

'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' Group's Understanding of Fascism

A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders

(Part – V)

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14. Sukhwinder on Comintern's Struggle Against Fascism: A Découpage of Historical Ignorance, Political Illiteracy and Dishonest Omissions

Sukhwinder's account of Comintern's evolving strategy and tactics of the united front against fascism reveals following things:

one, Sukhwinder has not read the documents of the Comintern, especially since the Third Congress;

two, he does not understand the whole period of 'united front from below', that is, 1921 to 1933-34 and considers this as one homogeneous period;

three, he omits all the details regarding the positions taken by the Comintern at different points of time, which do not fit his own idiocy;

four, he does not know the real history of the application of the line of the 'popular front' which has been recorded in the documents of the Comintern itself from 1935 to 1943;

five, he has read, at most, certain portions of Dimitrov theses, which he has reproduced and does not know the twists and turns through which the Comintern ended up at the right-deviation of the 'popular front';

six, due to his ignorance of the fact that the Comintern itself began to abandon the policy of the 'popular front' from November 1938 itself and abandoned it decisively in favour of returning to the policy of 'united front from below' by 1939, Sukhwinder with the delusion of profundity claims that the policy of the 'popular front' is the general, universal policy of resistance against fascism and it applies even today.

We will demonstrate it point-by-point in what follows and will quote copiously from the documents of the Comintern to acquaint the readers with the "left"-right vacillations in the application of the policy of the 'united front from below' and how and in what conditions the shift to the right-deviation of popular-frontism happened and how the Comintern leadership began to implement a corrective from November 1938 onwards, that is, after the decisive failures of popular-frontism in Spain as well as France. We will start with Sukhwinder's good old dishonesty in quoting sources selectively and inaccurately. Let us begin.

A. *How Sukhwinder Transformed Clara Zetkin into an Ordinary Liberal*

Sukhwinder starts his account of Comintern's struggle against fascism and its policy of the united front from 1923, that is, just before the Fifth Congress, whereas the thinking on fascism and united front had begun properly from the Third Congress itself and Fourth Congress has special speeches, resolutions and documents on fascism and united front. However, Sukhwinder skips all of that and comes to the Third Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI (Executive Committee of the Communist International). We will explain the reason for this major omission later in the essay. Here, too, Sukhwinder misses/omits/skips everything that does not bode well for the

asininity of his positions on fascism and united front. He starts with selectively quoting Clara Zetkin to substantiate his inanities, in vain.

Sukhwinder writes:

“On 23rd June 1923, in the third extended plenum of Comintern’s executive committee, Clara Zetkin presented a report on Fascism and wrote a resolution regarding fascism which were accepted by the executive committee. In the report and resolution by Clara, on the whole a correct approach towards Fascism was adopted. We have discussed it briefly before. The main points of Clara Zetkin’s report and resolution were:

“(i) Fascism is a product of the economic and political crisis of capitalism.

“(ii) This dictatorship isn’t like the Horthy rule of Hungary rather it was a larger social basis. Fascism needs to be fought not just by military methods but also political ideological method.

“(iii) The construction of proletarian united defence was called upon to fight fascism. All workers’ parties, trade unions, and proletarian mass organizations were called on to join the common defence against fascism.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 39)

First, let us see how Sukhwinder has omitted all the cardinal details from Clara Zetkin’s theses on fascism presented in June 1923. These are the central elements of the resolution drafted by Zetkin, which negate the essence of Sukhwinder’s preposterous positions on fascism. The reduction of Zetkin’s theses to above 3 elements by Sukhwinder, is to take away the very proletarian soul of the theses. As we pointed out and as we shall see, Sukhwinder has omitted the cardinal points of the theses because they go against the asinine claims of Sukhwinder about the general nature of fascism.

Let us begin with Jane Degras’s summarization of the Zetkin’s theses and then we will quote from the theses itself. Degras has edited the three volumes of the documents of the Comintern from 1919 to 1943. These three volumes are available online and the readers are urged to read them, as without referring to the primary sources, we cannot reach a balanced understanding of the history of evolution of the line of Comintern on various questions, including fascism and united front.

Degras points out:

“Klara Zetkin, moving the resolution, referred to fascism as 'the strongest, most concentrated, and classical expression of the general offensive of the world bourgeoisie'. *Historically, it was a punishment for the proletariat not having carried farther the revolution begun in Russia.* It was a result of the breakdown of capitalist society and a symptom of the dissolution of the bourgeois State. It was recruited from the middle classes impoverished and proletarianized by the war, from ex-officers now unemployed, and from all those disappointed in reformist socialism who, instead of turning left, had lost hope in socialism. It had attracted thousands of disappointed proletarians who hoped that the will to build a new and better world would rise above class contradictions and find its embodiment in the nation. *The Italian CP had seen in fascism only a militarist terrorist movement, not a mass movement with a broad social basis which had already won a political and ideological victory over the working class before it came to power in Italy.* The communist parties must make the utmost efforts, politically and ideologically, to rescue those who had gone over to fascism, including the bourgeois intelligentsia. Against fascist force and terror the working class must organize for self-defence.” (Degras, J. *The Communist International, 1919-43*,

Documents, Vol. II, 1923-28, available at <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/documents/volume2-1923-1928.pdf>, *emphasis ours*)

As we can see, Zetkin clearly believed that the fascist rise to power was result of the political defeat of the working class.

Now let us turn to the original writings of Zetkin. Besides the resolution, Zetkin presented a report to the same enlarged plenum of the ECCI, which presents the basic arguments of the resolution itself, where she wrote:

“Let us not forget that before beating down the proletariat through acts of terror, fascism in Italy had already won an ideological and political victory over the workers’ movement that lay at the root of its triumph.” (Zetkin, C. 2017. *Fighting Fascism: How to Struggle and How to Win*, (edited and introduced by Mike Taber and John Riddell), Haymarket Books, p. 43-44, *emphasis ours*)

In the same report, Zetkin writes:

“Fascism is an international phenomenon; we all agree on that. Thus far, next to Italy, its strength is greatest in Germany. Here the war’s outcome and the failure of the revolution have been favorable for its growth. That is understandable, bearing in mind what we know regarding the roots of fascism.” (*ibid*, p. 57, *emphasis ours*)

Then in the resolution itself, Zetkin points out that in the phase of proletarian upsurge, the fascist demagoguery flirted with proletarian slogans and tone. However, as soon as the political tide of the proletariat subsided, fascism revealed itself as a reactionary mass movement in the service of the bourgeoisie:

“In the period of revolutionary ferment and upsurge by the proletariat, fascism flirted to some degree with proletarian-revolutionary demands. The masses following fascism vacillated between the two armies expressing the overriding world-historical class antagonisms and class struggles. However, after capitalist rule was reasserted and the bourgeoisie began a general offensive, fascism came down firmly on the side of the bourgeoisie, a commitment held by their leaders from the very start.” (*ibid*, p. 69, *emphasis ours*)

As is clear from the above excerpt, fascist rise was not a response to proletarian political offensive. On the contrary, it *began* when the proletarian political offensive had already been defeated. In what follows, Clara Zetkin, again, points out that fascism was not a response to revolutionary upsurge, but the failure to mount a revolutionary offensive by the communist party, the potential of which were present in the spontaneous militancy of the working class:

“The development of fascism in Italy expresses the inability of the party and unions to utilize the workers’ occupation of the factories in 1920 to heighten the proletarian class struggle. The fascist victory violently obstructs every workers’ movement, even for simple and nonpolitical wage demands.” (*ibid*, p. 70, *emphasis ours*)

Similarly, the very difference from the Horthy regime lay in the difference of the nature of political crises that leads to fascism and the one that leads to regimes like the Horthy’s. Zetkin writes:

“The terror in Hungary began after the defeat of an initially victorious revolutionary struggle. For a moment the bourgeoisie trembled before the proletariat’s might. The Horthy terror emerged as revenge against the revolution. The agent of this revenge was a small caste of feudal officers.

“Fascism is quite different from that. It is not at all the revenge of the bourgeoisie against the militant uprising of the proletariat. In historical terms, viewed objectively, fascism arrives much more as punishment because the proletariat has not carried and driven forward the revolution that began in Russia. And the base of fascism lies not in a small caste but in broad social layers, broad masses, reaching even into the proletariat. We must understand these essential differences in order to deal successfully with fascism. Military means alone cannot vanquish it, if I may use that term; we must also wrestle it to the ground politically and ideologically.” (ibid, p. 24, emphasis ours)

Thus, for Zetkin, the difference did not simply consist in the fact that fascist regime had a larger social base than that of the Horthy regime, which almost all Marxist observers had begun to realize by the end of 1922. It also included the fact that Horthy regime was the response to the revolutionary onslaught of the proletariat whereas fascist regime was a punishment to the proletariat for being *unable to mount or continue a revolutionary offensive, or, the punishment for defeat.*

However, since these observations of Clara Zetkin in her report and the resolution go against Sukhwinder’s unfounded belief that fascism is a response to the threat of proletarian revolution, he omits them from his summarization of Clara Zetkin’s position, as evident from the two documents that she presented to the enlarged plenum of the Third ECCI on fascism.

We have presented another excerpt from Zetkin earlier in the present critique, where she clearly says that what distinguished the political crisis leading to the Horthy regime from the political crisis leading to fascist regime in Italy is that in the latter case, the proletariat was already defeated politically.

Similarly, *in the same report Zetkin strongly argues for a proletarian united front from below that would also win over the peasants and other sections of the petty-bourgeoisie.* Zetkin writes:

“But proletarian struggle and self-defense against fascism required a proletarian united front. Fascism does not ask it the worker in the factory as a soul pained in the white and blue colors of Bavaria; or is inspired by the black, red, and gold colors of the bourgeois republic; or by the red banner with a hammer and sickle. It does not ask whether the workers wants to restore the Wittelsback dynasty [of Bavaria], is an enthusiastic fan of Ebert, or would prefer to see our friend Brandler as president of the German Soviet Republic. All that matters to fascism is that they encounter a class-conscious proletarian, and then they club him to the ground. That is why workers must come together for struggle without distinctions of party or trade-union affiliation.” (ibid, p. 64-65, emphasis ours)

These words of Zetkin come immediately after her criticism and condemnation of the social-democratic line on fascism. This was precisely the line presented in the Third Congress under the guidance of Lenin: *the united front of the working class from below.* Since, this, too, goes against the class collaborationism and capitulationism of Sukhwinder, he omits this, because he believes that the entire period before the Seventh Congress was characterized by a plague of “left” sectarianism and Dimitrov corrected it, at last, in the Seventh Congress and that the policy of the ‘popular front’ is the only correct universal policy of anti-fascist united front applicable even today. He presents only those points of Zetkin which might somehow fit with the politically bankrupt idiocies of his own position. As is clear, Sukhwinder selectively quotes and distorts the position of Clara Zetkin. Is this revolutionary honesty? We leave the answer to the readers.

B. Sukhwinder’s Poor Attempt to Understand the History of Evolution of Comintern’s Understanding of Fascism and the Question of the United Front

Then Sukhwinder begins his over-simplifications, distortions of and omissions from the account of development of Comintern's line on the question of fascism and united front by jumping directly from the third enlarged plenum of the ECCI in June 1923 to Fifth Congress in June-July 1924. He never discusses the Third and the Fourth Congresses of the Comintern. Why? Because Lenin was alive and he did participate in these congresses, *directly and indirectly*, and played the central role in the formulation of the policy of united front of the working class. Therefore, critiquing those formulations as "left" sectarian would mean that Sukhwinder would be obliged to present a critique of Lenin. That is why, Sukhwinder starts with the period *after Lenin in order to attack the Leninist line of united front of the working class*.

Sukhwinder writes:

"In 1924, Comintern's 5th congress was held. A resolution was passed on fascism. In this resolution was discussed the basis of fascism and its character was identified. Correctly identifying the social basis of fascism, it was said that, "in its social structure, fascism is a petty bourgeois movement." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 39-40)

Further:

"Along with this, the resolution contains some exaggerated, non-realist verdicts. For instance, in this resolution all other bourgeois parties (including social democratic parties) along with fascist parties are declared to be fascist. It is stated in the resolution, "*all bourgeois parties, particularly social democracy, take on a more or less fascist character. ... Fascism and social democracy are the two sides of the same instrument of capitalist dictatorship. In the fight against fascism, therefore, social-democracy can never be a reliable ally of the fighting proletariat.*"

"Thus, in the resolution difference between fascist and other bourgeois parties was wiped out. The possibility of united front with social democracy was fundamentally rejected. This was the start of left sectarianist deviation in Comintern which reached its peak with the 'social fascism' thesis of 1929.

"In 1924, Comrade Stalin wrote an article titled "The period of bourgeois democratic "pacifism"". In which he presented views similar to those presented in the above resolution. He wrote, "Fascism is the bourgeoisie's fighting organisation that relies on the active support of Social-Democracy. Social-Democracy is objectively the moderate wing of fascism." (*ibid*, p. 40, *author's emphasis*)

Sukhwinder fails to understand that despite the "left" mistake in theoretically, at least partially, obliterating the difference between fascism and social-democracy, there was a qualitative difference between what the Fifth Congress had done and what the Sixth Congress did in 1928. He assumes that the "left" deviation came into existence in the Fifth Congress (wrong! it was present even before that) and evolved in a straight line to the ultra-left deviation by the time of the Sixth Congress (wrong! the whole period was full of right opportunist as well as "left" deviations). However, it was not an evolutionary process and, in some ways, the Sixth Congress represented a bigger rupture than the Seventh Congress, as Poulantzas has pointed out.

