concentration around the redemptive potential of a radical-nationalist antisocialist terror was far more advanced.” (Eley, Geoff. 2003. *op.cit.*, p. 91)

We can go on quoting such excerpts from the history of the rise of fascism in Germany and in Italy from various authorities. However, there is no need to do that. The above quotations are sufficient to reveal Sukhwinder’s ignorance of history. Sukhwinder believes that the difference between the German and Italian case was only related to the entry of these countries in the world of industrial capitalism, the pace of industrialization and the *unevenness* of the capitalist development, *all quantitative economic factors*. On the contrary, the difference was not simply quantitative economic; the difference was qualitative and pertained to the very class dynamic, historically speaking, of the two societies. These differences are precisely the factors that explain the difference in the *process* of fascist rise in the two countries.

Moving on.

B. Sukhwinder’s Complete Cluelessness Regarding the History of the Left Movement in Germany

Here we do not want to focus on the historical inaccuracies of Sukhwinder’s account. Therefore, we will present only a few examples. Sukhwinder writes:

“It became clear by 1918 that Germany’s defeat was certain in the war. Revolutionary conditions were ripening in the country. On 3 November 1918, the navy revolted in Kiel city. Workers of the cities announced a general strike in solidarity with the soldiers. Workers and soldiers’ soviet was organised which wielded the administration of the city. On 9th November, a general strike began in the capital, Berlin. Strike turned into revolt and the German Kaiser Wilhelm II fled the country. Thus, the November bourgeois democratic revolution began in Germany.

“This revolution was accomplished mainly by the participation of working class. Power came in the hands of soviets of people’s representatives which was led by the social democratic party of Germany. There existed three trends in the party at that time. Rightist social democrats and reformists, leftist social democrats (Spartacus group and others) and centrists. Centrists were leftists in theory but reformists in actions.

“Centrists separated and formed their own party which was named independent social democratic party of Germany. In most of the soviets in Germany, rightist social democrats dominated. This restricted the scope of November revolution.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 34-35)

Sukhwinder thinks that the Independent Social Democratic Party was formed after the November Revolution. That is untrue. The USPD was formed in 1917 itself. He argues that *after* the November Revolution, three factions existed in the party, which included the centrist faction which *later* founded USPD. However, had Sukhwinder read any authoritative book on the history of the German Revolution, he would not have made such an ignorant claim.

Moreover, the USPD was not “left” even in theory. Lenin’s words are important here where he defends an alliance between the communists and the independent socialists (USPD) and critiques the German “left” deviationists for attacking the KPD for forming an alliance with the USPD:

“It is therefore understandable why attacks of the German Lefts on the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany for entertaining the idea of a

bloc with the “Independents” (the “Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany,” the Kautskyites) appear to us to be utterly frivolous and a clear proof that the “Lefts” are in the wrong. We in Russia also had Right Mensheviks (who participated in the Kerensky government), corresponding to the German Scheidemanns, and Left Mensheviks (Martov), corresponding to the German Kautskyites, who were in opposition to the Right Mensheviks.” (Lenin, V. I. 2021. “Left-wing” *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 67)

Lenin was in favour of formation of alliance with the “left”-wing of the USPD and criticized the “left” German communists for adopting a sectarian line on this question. However, this was not Lenin’s defence of the German Kautskyites (the “left”-wing of the USPD) in terms of theory. Lenin points out:

“The real nature of the present leaders of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany...was revealed once again during the German Kornilov affair, i.e., the Kapp-Luttwitz putsch. A small but striking illustration is afforded by two brief articles—one by Karl Kautsky entitled “Decisive Hours” (“Entscheidende Stunden”) in *Freiheit* (Freedom, the organ of the Independents) of March 30, 1920, and the other by Arthur Crispian entitled “On the Political Situation” (in this same newspaper, issue of April 14, 1920). These gentlemen are absolutely incapable of thinking and reasoning like revolutionaries. They are sniveling philistine democrats, who become a thousand times more dangerous to the proletariat when they claim to be supporters of Soviet government and of the dictatorship of the proletariat, because actually whenever a difficult and dangerous situation arises they are sure to commit treachery ...while “sincerely” believing that they are helping the proletariat!” (*ibid*, p. 109)

The fact is that the USPD was not only centrist (read the “left” wing of the right!) in practice but also in theory. There was a “left”-wing within the USPD to which Lenin prescribed rapprochement in the hope that they can be won over to communist position, along with the scores of their proletarian supporters, which was more important for Lenin. However, these hopes were dashed in part due to the “left” mistakes of the KPD itself and in part due to the intrinsic nature of the USPD-left itself, theoretically speaking. However, Sukhwinder takes anything from history or theory and then vulgarizes it in the crudest fashion. As we have pointed out, he has a knack for not understanding nuances and subtleties, either in theory, or in history.

It is precisely due to this reason that Sukhwinder makes contradictory claims. For instance, he writes:

“The most reactionary elements of bourgeoisie wanted to completely abolish the nominal democratic rights obtained by the people which were reflected in the constitution. *Hitler’s Nazi party came into existence in 1919. It came to power with the backing of monopoly capital.* In December 1923, new bourgeois government was formed in Germany. This attempted to bring economic and political stability to the country. During this time of political stability, the German working class won some rights. Workers fought against reaction and militarism for 8 hour working day and better working conditions. But reactionary forces succeeded in enacting a 10 hour working day in 1927.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 36, *emphasis ours*)

Just a few lines before, Sukhwinder writes:

“The new government (*after the November Revolution – author*) undertook many reformist steps, controlled the production and administration of many

departments. Martial law was removed. Freedom of speech, gathering and organisation, women rights, 8 hour working day etc., were recognised." (*ibid*, p. 35)

So, the bourgeois government formed under the leadership of the Social-Democrats introduced "8 hour workday, etc." after the November Revolution. However, after the formation of the new bourgeois government in December 1923, workers again "fought...for 8 hour working day". Did the bourgeois government take away the right of 8-hour working day during the period between 1919 and 1923? No. Then what happened in 1923? How come the working class was fighting for something that it already had? May be Sukhwinder took it away! Let us see what happened.

After the November Revolution, the working class indeed had gained the right of 8-hour working day and the provisional government under Scheidemann and Ebert were willing to grant this because of, first, the Social-Democratic idea of labour-capital compromise for peaceful capitalism and, second, in the face of the militant working-class movement, which was not decisively defeated (politically speaking) till the end of 1920, they had no other choice. However, the period from 1919 to 1923 was the period of the economic instability of the German capitalism due to the crisis created as the aftermath of war.

However, since the 1923, recovery began due to relative economic stabilization, which also got boost from the Dawes Plan in 1924. At the same time, in 1924, the Comintern, too, recognized a process of economic stabilization, which was equated with working-class defensive. In this entire context, the German bourgeoisie began its economic offensive with the help of the social-democrats and this offensive included the demand of the capitalist class to do away with the 8-hour working day. With the Social-Democratic Party and its trade unions agreeing and with the complete defeat of the political offensive of the working class by 1920 and its economic offensive and scattered skirmishes by 1923, the German bourgeoisie was able to snatch away this right. Kurt Gossweiler writes:

"The short phase of "normal" development between 1924 and 1929 is no argument against the assertion regarding the absence of a foundation for a stable development of the Weimar Republic. For, whereas Social Democratic party and trade-union leaders hurriedly considered this phase a new beginning for a crisis-free economy that would subsequently grow into socialism along peaceful lines via "organized capitalism," in reality, as far as the big-capital opponents of the Weimar democracy were concerned, this period merely represented an armistice phase. *Moreover, this phase had been accepted only after the SPD and the trade unions had actually renounced the eight-hour day, one of the principle revolutionary gains of the period...*" (Gossweiler, Kurt. 2003. "Economy and Politics in the Destruction of the Weimer Republic", in Dobkowski, Walliman (eds.) *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1945*, Cornerstone Publications, p. 155, *emphasis ours*)

David Abraham points out:

"This bloc made use of inflation, French occupation of the Ruhr, and aborted communist uprisings to revoke the eight-hour day, lower real wages, and wipe out its debt." (David Abraham. 2003. "State and Classes in Weimer Germany", in Dobkowski, Walliman (eds.) *op.cit.*, p. 39)

Here Abraham is talking about the bloc of the ruling class consisting of heavy industry, estate owners, export industry, which he calls the 'Anti-socialist Right Bourgeois Bloc' that existed from 1922 to 1924 (see p. 40, Table 2). The third bloc continued this policy, which comprised of export industry, heavy industry in the main and tailended by rural labour, salaried employees and the proletariat. Abraham calls this bloc the 'Class Compromise Bloc, 1925 to 1930'. As the

name suggests, the bloc became possible only due to the capitulation of the SPD to the reactionary bourgeoisie for hopes of 'peaceful development' of the "organized capitalism" into socialism and in hopes of sidelining the KPD.

Poulantzas, too, points out:

"After the 1923 state of emergency - a simple warning shot - and the memorandum by the big industrial magnates calling for the prolongation of the working day, the abrogation of many social benefits, the suppression of bread subsidies, the denationalization of the railways, etc., governments increasingly satisfied their demands. *The eight-hour working day was gradually stretched to at least nine hours, often ten and sometimes twelve: a situation officially ratified by the social democratic trade unions in 1927.*" (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 107)

Sukhwinder's mind has been addled by numerous, discrete, disparate and not-so-discriminate flap readings, quote-scavenging through index and plagiarizing from variety of sources. And he makes the historical account of rise of fascism in Germany resemble a non-linear narrative of a Christopher Nolan-type movie, though *sans* intelligence!

Also, readers can notice how Sukhwinder absolved the social-democrats of all responsibility and wants us to believe that extension of the working-day to ten hours was purely due to the reactionary forces! He totally omits one important little detail: the German bourgeoisie and its economic organizations succeeded in snatching away the right of the eight-hour working-day *precisely because of the betrayal of the social-democrats*. In fact, the social-democrats were the main reason why the Weimer Republic saw years of so-called stability between 1924 and 1929 due to the labour-capital compromise with the upper hand of capital. From Sukhwinder's account, the complicity of the social-democrats in creating the situations that led to the rise of fascism are mostly absent and appear only at some places and merely as an insignificant appendix. We will see how even in the case of analyzing the failure of KPD-SPD alliance with the coming of the peak of fascist offensive, Sukhwinder puts the main responsibility on KPD, whereas, the truth was that notwithstanding the "left"-right mistakes of the KPD, the main responsibility lies at the door of the social-democracy.