The difference lies in the fact that till the time of the Fifth Congress, the Comintern had not yet identified social-democracy as the *principal enemy*, which must first be defeated in order to defeat fascism. This disastrous line took hold of the Comintern only in the Sixth Congress, though it afflicted certain factions in certain parties in Europe even before that. The resolution at the Fifth Congress still talks about 'a united front under the leadership of the Comintern' and 'driving away the known fascists' from their positions in factories and mass-organizations, etc. Also, this mistake of partially obliterating the theoretical difference between fascism and social-democracy, which originated in the Fifth Congress, had a lot to do with the misdeeds of the

social-democracy in Germany after the final collapse of working-class offensives in 1923 and its open collusion with the reactionary forces in the brutal suppression of the KPD. The tone of the resolution about the social-democracy was determined to a large extent by this.

However, even after the Fifth Congress, the communist parties as well as the Comintern did try to form particular united fronts (from above) with the social-democrats. In fact, at the same congress, the *Theses on Tactics* says:

"Unity from below and at the same time negotiations with leaders. This method must frequently be employed in countries where social-democracy is still a significant force..."

"It is understood that in such cases the communist parties maintain their complete and absolute independence, and retain their communist character at every stage of the negotiations and in all circumstances. Therefore all negotiations with the social-democratic leaders must be conducted publicly, and communists must do their utmost to get the working masses to take a lively interest in the negotiations.

*"3. United front only from above. This method is categorically rejected by the Communist International." (Degras. J. *The Communist International 1919-43, Vol. II, 1923-1928*, p. 152, available at Marxists.org, *emphasis ours*)*

Just before the Fifth Congress, in March 1924, the Comintern's EC had made it clear that the case of Germany is to be treated separately:

*"In Germany it is essential for us to use the united front tactic only from below, that is to say, we will have no dealings with the official social-democratic leaders. The tactics of the united front from below must, however, be pursued honestly, consistently, and to the end. No fractional diplomacy can be permitted in this question..." (ibid, p. 88, ECCI letter to the Ninth Congress of the KPD, March 1924, *emphasis ours*)*

Therefore, in order to make sense of the character of the "left" mistake committed at the Fifth Congress and the one committed at the Sixth Congress, one has to understand the theoretical as well as historical context, both of which are completely lost on Sukhwinder. Hence, it is partially true that the seeds of the theory of direct identification of fascism and social-democracy might be traced back to the Fifth Congress, but the tactical considerations of the Fifth Congress were very different from those of the Sixth Congress, which takes a decisive turn. Also, between the Fifth Congress and Sixth Congress, the entire period of four years was not marked with "left"-sectarian deviation which gradually evolved into the ultra-left line which began to dominate after the Sixth Congress in 1928. This period was also witness to serious right-wing deviations as well.

Sukhwinder picks up his description from Poulantzas. Please compare the following words of Poulantzas with the excerpt of Sukhwinder presented above:

*"The first form amalgamates and fuses 'social democracy' and 'fascism'. The resolutions of the Fifth Congress had already formulated this: 'Fascism and social democracy are two sides of one and the same coin of the dictatorship of big capital. Social democracy is already transforming itself from the right wing of the labour movement into the left wing of the bourgeoisie and therefore of fascism'. In 1924, Stalin affirmed that fascism was not simply a combat organization of the bourgeoisie, but a political phenomenon relying on social democracy." (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 148)*

We have already talked about the *second form* of the “left” mistake in the Fifth Congress, where the Comintern did not identify fascism with social-democracy, but argued that these are *two different cards* that the bourgeoisie can play in the same kind of political crisis, which countries like Germany and Italy were facing. We have also discussed that this second version, too, was politically inaccurate as it failed to distinguish between two different kinds of political crisis and two different kinds of representatives of the bourgeoisie.

However, Sukhwinder neither knows about what happened between the Fourth and the Fifth Congresses, nor does he know about what transpired after the Fifth Congress. Consequently, he falls into the error of believing that since the Fifth Congress, it was increasing “left”-deviationism all the way up till the Seventh Congress.

In fact, if we look at the Fifth Plenum of 1925 itself, it backtracks from many positions assumed by the Comintern in July 1924 at the Fifth Congress. It accepts stabilization and once again stresses the need for *particular* ‘united front from above’ as well as *general* ‘united front from below’. In fact, during the March 1925 German elections, the Comintern had directed the KPD to support the presidential candidate of the SPD. However, the SPD withdrew its candidate and supported a bourgeois centrist candidate. The ECCI statement on Paul von Hindenburg’s election as president in March 1925 says:

“The Communist International suggested that the KPD support the social-democratic candidate in the second round if the SPD put its candidate forward again. But, faithful watch-dogs of the bourgeoisie that they are, the social-democrats withdrew their candidate in favour of the bourgeois candidate Marx... Once more the SPD leaders showed the world that they are as dubious republicans as they are bad socialists. There is not the slightest doubt that the SPD leaders and the Second International will try to place responsibility on the German communists. They will throw sand in the eyes of the masses. Once again they will take up the campaign against the vanguard of the German proletariat...”
(*ibid*, p. 214, *emphasis ours*)

The point is simple: Sukhwinder, due to ignorance about the history of the European communist movement in general, the history of the KPD and the Comintern in particular and due to the total lack of the study of the original documents of the Comintern, over-simplifies the history of the evolution of Comintern’s line on united front since 1923 itself as a story of growing “left” sectarianism, till Dimitrov arrived in the Seventh Congress and corrected this mistake. As the readers will see, the true story is one of line-struggle within the Comintern, vacillations between “left” and right, between theory (often veering to the “left”) and practice (veering in the opposite right direction at some times and towards “left” at others).

Why Sukhwinder fails to understand the history of the line-struggle in the Comintern on the question of fascism and united front? Besides total lack of study of primary material, *it is also the fact that Sukhwinder starts his account from 1923, from the third enlarged plenum of the ECCI, then skips the Fourth Congress, comes directly to the Fifth Congress, and then skips the four years between the Fifth Congress and the Sixth Congress and comes directly to the Sixth Congress, which represented the sharp ultra-left turn.*

That is also the reason why Sukhwinder does not even once mention the Leninist line of ‘united front of the working class’ as presented in the Third Congress and ratified again by the Fourth Congress, which included the ‘united front from above’, on particular issues, that is, *particular united front from above*, subordinated to the general tactics of *united front from below*. The aim was clear: winning over of the majority of the masses of workers to the communist side, as it was accepted in the Third Congress that the revolutionary wave had subsided and the majority of workers are still under the political and ideological influence of social-democracy and reformism, whereas a period of stabilization and in Lenin’s words ‘relative balance of the forces’ had begun, and the need of the hour was the slogan of ‘to the masses’, in order to accumulate the

forces of the proletariat to be able to resist the bourgeois reactionary offensive and subsequently mount the proletarian offensive. *This Leninist line, in general, was the correct line.* However, the “left”-right deviations alternating within the Comintern since 1922 itself and finally the ultra-left turn since the Sixth Congress prevented the correct implementation of this line. However, Sukhwinder does not even mention a word about the Leninist line of the ‘united front of the working class’. That is why he comes directly to the ultra-left error of the Sixth Congress on the question of fascism and united front (which were different from those of the Fifth Congress):

“In 1929, an extended meeting of the executive committee of Comintern took place. In this a resolution was passed regarding the international situation. In this social democracy was declared to be social fascism. The resolution stated that, *“In this situation of growing imperialist contradictions and sharpening of the class struggle, fascism becomes more and more the dominant method of bourgeois rule. In countries where there are strong social-democratic parties, fascism assumes the particular form of social-fascism.”*

“To declare all other parties (including social democracy) along with fascist party to be fascist was the peak of left deviation. This was a rejection of utilising contradiction between the different fraction of bourgeoisie to further the struggle of proletariat. This left sectarianist deviation was a barrier in the construction of wide united front against fascism and seriously harmed the anti-fascist struggle. But after several years, especially during the 7th congress of Comintern in 1935, this mistake was rectified. (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 40-41, *authors’ emphasis*)

This account, instead of enlightening any student of Marxism about the actual twists-turns in the history of the Comintern during the period of 1922-1935, will make them dumb about and ignorant of this history. That is why, we deem it necessary to present a brief historical account of the evolution of the positions of the Comintern regarding fascism and particularly the policy of the united front.

C. A Brief Historical Account of Comintern’s Position Regarding United Front

It is noteworthy that Sukhwinder has skipped the Third Congress of the Comintern and starts his account with the Third ECCI’s enlarged plenum in June 1923, as we mentioned earlier. However, without studying the positions put forth and resolutions passed in the Third Congress regarding the policy of united front against the reactionary offensive of the bourgeoisie (which included fascist rise in Italy), we cannot understand how the vacillations of “left”-right finally led to the right-deviationist line of the ‘popular front’, which Sukhwinder considers as the *only correct line on anti-fascist fronts applicable universally and even today.*

We will present a short account of the evolution of the united front policy since the Third Congress so as to acquaint the readers with the trajectory of right-“left” errors till 1935 and *then reversion to the policy of ‘united front from below’ by the Comintern including Dimitrov, since November 1938.* In order to have a grasp of the context in which these shifts took place, the correct starting point is the Third Congress, because even in the enlarged plenum of the Third ECCI, all the discussions take cue from the Third Congress itself. Sukhwinder has completely failed to understand this. That is why, he does not understand that the Third Congress itself recognized a political shift in the class struggle with the subsiding of the revolutionary wave in Germany and Italy and saw the emergence of a bourgeois offensive after this defeat. Zetkin is referring precisely to this particular political conjuncture in her report and resolution quoted above. *Had Sukhwinder understood this historical background, he would not have conflated the fascist rise with the political offensive of the proletariat, or, threat of proletarian revolution.* Let us elaborate this point.

Jane Degras summarizes the crux of the proceedings at the Third Congress, which recognized the subsiding of the revolutionary onslaught of the working class:

“The third Comintern congress, held from 22 June to 12 July 1921, was attended by 509 delegates from 48 countries, of whom 291 had full voting rights. Its meetings were dominated by the discussion of the March action in Germany. This, the Kronstadt rising, and the New Economic Policy in Russia, brought to a close the first period of the Comintern's history. 'With the third congress', Trotsky wrote later, *'it is realized that the post-war revolutionary ferment is over...The turn is taken to winning the masses, using the united front, that is, organizing the masses on a programme of transitional demands'*. The broad revolutionary perspectives opened by the war and its consequences had not led to the victory of the proletariat, he said, because of the absence of revolutionary parties able and willing to seize power.

“Comparing the second and third congresses, Lenin, using Japanese action at Port Arthur as an analogy, said that the Comintern had passed from the tactics of assault to the tactics of siege, infiltration taking the place of open armed struggle.” (Degras. J. *The Communist International 1919-42, Vol. I, 1919-22*, available at Marxists.org, p. 224-25, *emphasis ours*)

This was the admission of subsiding of the revolutionary waves in Europe. Moreover, in the Third and Fourth Congresses, the utterances of Trotsky cannot *simply* be taken as broadcasting of the neo-Lassalleian Trotskyite ideas. Most of the interventions by the members of the Bolshevik Party in the proceedings of the Comintern happened, as a matter of rule and discipline, under the supervision of the party leadership itself, which included Lenin.

In December 1921, based on the resolutions passed in the Third Congress, the ECCI issued directives on the ‘united front of the working class’ and the attitude of workers in the social-democratic organizations. Degras writes:

“Zinoviev said: 'The tactics of the united front were in reality ... an expression of our consciousness, *first, that we have not yet a majority of the working class, secondly, that social-democracy is still very strong, thirdly, that we occupy defensive positions, and . . . fourthly, that the decisive battles are still not yet on the immediate agenda.*'” (*ibid*, p. 308, *emphasis ours*)

Based on the recognition of the change in the relation of forces after the defeats of 1918-20, the directive itself says:

“Considerable sections belonging to the old social-democratic parties also are no longer content with the campaign of the social-democrats and centrists against the communist vanguard, and are beginning to demand an understanding with the communists. *But at the same time, they have not yet lost their belief in the reformists, and considerable masses still support the parties of the Second and the Amsterdam Internationals. These working masses do not formulate their plans and aspirations clearly enough, but by and large the new mood can be attributed to the desire to establish the united front and to attempt to bring about joint action by the parties and unions of the Second and Amsterdam Internationals with the communists against the capitalist attack. To that extent this mood is progressive. In essentials the belief in reformism has been undermined.*” (*ibid*, p. 310, *emphasis ours*)

It is noteworthy that in the Third Congress all the references to the capitalist reactionary onslaught include fascists in Italy as well as attempts of the right-wing in Germany to seize power. However, the ECCI also recognized that the social-democracy is not inherently interested for particular alliances (particular united front from above), though it is being forced

by the situation to agree to such alliances. Moreover, the reformists will push to use such united front to promote class collaborationism, if and when they are forced to form such alliances under the pressure of the rank-and-file workers of their unions. The ECCI points out:

“Profound internal processes are however *forcing the diplomats and leaders of the Second, Two-and-a-half, and Amsterdam Internationals to push the question of unity into the foreground*. But while, for those sections of the working class with little experience who are only beginning to awaken to class-conscious life, the slogan of the united front expresses a most genuine and sincere desire to mobilize the forces of the oppressed classes against the capitalist onslaught, the leaders and diplomats of these Internationals advance that slogan only in a new attempt to deceive the workers and to entice them by new means on to the old road of class collaboration. The approaching danger of a new imperialist war (Washington), the growth of armaments, the new imperialist secret treaties concluded behind closed doors—all this will not induce the leaders of the three Internationals to beat the alarm in order to bring about the international unification of the working class not only in words, but also in fact; on the contrary, it will provoke inevitable friction and division within the Second and Amsterdam Internationals, roughly of the same kind as that apparent in the camp of the international bourgeoisie. This phenomenon is inevitable because the solidarity of the reformist 'socialists' with the bourgeoisie of their 'own' countries is the cornerstone of reformism...” (*ibid*, p. 311, *emphasis ours*)