Further.

C. Sukhwinder's Gradualist and Economistic Conception of Economic and Political Crisis, and, Once Again, Total Ignorance of History

Sukhwinder continues to blabber his gibberish:

"The great depression started in 1929. It particularly affected the German economy adversely. Industrial production in 1932 as compared with 1929 fell 40%. The number of unemployed, semi-unemployed reached 80 lakh. Many banks went bankrupt. Peasants, artisans and traders started going bankrupt.

"Political forces were sharply polarised in this period. The workers were fed up with the ruling class' parties (social democratic and other bourgeois parties). They were also displeased with the communist party. A considerable portion of the masses, especially petty bourgeois went into the fascism's influence. In parliamentary (Reichstag) elections of September 1930, candidates of Nazi party received 65 lakh votes. In 1928, it had received only 8.1 lakh votes. In the parliamentary elections of December 1932, Nazi party received 1 crore 17 lakh votes. *Immediately after the elections, the reactionary ruling classes of Germany moved towards the setting up of fascist dictatorship. President Hermann Hindenburg declared Hitler as the head of state on 30 January 1933. This meant the setting up of naked dictatorship of the most reactionary elements of monopoly capital in Germany.* After this, the already transpiring fascist terror intensified

further. The arrests, murders of communists, trade union leaders hastened. At the time, the communist party of Germany was the second largest communist party of Germany. Fascist state eliminated this party in a week. *The first task that Hitler's fascist state did was to cripple the organised workers' movement of Germany and unshackle the German capital of the danger of worker's revolution which was continuously circling over it.* (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 36-37, *emphasis ours*)

Wonderful! This particular excerpt reveals the bourgeois democratic, liberal and reformist illusions of Sukhwinder, to say the least.

First of all, political forces were not simply polarized *after* the outbreak of the Great Depression. In fact, serious political crisis (the fragmentation of the political forces of the bourgeoisie and the breaking of the representational ties of the bourgeois parties with the bourgeoisie and the widening of the cleavage between the real and formal power) continued to brew since 1927-28 itself. Here, too, Sukhwinder reveals his incorrigible economism. He yet again assumes that it is economic crisis which incrementally develops into political crisis. Let us understand how this idea is not only theoretically incorrect, but also betrays ignorance of history.

David Abraham points out:

“The bourgeois governments of 1924-28, under several DVP and Catholic chancellors, were able to compromise and maneuver as much as they did -only at the expense of the parties that constituted the various coalitions. Cabinets and bureaucracies worked out a host of compromises, but party life showed signs of becoming moribund as the transmission of interest-group pressures became an increasingly central activity. Already, formal and real power began to issue from different sources. Collaboration did not create consensus, and the centrality of the middle parties masked the decline and splitting of their constituencies. *The political crisis became increasingly acute after 1928, before the economic crisis had really set in.* No member or fraction of the dominant bloc was capable of imposing its direction on the other members of the bloc, either through parliament or other organs of the state.” (Abraham, D. 2003. *op.cit.*, p. 54, *emphasis ours*)

Abraham points out further:

“The bloc, in brief, could not surmount its own internal contradictions... As the political crisis deepened and the locus of decision-making narrowed from parliament to cabinet to presidential circles, the expression of dominant bloc interests actually became more fragmented. Despite the government's increased emergency powers, it was faced with increased bourgeois disunity.” (*ibid*, p. 54)

Similarly, Gossweiler points out:

“Attentive observers, however, have been quick to note a keynote feature, *namely that the offensive against the Weimar Republic began toward the end of 1927 and early 1928, that is to say, the temporary armistice initiated by capital came to an end considerably before the outbreak of the world economic crisis.* Singularly significant evidence in this context was the forming early in 1928 of the Association for the Renewal of the Reich, which, in rejecting the Weimar Republic, echoed the clarion call for establishing a Third Reich. Further symptoms along similar lines were the right-wing seizure of leadership posts both in the German National People's party (DNVP) and the Center party, namely, Alfred Hugenberg and the Prelate Kaas; the lockout of some 250,000 metalworkers by the Ruhr trusts in November 1928, and the memorandum of

the Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie entitled 'Äscent or Demise" in December 1929.

"All these facts run counter to the viewpoint that the outbreak of the world economic crisis sparked the employers' onslaught against the Weimar Republic." (Gossweiler, K. *op.cit.*, p. 156, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas describes the same process in detail demonstrating how the political crisis, that is, the crisis of hegemony within the 'power bloc' of the ruling class ensued from 1924 itself and becoming particularly acute since 1927-28. Readers can refer to Poulantzas (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 100-101).

Thus, contrary to Sukhwinder's belief, the political forces were not simply polarized after the onset of the crisis in 1929. The political crisis of the bourgeoisie was present even before that and the bourgeoisie was able to prevent the arrival of the tipping-point *only* due to the collaboration of the social-democrats, who are so close to the heart of Sukhwinder. Gossweiler argues:

"The short phase of "normal" development between 1924 and 1929 is no argument against the assertion regarding the absence of a foundation for a stable development of the Weimar Republic. For, whereas Social Democratic party and trade-union leaders hurriedly considered this phase a new beginning for a crisis-free economy that would subsequently grow into socialism along peaceful lines via "organized capitalism," in reality, as far as the big-capital opponents of the Weimar democracy were concerned, this period merely represented an armistice phase. Moreover, this phase had been accepted only after the SPD and the trade unions had actually renounced the eight-hour day, one of the principle revolutionary gains of the period, and only after the French waiver in respect to the priority rating of German reparation payments led to a situation in which other liabilities of American finance capital displayed an ostensible inclination to bolster up the capital-formation process in Germany by providing loans. *The contradictions between capital and labor was therefore, during the normality phase, minutely less pronounced because of the partial abandonment of the revolutionary gains and particularly because of the external temporary capital inflow.* That is why the stabilization of capitalism in Germany could be only very relative and had to be more fragile than was the case in the other developed capitalist industrial countries." (Gossweiler, K. 2003. *op.cit.*, p. 155, *emphasis ours*)

Abraham points out:

"Bourgeois-working-class collaboration during the period of recovery stabilized the dominance of the former by at once rewarding and depoliticizing the latter. Playing by the rules of the game tended to make the SPD a normal, interest-aggregating Volkspartei...Strikes were invariably about wages and other distribution questions; gone were vague political demands and political strikes." (Abraham, D. 2003. *op.cit.*, p. 51)

Abraham argues further, pointing to the deepening political crisis of the bourgeoisie even before the onset of the Great Depression and how the latter took this political crisis to the nodal point:

"Consequently, the parliamentary and party format for bourgeois-working-class collaboration remained inadequate while it simultaneously aggravated existing cleavages within the bourgeois parties. This was neither the first nor the last occasion when bourgeois political stability was dependent on SPD and union support. *The latter, in turn, was conditioned primarily by the bourgeoisie's ability to pay the bill.*" (*ibid*, p. 53)

Further.

D. The Evolution of the Political Crisis in Germany, the Changing Response of the Bourgeoisie and Its Attitude Towards Hitler and the Nazi Party: Sukhwinder's Infantile Illusions

We will not focus too much on asinine statements of Sukhwinder like “They (workers) were also displeased with the communist party” as it completely misses the fact that it was not the question of being “pleased” or “displeased”. The question was that the KPD could not rally the mass of the working class *politically* to resist fascism through implementation of massline, repudiation of economism and failure to conceptualize and apply the line of ‘united front from the below’. Purely in terms of votes that the KPD got since 1924 show a trajectory of increase (mostly due to workers’ votes shifting from the SPD). KPD’s vote percentage was 9.2 in 1924, 10.7 in 1928, 13.1 in 1930, 14.3 in 1932 (I) and 17 percent in 1932 (II). It fell only in the last election to 12.2 in 1933 which happened with Hitler in power.

The error was that the KPD failed due to its own “left” deviation, right deviation (yes! At the same time, simultaneously), economism and lack of massline, to mobilize and organize the masses *politically* in resistance to fascism. However, Sukhwinder fails to understand all things that are nuanced. He has a knack for catching only the crude things and that, too, in the crudest manner. *Politically*, the working class was getting farther and separated from the KPD, precisely because of the incorrect line of the KPD, even though a considerable number of workers were still voting for the KPD. Thus, the electoral mass support for KPD increased, precisely due to the *more militant economism* of the KPD, in comparison to the blunting edge of the economism of SPD because of the most shameful forms of class collaborationism and capitulation to the bourgeoisie, especially in the years immediately preceding the fascist rise to power. Poulantzas has captured this point succinctly:

“In 1930, although it was a year of open crisis, the only notable big strikes, initiated by the RGO (the communist ‘revolutionary trade-union opposition’) in the Mansfeld region, and in the metallurgical industries of the Rhine and Berlin, were solely against wage cuts (though 130,000 workers were on strike for two weeks). *It was as if the RGO itself, at the instigation of the KPD, was trying to bypass the passivity of the social-democratic trade-union leaderships simply by bidding higher on the wages front alone.*” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 173, *emphasis ours*)

It was precisely this economic line that led to increase of the *political* influence of social-democracy in the ranks of the KPD. (see Poulantzas for a description of the entire process: Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 173-175). Evidently, Sukhwinder fails, once again, to see the difference between *the political* and *the economic*. There is no need to dwell any further on such asininity.

Sukhwinder claims that “immediately after” the elections of December 1932, the reactionary ruling class moved to install a fascist dictatorship. This claim has nothing to do with actual historical facts.

In fact, the larger part of the reactionary ruling class was still reluctant to propel Hitler to power and wanted to try another option. It was only when this other option did not work for the resolution of the political crisis of the bourgeoisie that the majority of the reactionary ruling class rallied behind Hitler. Let us understand this process in a little detail, because Sukhwinder has not understood this process at all, precisely because of his inability to understand the very concept of political crisis.

The fact is that from 1930 itself the political crisis of the bourgeoisie was hitting the fan. From 1930 to 1932, the bourgeoisie tried to resolve this crisis through various authoritarian

governments. The first combination that the bourgeoisie tried was that of the Brüning government. Brüning belonged to the Catholic Zentrum party. His government tried to manage the labour-capital compromise in order to maintain the mass base for the regime. Abraham writes:

“Heinrich Brüning, a leader of the Catholic Zentrum party, became chancellor following the collapse of the Grand Coalition in March 1930. He ruled without a parliamentary majority through the semiconstitutional mechanism of presidential decree. The Brüning regime functioned as a surrogate for the bourgeois parties, which had, by this time, lost nearly their entire electoral backing. They had become simple transmission belts for economic interests; under pressure from their industrial backers they had become creatures of “industrial egotism lacking any social concern.”...The first year of Brüning’s regime was, nevertheless, tolerated by the SPD, which could have toppled him. He attempted to implement a program bridging the differences among the three dominant fractions, and his economic policies were characterized by brutal deflationary budget-balancing and belt-tightening. Brüning’s modest efforts to force the estate owners to modernize, give up their huge subventions, or face massive peasant resettlement (land reform) led them to conspire with President Hindenburg’s camarilla, and Brüning was abandoned. In fact, however, the heavy-industry fraction had already turned against him because he had not cut himself off entirely from the pressure of organized labor, Catholic and socialist. The dynamic-export fraction of industry, on the other hand, was prepared to continue supporting him, but it was no longer setting the tone or agenda for the dominant classes as a whole.” (Abraham, D. 2003. *op.cit.* p. 57)

The three dominant fractions that Abraham is talking about is heavy industry, junkerdom (estate owners), and export industry. The problem was dual: one, establishing the political hegemony of one of the fractions within the ‘power bloc’ and two, on the basis of the resolution of this problem, developing a mass base of the regime. The petty-bourgeoisie had been alienated from most of the bourgeois parties, except the NSDAP. The capital-labour compromise was unaffordable anymore for the bourgeoisie in general, so the SPD’s effort to rally organized labour in support of the regime were bound to fail. When Brüning government was replaced by Franz von Papen with the support of Hindenburg in May 1932, this problem exacerbated even more because the latter had even less capability to resolve the above dual problem. Abraham points out:

“Papen’s government was heralded as being fully authoritarian and national, but throughout its six-month tenure it lacked any base of mass support and failed to unify the interests of the dominant fractions. It catered almost exclusively to the protectionist and autarkic strivings of the rural elite and heavy industry while failing to integrate the Nazi party as a junior member of the government. Papen was even less able than Brüning to harmonize the interests of the three dominant fractions, although he was certainly more energetic and effective in his repression of the SPD and unions. Because he incurred the wrath of the dynamic-export fraction and failed to split and enlist part of the Nazi party, Papen was replaced in early December 1932 by General von Schleicher.” (*ibid*, p. 57-58)

Papen government mainly represented the estate owners and secondarily the heavy industry, which were closer to one another in their *political reaction*, whereas the latter was closer to export industry in its shared economic interests *contra* the agricultural bourgeoisie. We know the issues of dispute between the two fractions: industrial and agricultural. The latter bourgeoisie wants higher prices for principal wage-good, namely, food, whereas the entire industry wants to keep the principal wage-good and all wage-goods as cheap as possible. However, within industrial bourgeoisie, the interests of the heavy industry, mainly based in

Ruhr, and the export industry were different too in certain respects. The latter was more inclined to continue the capital-labour collaboration, whereas the politically reactionary heavy industry was totally against it. Schleicher represented mainly the export industry. Abraham writes:

“Schleicher's failings were a mirror image of his predecessor's: if Papen erred on the side of estate owners, deflation, domestic-oriented heavy industry, autarky, and failure to seek a mass base, then Schleicher and his left-Keynesian minister for "Work Creation" erred grievously on the side of opposition to the rural elite, inflation, the export industries, and too much dickering with the Nazi "left" and the unions. His public-works program was not unlike that proposed by some union spokespeople. Although both fractions of industry were opposed to an inflation, the prospects of a policy shift in favor of the dynamic-export industries came as a rude shock to those in heavy industry and agriculture who had previously brought about a shift in their own favor. Conflicts rather than joint interest had come to the fore among the dominant fractions. Finally, Schleicher's efforts raised the spectre of state socialism and a possible reparliamentarization of political life, even in military dress.” (*ibid*, p. 58)

It was only after the failure of what we can call the “knee-jerk” authoritarian governments of Brüning, von Papen and Schleicher, that the bourgeoisie finally (not without apprehensions and fear) resorted to the fascist option and Hindenburg very unwillingly appointed Hitler as the chancellor. In fact, the first option that the reactionary bourgeoisie tried was to tame and subordinate the Nazi party, which they saw with suspicion and apprehension. It was only after testing all other possible options, they selected the Nazi option, as they were left with only that option. Abraham points out:

“After the failures of the previous two years it was the political fear inspired by Schleicher's program that was central and that led finally to the appointment of Hitler on January 30, 1933. Papen's program, this time with a mass base and a more imperialist tone, appeared to be the least common denominator for the three dominant fractions.

...

“Since 1924, most industrialists and most bourgeois politicians had remained somewhat aloof from völkisch (populist radicalism) and had come to look upon it with disdain. After 1930, however, this new popular mass and the Nazi party it supported became objects of their intense interest. Once they established that both the party and its mass were (or could become) supporters of social order, various governmental possibilities involving the Nazis became feasible. In the eyes of those professional politicians and economic leaders for whom the NSDAP was an exogenous force and its supporters potential revolutionaries, the preferred strategy was to split the party and enlist its masses. *It was only reluctantly that the leading industrial circles became receptive to the idea that the entire NSDAP had to be called upon to take charge of the state and provide that popular base that had been lacking since 1930.*” (*ibid*, p. 58, *emphasis ours*)

Kurt Gossweiler, whose general analysis is quite different from and on certain points opposed to David Abraham's analysis, confirms these facts. He has pointed out the same dynamic within the dominant classes of Weimer Germany in the late-1920s and early-1930s before the rise of Hitler to power. Gossweiler points out:

“All bourgeois parties, along with other groups and factions of the ruling class, quickly realized that the NSDAP would have to be directly involved in government. *However, its possible role and the leadership under which this was to*

happen became a matter of contention, resurrecting old rivalries and competitive bickering. Hereby, as time passed and situations changed ever more, new considerations and combinations were brought into play. To simplify matters the following four major groups and strategies can be observed:

“1. Alfred Hugenberg and his party, as well as the circles from heavy industry and the landed aristocracy behind this party, relying on Reich President Paul von Hindenberg, resolutely pressed for an alliance with the NSDAP, *with the NSDAP in the role of junior partner, attracting the masses--in other words, an alliance that would assure the Hugenberg party of supremacy in the bourgeois camp and leadership in the desired "National Dictatorship,"* the culmination of which should in due course be the restoration of the monarchy.

“2. The Center party (Brüning) and those circles in heavy industry, chemicals, the electrical industry, the export sector, and the bankers behind it, wanted to win over the NSDAP for a government alliance. *With the assistance of the NSDAP it thereby hoped to move from the Weimar democracy to an authoritarian regime that in the long run would similarly culminate in the restoration of the monarchy.*

“3. In contrast to these strategies, Hjalmar Schacht and Fritz Thyssen--both principal spokesmen of a group of industrialists and bankers particularly strongly linked to U. S. finance capital--were not anxious to subordinate the Hitler party to one of the old bourgeois parties. Instead, using Hermann Göring, whom they backed very generously as their go-between to the NSDAP, they pressed Adolf Hitler to stake a claim to the chancellorship as a precondition for the NSDAP's joining the government. Moreover, they advised Hitler to make his bid with utmost persistence and without the slightest concessions. Thereby they hoped that a Hitler government would allow them to triumph over all contenders and to pursue a foreign policy bent on expansion solely in the East in alliance with the West.

“4. General Kurt von Schleicher cooperated with NSDAP organization head Gregor Strasser, the second most powerful NSDAP figure after Hitler, until his demise early in December 1932, in attempting to set up a military dictatorship. He sought to anchor this in the working class by means of his "trade union axis" project ranging from the Free Trade Unions (Theodor Leipart) to the Christian trade unions to the NSDAP.

“Schleicher tried to implement his project under the Papen government, but Chancellor Franz von Papen swung toward the Hugenberg line and tried to "soften Hitler" and to cause him to relent by dissolving the Reichstag during a period of deep crisis in the NSDAP. He thereby compelled the Nazi party to enter a further costly electoral campaign. This maneuver proved to be a serious mistake, ending in von Papen's forced resignation.” (Gossweiler, K. 2003. *op.cit.*, p. 162-63)

Finally, Gossweiler points out that the German bourgeoisie in its struggle to overcome its political crisis tried many options from Brüning to von Papen and finally Schleicher. However, one faction and its strategists were steadfast in propping up Hitler: Thyssen and Schacht, representing the faction of industrialists and bankers, supported by the US capital. Hitler himself was wavering. However, with the support of Hermann Goring, Thyssen and Schacht continued to prop up his confidence, whereas other lobbies were not so much keen on making Hitler the chancellor. Finally, when all other options failed, which Thyssen and Schacht had foreseen, the rest of the fractions, too, willingly or unwillingly, rallied to the Nazi party, which was the only bourgeois party with *a sizeable mass base and representational links.* Gossweiler points out:

“Thus, one of two remaining possibilities for attaining the dictatorship had to be chosen: either the risky coup d’etat backed solely by the army or the legal formation of a government for establishing a national dictatorship on the conditions demanded by the Nazi party, namely, Hitler’s chancellorship. In this situation the key ruling-class circles opted for the path of (at least) formal legality, thereby revealing that Schacht and Thyssen were indeed the better strategists. They had foreseen that, provided Hitler remained steadfast and did not lose his nerve, all other variants would surely fail. For sound reasons, a coup d’etat bid had to be avoided, yet the legal path was feasible only with the cooperation of the NSDAP, which now had more leverage and, being the most powerful government party, was in a position to insist on its claim to head the government.” (*ibid*, p. 164)

Sukhwinder has no clue how the political crisis which propelled the Nazis to power in 1933 had matured. His ignorant and over-simplistic account presents Hitler as the favored candidate of the reactionary bourgeoisie since the December 1932 elections itself, whereas even when the reactionary bourgeoisie moved to lend support to Hitler, it did so with various reservations, apprehensions and some false hope, too. For instance, Abraham points out:

“The leading representatives of the dominant classes thought the Nazis manageable, despite their demands for total power.” (Abraham, D. 2003. *op.cit.*, p. 58)

Why does Sukhwinder fail to understand this dynamic and think that the entire reactionary bourgeoisie rallied in unison behind Hitler and the NSDAP after the December 1932 elections? Precisely because he does not understand the concept of ‘political crisis’, as one, where none of the fractions of the dominant classes are able to impose their political hegemony within the ‘power bloc’. Secondly, because he sees fascism as the “bare-naked” dictatorship of “the most reactionary and chauvinist elements of the big monopoly financial bourgeoisie”. In sum, a deadly combination of dogmatism, economism, mechanistic and metaphysical view and yes, also unbelievable stupidity and ignorance.