ECCI argues further:

“Confronted by this situation, the ECCI is of the opinion that *the slogan of the third world congress of the Communist International 'To the Masses', and the interests of the communist movement generally, require the communist parties and the Communist International as a whole to support the slogan of the united front of the workers and to take the initiative in this matter*. The tactics of each communist party must of course be worked out concretely in relation to the conditions in each country.” (*ibid*, p. 311, *emphasis ours*)

As is evident, ECCI warns that the application of the policy of ‘united front from below’ would involve different actions in different countries, according to the particular political situation. Wherever the political situation demands ‘united front from above’ (including the slogan of workers’ governments) *in order to strengthen the ‘united front from below’*, it must be formed. Thus, it presents different policy prescriptions for different countries within the broad framework of ‘united front of the working class from below’. It says:

“In Germany the communist party at its last national conference supported the slogan of a workers' united front and declared *its readiness to support a workers' government* which was willing to take up with some seriousness the struggle against the power of the capitalists. *The ECCI considers this decision completely right and is convinced that the KPD, while maintaining in full its independent political attitude, is in a position to permeate broad sections of the workers and strengthen the influence of communism on the masses*. In Germany more than anywhere else the broad masses will be daily more convinced how right the communist vanguard were when at the most difficult time they did not want to lay down their arms and steadily emphasized the worthlessness of the reformist actions proposed, since the crisis could be resolved only by the proletarian revolution.” (*ibid*, p. 311-12, *emphasis ours*)

Thus, in Germany the slogan of the workers’ government is accepted as part of ‘united front’ strategy. Regarding France it says:

“In France the communist party has a majority among the politically organized workers. Hence the united front question has a different bearing there from what it has in other countries. *But even there it is necessary that the entire responsibility for the split in the united workers' camp should fall on our opponents.* The revolutionary section of the French syndicalists are rightly fighting against a split in the French unions, that is, fighting for the unity of the working class in the economic struggle against the bourgeoisie. But the workers' struggle does not stop in the factories. Unity is necessary also in the face of growing reaction, of imperialist policies, etc. The policy of the reformists and centrists, on the other hand, led to the split in the party and now also threatens the unity of the trade union movement, which shows that Jouhaux just like Longuet objectively serves the cause of the bourgeoisie. *The slogan of the united front of the proletariat in the economic and the political struggle against the bourgeoisie remains the best means of counteracting these splitting plans.*

“Even though the reformist CGT, led by Jouhaux, Merrheim and Co., betrays the interests of the French working class, *French communists and the revolutionary elements among the French working class in general must, before every mass strike, every revolutionary demonstration, or any other revolutionary mass action, propose to the reformists support for such action, and if they refuse to support the revolutionary struggle of the workers they must be exposed.* This will be the easiest way of winning the non-party working masses. In no circumstances, of course, must the Communist Party of France allow its independence to be restricted, e.g. by supporting the 'left bloc' during election campaigns, or behave tolerantly towards those vacillating communists who still bemoan the break with the social-patriots.” (*ibid*, p. 312, *emphasis ours*)

In France, too, the particular ‘united front from above’ has to be formed, along with the main emphasis on the ‘united front from below’. Regarding Italy it says:

“In Italy the young communist party is beginning to conduct its agitation according to the slogan of the proletarian united front against the capitalist offensive, although it is most irreconcilably opposed to the reformist Italian Socialist Party and the social-traitor labour confederation, which recently put the finishing touch to their open treachery to the proletarian revolution. *The ECCI considers this agitation by the Italian communists completely correct and insists only that it shall be intensified. The ECCI is convinced that with sufficient foresight the CP of Italy can give an example to the entire International of militant Marxism which mercilessly exposes at every step the half-heartedness and the treachery of the reformists and centrists who clothed themselves in the mantle of communism, and at the same time conduct an untiring and ever-mounting campaign among ever broader masses for the united front of the workers against the bourgeoisie.*

“The party must of course do its utmost to draw all the revolutionary elements among the anarchists and syndicalists into the common struggle...” (*ibid*, p. 313, *emphasis ours*)

Thus, the case of Italy was seen as different from Germany and France and all the energies were to be focused on the ‘united front from below’. Thus, the Comintern policy provided *only a general framework of Leninist policy of ‘united front of the working class’* in which the tactics of *from below* and *from above* had to be mixed up, with primacy given to the former, in different ways in different national situations.

We can see that the policy of ‘united front of working class from below’ did not exclude ‘from above’ alliances with the social-democracy and socialists, and even anarchist and syndicalist

organizations, against the bourgeois offensive. However, whenever these alliances were to be formed, the aim was to be twofold: *one, winning over of the masses of workers to the side of communism; two, exposure of the social-democracy and reformism.* Thus, the line can be summarized as *general united front of the working class from below* and subordinated to the interests of this, *particular united front of the working class from above* (which included the policy of united front with, not simply social-democratic workers, but social-democratic organizations and parties). The following excerpts will make it clear:

“The principal conditions which are equally categorical for communist parties in all countries are, in the view of the ECCI . . . *the absolute independence of every communist party which enters into an agreement with the parties of the Second and the Two-and-a-half Internationals, its complete freedom to put forward its own views and to criticize the opponents of communism.* While accepting a basis for action, communists must retain the unconditional right and the possibility of expressing their opinion of the policy of all working-class organizations without exception, not only before and after action has been taken but also, if necessary, during its course. In no circumstances can these rights be surrendered. *While supporting the slogan of the greatest possible unity of all workers' organizations in every practical action against the capitalist front, communists may in no circumstances desist from putting forward their views, which are the only consistent expression of the defence of working-class interests as a whole.*” (*ibid*, p. 313-14, *emphasis ours*)

Further:

“But though the leaders of the Second, Two and-a-half, and Amsterdam Internationals reject one or another practical proposal put forward by the Communist International, *that will not persuade us to give up the united front tactic, which has deep roots in the masses and which we must systematically and steadily develop. Whenever the offer of a joint struggle is rejected by our opponents the masses must be informed of this and thus learn who are the real destroyers of the workers' united front.* Whenever an offer is accepted by our opponents every effort must be made gradually to intensify the struggle and to develop it to its highest power. In either case it is essential to capture the attention of the broad working masses, to interest them in all stages of the struggle for the revolutionary united front.” (*ibid*, p. 315, *emphasis ours*)

The most remarkable trait of this policy was that *it clearly makes distinction between the classes and the parties.* The ‘popular frontism’ makes precisely the mistake of conflating the two in effect, thus giving decisive primacy to approaching the masses of workers through their parties only. Therefore, approaching the workers in the social-democratic organizations was possible only ‘from above’, through the leadership. Sukhwinder makes precisely the same argument.

As is clear, on particular issues the Communists were asked to approach the social-democrats repeatedly and in case of a positive response and in case of a negative response, different strategies were prescribed to expose the social-democracy and strengthen the united front of the working class from below.

On 1 January 1922, ECCI and Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) issued a joint manifesto on the policy of the united front. In the editorial commentary to this statement, Degras writes:

“In a speech on 20 October 1922 Trotsky, explaining the united front policy, said that the third congress had made it clear that the immediate task of communists in Europe was not to capture power, but to win the majority of the working class. ‘If we consider that the party is on the eve of the conquest of power and the working class will follow it, then the question of the united front does not

arise. But... if we become convinced that a certain interval must elapse, perhaps several years, before the conquest of power...it is necessary to consider what will happen in the interim to the working class.' At the fourth congress he said that *'the basic idea underlying the decisions of the third congress was as follows. After the war the masses were seized by a revolutionary mood and were eager to take up the battle, but there was no revolutionary party capable of leading them to victory. Hence the defeat of the revolutionary masses in various countries; hence the mood of depression and passivity. Today revolutionary parties exist in all countries, but they rest directly only upon a fraction of the working class...The communist parties must win the confidence of the overwhelming majority of the working class. When experience has convinced them of the correctness, firmness, and stability of communist leadership, the working class will shake off disillusionment, passivity, and dilatoriness...This can and must be achieved in the course of fighting for the workers' transitional demands under the general slogan of the proletarian united front.'*" (*ibid*, p. 316, *emphasis ours*)

This explains that the Comintern very clearly recognized that the revolutionary wave in Europe had already subsided and the policy of the united front from below was the most important weapon for the revolutionary communists to accumulate their forces till they are capable of mounting another revolutionary offensive, though Trotsky's formulation is not accurate from the Leninist perspective, because even on the eve of the proletarian revolution, a united front of the ally classes under proletarian leadership is essential, whereas Trotsky argues that at such a conjuncture the question of united front will not arise. Notwithstanding many of his contributions during this period, this particular statement betrays his neo-Lassallean leanings, even when he was with Bolsheviks.

Even in 1922, in certain parties there were clear-cut "left"-deviationist trends which opposed the Leninist policy of the united front of the working class from below. Consequently, there was a fierce line-struggle going on within the Comintern. Degras points out:

"At the first enlarged plenary session of the ECCI, which met from 21 February to 4 March 1922, and consisted of 105 delegates from 36 parties, *the French, Italian, and Spanish delegations opposed the united front theses, which were adopted by 46 votes to 10.* The chief argument of the opponents was that, having emphasized in all their propaganda that the social-democrats were the worst enemies of the working class, the new tactics would only bewilder and confuse the workers. *The congress of the Italian Communist Party in Rome at the end of March 1922 passed, against 8 votes, a resolution put forward by Bordiga which rejected the application of united front tactics in the political field, while accepting them for trade union work.*" (*ibid*, p. 308-09, *emphasis ours*)

Thus, the Bordiga tendency, among others, either rejected the united front policy of the Third Congress or accepted only the *economic* united front. Further:

"Cachin, speaking at the February meeting, asked the ECCI to take note that *three delegations—the French, Italian, and Spanish—had expressed reservations about the new tactics*; the French party would, however, observe discipline and carry out ECCI decisions. But at the meeting of the national council of the CPF on 22-23 April 1922, a resolution was adopted that the party was bound to maintain until its next congress the objections previously put forward, while 'proclaiming its firm determination to fight as a whole alongside the CI.' *It was opposed to any understanding with the reformist and syndicalist leaders and regretted that in some countries the communist parliamentary fractions were cooperating with the socialists.* It regretted the joint activities with the Second and Two-and-a-half Internationals. 'The national council', it added, 'notes the resolution of the

enlarged ECCI, but states that only the fourth world congress can finally decide the question at issue with the necessary authority.'

"At the June 1922 meeting of the ECCI French and Italian opposition was maintained, but the internal conflict was covered by a resolution (formulated by Trotsky in the French commission) and passed by the ECCI without discussion, which asserted that the united front did not imply any abatement of hostility to reformism and instructed the Executive to work out instructions appropriate to each country. At French insistence the question was put on the agenda of the fourth world congress." (ibid, p. 309)

There was a struggle against this "left" tendency within the Comintern during this period. The Comintern continued its line of approaching the reformists and social-democracy for alliance, despite their repeated refusals, in order to expose them and strengthen the 'united front from below'. Between April and August 1922, there was a process of the two reformist internationals and the Comintern forming an alliance against the bourgeois onslaught. However, due to the intransigence of the Second International, the effort could not bear fruit. In April 1922 itself Comintern said about these efforts:

"The Communist International calls on the working masses, regardless of their opinion about the road which will lead to final victory and the means of securing this road, to unite for the struggle against the present capitalist offensive and to wage it energetically. That is why the Communist International issued the slogan of the united front for the struggle against the bourgeoisie, and welcomed the initiative of the Vienna Union in calling for an international workers' congress. It regards the proposed congress as a way of unifying the workers' struggles which are now opening." (ibid, p. 335, emphasis ours)

It was a perfectly correct approach as it combined the *general united front from below* with genuine efforts to form *particular united front from above*. Late in April, when the attitude of the social-democrats to such united front became clear and substantiated the analysis of the Comintern, an ECCI statement pointed out:

"What is the united front and what should it be? The united front is not and should not be merely a fraternization of party leaders. The united front will not be created by agreements with those 'socialists' who until recently were members of bourgeois governments. The united front means the association of all workers, whether communist, anarchist, social-democrat, independent or non-party or even Christian workers, against the bourgeoisie. With the leaders, if they want it so, without the leaders if they remain indifferently aside, and in defiance of the leaders and against the leaders if they sabotage the workers' united front.

"And this genuine united front in the common struggle is bound to come. It must come if the working class wants to defend its most fundamental and elementary interests against the capitalist offensive." (ibid, p. 341, emphasis ours)

In May 1922, the ECCI reiterated the analysis of the Comintern in a statement:

"The proletariat without distinction of party has had the opportunity of convincing itself who is for the united front and who is against. The resistance of the leaders of the Second International has frustrated the attempt to organize the proletarian united front from above. That makes it a duty to rally all forces to organize the proletariat for the common struggle in opposition to the leaders of the Second International.

"Communist workers, it is your duty to spread the lesson of this first attempt to establish the united front among the broadest masses of the working classes.