Moreover, who is this Hermann Hindenburg that Sukhwinder is talking about? Hindenburg’s name was Paul von Hindenburg. Why did Sukhwinder confuse him with some guy Hermann? Well, this guy was basically the Hermann Müller, the last social-democratic chancellor of Germany, just before Brüning took over. During Müller’s chancellorship, Paul von Hindenburg was the president. So, Sukhwinder came up with a brilliant idea. Why not resolve the political crisis of the German bourgeoisie by fusing Hermann Müller (representative of medium capital and partially export industry, with mass base in organized labour) with Paul von Hindenburg (representative of the junkerdom and partially the heavy industry) and create one ‘Hermann Hindenburg’!

Such are the unique ways of the editor saab of ‘Pratibaddh’!

Moving on.

E. The KPD, the SPD, and the Bourgeois-Democratic and Reformist Afflictions of Sukhwinder

The last paragraph of the above excerpt of Sukhwinder reveals his bourgeois democratic illusions and social-democracy in the clearest fashion. Here the readers clearly understand why Sukhwinder puts all the blame of failure in formation of a united front against fascism on the KPD, whereas, notwithstanding the “left”-right deviation of the KPD, the main responsibility in the last years up to the fascist rise to power, lay at the door of the SPD. Sukhwinder says, “*the Communist Party of Germany was the second largest communist party of Germany.*” In other words, the KPD was the second largest communist party of Germany. Then which party was the

largest communist party of Germany? The SPD! Thus, for Sukhwinder, the Social-Democratic Party of Germany was a communist party! Clearly, some scattered statements in Sukhwinder's essay about "treachery of social-democracy", etc. are only artificial additions to what is actually a particularly reformist piece. The readers must not forget that it was the social-democratic party itself (its defence minister Gustav Noske) who had directly recruited the right-wing militia, including the infamous *Freikorps* for the assassinations of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; also, the readers must not forget that it was this same SPD which in alliance with the bourgeois government, accepted the prolongation of the working day from 8 hours to 10 hours and even accepted its legalization by 1927; this party is considered by Sukhwinder as the largest communist party of Germany. Any revolutionary communist can only be disgusted at such a claim. This is nothing short of slander against revolutionary communism.

Another instance of Sukhwinder's illiteracy of the history of German fascism is his claim that "Fascist state eliminated this party (KPD) within a week" after Hitler's rise to power in January 1933. Well, no! In fact, Hitler was reluctant to even formally ban the KPD immediately after his ascension to power, because he feared a left polarization of votes and also left insurgency. The initial steps only included severe repression, without formally banning, on the basis of false pretexts, one of which included Reichstag fire case. In fact, the KPD fought the March 1933 elections, despite severe and brutal repression and fascist attacks, and won 81 seats in the German parliament. However, by that time, the political opposition of the KPD was crushed, the Nazis had consolidated their social base, neutralized the working class completely in the political sense and then these deputies of the KPD were arrested. Following this, the KPD was formally banned and the same fate befell the rest of the political opposition. Why Sukhwinder got confused? Because he *misplagiarized* from Dave Renton! Renton writes:

"Within a week of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, the Communist Party was banned." (Renton, D. 1999. op.cit. p. 37, emphasis ours)

But Sukhwinder by his magic wand of stupidity eliminated the KPD! God knows what grudge Sukhwinder harbours against the KPD!

Though, even Renton is not accurate here (just like on many other issues), as KPD was banned formally and properly only on 6 March 1933. Before that, practically there was a wave of repression against the KPD on the pretext of Reichstag fire. However, there was no formal ban. That is why the KPD was able to fight in the Reichstag elections of March 1933. However, the main point is that Sukhwinder did not understand the difference between 'banned' and 'eliminated', while plagiarizing from Dave Renton! He is the true-blue *kharra-man* (*kharra are the chits of paper that students use for cheating in examinations-author*) of Punjab's left movement!

Moreover, this again reveals his bourgeois-democratic illusions. If a communist party does not have a legal existence (for instance, in conditions like Czarist Russia or any authoritarian regime) it is eliminated, for Sukhwinder! We can only say: such are the wonders of noodle-brained leadership of the 'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' group! Even intelligent plagiarizing is beyond Sukhwinder.

Finally, in the above quote, Sukhwinder repeats his innumerably repeated false claim that the threat of workers' revolution was hovering over the head of German capitalism and Nazis relieved the German bourgeoisie of this threat. Sukhwinder does not understand that the proletarian revolutionary offensive decisively ended in 1923 itself. Fascism began to rise in 1926-27 only. Why does Sukhwinder not understand this? Let us discuss the most important foundational reason for this.

F. The Rise of Fascism, the Origin of Fascism and the Origin and Rise of Sukhwinder's Muddle

Sukhwinder is unable to make a distinction between what Poulantzas has called *the origin of fascism* and *the rise of fascism*. It is essential to make a difference between the two. Most serious scholars of fascism make this distinction clearly, the Marxist ones as well as the non-Marxist ones. In India, too, the RSS existed since the 1920s itself. This existence had two dimensions: *the derivative ideological impact of Italian fascism* and later the Nazism and *the limited social base for reaction in the landlordism and certain sections of the petty-bourgeoisie*. However, the fascist rise in India begins only in the 1980s, because the conditions which lead from fascist origins to fascist rise were absent for a variety of reasons that we will be able to discuss later, when we come to the Indian case. The same is true for the German case. Let us understand this through Poulantzas, because on this point he is correct.

Poulantzas points out:

"The question of the beginning of the growth of fascism should not be confused with the problem of the origins of fascism, a question to which priority has been given in the historiography of fascism. First of all, there is the striking fact that the start of the process is not the 'birth' of fascist organizations, which on the one hand, vegetated for a long time in Germany and Italy before the process really began, and on the other, often existed elsewhere without getting under way at all. Secondly, and most importantly, what is characteristic of the start of the process is the accumulation, or rather the systematic co-ordination of particular characteristics." (Poulantzas. 1979. op.cit., p. 65-66, emphasis ours)

Again, in the specific German context, Poulantzas exemplifies the above distinction:

"The last question we shall deal with here is that of the relation of the National Socialist Party (NSDAP) and national socialism in general to the power bloc and, more especially, to big capital. In fact, the start of the rise of fascism marks a break in this respect, since this relation cannot be reduced to the question of the 'origins' of fascism. In the preceding periods, there had been only armed bands and free corps, directly under the orders of big landowners and of capital, armed bands abandoned by their paymasters as soon as their direct military role was no longer required. The start of the rise of fascism made for a quite different situation. Coinciding with the step at which the power bloc took the offensive the NSDAP became a real mass movement, and effective organizational relations were increasingly established between it and the power bloc." (ibid, p. 108, emphasis ours)

Due to not understanding this basic distinction which is clear to most Marxist theorists and historians who have worked on fascism, Sukhwinder conflates the formation of the fascist bands in Italy and formation of the Nazi party in Germany, with the process of fascist rise. The former refers to *the origins of fascism*, whereas the latter is *the process of fascist rise, which begins only after the political offensive of the proletariat has been decisively defeated*. The Nazis, after coming to power, did not thwart the prospects of a workers' revolution. The prospects of a workers' revolution were decisively weakened in 1919 itself and then they were eliminated by 1923. It was only in 1926-27 that the first phase of the fascist rise begins. In this period, fascism begins to rise as a mass movement of the petty-bourgeoisie and also begins to get considerable support from certain sections of the bourgeoisie. Even Quintin Hoare, who is talking about the Italian case, points out:

"It was in late 1920 and early 1921 that sections of the Italian ruling class – first landowners in Central and Northern Italy, followed closely by powerful industrial and financial forces – began to turn to the hitherto insignificant fascists as an appropriate instrument with which to prosecute their class interests. Perhaps the foremost consideration which led them to do so was an awareness of the extreme weakness of the traditional state institutions and

party-system created in the half-century since national unification. *In Italy, by this time, the revolutionary upsurge had already passed its peak, and the defeats inflicted upon the working class in April and September 1920 had been decisive ones...*" (Hoare, Q. 2015. 'Introduction', *Selections from Political Writings, 1921-26*, Aakar Books, p. ix-x, *emphasis ours*)

The same applies to the German case even more. We have quoted Poulantzas at length above to demonstrate how the rise of fascism in Italy as well as Germany *began* only when the political offensive of the proletariat had subsided and pecuniary logic had become dominant in the working class. Let us see what David Abraham says about this:

"The defeat of the revolutionary working-class impulse had been completed by 1923: local communist uprisings had been suppressed; previous concessions in the realm of wages and hours had been reversed in the context of the Ruhr occupation; the inflation facilitated liquidation of industrial debts; the SPD had rid itself of most of its revolutionaries..." (Abraham, D. 2003. *op.cit.*, p. 47, *emphasis ours*)

In the specific context of the defeat of the revolutionary offensive of the working class in Germany, Poulantzas points out:

"1918-19. Failure of the German revolution and defeat of the Spartakist militants. But given the nature of the confrontation, which did not take the form of a general civil war, the revolutionary forces were not eliminated, and the working class was far from crushed.