“Workers of the parties of the Second and Two-and-a-half Internationals! After this experience with your leaders it is your duty to do everything, to omit nothing, *to show the leaders of your parties who have forgotten their duty that you will no longer tolerate sabotage of the united front, that you want to unite with the communist workers in the struggle against the capitalist offensive.*” (*ibid*, p. 351, *emphasis ours*)

In June 1922, the resolution of the enlarged ECCI warned the PCF of “left” as well as right mistakes in the implementation of the policy of the united front of the working class. This resolution pointed out that in order to weed out reformism from the working-class movement, it was essential to form particular united fronts with the social-democratic, socialist organizations and parties; only in the process of mass struggles against various forms of bourgeois reaction, can the true character of such parties be exposed. Masses of workers cannot be persuaded by preaching, but by real experience of struggles. The resolution equally condemned the right deviation that saw the tactics of united front as mere electoral alliances. It says:

“The International notes that the press and *the leading bodies of the French Communist Party dealt in a wholly incorrect fashion with the meaning and significance of the united front tactics. The International roundly rejects the superficial judgment of journalists who see a rebirth of reformism in what is in fact an intensification of the methods of fighting against reformism...*

“The idea of a left bloc can in the given circumstances exercise a spell over a great many workers who have little political experience. The Communist Party of France must give serious consideration to this danger. *In its daily propaganda the party must systematically oppose to the idea of the left bloc, the idea of a bloc of all workers against the bourgeoisie.* Naturally, when it comes to elections, the party must put forward its own independent communist lists...” (*ibid*, p. 356, *emphasis ours*)

Here, we can see that the Comintern statement condemns both, the right as well as the “left” deviations. Even before the Fourth Congress, the confusion regarding the call for workers’ governments had begun. Various leaders from communist parties of different countries accepted that there was a confusion as to the conditions in which the united front tactic would include the call for workers’ government and the conditions in which such a call should not be issued. Zinoviev represented a position that was slightly “left” whereas Radek represented a clear-cut right position on this question. *Theses on Tactics* adopted by the Fourth Congress attempted to clarify the approach of *general united front of the working class from below* and *particular united front of the working class from above*:

“The necessity of the united front tactic follows from all this. *The slogan of the third congress ‘to the masses’ is now more than ever appropriate.* Only now is the struggle for the formation of the proletarian united front beginning in a great number of countries. Only now are the difficulties of the united front tactic beginning to be overcome. The best example is France, where the course of events has convinced even those who a short time ago were on principle hostile to this tactic of the necessity of its employment. The Comintern requires all communist parties and groups to carry out the united front tactic strictly, because in the present period that alone can give communists a sure road to winning the majority of the workers.

“The reformists need a split. The communists are interested in rallying all the forces of the working class against capitalism.

“The united front tactic means that the communist vanguard must take the lead in the day-to-day struggles of the broad working masses for their most vital interests. *In these struggles the communists are even ready to negotiate with the treacherous social-democratic and Amsterdam leaders.* The attempts of the Second International to represent the united front as the organizational fusion of all 'workers' parties' must of course be decisively rebutted. The attempts of the Second International, under the cloak of the united front, to absorb workers' organizations further to the left (for example the unification of the socialists and independent socialists in Germany) mean in practice nothing but the opportunity for the social-democratic leaders to surrender further sections of the working masses to the bourgeoisie.

“The existence of independent communist parties and their complete freedom of action in regard to the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolutionary social-democracy is the most significant historical achievement of the proletariat, which communists will in no circumstances whatever renounce. Only the communist parties fight for the interests of the proletariat *in its entirety.*”

“Nor does the united front tactic mean so-called upper level 'electoral alliances' which pursue some parliamentary purpose or other. The united front tactic is the offer of a joint struggle of communists with all workers who belong to other parties or groups, and with all non-party workers, in defence of the basic interests of the working class against the bourgeoisie....”

“In executing the united front policy it is especially important to achieve not only agitational, but also organizational results. No single opportunity should be missed of creating organizational footholds among the working masses themselves (factory councils, supervisory commissions of workers of all parties, and of non-party workers, committees of action, etc.).”

“The most important thing in the united front tactic is and remains the agitational and organizational rallying of the working masses. *Its true realization can come only 'from below', from the depths of the working masses themselves. Communists however must not refuse in certain circumstances to negotiate with the leaders of the hostile workers' parties, but the masses must be kept fully and constantly informed of the course of these negotiations.* Nor must the communist parties' freedom to agitate be circumscribed in any way during these negotiations with the leaders.

“It is obvious that the united front tactic is to be applied in different ways in different countries, according to the actual conditions prevailing there. Where, in the most important capitalist countries, objective conditions are ripe for the socialist revolution and where the social-democratic parties—with their counterrevolutionary leaders—are deliberately working to split the working class, the united front tactic will be decisive for a new epoch.” (*ibid*, p. 424-25, *emphasis ours*)

As we can see, the Comintern did try to dispel the confusions regarding the policy of the united front of the working class. The above excerpt demonstrates the earnest efforts of the Comintern, which was increasingly becoming a site of struggle between the “left” line and the right-deviationist line. The *Theses* tried to clarify the question of workers' government in the following way:

“The slogan of a workers' government (or a workers' and peasants' government) can be *used practically everywhere as a general propaganda slogan.* But as a topical political slogan *it is of the greatest importance in those countries where*

bourgeois society is particularly unstable, where the relation of forces between the workers' parties and the bourgeoisie is such that the decision of the question, who shall form the government, becomes one of immediate practical necessity. In these countries the slogan of a workers' government follows inevitably from the entire united front tactic.

“The parties of the Second International are trying to 'save' the situation in these countries by advocating and forming a *coalition government of bourgeois and social-democratic parties...* To this open or concealed bourgeois-social-democratic coalition the communists oppose the united front of all workers and a coalition of all workers' parties in the economic and the political field for the fight against the bourgeois power and its eventual overthrow. *In the united struggle of all workers against the bourgeoisie the entire State apparatus must be taken over by the workers' government, and thus the working class's positions of power strengthened.*

...

“*Such a workers' government is only possible if it is born out of the struggle of the masses (not simply by electoral alliances from above – author), is supported by workers' bodies which are capable of fighting, bodies created by the most oppressed sections of the working masses.* 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, and the continued existence of a government which pursues a revolutionary policy, must lead to a bitter struggle, and eventually to a civil war with the bourgeoisie. The mere attempt by the proletariat to form such a workers' government will from the outset encounter the sharpest opposition of the bourgeoisie. *The slogan of a workers' government is therefore suitable for concentrating the proletariat and unleashing revolutionary struggles.*” (*ibid*, p. 425-26, *emphasis ours*)

To make matters even clearer, the *Theses* goes on to distinguish among different case scenarios of the workers' government, the different character of different types of the workers' government and the types in which the communists might participate under certain conditions. It attempted to warn against the dangers of the right deviation. The *Theses* point out:

“With all its great advantages, *the slogan of a workers' government also has its dangers, just as the united front tactic as a whole conceals dangers.* In order to avoid these dangers, the communist parties must bear in mind that while every bourgeois government is a capitalist government, *not every workers' government is a really proletarian government, that is, a revolutionary instrument of power.* The Communist International must consider the following possibilities:

“1. Liberal workers' governments, such as there was in Australia; this is also possible in England in the near future.

“2. Social-democratic workers' governments (Germany).

“3. A government of workers and the poorer peasants. This is possible in the Balkans, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc.

“4. Workers' governments in which communists participate.

“5. Genuine proletarian workers' governments, which in their pure form can be created only by the communist party.

“The first two types are not revolutionary workers’ governments, but in fact coalition governments of the bourgeoisie and anti-revolutionary labour leaders. Such governments are tolerated by the enfeebled bourgeoisie in critical times as a means of deceiving the proletariat about the real class character of the State, or to ward off, with the help of the corrupt workers’ leaders, the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat and to gain time. Communists cannot take part in such governments. On the contrary, they must vigorously expose to the masses the real character of these pseudo-workers’ governments. But in the present period of capitalist decline, when the most important task is to win the majority of the proletariat for the revolution, even such governments may objectively help to accelerate the process of disintegration of bourgeois power.

“Communists are however prepared to act together with those workers who have not yet recognized the necessity of the proletarian dictatorship, social-democrats, members of Christian parties, non-party syndicalists, etc. They are thus ready, in certain conditions and with certain guarantees, to support a workers’ government that is not communist... The two types numbered 3 and 4, in which communists may take part, do not represent the dictatorship of the proletariat, they are not even a historically inevitable transition stage towards the dictatorship. But where they are formed they may become an important starting point for the fight for the dictatorship. The complete dictatorship of the proletariat is represented only by the real workers’ government (the fifth on the above list) which consists of communists.” (ibid, p. 426-27, emphasis ours)

However, the Fourth Congress analyzed the contemporary situation of subsiding of the proletarian offensive and the beginning of the reactionary onslaught of the bourgeoisie in economic terms, in the terms of *economic stabilization*, which amounted to the *defensive of the proletariat*. Contrary to this characterization, Lenin used the term *the relative balance of the forces*, which did not reduce the period of economic stabilization *necessarily* to the strategic defensive of the working class; such a political move would not simply depend upon ‘economic stabilization’ alone, but on the conjuncture of the class struggle, which is determined by the economic factors only in the last instance. Poulantzas was correct on this point:

“An important question of terminology should be pointed out here. Lenin appeared to be conscious of the economic connotations the term ‘stabilization’ would have carried for the Comintern, implying ‘economic stabilization’. He does not use this term but uses instead the term ‘relative balance of forces’, which refers specifically to the class struggle. It was only afterwards that the Comintern, in quoting Lenin, substituted the term ‘stabilization’.

“That it did so was no accident.

“In fact this conception of Lenin’s was not understood or applied either by Communist Parties (particularly the German and Italian Parties) or by the Comintern from its Fourth Congress on. The conjuncture of the class struggle, which will be discussed in detail later, was increasingly modelled on and reduced to the economic sphere, whether ‘stabilization’ in an economic sense was accepted or rejected. Moreover, even where stabilization was accepted as having a purely economic meaning (economic stabilization), it always implied a mere economic episode, a phase in the destruction of capitalism in the stage of permanent economic disintegration.

“The Fourth Congress (1922–3) spoke of stabilization in an economic sense for the first time, and drew from it wrong (‘ultra-right’) conclusions about the step of the class struggle.” (Poulantzas. 1979. op.cit., p. 45, emphasis ours)

Between the period of the Fourth Congress (1922-23) and the Fifth Congress (1924), there was a period of right deviation in practice, while theoretically the line of united front of the working class was in place. However, the correct implementation of this Leninist line was mostly absent from the practice of most of the European parties. As a consequence, 'stabilization=defensive' formula led to a variety of right-deviationist mistakes. It goes without saying that *at the same time* there were strong "left"-infantilist tendencies as well.

Before the Fifth Congress and after the Fourth Congress, due to the intransigent attitude of the social-democrats and their open treachery against the communists in Germany and elsewhere, we see increasing emphasis on the united front from below, as the united front from above (that is, particular alliances with the social-democrats) was not working, the principal responsibility of which lay with the social-democrats, especially in Germany. However, we clearly see a state of confusion. Degras quotes from an issue of 'Inprekorr' published in January 1923:

"Therefore, comrades, the two congresses call on you to form a united front against capital..

"Unless the working class is united in such a struggle, its separate groups and sections will be defeated one by one. That is why our congresses decided to fight, before everything else and at any cost, for the unity of the trade union movement. But the bourgeoisie have powerful supporters in the social-democrats and the trade union leaders. And precisely now, when it is more than ever essential to unite all forces, these gentlemen, who sell the proletariat to the Stinneses of this world and at the Hague ally themselves with bourgeois pacifists, are expelling communists from the trade unions. These expulsions are the fruit of a devilish conspiracy against the proletariat. Even the bourgeoisie could not have thought up anything better to disorganize the forces of the proletariat at a moment when a furious attack on the workers is being prepared.

"We call on all honest workers, men and women, regardless of their party affiliation, to defend the unity of the trade unions. Do not let the agents of capital destroy the unity of the working class. Defend that unity with your hard proletarian fists!" (Degras. J. *The Communist International 1919-43, Vol. II, 1923-1928*, p. 2)

Further:

"Our congresses brought the revolutionary trade union associations closer together than ever before. *They instructed our executives to use every favourable opportunity to approach Amsterdam and the social-democrats with the demand for a common fight against capitalist attack. This is where your support, the support of the working masses, is required. Force your leaders towards a united front. And if they stand out stubbornly against it, bring about a united front over their heads, sweeping away all obstacles to united struggle.*

"The experience of working-class struggle has shown that capitalist governments are not prepared to renounce even a part of capitalist profits. They are not prepared to introduce a single reform, to make a single concession to the working class. Therefore:

"Through united struggle to a workers' government." (*ibid*, p. 2, *emphasis ours*)

However, due to the incorrect formulation of the relation between *the political* and *the economic*, the ground for right-deviationist application of the policy of united front of the working-class was prepared. Degras writes about an ECCI resolution on the KPD:

“Was the SPD the left wing of the bourgeoisie or the right wing of the working class? *The right-wing majority in the KPD advanced the latter thesis, and were therefore in favour of united front tactics from above as well as below; that is, they favoured a coalition policy in the Saxon and Thuringian Governments*—the elections of November 1922 for the Saxon Diet had given the SPD 40 seats, and the KPD 10, out of a total of 96—on a programme of social reform, control of production by factory committees, etc. *The left wing argued that a workers' government could only follow the mass struggle, not precede it.* The voting was 118 against 59.” (*ibid*, p. 16, *emphasis ours*)

Degras points out further:

“The differences within the party arise from the slow pace of revolutionary development in Germany and the objective difficulties this causes, *producing both right and left deviations in the party.* ... *It was the right deviation which the Executive and the fourth Comintern congress had in mind when they spoke of the dangers inherent in the application of united front tactics. These tactics were applied by the right-wing elements not as a method of detaching the working masses from reformist policy, but as a method of adapting the communist party to the reformist leaders.*” (*ibid*, p. 18, *emphasis ours*)

In reaction to this, with the political situation of 1924, where the social-democrats shifted increasingly towards reaction in Germany, the KPD with the nod of the Comintern rejected any kind of united front from above and argued for focusing only on the united front from below. The KPD cannot be blamed for this, as the social-democrats were completely acting hand-in-glove with the reactionary bourgeois forces against the KPD. *The mistake of KPD was not rejection of party-to-party particular alliances, but the failure to implement even ‘united front from below’ and continuing to implement right-deviationist policies in practice.* Anyway, the Comintern had supported this stand of the KPD, namely, rejection of party-to-party particular alliances with the SPD, while reminding the KPD that the work on building a united front from below must not be neglected:

“The ECCI has already laid down its views on this question in the theses adopted at the January session in Moscow... In our opinion there is no reason to change what was then said...