...

"March 1920. The Kapp Putsch. The working class and the masses succeeded in defeating this by mobilizing in a general strike called by a united committee of the independent socialists (USPD) and the social-democratic left, joined by the KPD (Spartakusbund). But considering the conditions in which the putsch ended, this can be seen as a relative failure of the working class: in effect, no use was made of its victory.

...

"1921. A series of 'putschist' attempts in Prussia by the KPD, probably falling for police provocations. There was an armed rising at Mansfeld under the leadership of Max Hölz. The insurgents succumbed at the end of a week of heroic struggles. The call for open insurrection from the central committee of the KPD on 16 March, and the call for an insurrectional general strike published in Die Rote Fahne on 28 March, were not followed. This was a debacle for the KPD. In a long letter of 14 August 1921, addressed to the German communists, Lenin wrote that 'hatred of the opportunists of social democracy pushed the German workers into premature insurrections'. After this failure, KPD membership fell from 350,000 to 180,000. "The Comintern, at its Third Congress, passed a severe judgment on this 'putschism'.

"1923. The great turn. The Fourth Congress of the Comintern had already taken place (1922-3); it had interpreted 'stabilization' economically, identifying it with a 'defensive' for the working class, and launched the slogan of 'workers' governments'. Based on this slogan, the KPD, which had never attempted in the meantime to build the rank and file united front, made a volte face towards a right-wing policy under Brandler and Thalheimer; it somehow missed out the united front and went straight into parliamentary alliances between the leaderships. At the KPD's Leipzig Congress in January 1923, the questions of

mass action and the alliance between the working class and poor peasantry were neglected, while 'workers' governments' were formed with the social democrats in Saxony and Thuringia.

"In July 1923, with inflation, the failure of passive resistance in the Ruhr, reactionary government policy (Cuno), etc., there was a situation of open crisis. The influence of the KPD in the working class increased relative to that of social democracy.

"Was it an objectively revolutionary situation? Opinions are divided. For Rosenberg, the situation was similar to that of the spring and summer of 1923, but conditions changed later.

...

"In any case, there was open crisis: it contained certain objective possibilities for mass action and working-class victories, even if these had fallen short of the direct seizure of power.

"The KPD, dragging the German working class with it, capitulated without offering battle... The reversal by the leadership consisted not in that it changed the forms and aims of the struggle, but in that it fell back into the immobility of 1922-3. It was a very serious setback for the KPD: repression clamped down, the party was banned and discredited among the working class, which came out of the experience defeated.

"This defeat heralded in a decisive fashion the step of stabilization: not yet the defensive as such, for again because of the nature of the confrontation, the working class was conserving its strength; moreover, the ban on the KPD and the state of emergency were lifted in 1924. *The revolution had missed its chance for a long time, but for all that, fascism had not yet found its moment. This would not be long delayed.*" (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 168-169, *emphasis ours*)

Here, Poulantzas presents a broadly correct historical account of the defeat of the revolutionary offensive of the working class decisively by the end of 1923. On the other hand, *the fascist rise* begins only after 1926, even though the fascist organization had been present.

Poulantzas points out:

"The start of the rise of fascism, in 1927-8, coincided with the lowest point in their membership, and the 1929 crisis did little to change this. This decline in trade unionism was not associated with any resurgence of political struggle: there was rather a demobilization of the working class." (*ibid*, p. 173)

More:

"If the start of the rise of fascism coincides with the turning point in the defeat of the working class, it must not be forgotten that the proletariat, contrary to what Trotsky thought, does not rise again after this defeat: the bourgeoisie is now engaged in a permanent offensive. The defeat produces neither a situation in which big capital means to make the broad masses participate in the 'normalization' of the regime, nor a situation which would lead it to civil war against the uprisen proletariat." (*ibid*, p. 156)

And finally:

"With the start of the rise of fascism, around 1927, the problem of reforming and centralizing the Reich became crucial. In the context of political crisis and failing

hegemony, the provincial apparatuses operated more and more as 'autonomous' centres of State power for different classes and class fractions." (*ibid*, p. 339)

Therefore, it was not the hovering danger of proletarian revolution "which was continuously circling over" the German bourgeoisie throughout the 1920s and early-1930s, which the Nazis liberated it from! Rather, it is the continuously hovering cloud of dimwittedness over the head of Sukhwinder, which leads him to nonsensical formulations unabatedly.

The fact is that the threat of the proletarian revolution or even its revolutionary offensive have long been subsided when the fascist rise in Germany began. It was more due to the particular type of crisis which leads to fascism: not the equilibrium crisis, where the dominant classes are faced with the threat of revolution, but a political crisis reflected in the crisis of hegemony within the 'power bloc' of the dominant classes, where no fraction is able to establish its political hegemony within the 'power bloc' to collectivize the long-term general political interests of the bourgeoisie and ensure a mass base for the regime, as we have discussed time and again in this essay. It was precisely this crisis which led to the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany. However, due to total and utter ignorance of history as well as theory, Sukhwinder keeps broadcasting sheer inanities with the delusions of profoundness.

The origin of this particular mess created in the dizzy head of editor of 'Pratibaddh' is the failure to make a distinction between the *origins of fascism* and the *rise of fascism*. Had Sukhwinder even read an authoritative bourgeois textbook of German history, he would have understood this.

G. *Once Again on the Question of Economism: The Real and Not-So-Nominal Blunders of Sukhwinder*

We have seen earlier in the essay, how Sukhwinder reduced economism to fighting only for "trivial economic demands". The readers might have suspected that it might have been a slip of pen. Even we had suspected that when we read his essay for the first time. However, as we moved on, we found Sukhwinder standing at every turn with reminding us that he does not commit slips! He only commits blunders! Let us see.

Sukhwinder argues that the error of economism is basically limiting the working class to "nominal economic achievements":

"Like Italy, in Germany too, surely social democracy's treachery, (which we have already described briefly and which we shall discuss more further on) *its economistic reformist practice (meaning entangling the working class in the struggle for nominal economic achievements, not allowing the consciousness of working class to rise above economic achievements)* is responsible but the mistakes of communist party too played its role in it. (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 37, *emphasis ours*)

So, had the social-democracy fought not simply for "nominal economic achievements" but *real economic achievements* that would not have been economism for Sukhwinder! Editor of 'Pratibaddh' reveals his crude and vulgar understanding of economism repeatedly in this essay. We have already presented Lenin's views on economism above. The theoretical crux of economism is the *inability to raise the political question*.

Moreover, even if the working class "rises above economic achievements", it does not necessarily mean a *class political consciousness* for Lenin. It might lead to some kind of syndicalism, anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism, too, which *in essence* are finer varieties of economism itself. However, these tendencies do not necessarily limit themselves to economic achievements only. The *class political consciousness* is the highest stage of the development of the class consciousness of the working class, which begins with the realization of the working class that it has been born; the next step is seeing, not the machines, but the employers as the

enemy; subsequently, seeing the *class of the employers* as the enemy; then, seeing *the state* not as an impartial third actor, but as a representative of the class of capitalists; and finally, understanding that to smash the state, the vanguard revolutionary party of the proletariat is required; this final stage is the stage of what Lenin called 'party consciousness' (see, for instance, among other writings, 'Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution' in Volume 15 of the *Collected Works of Lenin*). It is precisely by reaching this stage, *in the very process of struggle against various forms of economism*, that the working class can rise above the short-term, particular, economic interests and reach the level of the consciousness of the long-term, general, political interests. Without this, the working class cannot constitute itself as a *political class, the proletariat, and emerge as the leader of the masses*. It goes without saying that the masses includes the masses of the working class, too, besides those of working peasants, lower and medium middle classes, etc. and also that this process is impossible without the agency of the vanguard party, which is nothing but the 'embodiment of the proletarian ideology' and 'advanced detachment of the proletariat' and itself emerges in the proletarian struggle against various alien bourgeois ideologies. However, for Sukhwinder, all the foundational elements of the proletariat becoming a political class are reduced to "rising above economic achievements"! A crude and vulgar economic critique of economism!

Therefore, economism can assume variety of forms: workerism, productivism, trade-unionism, syndicalism, anarcho-syndicalism, etc. One particular form is to trap the working-class movement in the round-about of the pecuniary logic of trade-unionism based on wage gains and other economic benefits. It is not about "trivial" or significant economic gains, it is not about "nominal" or real economic achievements, as Sukhwinder thinks. Unbelievably poor understanding for a person who is leader of a group! Where can such leadership lead to? The abyss of idiocy, opportunism, national chauvinism, linguistic identitarianism, class capitulationism and class collaborationism! The sensible and well-read communists of Punjab need to think about this particular Trot-Bundist, and now we can safely say, a reformist and social-democratic tendency, as it will prove to be and is indeed proving harmful to the revolutionary left movement of Punjab, in general.

H. Sukhwinder's Not-So-Secret Love for Social-Democracy at Full Display: Fascism, Social-Fascism, the KPD, the SPD and Besotted Editor Sa'ab

Sukhwinder continues his assault on Marxism-Leninism and history:

"Like the communist party of Italy, the communist party of Germany too could not understand the real character of fascism and underestimated its threat. *Instead of fascism, it continued to consider social democracy as its true enemy*. It primarily targeted it (social democracy) in its attacks. The 'social fascism' theses adopted by Comintern in 1929, *which mislabeled social democracy as fascist*, too played its role in this. *In Germany the communist party could not form a united front with social democracy and other anti-fascist forces against the rising tide of fascism. One of the reasons for this was also the fact that social democratic party too was unwilling to form a united front with communists. But the primary cause for this was the attitude of communist party towards social democracy (considering it as the primary enemy instead of fascism). Even though social democracy was not prepared to forge a united front with communists, still the attitude adopted by communist party should have been that if making an anti-fascist front with it*. The social democratic party had a larger basis in the workers of Germany. This entire basis could not have been in agreement with the capitulationist line of social democratic party. The continued appeals for forging a united front would have affected its social basis. Either this party would have been forced to construct a united front or it would have suffered a split and a section of it would have joined the united front. *This could not materialise due to*

Communist party of Germany's incorrect understanding of fascism, its left sectarian line." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 37-38, *emphasis ours*)

This entire paragraph reeks of ignorance of history and resorts to childish over-simplifications in order to save the social-democracy from the main culpability in the rise of fascism and rather puts it on the KPD, which did share the responsibility due to its right-opportunism, its "left" deviationism as well as its economism and complete lack of massline. It was not simple "left"-sectarian mistake that the KPD committed, as fact that Sukhwinder would have realized and known had he read even a single Marxist work on this question. However, Sukhwinder presents bizarre arguments to save his dear ones, the social-democrats. Let us elaborate point-by-point.