“*In Germany it is essential for us to use the united front tactic only from below, that is to say, we will have no dealings with the official social-democratic leaders. The tactics of the united front from below must, however, be pursued honestly, consistently, and to the end. No fractional diplomacy can be permitted in this question...*” (*ibid*, p. 88, ECCI letter to the Ninth Congress of the KPD, March 1924, *emphasis ours*)

At the Fifth Congress, the reaction to the right-deviation of the preceding period, was expressed as the beginning of the dominance of a “left”-deviation, even though both were coexisting in the Comintern at that time. Degras comments on *Theses on Tactics* adopted at the Fifth Congress:

“At first, Zinoviev said, these tactics had expressed the realization that the communist party did not have on its side the majority of the working class, that the reformists were still strong and the communists on the defensive. But they were not evolutionary tactics, an attempt to form an alliance with social-democracy. They were a strategic manoeuvre designed to mobilize the masses in a period when the revolution was temporarily halted. *It was never right to have a united front from above alone, and it was nearly always right to have it from below. The use of these tactics from above and below was correct in a country such as England. But they had to revise the exaggerated, imprudent, and incorrect*

formulation of the tactics introduced by Radek at the fourth congress. Radek replied that no objection had been raised at the time to his speech at the fourth congress. He had said then that it might mean temporary coalitions with social-democrats. If the tactics were meant merely to 'unmask' them, on the assumption that they would not and could not fight, it was a misleading trick. They did want a united front, and were prepared to go along with the social-democrats as long as they were willing to fight. That was the idea behind the conference of the three Internationals in the spring of 1922. They had no confidence in the social-democratic leaders, but the struggle of the working class demanded unity of action. Saxony was a tragi-comedy for the party because it had not been prepared for. It was a united front from above only, with nothing below. A number of speakers admitted that they were confused on these questions." (ibid, p. 142-43, emphasis ours)

We can see that in Saxony and Thuringia, the mistake of the KPD was not simply in supporting the SPD governments in those provinces, but in the failure to form the united front from below. This made the electoral policy of the KPD as a right-deviationist one, because it was simply a 'united front from above with nothing below'. The prevailing confusion is reflected in the ambiguity implicit in the formulation of the *Theses on Tactics* itself:

"At the fifth congress it has become unmistakably clear that in some countries, of the utmost importance for the workers' movement, the representatives of the right-wing tendency tried to distort completely the tactics of the united front and of the workers' and peasants' government, interpreting them as meaning a narrow political alliance, an organic coalition of 'all workers' parties', that is, a political alliance of communists with social-democracy. While for the Comintern the main purpose of the united front tactics consists in the struggle against the leaders of counter-revolutionary social-democracy and in emancipating social-democratic workers from their influence, the representatives of the right-wing tendency tend to interpret the united front as a political alliance with social-democracy. . . ." (ibid, p. 150, emphasis ours)

However, still, the Fifth Congress did not refuse to implement the policy of 'united front from above' along with 'united front from below'. It says:

"1. The tactics of the united front from below are necessary always and everywhere, with the possible exception of rare moments during decisive struggles when revolutionary communist workers will be compelled to turn their weapons against even groups of the proletariat who out of deficient class consciousness are on the enemy's side. . . .

"2. Unity from below and at the same time negotiations with leaders. This method must frequently be employed in countries where social-democracy is still a significant force. . . .

"It is understood that in such cases the communist parties maintain their complete and absolute independence, and retain their communist character at every stage of the negotiations and in all circumstances. Therefore all negotiations with the social-democratic leaders must be conducted publicly, and communists must do their utmost to get the working masses to take a lively interest in the negotiations.

"3. United front only from above. This method is categorically rejected by the Communist International." (ibid, p. 152, emphasis ours)

In 1926, too, the elements of confusion are apparent due to the vacillations between "left" and right, though increasing influence of the "left" deviation at least in the theorization of the Comintern are becoming increasingly apparent. *However, in practice, the right and "left"*

deviations continued to co-exist in the political practice of the KPD. In fact, repeated reminders about the tendency of right opportunism in Comintern documents of the period between 1924 and 1926-27 bear witness to the “left”-right deviations evident in the political practice of the KPD. The Sixth ECCI Plenum pointed out:

“The enlarged Executive of the Communist International calls imperatively on all its sections to act decisively, vigorously, and sincerely in meeting the wish of the social-democratic workers to establish a united front to fight the bourgeoisie, to unite with them in carrying through tactical actions, even under the most modest slogans, and to adopt towards them an attentive, comradely, and correct attitude, in order to make it possible for them to proceed jointly with us against the bourgeoisie.

“Nevertheless the Communist International has no reason to revise its estimate of the objective role of social-democracy, and particularly of the social-democratic leaders, including the 'lefts' among them. ... It does not doubt that, in the future as in the past, the majority of them will sabotage the united front. ... It adheres to the point of view that in no circumstances does the united front mean a parliamentary bloc with the social-democratic leaders, or the amalgamation of the communist with the social-democratic party, the renunciation by the communist party of independent propaganda and agitation.” (p. 253, Sixth ECCI Plenum, *Inprekorr*, May, 1926, *emphasis ours*)

Further:

“Two mistakes were frequently made in applying united front tactics: (a) *In making proposals to social-democratic workers, our parties put forward demands, to be accepted before joint action was organized, which were from the outset unacceptable to workers still thinking along reformist lines...*(b) *In their anxiety to reach agreement with the social-democrats, our organizations occasionally undertook not to agitate against the social-democratic party.* In other words they renounced the right to conduct communist agitation. . . .” (*ibid*, p. 256, *emphasis ours*)

As we can see, despite the “left” turn evident in the *theorizations* of the Comintern documents after the Fifth Plenum (1925) and the Sixth Congress (1928), *in practice*, serious right deviations were present in many European parties and Comintern continued to point to this fact in most of its documents between 1924 and 1928.

In the Sixth Congress a decisive ultra-left turn takes place. What does this ultra-left turn consist in? The Sixth Congress and the period following it did not witness the rejection of the line of united front. Then what was the mistake?

The mistake consists in this: identification of social-democracy as the *principal enemy*, whose decimation was seen as a precondition for enabling the proletariat to fight against fascism; the increasing right-turn of the social-democracy led the Comintern and its leaders to think that social-democracy, *objectively speaking*, was the “other side” of fascism, “moderate wing” of fascism, the other reactionary force of the bourgeoisie which was becoming increasingly “fascistic”, one of the two cards that the reactionary bourgeoisie can play, etc. *This obliterated the peculiarity of, not only fascism, but also of social-democracy.*

Also, it totally failed to see the difference between an exceptional form of the bourgeois state and the regular form of the bourgeois state, that is, *democratic, representative multi-party parliamentary system*. It is noteworthy, that the shell of *parliamentary system*, that is, *the form* of bourgeois democracy can be retained while, its democratic content might disintegrate. This is particularly true for the phase of neoliberalism, as Poulantzas has shown in his last work and as has been witnessed by scores of Marxists in the phase of neoliberalism.

The third mistake was that, in practice, *the communist parties did not even implement the policy of 'united front from below'*. They often stuck to elections to measure their mass influence. This led the KPD to over-optimistic estimation of their political influence from 1928 to 1932, whereas the party cadre force from the working class was decreasing, the working class was being demobilized completely and becoming politically dormant. This was precisely due to the more militant economism of the KPD and the absence of a massline, and the lack of political work among the working masses. Poulantzas rightly comments:

“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...” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 160, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas points out that even in the period of ultra-left deviation after the Sixth Congress, the KPD's political practice revealed “left”-right vacillations constantly:

“In fact, after 1928, this model is no longer adequate: the same general line was increasingly affirmed, despite appearances, by its identical concrete effects. Though they were attenuated with and after Dimitrov, they were clearly at work in the so-called ‘ultra-left’ period. *In particular, the radical words of the KPD were matched only by its triumphant faith, at the same period, in the parliamentary electoral struggle, and by its strong social chauvinism.*” (*ibid*, p. 161, *emphasis ours*)

We will come to a detailed criticism of the policy of the ‘popular front’ later. First, let us see how the ultra-left deviation reached its peak between 1928 and 1933.

The statements and resolutions from 1928 to 1932-33 show the ultra-left deviation of the Comintern as well as most of the European parties very clearly. We will only present a few representative examples, as there is hardly any debate about it. This is from February 1930, published in *Inprekorr*:

“The communist party, whose united front tactics are to be operated only from below, *must not only refrain from any agreement with the reformists and pseudo-communists, but must carry on an irreconcilable struggle against them.* . . . Where there is no possibility of putting up ‘legal’ candidates, the communist party must nominate political prisoners, and get mass participation in a demonstrative vote for these names.” (Degras, J. *The Communist International 1919-43, Vol-III, 1929-43*, p. 98, *emphasis ours*)

This is from April, 1931, from the Eleventh ECCI Plenum:

“In the preparation and organization of every form of revolutionary action, it is imperative to carry on *a most stubborn, consistent, and comprehensive fight against the social-democratic reformist leaders*, and to work persistently to win over the social-democratic workers and members of reformist trade unions, using the tactics of a united front from below.” (*ibid*, p. 164, *emphasis ours*)

At the same time, in practice right-deviationist mistakes were being committed by various communist parties. So, the Twelfth ECCI Plenum warns against this:

“In addition to this the twelfth Plenum of the ECCI declares that in the overwhelming majority of the sections of the Comintern serious shortcomings

and a number of serious opportunist mistakes have been discovered in carrying out the tactics of the united front from below, which have been utilized by the social-democrats and the reformist trade union bureaucrats in their tricky manoeuvres. *These shortcomings have arisen both from the underestimation and an insufficient application of the tactic of the united front (especially with regard to social-democratic workers), and also from opportunist capitulation to the reformist trade union bureaucrats (unity at any price), and in fact they have been the chief causes of the insufficient advances of the communist parties and the revolutionary trade union movement in the development of the independent leadership of the economic struggle of the proletariat...*" (*ibid*, p. 232-33, *emphasis ours*)

Thus, the Comintern kept reminding the communist parties that *the refusal to form united front from above must be supplemented by a more intensive and extensive work for the formation of the united front from below*. The same ECCI Plenum clearly stipulates the line of seeing social-democracy as the main enemy:

"The consistent everyday struggle of communists and supporters of the revolutionary trade union movement for the establishment of the united front of the workers urgently raises before all the sections of the Comintern and of the Red International of Labour Unions the question of work inside the reformist trade unions and the methods of this work. *The influence of the reformist trade union bureaucracy, especially in countries with long established and strong reformist trade unions, is one of the chief hindrances to the development of the class struggle, and cannot be broken down by shouts about wrecking the trade unions for which communists are not striving, nor by deserting the trade unions, but by persistent work inside the reformist trade unions, by fighting hard to win every member of the reformist trade unions, for every elected post in the trade unions, for securing the dismissal of the reformist trade union bureaucracy and winning over the local organizations of individual trade unions and the local trade union councils of the reformist unions.*

"The twelfth Plenum of the ECCI calls upon all sections of the Communist International *to continue the struggle with all Bolshevik consistency and determination against capitulation to the reformist trade union bureaucrats, as against the chief danger, and against those opportunist elements in the communist parties and the revolutionary trade union movement which still in practice oppose the existence of Red trade unions and the RTUO and the organization and the carrying on of independent economic strikes by them, and who, as substitute for them, support the slogan: 'Make the leaders fight'.*" (*ibid*, p. 234, *emphasis ours*)

At the same time, the KPD was going even more "left" than the Comintern and neglecting even the masses of workers in the social-democratic trade unions and mass organizations. This was too "left" for the Comintern. So, the same Plenum of the ECCI says:

"*A necessary condition for a successful struggle against the chief danger of right opportunism is a determined struggle against 'left' opportunist deviations which are expressed in a leftist 'theory' that the workers organized in the reformist trade unions represent a '[uniformly] reactionary mass', in the leftist sectarian underestimation of the tactic of the united front, in the statement that the reformist trade unions are 'schools of capitalism', in a sectarian attitude to work inside the reformist trade unions, in reducing all the work in the reformist unions to the task of wrecking the apparatus and in the bureaucratic ignoring of the methods of proletarian democracy.*" (*ibid*, p. 237, *emphasis ours*)

As we can see, the mistake was not abandoning the line of forming rank-and-file united front, but was identifying social-democracy as the main enemy and consequently refusal to form *particular united front from above* with the social-democrats, though even the line of the united front from below was seldom being implemented by most of the parties. Thus, effectively, no *particular united front from above* due to identification of the social-democracy as the principal enemy, and also, no *general united front from below* by identifying the mass of social-democratic workers as one homogeneous reactionary mass and confining all political activity to electoral work.

This entire period from 1929 to 1932 led to disastrous results due to the failure to implement the Leninist line of the 'united front of the working class' which included *general united front from below* and *particular united front from above*, with the latter subordinated to the former. It led to the *political isolation* of the KPD, despite its improving electoral fortunes till the last election of 1933.

In 1933, the Second International offered to form a united front with the communists, especially, in Germany. The Communist International, too, agreed with suspicions and reservations. However, by then it was too late. ECCI statement on the German Situation and the United Front states:

"Now the bureau of the LSI has published, on 19 February of this year, a statement on the readiness of the social-democratic parties affiliated to it to form a united front with the communists to fight against fascist reaction in Germany. This statement sharply contradicts the entire previous behaviour of the LSI and the social-democratic parties. The entire previous policy and action of the LSI justify the CI and the communist parties in doubting the sincerity of this statement, made at a time when in a number of countries, and particularly in Germany, the working masses are taking the initiative in organizing the united fighting front.