First of all, the claim that the KPD considered "social-democracy as its true enemy and not fascism" is not only theoretically incorrect but also historically incorrect.

First of all, before 1928, the Comintern and, following it in a poor fashion, the KPD did try to link the social-democracy and fascism, a mistake about which we have written above, but the line of social-democracy as the *principal enemy* became dominant only after 1928 and especially in the case of KPD. Before 1928, in fact, the KPD formed provincial governments in alliance with the SPD in Saxony and Thuringia and was open to form a workers' government at the national level, too, because the Fourth Congress of the Comintern prescribed such a line, despite the beginning of theoretical identification of social-democracy with fascism, as its other side. Therefore, representation of the entire period from the Third Congress onwards, or even the Fourth Congress onwards, as one homogeneous period of "left" sectarianism by Sukhwinder, reveals beyond doubt his illiteracy about the history of the Comintern as well as the KPD and its practice.

Secondly, during the period of ultra-left deviation since 1928, the KPD treated social-democracy as its *main enemy* not the *true enemy*, and fascism as the secondary one, as the former collaborated with the reactionary forces and fed in to the fascist rise. Fascism as well as social-fascism (social-democracy) were considered *true enemy*, though the KPD failed to understand the distinction between the two different kinds of representatives of the bourgeoisie and considered social-fascism as its principal enemy, as it thought that without defeating social-fascists, an effective fight against fascism was impossible. Besides, the views represented within Comintern vacillated from the tendency of liquidating the difference between fascism and social-fascism (since the bourgeoisie itself was becoming fascistic in general in the ongoing phase imperialism in crisis according to the analysis of the Comintern) and the tendency to see a difference, but considering the two as 'two cards' that the bourgeoisie could play in the conjuncture of crisis. Moreover, this line became dominant only after 1928 till 1933. However, Sukhwinder presents this line as the general line of the KPD throughout the 1920s, which was finally corrected by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern!

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern did talk about the social-democracy in terms which can be called some kind of equating of fascism and social-democracy as equally dangerous for the working-class movement. However, since 1924 till 1927-28, the KPD was suffering from a serious *right deviation*, where instead of forming grass-root alliances with the mass of workers in the social-democratic party and its unions, the KPD only formed *electoral alliances* with the SPD at the leadership level, according to its own understanding of the Comintern line of 'workers' government'. This was the period of right deviation where there was no question of treating social-democracy as the principal enemy. It was only since the Sixth Congress that the KPD *in practice* trained its guns mainly on the social-democracy for some time. However, this tendency weakened gradually after the rise of the authoritarian governments immediately before Hitler's ascension to power. Sukhwinder misses all these important elements which are indispensable to understand the mistakes of the KPD. In order to clear the fog created by editor of 'Pratibadhh', we would require to dig in the details of history and theory for a little bit.

First of all, let us deal with the basic problem with the theory of 'social-fascism' as presented by the Comintern. Poulantzas points to the crux of the error:

"There can be no question about the role of social democracy, which is precisely to mislead the masses and hold back the revolution. *But it is evident that it did not and cannot fulfil this function in the same way as the fascist party, which is the only strict point of reference for an examination of the theory of social fascism.* In fact 'practices' or 'methods' do not exist in a void, but in relation to the apparatuses which support them: their nature is governed by that of the apparatus. *Social democracy and fascism do not fulfil this role in the same way, either in the repression of the working class (in the strong sense), or as far as ideological or organizational forms are concerned.*

"Taking all these considerations into account, then not only do social democracy and the fascist party not 'supplement each other', in Stalin's terms: they negate each other'. *It is absolutely impossible for them to occupy the same place in the same form of State.*" (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 153-54, *emphasis ours*)

This was the foundation of the mistake of the theory of 'social-fascism' as presented by the Comintern in the late-1920s.

Within the Comintern itself, as Poulantzas points out (p. 148-49), there were *two slightly different versions of the theory of social-fascism.*

One directly identified it with fascism. The other saw fascism and social-fascism as two different alternatives that the bourgeoisie has in the same conjuncture, which meant to say that in the same type of political conjuncture, the bourgeoisie could play either the card of fascism or the card of social-democracy. This, too, was incorrect and failed to understand the peculiarity of fascism, as Poulantzas argues, but also the peculiarity of social-democracy. However, this much is true that the other variant did not directly identify fascism with social-fascism. Poulantzas elaborates on the mistake of the second version of the theory:

"Considered now from the point of view of the strategy of the bourgeoisie, which at a given moment in time would play *either the social-democratic card or the fascist card*, or even both at once, the theory of social fascism is based on a significant mistake about the rise of fascism and its periodization into steps and turns, depending on the real relation of forces in the class struggle. It is really no accident that this conception of social fascism, and the identification of the 'parliamentary-democratic' form of State with the fascist State, was accompanied by a linear conception of the 'organic process' which entirely ignored the problem of the political crisis and the rise of fascism.

"What in fact happens is that the bourgeoisie plays the card of 'class collaboration', to put it that way, at the end of the period of stabilization and the beginning of the rise of fascism. This card can be played either with social democracy in power (the German case), or via bourgeois political parties without the direct collaboration of social democracy. In other words, the move coincides with the turning point in the process of working-class defeat, and with the upturn of the bourgeoisie's offensive." (*ibid*, p. 154, *emphasis ours*)

Sukhwinder also does not understand that the policy of the Comintern itself was not simply a story of "left" sectarian deviation since the Fourth Congress or the Fifth Congress. While in words, there were attempts to identify fascism with social-fascism in theory, as we have shown above, in practice, the alternating currents of (not only) "left" deviation as well as right opportunism continued. Poulantzas points out:

“The theses on the united front flowed directly from the Leninist slogan, ‘To the masses’; but with the Fourth Congress and Comintern policy in the period straight after it, *there was a change to the slogan of workers’ governments (Arbeiterregierungen), or governments of alliance between communists and social democrats*, with definite objectives: ‘Such a workers’ government is only possible if it is born out of the struggle of the masses, is supported by workers’ bodies which are capable of fighting ... The overriding tasks of the workers’ government must be to arm the proletariat, to disarm bourgeois, counterrevolutionary organizations ... Even a workers’ government which is created by the turn of events in parliament, which is therefore purely parliamentary in origin, may provide the occasion for invigorating the revolutionary labour movement. It is obvious that the formation of a real workers’ government which pursues a revolutionary policy, must lead to a bitter struggle, and eventually to a civil war with the bourgeoisie.’” (*ibid*, p. 158, *emphasis ours*)

Thus, the seeds of a right-deviationist negation of Leninist line of ‘united front from below’ were present since the Fourth Congress itself; Leninist line meant the winning over of the masses of workers and working people, including the ones who were members of social-democratic and other organizations. Instead, the policy of forming leadership-level alliances with the social-democrats was applied and the line of winning over the masses of workers in social-democratic organizations was abandoned by the KPD. The Fifth Congress, then, rejected the line of workers’ governments as an intermediate step towards the proletarian power. But the Fifth Plenum of the Comintern again prescribed the line of maintaining contacts with the social-democrats at “the highest levels” of the leadership. Poulantzas writes:

“The Fifth Congress made an ‘ultra-left’ turn, neglecting ‘stabilization’ and changing the position on workers’ governments. While the Fourth Congress had seen these as a ‘step’ towards the dictatorship of the proletariat through revolution, the Fifth Congress – the Congress of ‘Bolshevization’ – identified them with the dictatorship of the proletariat, implying that they could not come as a particular step before revolution. This amounted in practice to a rejection of the theory of workers’ governments.

...

“The Fifth Plenum (1925), accepting stabilization, took up once again the policy of contact at the highest levels, and the Comintern carried on an intense struggle against the left party leaders who had attended the Fifth Congress.” (*ibid*, p. 159)

The Sixth Congress settled this “left”-right vacillation decisively in favour of ultra-left deviation. However, the KPD implemented it in even more ultra-left way because the Sixth Congress in principle did talk about rank-and-file united front of the working class, even while maintaining that social-democracy is the main enemy because in order to defeat fascism, it must first be defeated. Poulantzas opines:

“With the Comintern’s Sixth Congress (1928), the decisive turn took place. Even though in Germany the defensive step of the workers’ movement had just begun, with the start of the rise of fascism, the end of ‘stabilization’ was defined, in ‘economist catastrophist’ terms, as a step of proletarian offensive and imminent revolution: the ‘offensive strategy’ was openly proclaimed. The theory of social fascism was put forward, and in the strategy of alliances a turn was made to ‘class against class’ and the ‘rank and file united front’.

“The Third Congress had also spoken of a rank and file united front, *but the difference here lay in the concrete policies of the Comintern and the KPD towards social democracy and the masses supporting the social-democratic organizations:*

‘There can clearly be no unity with the social fascists.’ ‘The social fascists know that for us no collaboration is possible ... No communist shares the illusion that fascism can be fought with the aid of social fascism’. This line was by no means applied only to the leaders of the socialist party: ‘Hunt the social fascists from their posts in the factories and the unions’; ‘Hunt the little social fascists from the factories, the employment exchanges, the apprentices’ schools’; ‘Strike at the social fascists in the schools and the recreation grounds’. The ‘left’ wing of social democracy was moreover considered the most dangerous enemy: ‘The new rising tide of the revolutionary labour movement ... urgently confronts the Comintern and the sections with special acuteness with the task of decisively intensifying the struggle against social democracy, and especially against its ‘left’ wing as the most dangerous enemy of communism in the labour movement and the main obstacle to the growth of militant activities of the mass of workers.’ As for the social-democratic masses, Thälmann has a revealing way of putting it: ‘As long as they are not delivered from the influence of the social fascists, these millions of workers (of the German Social-Democratic Party and its associated trade unions) are lost to the anti-fascist struggle.’