"Nevertheless, in view of fascism's offensive against the German working class, unleashing all the forces of world reaction, the ECCI calls on all communist parties to make a further attempt to establish a united fighting front with the social-democratic working masses through the social-democratic parties. The ECCI is making this attempt in the firm conviction that the united front of the working class on the basis of the class struggle is capable of repulsing the offensive of capital and fascism and greatly hastening the inevitable end of all capitalist exploitation." (*ibid*, p. 252-53, *emphasis ours*)

In the meanwhile, a lot was happening in France, which along with the above shift, propelled the movement towards the line of the 'popular front', later officially presented in the Seventh Congress by Dimitrov.

This was the entire story of the "left"-right deviations, which took place in theory and practice in different rhythms. This could have become clear to Sukhwinder had he read the original documents of the Comintern. However, since he is a plagiarizer and quotation-scavenger, who never reads any work of history or any document from cover to cover, all these cardinal details are lost on him. Sukhwinder thinks that since 1923, the entire period till 1935 was a period of "left"-sectarian deviation in the Comintern; Comintern was saved with the arrival of Dimitrov thesis in 1935, when, according to Sukhwinder, the universal communist line of anti-fascism and anti-fascist front, namely, the line of the 'popular front' was invented, which is applicable even today for the communists of the world!

What is really surprising is that as a person writing specifically on the evolution of the Comintern's policy of united front against fascism, he *does not even know* about the policy of the united front of the working class. He never discusses it in his essay. The reason is that he did not

study the primary sources, that is, the documents of the Comintern, especially since the Third Congress. As a result, for him 'popular front' becomes the 'demi urgos', the supreme idea, which existed *a priori*, but in an alienated form, and with Dimitrov thesis it attained its full conception again, just as the Hegelian supreme idea attained its full conception with the idealist system of Hegel! Such is the view of editor *sa'ab!*

We will see in a while how the right reaction to the ultra-left deviation of the Comintern and various parties, especially the KPD, originated not in the Comintern itself but in France, in the PCF. It is necessary to understand how the shift to the policy of 'popular front' took place in the Comintern.

D. The Origins of the Policy of the 'Popular Front': Cluelessness of the Editor of 'Pratibaddh'

Very few students of history are aware of the fact that the idea of the 'popular front' originated in the French Communist Party. However, a person who claims to lead a political group is expected to know this fact. From 1933 itself, the Comintern documents reveal that there was a strong right-deviationist current in the PCF. *Theses of the Thirteenth ECCI Plenum (December 1933) on 'Fascism, The War Danger and the Tasks of Communist Parties'* reveal this tendency in clear terms, even though, it also notes the ultra-left deviation prevalent in the Comintern and the European communist parties, too. In fact, the right-deviationism appears as a pathological reaction to the disastrous results of the ultra-left policy. Degras points out:

"Thorez gave a picture of confusion, doubt, and indiscipline in the French CP: some communist municipal councillors had voted in favour of resolutions 'in defence of bourgeois democracy', some CP members had proposed the abandonment of anti-Versailles slogans; some local party committees had asked the CC to deny the rumours of a Franco-Soviet alliance; others had protested against the reception of Herriot in Moscow; others had talked of 'France's peaceful intentions'. There were doubts about the correctness of KPD policy; the talk about 'the capitulation of the KPD' had been severely condemned by the CC. Some communist trade union leaders had entered into negotiations with the CGT about a joint strike, which was also condemned as an error by the CC. In a number of strikes communists had 'neglected the fight against social-democracy' and formed joint committees with the CGT and the Christian trade unions. A year before, the socialist party had written to the CC proposing negotiations for the formation of one workers' party. Their representatives had met but no decisions had been taken 'and later we broke off connexions'. The mistake of the central committee was not the exchange of views itself, but in 'allowing the idea to arise that in certain circumstances we communists were ready to discuss organizational union with the socialist party'. The aim of the socialist party in this move had been to sabotage mass action. 'In addition to opportunist errors in united front tactics, and to the tendency to relax the fight against the socialist party, there were many proposals made to abandon the "class against class" tactics. *There were even members of the CPF in 1933... who blamed us for "playing into the hands of reaction" . . . some proposed that in the second electoral round we should vote for the socialists. In the municipal elections many communists proposed a joint communist-socialist list in the second and even in the first round. The central committee vigorously rejected these opportunist proposals and condemned their adoption.'* The root of the error lay in illusions about democracy, and the failure to understand the role of social-fascism as agent of the imperialist bourgeoisie in the working class. Social-democracy was actively helping the bourgeoisie to prepare war, for though, under pressure of the mass enthusiasm for the construction of socialism in the USSR, the relations between France and Russia were changing, the basic hostility of the French bourgeoisie to Russia

remained. They sought salvation in war, which they were organizing in the name of security and the defence of democracy. *There were many fascist organizations in France, but what was characteristic of the situation was that 'in all "left" parties, including the socialist party, there is a wing which more or less openly advocates a fascist programme'*. The open division in the socialist party (between Blum and Renaudel) was merely a cunning division of labour in support of the bourgeoisie. The CP fight had to be directed primarily against the Blum faction, because they were liable to arouse illusions. 'Never have we been so successful as now in shaking the position of the socialist party and the CGT' by the tactics of the united front from below. *Marty also spoke of 'misunderstandings' in the CPF since Hitler had come to power. 'There have even been vacillations among members of the polit bureau. ... It remains an essential task to overcome resistance to the Comintern line, for this confuses the party and cripples its action.'*" (Degras, J. *The Communist International 1919-43, Vol. III, 1929-43, p. 291-92, emphasis ours*)

This was a clear-cut allusion to the right-wing deviation in the French Communist Party, which had strong factions within the leadership which had been advocating rapprochement with the socialists and radicals in France. In March 1934 again, the same question appears in the documents of the Comintern itself. Degras writes:

"The condemnation of the CP of France for 'attempts to arrange blocs at the top' suggests that there was a strong group in the CPF which was agitating for a change in the communist attitude to the socialist party. In January 1934 the French central committee met to approve the resolutions of the thirteenth ECCI plenum. Thorez said events were moving so fast in France 'that some elements in the party, yes, even in the central committee, became confused by the pressure of the enemy (defence of "democracy" against fascism, distortion of the Soviet Union's peace policy, etc.)'. The party failed to understand the role of social-democracy, and some party organizations were not convinced of the necessity of a bitter struggle against the socialist party. One central committee member [Doriot] made proposals which meant changing the entire political line about social-democracy, making united front proposals to the socialist leaders. 'This proposal was indignantly rejected by all members of the central committee unanimously, for it would have led to capitulation to social-democracy.' The meeting approved a resolution on the party's tasks which said: 'The central committee calls upon the entire party to apply resolutely the tactics of a militant united front from below, combating vigorously any opportunist attempt to propose a united front to the leadership of the socialist party.' Berlioz wrote that as a result of the longing for unity among French workers and of socialist manoeuvres, 'officials of the CP have in many places succumbed to this pressure and concluded vague agreements with the socialists in which the face of the CP is lost'." (*ibid*, p. 313-14)

Thorez was later convinced on the line being proposed by Doriot by Comintern leadership itself, however, due to other reasons pertaining to indiscipline, Doriot himself was admonished by the Comintern. By June 1934, in France the policy of 'popular front' was already being implemented. Degras points out:

"At its conference in Ivry on 23-26 June 1934 the CPF reversed its attitude and no longer insisted on the 'united front from below only'. This, it said, was not a change in policy, but in tactics. Duclos denied Doriot's assertion that the CPF was now belatedly taking his advice and pursuing the policy he had advocated; Doriot had wanted 'a Trotskyist bloc of the two parties'. Communists, said Thorez, had

always worked for the united front; they were doing so now in a way the social-democratic workers would understand.” (ibid, p. 332, emphasis ours)

This statement is not wholly accurate, as indeed, the line of ‘popular front’ was being preached by Doriot, much before any other leader in the PCF. Further, as Degras points out:

“In June 1934 Dimitrov, drafting the speech he proposed to make at the seventh CI congress (later postponed), suggested that the terms 'social-fascist' and 'social-democratic treachery' should be dropped, and the policy of a united front only from below abandoned; the united front should be led and directed by the communists not in words but in action.” (ibid, p. 333, emphasis ours)

Again, in April 1935:

“Conditions had changed, and now success in the fight against fascism required an alliance, under CP leadership, with the middle classes. This would establish a 'people's front'. The CPF had first made proposals to the Radicals in October 1934 for common action in defence of the constitution, for the dissolution of the fascist leagues, etc. In May Thorez wrote that in the existing circumstances it was necessary to make proposals for a united front to the leaders of the SFIO and CGT. 'Together with the CG of the CPF', wrote Pravda, 'the Comintern is of the opinion that, in view of the fascist danger, proposals from the CPF to the SFIO on these lines are not only permissible but in certain circumstances necessary.' The attitude to socialist parties was not 'programmatic' but determined by 'considerations of revolutionary expediency'. There was no mention in the article of 'social-fascism' or 'social-democratic treachery'.” (ibid, p. 341-42, emphasis ours)

The policy of the French party was already that of ‘popular front’, even before the Seventh Congress and Dimitrov Theses:

“Soviet power could not be their immediate goal, because only a small minority of the people shared their convictions, but the CPF would support a Popular Front Government and, if necessary, participate in it. In November 1934 and again in May 1935 the CPF had proposed a joint conference with the SFIO to form a single party, but this had not yet been agreed on. In elections they would put forward CP candidates in the first ballot; if there were a second ballot they would reach agreement with the socialists and the radicals on the candidates to be supported.” (ibid, p. 358, emphasis ours)

Degras documents the events before the Seventh Congress and shows how the policy of ‘popular front’ developed in France and even Dimitrov acknowledged the role of the French party in this process:

“In March 1935 Thorez introduced the term 'popular front' to cover agreements with the Radical Party; success in the fight against fascism required an alliance (under communist leadership) with the middle classes. A government which took action against fascism would receive communist support, but participation in the government was 'out of the question. There can be no participation whatever in such a government within the bounds of capitalism.'

“A joint socialist-communist committee was set up in July 1935 to discuss proposals for unification. At the seventh Comintern congress (where Dimitrov said that the actions of the French CP 'helped to prepare the decisions of our congress'), Thorez said that the CPF was prepared to take part in a popular front government, since its immediate goal was not revolution and proletarian dictatorship, but the defeat of fascism. The entire credit for the united front, he said, was due to the CPF, which

had been anxious to establish it since 1922; now the SFIO and CGT had been forced to come in.” (ibid, p. 383, emphasis ours)

We have already quoted above Eric Hobsbawm, Monty Johnstone and Jonathan Haslam, who have shown that it was Doriot in the PCF who consistently stuck to the line of the ‘popular front’ since 1932 itself and consistently argued with the CC of the PCF as well as the leadership of the Comintern on this question. Jonathan Haslam presents the entire account of how Dimitrov was won over by the line of Doriot and then in a meeting with Thorez, a leading member of the PCF, expressed his agreement with Doriot’s line. However, Doriot himself had distanced himself from the PCF as well as the Comintern and was denounced by the PCF as well as the Comintern as hobnobbing with the Trotskyites, etc. Based on the French experience, where the line of popular front was being implemented in fragments since 1933 itself and then more consistently in 1934, Dimitrov finalized draft of his plan of the ‘popular front’ and sent this plan in a letter to Stalin, too. When Dimitrov had presented his plan to Stalin, Stalin had expressed his apprehensions, as Johnstone shows but he was persuaded successfully by Dimitrov, who then was given the responsibility to lead the Comintern. The role that Doriot had played in France, was played by José Antonio Balbontin in Spain. He also met the same fate as Doriot. Ultimately, France and Spain became the two countries where the ‘popular front’ policy was implemented, even before the rise of fascism to power in these countries and even before the Seventh Congress had proclaimed these tactics in the new political conjuncture which had emerged with the decisive victory of Hitler and repression of the communists as well as the social-democrats.

We need to understand a few basic things here.

First, without understanding the entire history of the evolution of the line of Comintern on the question of fascism and united front, we cannot understand why and how the policy of the ‘popular front’ emerged;

Second, without understanding the history of the European communist movement and political developments in Europe since the subsiding of the proletarian revolutionary wave by 1920-21, we will not be able to contextualize the alternating currents of the “left”-right deviations from the line of ‘united front of the working class’ and then the emergence of the right-deviationist line of the ‘popular front’, as a pathological reaction to the ultra-left deviation since 1928-29;

Third, we will not be able to understand the fact that the policy of the ‘popular front’ was not designed simply for ‘fascism in power’ as Sukhwinder thinks; for Dimitrov and the Comintern, it was universally applicable for all countries which had a considerable fascist movement;

Fourth, the right-wing deviation of the ‘popular front’ was implicit not only in the political developments of Europe but also in the incorrect political economy underlying this theory, namely, the theory of fascism as the ‘dictatorship of the most reactionary and chauvinistic elements of the big monopoly finance capital’; the narrowing down of the class character of fascism from the Fifth Congress of the Comintern itself till the Seventh Congress, had disastrous political implications of class collaborationism and class capitulationism, for which the world communist movement paid dearly;

Fifth, the policy of the ‘popular front’ did not become a universal panacea for all revolutionary communists, even in the 1930s and 1940s. We have quoted above Mao, Kang Sheng and Chou En-Lai to demonstrate this fact.

Before we show how the Comintern itself abandoned the policy of the ‘popular front’ and openly called for a return to the policy of ‘united front from below’, the readers must allow us to return to our editor sa’ab and let us show how he has not even understood the incorrect policy of ‘popular front’ itself, though he blabbers a pile of crap about it.