“This strategy was accompanied by the concept of *the main enemy being not fascism but social democracy, the defeat of which was the precondition, even chronologically, of a victory over fascism...*” (*ibid*, p. 159-60, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas continues:

“This orientation led to disastrous results. *But it would be quite wrong to think that behind this radical terminology, the KPD was carrying out an intransigent, if sectarian, struggle against fascism, and for the revolution.* Not that it failed to carry out the implacable struggle it advocated against social democracy: *the problem was that it did nothing but that.*”

“In fact, something very important gradually happened to the Comintern during this very period, something identifiable precisely in the case of Germany, which acted as the ‘test’ case for Comintern strategy. *Even the distinctive features of the ‘left-right’ turns then began to be confused, in the sense that certain elements which were to be very much in evidence at the Seventh Congress (the Dimitrov one), were already developing in the period 1928–35. In other words, the relationship of the Sixth and Seventh Congresses was quite different from the classic, simple ‘swing’ from left opportunism to right opportunism, and rather one of two diametrically opposed expressions of the same wrong general line...*” (*ibid*, p. 161, *emphasis ours*)

Then what was the mistake of the KPD? Not simply “left” deviationism all the way from 1920-21 to 1935, as Sukhwinder thinks. It was *a constant vacillation between the right opportunist line and the “left” and ultra-left line, due to the lack of a correct political line, which in turn was owing to the dominance of economism, social-democratic ideology within the ranks of the KPD and most importantly the absence of massline, which Lenin had argued for in his slogan of ‘to the masses’ in the Third Congress of the Comintern.* Poulantzas is broadly correct when he says:

“I shall now turn to the policy of the KPD during the rise of fascism. Its policy was dictated, amongst other things, by an incorrect understanding of the period (as one of revolutionary working-class offensive) and by an under-estimation of the fascist danger. The policy as a whole was ‘ultra-left’ only in appearance. I have given my views above about the description of the Sixth Congress as ‘ultra-left’, and these considerations are equally applicable to KPD policy, taken as a whole. This does not mean that the KPD’s specific policies did not have certain real ‘ultra-left’ aspects during this period.” (*ibid*, p. 180-81)

What was the main reason that the KPD could not form an effective united front against fascism? Sukhwinder thinks that it was KPD's refusal to form party-to-party alliance with the SPD; he argues that even if SPD was not willing to form the alliance with the KPD, in order to win over the masses in the SPD and effect a split in the SPD, the KPD should have continued to appeal the SPD for party-to-party alliance against fascism. *Thus, the winning over of the masses of the SPD and its trade unions was possible only through approaching and appealing the leadership of the SPD for alliance! This is what Poulantzas has called conflating the class with the party. And this was precisely the mistake that KPD had been committing between 1924 and 1928, as a result of non-implementation of the policy of the 'united front from below'!*

Poulantzas points out that the real mistake was, in fact, *not approaching the masses of the working class in the social-democratic organizations directly* and winning them over against fascism. It was not the refusal of the KPD to capitulate to the SPD at the leadership level, as Sukhwinder demands! The refusal to form even *particular anti-fascist alliance* (which is different from forming *general anti-fascist front*), too, was a mistake committed because the policy of 'united front from below' was not implemented as this policy *did include* issue-based particular anti-fascist alliances with the social-democrats. This mistake stemmed from mistaking social-democracy as the principal enemy. However, the principal mistake was non-implementation of the line of 'united front from below' to win over the masses of workers in all kinds of organizations, including the social-democratic mass organizations. Poulantzas has succinctly summarized this mistake:

"As far as the line itself is concerned, the inclusive designation of social democracy and the social-democratic trade unions as social fascist and as the main enemy, bore a heavy responsibility for the failure of the united front. This was not so much because of the refusal of all contact between the leaderships, and even between the secondary ranks; it was particularly because of the policy towards the social-democratic masses, considered 'lost' as long as they were under the influence of social democracy." (ibid, p. 182, emphasis ours)

What Poulantzas is arguing here is remarkably true. The mistake was not the policy of united front of the working class, as Sukhwinder thinks; in fact, the policy stemmed directly from the Leninist directive to implement the massline: 'to the masses'. This policy was dialectical as it had *four basic elements*: *one*, the maintenance of proletarian independence to carry out propaganda campaigns exposing the role of social-democracy; *two*, formation of issue-based particular alliances with the social-democracy; *three*, most importantly, making a distinction between the social-democratic party and its mass organizations, in other words, the social-democratic leadership and the masses in the social-democratic organizations; and therefore, the principal emphasis was to be on the winning over of the masses of the working class in all kinds of mass organizations and mobilizing them into anti-fascist united fronts from below; and *four*, the independent political work of the communists among the masses of petty-bourgeoisie, including the peasant masses. This policy in its Leninist theoretical form was perfectly correct and capable of resisting the fascist onslaught; however, due to the lack of comprehension of this policy, its non-implementation and the pendulum like motion of "left"-right deviation from the dialectical centre of this policy, the revolutionary communist movement faced a disaster in the face of rising tide of fascism.

In fact, the exposure of the social-democrats, too, was not done by the KPD through revolutionary propaganda among the masses of workers in all organizations. Here, too, the massline was absent. The exposure was only targeted at a higher level, which totally neglected the masses, which was reflected in the growing ideological and political influence of the social-democrats in the masses. Even Dimitrov partially understood this failure of the KPD. Poulantzas points out:

"Even apart from the fact that the KPD's main activity was still directed against social democracy, this activity was conceived of as a struggle between

'organizations', not as a mass struggle on a mass line. What really happened to the rank and file united front? The remarkable thing, as Dimitrov was correctly to recall, was that *nowhere did the KPD set up specific forms of rank and file united front organizations, which as organizations outside the party could cement the union by steps, combining economic and political struggle, with politics in command.* The only form of rank and file struggle the KPD accepted was trade-union struggle through the trade-union opposition, the RGO. The RGO was to be the spearhead of the rank and file united front, in the now all but defunct 'factory committees'.

"Nothing came of it: firstly, because of the policy towards workers in social-democratic unions; secondly, and most importantly, because the RGO tried to cut out the social democrats simply by putting in higher claims, while the party leadership proclaimed, from on high, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Of course, trade unions have a part to play, but the crux of the matter was that, because of the KPD's lack both of specific rank and file united front organizations, and of a mass line, the RGO itself constantly ended up just fighting for rather higher wage increases than the social democrats managed to obtain through a policy of class collaboration." (*ibid*, p. 182-83, *emphasis ours*)

Beneath the ultra-left phraseology of the KPD, were other serious right opportunist errors, which included *a policy of legalism and quietism* in fighting against fascists on the streets, as well as the non-Bolshevik organizational line of the party, with virtually no underground structure (see Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 185-87).

In fact, after the Fourth Congress of Comintern and the right turn introduced by it, the KPD, which never really attempted to form rank-and-file united fronts, now capitulated to even more right and eagerly formed parliamentary alliances with SPD and even formed governments in Saxony and Thuringia, without even attempting to form rank-and-file united front of the masses of workers. Poulantzas remarks:

"The Fourth Congress of the Comintern had already taken place (1922-3); it had interpreted 'stabilization' economically, identifying it with a 'defensive' for the working class, and launched the slogan of 'workers' governments'. Based on this slogan, the KPD, which had never attempted in the meantime to build the rank and file united front, made a volte face towards a right-wing policy under Brandler and Thalheimer; it somehow missed out the united front and went straight into parliamentary alliances between the leaderships. At the KPD's Leipzig Congress in January 1923, the questions of mass action and the alliance between the working class and poor peasantry were neglected, *while 'workers' governments' were formed with the social democrats in Saxony and Thuringia.*" (*ibid*, p. 169, *emphasis ours*)

We have quoted Poulantzas at length because he has captured the right-"left" currents of deviations within the KPD since 1921 to 1933, better than any other theorist. Moreover, without quoting him in a detailed fashion it was difficult to reveal the shameful ignorance of the editor of 'Pratibaddh' who thinks that KPD was a victim of the "left" deviation all the way, whereas the story is completely different.

Moreover, Sukhwinder has failed to grasp the crux of error in KPD's failure to form an anti-fascist united front. It was not the failure/refusal of the KPD to capitulate to the SPD and sit in its lap by forming mere leadership-to-leadership party alliances, as Sukhwinder would have liked, by repeatedly calling for forming a united front despite the refusal of the SPD to do so; on the contrary, there was no question of forming a *general anti-fascist front* under the Leninist line of 'united front from below'; at the time, formation of *particular anti-fascist front* (that is, issue-based alliances) was recommended by the Leninist line of 'united front from below'. The

principal mistake was the failure of the KPD to approach and win-over the masses of the workers, especially in the social-democratic trade unions and other mass organizations and rejected this entire mass as being, in the words of Thälmann, lost to the cause of communism; and secondary mistake was the refusal to form *particular anti-fascist alliance* with the social-democrats and other forces which were anti-fascist. Sukhwinder is hell-bent upon anachronistically force the KPD to capitulate to the extreme-right from its “left” deviationism!

Now let us come to the next question: *who bears the main responsibility in the failure of formation of an anti-fascist united front, the SPD or the KPD?* Sukhwinder believes that even though the SPD was unwilling to form such an alliance and refusing to do so, the main culprit was the KPD. Is that true? No. Notwithstanding the “left” mistakes of the KPD, the SPD appears to be the main culprit.

First of all, it must not be forgotten that whenever there was a real threat of proletarian revolution or the rise of the KPD in Germany, till 1923 arrived, when the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat was completely neutralized, *the SPD not simply colluded with the arch-reactionary forces of the bourgeoisie behind the doors; in fact, the SPD directly recruited, helped and gave all support to the extreme-right to suppress and kill revolutionary communists (whatever their deviations might be!)*. The first example was the assassinations of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht by the right-wing armed groups, like *Freikorps*. Sukhwinder lays the blame completely on “the reactionary forces” alone for the martyrdom of these great leaders of the proletariat. However, here, too, either he does not know the history or he is intentionally protecting the social-democrats. What had happened? It was the social-democratic defence minister Gustav Noske who actually recruited the right-wing militia to kill Rosa and Liebknecht. Renton writes:

“Many of the leading Nazis had been members of the Freikorps, demobilised patriotic soldiers and middle-class youth assembled by the Social Democratic Defence Minister, Gustav Noske, to end the November revolution. The Freikorps were responsible for the murders of prominent Communists, including Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and almost seized power during the attempted Kapp putsch.” (Renton, D. 1999. *Fascism: Theory and Practice*, Pluto Press, p. 34)

Today, most of the revolutionary communists of the world know how social-democracy was directly responsible for the murders of Rosa and Liebknecht. The likes of Noske represented the leadership of SPD that considered communists as greater danger than the fascists:

“Firstly, the leadership: *apart from leaders of the kind of Noske and Severing, who well deserved their sinister reputation among the working class, and who always openly considered Nazism the lesser evil to ‘Bolshevism’, there was the centre, which went into exile after Hitler’s seizure of power, and the ‘left’*. The latter, represented in particular by Rosenfeld and Seydwitz, had for a long time been favourable to a united front with the communists. Certain left elements were to split in 1931 to create the Socialist Workers’ Party (SAP)” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 180)

It goes without saying that even in the “left” and ultra-left deviationist phase of the KPD, there was a centrist and “right” faction within the KPD which wanted an alliance with the SPD. However, due to the dominance of the “left” faction particularly due to the “left” line of the Comintern since the Sixth Congress, this faction did not have its say.

Poulantzas also points out, which can be seen as a rebuke to the right-wing positions of the likes of Sukhwinder:

“In conclusion, SPD policy was faithful to its counter-revolutionary nature and function. There was no actual collusion between social democracy and fascism; throughout the rise of fascism, it still tried in its own way to defend and preserve

the 'economic interests' of the working class, which it had to do to keep its representational base in the class. *None the less, it certainly bears the greatest share of responsibility for fascism's coming to power.*" (*ibid*, p. 180, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas makes the same argument elsewhere in the same book (p. 156).

Now let us focus on the very possibilities of formation of a particular anti-fascist united front during the fascist rise in Germany and who was principally responsible for the waste of these possibilities. Kurt Gossweiler has presented a relatively more balanced analysis of this question. Gossweiler points out that the first opportunity to form a broad united front was lost after the SPD's victory in 1928 elections and formation of Müller government. The principal task at that time was breaking the back of junkerdom by introducing certain radical land reforms. However, the SPD government shied away from its own program (which, on this particular question, was shared by the KPD). Gossweiler argues:

"Thus a program aimed at dividing up the Junker landed estates could have been a point of departure for creating a powerful, campaigning democratic front alongside it, thereby seriously weakening the most reactionary wing or the ruling elite.

"The principal force of such a front could only be the working-class movement. A commensurate initiative along these lines would have had the chance to bring about a decisive shift in the balance of power in favor of bolstering up and consolidating the democratic content of the Weimar Republic. *If the SPD and the allied Free Trade Unions had taken such an initiative following the overwhelming social-democratic electoral success in May 1928, this would most probably have resulted in a series of positive effects.*

"The first and most important commensurate outcome would have been the prevention of the disastrous further division of the working-class movement. *The unity of action so aptly displayed during the expropriation campaign of the princes would have been given new impetus in the struggle for agrarian reform.* As long as the Weimar Republic existed, even though its formation did not completely reflect the overall demands of the German Communist party (KPD), *the party had backed every real move in defense of democracy notwithstanding the fact that the Communist party never once relinquished its goal, namely the aim of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg to establish a socialist German republic. Moreover, the Communist party would never have hesitated to back to the hilt any initiative for the elimination of the hotbed of reaction, namely the East Elbe Junkerdom as, indeed, such action would have been fully consistent with the agrarian program of the KPD.*" (Gossweiler, K. 2003. *op.cit.*, p.157-58, *emphasis ours*)

Gossweiler argues that this would have won over the peasantry to the side of anti-fascist resistance and would have exacerbated the political crisis of the bourgeoisie by widening the cleavage between the agrarian bourgeoisie on the one hand and the industrial-financial bourgeoisie on the other:

"...by engaging in this struggle, the working-class movement would have proved itself the most resolute advocate of peasant interests and, thereby, real possibilities would have emerged for dismembering the grip of the most reactionary forces on the land.

"Fourth, if such policies had been pursued, severe restrictions and obstacles would have been imposed, in particular, on the possibility of fascism's developing into a mass movement. Fascism would have been denied one of its main arguments (namely, that Marxism in the guise of the SPD ruined the middle

classes and the peasantry) and, moreover, would have faced a united working-class movement. As a result, fascism would not have found itself in a position of merely having to combat a powerless, divided working-class movement, engaged in constant bickering.

"Fifth, such an attack on the Junkers would have brought out the differences within the big bourgeoisie and weakened - for both political and economic reasons - that element within the heavy-industry faction which tended to form coalitions with the Junkers and was the major enemy of the Weimar Republic." (*ibid*, p. 158)

However, the SPD committed its major betrayal and destroyed the possibility of formation of a *particular* united front against fascism and reaction, which the KPD was ready to support:

"However, as is known after its electoral gains and victory, German social democracy took no initiative whatsoever in implementing a program to promote and consolidate democracy. Moreover, the SPD did not even revert to its own agrarian program, the draft of which, adopted on January 12, 1927, proclaims that for reasons of both production and population politics the SPD advocates a fundamental change in basic property ownership conditions and, therefore, a "planned land reform."" (*ibid*, p. 159, *emphasis ours*)

Gossweiler points out:

"In reality, SPD policies were not geared to changes and reforms but solely to retaining what had been achieved through the alliance with that wing of the big bourgeoisie which had displayed a willingness to enter into an alliance with social democracy on conditions decreed by the big bourgeoisie. This had been succinctly expounded by Paul Silverberg, who, on September 4, 1926, when addressing the members' meeting of the RDI, declared that social democracy should "return to reality" and should "renounce radical doctrinarism along with the ever destructive never constructive policy of the streets and force" and cooperate in a responsible manner "with the employers and under their direction."" (*ibid*, p. 159, *emphasis ours*)

The words of Silverberg might encourage the readers to recall the words of Buddhadeb Bhattacharjea of CPM, when he was the chief minister of West Bengal. He uttered almost the same words regarding "abandoning street strategy" and the desirability of labour and capital walking hand-in-hand. Anyway, the consequences of this betrayal were disastrous, even for the SPD. Gossweiler argues:

"In practice this meant that the Hermann Müller government, in defiance of the SPD's electoral promises, had to follow (and indeed followed) the basic policies of the preceding bourgeois bloc parties, that is, to step up the struggle against the Communist party and to continue the armaments program of German imperialism. This led to the Bloody May of 1929 with the subsequent banning of the Red Front Union (while the fascist SA and SS terror groupings could legally continue to exist!) and to the decision to build the armored cruiser, a project that was clearly rejected prior to the elections. Basically, this was a suicidal policy. It even more profoundly widened the divisions within the working-class movement, weakened the reputation and standing of social democracy with large segments of the population, undermined the confidence SPD members had in their own party, and thereby decidedly weakened the entire left. The counterforces on the right, however, in particular the Nazi fascists, gained ground as a direct consequence. Adhering to a policy that renounced positive political change was bound to pave the way for successive decline: from a policy that defended the status quo to a

policy that tolerated the "lesser evil" to the final capitulation to the greatest evil without even a semblance of a fight." (ibid, p. 159-60, emphasis ours)

Gossweiler has here perfectly demonstrated the main culpability of the SPD in the failure to form a united front against fascism, to which, on a particular issue of land reforms, the KPD was also ready. Moreover, Gossweiler has also described in a more-or-less correct fashion in the overall culpability of the social-democracy in the demobilization of the working class and resultant rise of fascism, which was resistible but became 'irresistible' in principal due to the betrayal of the social-democracy.

There is no denying the fact that the KPD did commit suicidal "left" blunders (as well as right blunders). However, they did not consist in particular in their refusal to capitulate to the SPD, as Sukhwinder would have wanted them to do, but in the failure to forge *particular* anti-fascist alliances with the SPD (the equal responsibility of which lies with the SPD, too) and *the failure to implement the line of the united front from below: which would have meant approaching the masses of workers in social-democratic organizations and winning them over to the communist cause of anti-fascism.* It was precisely this policy which would have caused a rift and split within the SPD (which did actually happen when SAP was formed, but it would have been a much bigger split) rather than simple 'appeals to the leadership of the SPD for a united front' as Sukhwinder thinks. This again is tantamount to conflating *the class* with *the party*. The Comintern, too, understood this fact by the end of 1938, as we shall see.

After the above excerpt, Sukhwinder has foolishly equated the Second United Front with the KMT formed by the CPC under the leadership of Mao with the line of 'the popular front'. We have dealt with this utter idiocy in sufficient detail above. The readers can refer to that.

In the next subhead, we will demonstrate in detail, first, how the line of the 'popular front' led to disastrous outcomes for communists everywhere and failed miserably in practice in Europe and elsewhere; second, we will show that Dimitrov and the rest of the Comintern itself abandoned this line after the collapse of the 'popular front' in France and elsewhere due to the treachery and betrayal of the social-democrats; third, we will show that the Comintern itself reverted to the Leninist policy of 'united front from below' and asked the revolutionary communists to train their guns on social-democratism, in order to win the masses of working class under the social-democratic influence to their side, to be able to form a truly Leninist 'united front from below'; and four, the Comintern tacitly accepted that the 'popoular frontism' preached by the Seventh Congress did not work in practice. The problem with Sukhwinder is that he fragmentarily read Dimitrov's work on the 'popular front', but did not go through the documents of the Comintern between 1935 and 1943. Had he read that, he would not have made this preposterous claim that the policy of the 'popular front' is the universal policy against fascism and it is applicable even today. He would have known, and thus saved himself from embarrassment, that even the Comintern had abandoned this policy of the 'popular front' after its miserable failure. Today being 'popular frontist' is nothing short of being a reformist, social-democrat of the worst kind, a class collaborationist and a class capitulationist. We will demonstrate all these things with evidence from the documents of the Comintern itself, besides other sources.