E. Sukhwinder and the ‘Popular Front’: “Bare-naked” Parade of Intellectual Incompetence and Rank Opportunism

Sukhwinder writes:

“In the 7th congress of Comintern in 1935, Comrade Dimitrov presented a report regarding fascism and strategy for resisting it. The title of this report was ‘The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism’. The congress adopted this report after ample debate. *Even today this report is a guiding document for communists worldwide for understanding fascism and resisting it.* Discussing the entire report here is neither possible nor necessary. Here we will discuss some points of this report.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 41, *emphasis ours*)

After this, Sukhwinder presents a truck-load of quotations from Dimitrov’s report presented at the Seventh Congress. However, notably, he misses many cardinal points that Dimitrov makes in the report, especially the one on which Dimitrov was relatively correct. For instance, the following excerpt, too, is from the same report, which Sukhwinder has missed:

“The development of fascism, and the fascist dictatorship itself, assume different forms in different countries, according to historical, social and economic conditions and to the national peculiarities and the international position of the given country. In certain countries, principally those in which fascism has no extensive mass basis and in which the struggle of the various groups within the camp of the fascist bourgeoisie itself is fairly acute, fascism does not immediately venture to abolish parliament, but allows the other bourgeois parties, as well as the Social-Democratic Parties, to retain a certain degree of legality. In other countries, where the ruling bourgeoisie fears an early outbreak of revolution, fascism establishes its unrestricted political monopoly, either immediately or by intensifying its reign of terror against and persecution of all competing parties and groups. *This does not prevent fascism, when its position becomes particularly acute, from trying to extend its basis and, without altering its class nature, trying to combine open terrorist dictatorship with a crude sham of parliamentarism.*” (Dimitrov, G. 2020. *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 5, *emphasis ours*)

On this point, Dimitrov captured an important element of fascism, which appears to have been an exceptional element in the early-Twentieth century, but now has become the dominant mode of existence of fascism. However, precisely where Dimitrov makes a lot of sense, Sukhwinder loses sense.

Sukhwinder also misses the fact that Dimitrov report, *at least theoretically*, still did not advocate to abandon the proletarian united front and argued that the broad anti-fascist people’s front should be based on the proletarian front. Actually, the report goes on to give primacy to popular front and practically trashes proletarian front. However, at least, on the face of it, it still upheld proletarian front as the basis of popular front. Dimitrov writes:

“In the mobilisation of the toiling masses for the struggle against fascism, the formation of a broad people’s anti-fascist front *on the basis of the proletarian united front* is a particularly important task. The success of the entire struggle of the proletariat is closely connected with the establishment of a fighting alliance between the proletariat on the one hand, and the toiling peasantry and the basic mass of the urban petit bourgeoisie constituting a majority in the population of even industrially developed countries, on the other.” (*ibid*, p. 30, *emphasis ours*)

However, these were only words as the operative part of the report was total focus on ‘popular front’ without the necessary foundation of united front of the working class, or, the proletarian front. Poulantzas points out:

“(b) Although Dimitrov says that the ‘popular front’ must be founded ‘on the basis’ of the united front, *he attributes much more importance to the popular front*, which for him seems to govern the proletarian united front.

“(c) *Dimitrov accords small importance to the communists’ own mass work among the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie*: although communists must carry out their own work among the social-democratic masses of the workers, it seems as if the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie must firstly and mainly be drawn in through their ‘own parties’, which if they did not exist, would have to be invented.” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 164, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas is correct, without doubt, which is clear to anyone who reads the entire report (which we seriously doubt, Sukhwinder has, as we will demonstrate in a while). One thing is certain: even if Sukhwinder has read Dimitrov’s report comprehensively, he selectively quotes Dimitrov to suit his purpose and consequently presents a total misappropriation of Dimitrov line. Sukhwinder writes:

“*The most important thing in this report is the line of popular front for the resistance of fascism in power*. When fascist dictatorship is set up, the choice facing working class is not bourgeois democracy or dictatorship of the proletariat but rather bourgeois democracy or fascist dictatorship. In the latter pair, working class stands for the restoration of bourgeois democracy. It depends on the balance of power in the anti-fascist united front whether after the toppling of fascist dictatorship, bourgeois democracy is restored or (temporarily) some people’s democratic state comes to power in the leadership of the working class. (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 43)

Here Sukhwinder has revealed his utter ignorance of the theory of ‘popular front’. Popular front was not prescribed only as a policy against *fascism in power*. First of all, the implementation of the policy of ‘popular front’ was implemented in countries where fascism had not risen to power, namely, France and Spain. Secondly, it started even before the Seventh Congress. Third, the Seventh Congress congratulated the French communists for the implementation of this policy. Fourth, they encouraged the implementation of the policy of ‘popular front’ in all countries where there was a fascist movement. In fact, Dimitrov himself prescribes the exact policies of the ‘popular front’ in various countries like the US, Britain and France. He is especially congratulatory on the case of France for its exemplary “success” in the formation of an anti-fascist popular front. Dimitrov writes:

“France, as we know, is a country in which the working class is setting an example to the whole world proletariat of how to fight fascism. The French Communist Party is setting an example to all sections of the Comintern of how the tactics of the united front should be conducted; the Socialist workers are setting an example of what the Social-Democratic workers of other capitalist countries should now be doing in the fight against fascism. (Applause.) The significance of the anti-fascist demonstration, attended by half a million people, held in Paris on July 14 of this year, and of the numerous demonstrations in other French cities, is tremendous. *This is not merely a movement of a united working class front; it is the beginning of a wide general front of the people against fascism in France.*” (Dimitrov, G. 2020. *op.cit.*, p. 36, *emphasis ours*)

Further:

“*And if in France the anti-fascist movement leads to the formation of a government which will carry on a real struggle against French fascism— not in word but in deed—will carry out the programme of demands of the anti-fascist people’s front*, the Communists, while remaining the irreconcilable foes of every bourgeois

government and supporters of a Soviet government, will nevertheless, in face of the growing fascist danger, be prepared to support such a government." (*ibid*, p. 38, *emphasis ours*)

Similarly, Dimitrov proposes a particular application of the policy of the popular front in the particular conditions of the US in the face of growing fascism:

"And here it must be said that under American conditions the creation of a mass party of toilers, a "Workers' and Farmers' Party," might serve as such a suitable form. *Such a party would be a specific form of the mass people's front in America that should be set up in opposition to the parties of the trusts and the banks, and likewise to growing fascism.*" (*ibid*, p. 33, *emphasis ours*)

Only after discussing the possible strategies of forming a broad-based anti-fascist front in the US, Britain and France, does Dimitrov come to the tasks in the countries that already had fascism in power, Germany and Italy. Dimitrov, further, points out:

"Of course, we must strive everywhere for a wide People's Front of struggle against fascism. But in a number of countries we shall not get beyond general talk about the People's Front unless we succeed in mobilizing the mass of the workers for the purpose of breaking down the resistance of the reactionary section of Social-Democracy to the proletarian united front of struggle. Above all, this is how the matter stands in Great Britain, where the working class comprises the majority of the population and where the bulk of the working class follows the lead of the trade unions and the Labor Party. That is how matters stand in Belgium and in the Scandinavian countries, where the numerically small Communist Parties must face strong mass trade unions and numerically large Social-Democratic Parties." (*ibid*, p. 91-92, *emphasis ours*)

Dimitrov makes it quite clear in the above excerpt that even in those countries where there is a fascist movement, the communist parties must immediately undertake the steps to form a popular front. *The policy of the formation of the 'popular front' has nothing whatsoever to do with 'fascism in power' only.* It was proposed as a general policy of the communist international for resistance against fascism, in all countries, including where the fascist movement was present as well the ones where fascism was in power. Moreover, Dimitrov also talks directly about the two-cases of popular front governments in which the communists shall take part as a part of the general tactics of the 'popular front':

It is likewise not difficult to understand that *the establishment of a united front government in countries where fascism is not yet in power is something different from the creation of such a government in countries where the fascist dictatorship holds sway.* In the latter countries a united front government can be created only in the process of overthrowing fascist rule. *In countries where the bourgeois-democratic revolution is developing, a People's Front government may become the government of the democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry.*" (*ibid*, p. 97-98, *emphasis ours*)

In fact, Sukhwinder has himself quoted this excerpt from Dimitrov's report, where Dimitrov is clearly stating that the 'popular front' against fascism for the defence of the immediate economic and political interests of the working class against fascism is a general policy that has to be implemented in all capitalist countries (as most of the capitalist countries were witnessing the rise of fascist movements in different forms):

"What is and ought to be the basic content of the united front at the present stage? *The defense of the immediate economic and political interests of the working class, the defense of the working class against fascism, must form the*

starting point and main content of the united front in all capitalist countries.”
(*ibid*, p. 27, *emphasis ours*)

And still Sukhwinder argues that the ‘popular front’ was prescribed by Dimitrov for only those countries where fascism was in power! As the readers can see, Sukhwinder has not even read Dimitrov completely! Had he read Dimitrov’s report from beginning till end, he could not possibly have uttered such non-sense that the policy of the ‘popular front’ was prescribed only for the countries where fascism was in power.

Moreover, why would someone in a sane state of mind say so? Because that means that when fascism is rising to power, there should be no policy of united front! We must first wait for fascism to rise to power, then we will join hands with the social-democrats and other bourgeois parties who are against fascism! But, why? Why first wait for the complete destruction of working-class movement (not to be confused with the revolutionary political offensive of the proletariat), complete elimination of all bourgeois rights and liberties, brutal repression of all opposition, and then, once ‘fascism in power’ has begun to commit all these crimes, only then, Sukhwinder will make a ‘popular front’, or any strategy of united front?

It is quite evident that Sukhwinder is proposing a program of doing nothing against fascism in India, even if he believes that fascism is not in power and even if he believes that there is only a powerful fascist movement in India. That is the reason why except uttering some inanities about “centralization”, “federal rights” (which Sukhwinder would do in the case of any bourgeois government, according to his own Trot-Bundist national chauvinist line), ‘Lalkaar-Pratibaddh’ group has done nothing in particular against the fascist rise. This clearly reveals the rank opportunism of Sukhwinder. In order to justify his indefinite suspension of the most pressing task of the revolutionary proletarian movement in India today, he distorts the whole line of the ‘popular front’ itself, which was incorrect anyway. His argument that right now there is no need to form a ‘popular front’ because ‘fascism is not in power’, his argument that currently it is sufficient in general to work for the socialist revolution and fight for democratic rights (which, for Sukhwinder, is mainly fight for the federal rights of the Punjabi regional bourgeoisie!), show that either he has not read Dimitrov’s report or he is intentionally distorting and trimming its operative part to justify his complete inaction.

Or, may be Sukhwinder might like to say that the particular kind of united front, that is, ‘popular front’ tactics will be implemented when fascism comes to power in India and till that time some other tactics of united front will be implemented. But, then, what is that policy of united front? Is it the united front of the working class? However, he does not utter a single word about this policy, because he does not know what the Leninist policy of ‘united front of the working class’ was, as we have shown above. So, till fascism comes to power, Sukhwinder proposes no particular program of anti-fascism, only thing which remains for him is simply ‘working for the socialist revolution’. It is altogether a different matter that if Punjab is an oppressed nation, as Sukhwinder argues, how can a communist group of Punjab work directly for socialist revolution? Its first and principal task would be to fight for a national democratic revolution, beginning the mass struggles for the unconditional right to self-determination, and calling for a plebiscite! However, Sukhwinder does not even do that! Thus, the overall line is the line of ‘doing nothing’!

In the above excerpt of Sukhwinder that we have quoted, he repeats the same old idiocy that faced with fascism in power, the option before the proletariat is not fascist dictatorship or proletarian dictatorship, but the option is fascist dictatorship or the bourgeois democracy (one particular state-form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and another particular state-form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie). Of course, this line was incorrect as pointed out by Kang Sheng and Mao.

Sukhwinder argues that whether the bourgeois democracy or people’s democracy is established after overthrowing the fascist dictatorship will depend on the balance of class forces, *objectively*

speaking. However, the subjective approach of the proletarian forces will be the task of re-establishing the bourgeois democracy. As Kang Sheng under the guidance of Mao argued that *the very subjective aim* should be the establishment of a people's democracy/new democracy. Whether this materializes or not will depend on *the objective class situation* in a country. However, the positive aim of the communists cannot simply be restoration of the bourgeois democracy.

Moreover, this line, too, is incorrect that faced with fascism in power, the proletariat cannot and must not aim for socialist revolution and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Why? Because the false binary of 'fascist dictatorship vs. bourgeois democracy' was based on the characterization of the fascist dictatorship as the 'most naked and barbaric dictatorship of the most reactionary and chauvinistic elements of the big finance monopoly capital'. This narrowing of the class character of the fascist regime led to a class collaborationist line which meant forming a strategic class alliance with *all other fractions of the bourgeoisie, even big bourgeoisie!* This line had roots in the erroneous political economy regarding the monopoly capital that emerged within the communist movement during the 1930s and 1940s, as we have shown above. We do not need to quote Mao, Kang Sheng as well as Poulantzas here again on this question. The readers can refer to those parts of the critique above.

Finally, whether the fight against fascist dictatorship by the proletariat will lead to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat or people's democracy/new democracy, or under certain objective conditions, of the bourgeois democracy will depend on the particular class political situation of different countries in question. Especially, in the neoliberal phase, when fascism maintains the shell of bourgeois democracy, an eventuality about which Dimitrov himself had talked in his report, and which was later concretized by solid theoretical work by the likes of Poulantzas and many Marxist scholars who have worked particularly on the rise of fascism in the neoliberal phase, it is very clear that the proletariat is not at all faced, *in general*, with the binary of fascist dictatorship vs. bourgeois democracy. We have explained the reasons of the same in earlier part of this essay.

Further.

Sukhwinder blabbers:

"As social democratic and other bourgeois forces are included in the anti-fascist dictatorship united front, that is why this united front will not be for the setting up of proletarian dictatorship. *This would be for some transitional form of the state.*" (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 43, *emphasis ours*)

Here Sukhwinder commits another major blunder. For Dimitrov, the possible 'popular front' governments were not a *transitional form of the state!* Dimitrov is talking about *intermediary stages* after the fascist dictatorship is overthrown or a resurgent fascist threat is defeated; he is arguing that as an intermediary stage, which Dimitrov warns is not a universal intermediary stage and cannot be applied without qualifications and conditions, a 'popular front' or 'proletarian united front' government can be formed.

Would such a government be a 'transitional *form* of the state', as Sukhwinder thinks? No. It shows that Sukhwinder does not understand what a state is and what the form of a particular kind of state is, a fact that we have already pointed to in the very beginning of this critique. What would be the form of the state in case of such 'popular front' or 'proletarian united front' government? It would be the *bourgeois democratic form of multi-party representational electoral parliamentary democracy!* The only difference in the case of people's democracy or new democracy would be that this *form* will be a manifestation of the *democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants*. Those who know ABC of Marxism know that in such a dictatorship the *peasants as a whole* represent the radical bourgeois and petty-bourgeois element, whereas the proletariat represents the proletarian element; however, the *economic and social content* of such

democratic dictatorship is nothing but *radical bourgeois democratic*, as it would implement the radical bourgeois democratic program (like the nationalization of land, democratic rights of the working masses, eight-hour work-day, etc.) not a socialist program. Moreover, the form of the state will not be *soviet democratic form which is engendered by the dictatorship of the proletariat*, but, *bourgeois democratic form of multi-party parliamentary democracy*, even though the soviets/communes might exist along with such parliament/national assembly in certain cases of new democratic or people's democratic state. This is ABC of Marxism and we are not surprised that Sukhwinder is at sea here. His old record prevents us from being surprised.

What did Sukhwinder not understand about state and state-form? Everything!

Finally, a few more words on the question of the binary of *fascist dictatorship/bourgeois democracy* and *fascist dictatorship/proletarian dictatorship*.

Let us first understand the methodological question: first, fascist dictatorship, too, is a particular form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie itself; two, for the bourgeoisie as a political class, bourgeois democracy is the regular and preferred form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie; three, there can be no general historical argument from a consistent Marxist-Leninist position which contends that in cases of fascist dictatorship, the only possible strategy will be restoration of the bourgeois democracy, because the working class is *necessarily* faced with the binary of *fascist dictatorship/bourgeois democracy*; even Dimitrov points out that "That is just as wrong as the former assertion that there will be no intermediary stages in the fascist countries and that *fascist dictatorship is certain to be immediately superseded by proletarian dictatorship*"; fourth, whether the fascist dictatorship is overthrown by a socialist revolution or a people's democratic/new democratic revolution, or a bourgeois democratic restoration through an intermediary stage of a 'popular frontist' government or 'united front' government, is not a foregone conclusion; *such outcomes will always depend on the real and concrete class political situation of a country*; In this regard, we must ask the question: in capitalist countries, which contradiction is the *principal contradiction*, which determines the place and development of all other contradictions. Mao points out:

"For instance, in capitalist society the two forces in contradiction, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, form the principal contradiction. The other contradictions, such as those between the remnant feudal class and the bourgeoisie, between the peasant petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie, between the proletariat and the peasant petty bourgeoisie, between the non-monopoly capitalists and the monopoly capitalists, *between bourgeois democracy and bourgeois fascism*, among the capitalist countries and between imperialism and the colonies, *are all determined or influenced by this principal contradiction.*" (Mao, Tse-tung. 2021. *Selected Works, Volume 1*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 301-02, *emphasis ours*)

Thus, in a capitalist country, the principal contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat *determines* the other non-principal contradictions, which includes the contradiction between *bourgeois fascism* and *bourgeois democracy*. It does not mean that a fascist regime will be overthrown *necessarily* by a proletarian socialist revolution. It means that even if under the particular class political situation, that is, the particular relation of forces, alignment of forces, the accumulation of forces by the two terms of the principal contradiction (i.e., the bourgeoisie and the proletariat), the proletariat has to resort to *a transitional step* of forming a united front workers' government, leading to new democracy/people's democracy (democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants), *it would only be a particular step in the line towards establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat*. Moreover, even if, the weakness of the proletariat is in excess of the weakness of the republican democratic bourgeoisie (which is against fascism, is ready to militantly fight against fascism and which is a rarer species than Tapanuli Orangutan!), and therefore a transitional step involves formation of a government of 'popular frontist' type, *it*

will be determined by the principal contradiction itself and will lead to immediate rupture and intensification of the proletarian class struggle.

This much is certain: *in any case, restoration of the bourgeois democracy is not the only possible option before the proletariat in all scenarios, when faced with a fascist regime.*

Here we have not yet brought the element of the profound changes that fascism has undergone in the neoliberal phase of the imperialist stage. Even in the generic sense, the universalization of the strategy of 'popular frontist' government for the restoration of bourgeois democracy in the face of fascism, smacks of clear class capitulation and class collaboration. Even Dimitrov did not talk in such deterministic and firm class collaborationist terms.

The implementation of the policy of the popular front revealed the disastrous results in Spain as well as France within 3 years. That is the reason why Kang Sheng asked the Spanish comrades, "why bourgeois democracy? Why not new democracy or people's democracy?" That is why, Mao and Kang Sheng point out that the mistake of the 'popular front' forces, despite the brave fight that they put up, the initial victories against Francoist forces and preventing the reactionary quasi-fascist military coup for a few months, was precisely reflected in "refusal to take political power" and "handing the power over to the bourgeoisie".

Finally, in the view of the changes in the *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi* of fascism in the phase of neoliberalism, the decay of the bourgeois democratic content of the shell/form of multiparty parliamentary democracy, the decline of the remaining democratic potentialities of the bourgeoisie as a political class, the shifting of the all decisive powers to the executive, the decline of the legislative, the change in the nature of economic crisis, consequent change in the nature of rise of fascism and its take-over of political power, the *redemptive activity of the fascist forces themselves*, has led to a situation in which the form of multiparty representative electoral bourgeois democracy, *in general*, will not be abandoned by the fascist forces, which will be characterized by a long incubation period, molecular permeation in the society, deep infiltration into the state apparatus. This will allow the fascist forces to go in and out of *the government*, while maintaining its consolidated positions within the state and the society. This stems from the contradictions which naturally originate with the retention of the form of parliamentary democracy. This makes the fascist rise much more durable, much more hegemonic and chronic, though it can take acute forms, too, in certain political conjunctures.

F. Comintern's Reversion from the Policy of the 'Popular Front' to the Policy of the United Front of the Working Class from Below Since November 1938 and Sukhwinder's Complete Ignorance About it

Now let us come to the final point regarding Sukhwinder's ignorance of the history of evolution of the Comintern's policy on united front, namely, his complete unawareness about the fact that *the Comintern itself began to abandon the policy of the 'popular front' from November 1938 itself and abandoned it decisively by 1939, that is, even before the war began, and called for reverting to the policy of the united front of the working class.*

First, we shall look at some of the editorial comments of Jane Degras which point to how the policy of the 'popular front' was doomed from the very beginning. It raised questions before the communists in all countries regarding the dangers of class-collaborationism *inherent* in the policy itself. The comprehension and appreciation of these "dangers" were later recognized as the necessary outcome of the policy of the 'popular front'. Later, we will present the quotes from the documents of the Comintern itself, some of which were written by the leading exponents of the policy of the 'popular front' like Dimitrov and Manuilsky, where they condemned the policy of the 'popular front' (even though an open and transparent self-criticism was circumvented by putting most of the blame on the social-democrats and their capitulation to fascists and reactionaries, *which itself was an admission of the failure of the policy of the 'popular front'!*) and called for a return to the policy of the united front of the working class from below.

Degras points out:

*"The ambiguities of the popular front policy were apparent almost from the outset. In a long article in the Comintern journal at the end of 1936 Thorez explained that the CPF had had to tell the workers the proper time to end strikes 'because the party realized that a more rapid advance on the part of the working class risked its estrangement from the middle classes who were disturbed and made uneasy by the strikes'. He also explained that the slogan of 'French front', issued by the CP in an attempt to appeal to those who would not join a popular front, had caused a strong reaction in the SFIO; therefore, 'in order to avoid polemics . . . we can refrain from using the term "French front"'" (Degras, J. *The Communist International 1919-43, Vol. 3, 1929-43*, p. 401-02, *emphasis ours*)*

This was probably the first admission of the fact that the 'popular front' policy was leading to class-collaborationism and class capitulationism, even though this comment pertained mainly to the concrete considerations regarding the economic struggles of the working class against the bourgeoisie in general, where the unity of the bourgeois elements within the 'popular front' lay with the interests of the bourgeoisie in general, which objectively included the fascists, too.

Degras further points out that towards the end of 1938, Dimitrov himself was admitting the betrayal of the social-democracy, which in itself, was an admission of the failure of the policy of the 'popular front', though in a veiled fashion. Degras writes:

"In the last issue of the journal for 1938, however, Dimitrov wrote: 'A few months before Munich, and also directly preceding the Munich plot, the representatives of the CI approached the chairman of the Second International with the proposal to establish permanent contact between the leadership of the international organizations of the working class and urgently to take joint action to ward off the fascist blow aimed at Czechoslovakia.' All their proposals, he said, were turned down.

"Comment on social-democracy reverted to the style in use before the popular front. An article in the same periodical at the end of the year said the international united front could not come into being 'unless the predominant influence of social-democratism is eliminated', and another article in the same issue ended with a quotation from Stalin; 'It is impossible to put an end to capitalism without having first put an end to social-democratism in the working-class movement.' The editorial article said: 'The reactionary cliques of the English and French upper classes knew very well how easy it would have been to force Hitler to draw back. But they knew also that a political defeat of Hitler would shake the very foundations of fascism and call into being a mighty upsurge of the anti-fascist freedom movement... The protection of their class interests was more important to them than the protection of the vital interests of their own nations and of humanity as a whole... It is becoming clearer and clearer that Munich was the result of a secret, previously agreed, and scandalous plot.'

"The breakdown of the popular front policy was shown also in the attack on pacifism. 'It is absurd and at the same time distressing that the fear of war felt by the nations goes to increase the war danger, that pacifism is pouring oil on the flames kindled by the warmongers... While fascism fosters the ideology of a war of conquest, the accomplices of fascism in the democratic countries attempt to set up cowardice as a philosophy... The French Trotskyists ... have coined the term "Better a slave than dead"... This contemptible principle is being put forward by the agents of the Gestapo with the object of emasculating the working class... It is contrary to the innermost essence of the working class... Freedom is more precious than peace.' The 'total pacifists' believed in friendly

relations with gangsters; peace, they thought, could be saved by weakness, arguing that 'nothing could be more dangerous than to bar the way to fascism with an overwhelming superiority of military forces'. The intention behind the pacifist proposals was to weaken the democratic States so far that they would no longer be able to offer resistance to aggression, but would have to 'submit to German fascism without a struggle and without conditions'. The article ended with a quotation from Lenin: 'Pacifism and abstract peace propaganda are ways of misleading the working class.'" (*ibid*, p. 427-28, *emphasis ours*)

Degras points out further:

"In September 1938 the KPD central committee appealed for the amalgamation of all groups and parties opposed to Hitler. Wieden wrote (Communist International, August 1938) that fascism was not 'a quantitative modification of bourgeois democracy'; it was 'qualitatively different'; under bourgeois democracy the working class could organize and fight. It was 'the Trotskyist agents of the Gestapo' who denied the essential difference between fascism and bourgeois democracy. 'During the last three years the communists of all countries have proved themselves to be the most stubborn and tireless defenders of bourgeois-democratic liberties.' *Kautsky was opposed to SPD-KPD collaboration. 'Should the Russians reach agreement with Germany and Japan, then communists everywhere would become auxiliaries of the fascists.' In Paris the German popular front committee collapsed in the autumn of 1938.*" (*ibid*, p. 428, *emphasis ours*)

From the beginning of 1939, the voices against the tactics of the 'popular front' became increasingly vocal. In fact, one of the chief architects of the theory of the 'popular front' besides Dimitrov, Dmitry Manuilsky, was attacking the policy of the 'popular front' in March 1939 itself. Degras points out:

"At the eighteenth CPSU congress in March 1939 *Manuilsky, reporting as chief Soviet representative on the ECCL, criticized the application of popular front tactics. These had given rise to opportunist tendencies, 'a tendency to idealize the role of the so-called democratic States, and to gloss over their imperialist character... The communists of the capitalist countries are not sufficiently prepared for the abrupt turns in events, and have not yet mastered the forms of struggle dictated by the tense international situation.'* The Spanish Republic might have been saved if the LSI had accepted the CI's proposals for unity of action (the last Comintern representatives left Spain in March 1939), and this would also have averted the occupation of Austria and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia; it would have made Munich impossible, defeated the Italians in Abyssinia and the Japanese in China. '*But the capitulators of the Second International did not want this to happen because they feared the victory of the people's front more than they feared the victory of fascism.'* War could still be avoided by isolating these capitulators and destroying their influence-'they are the agents of fascism in the labour movement'- and if the democracies, so much stronger than the aggressors, exerted economic pressure." (*ibid*, p. 434, *emphasis ours*)

As you can see, Manuilsky calls the social-democrats as 'the agents of fascism' in the working-class movement. If that was *the character of the social-democrats, then, the whole policy of the 'popular front', its entire foundation, was incorrect.* This statement of Manuilsky is an admission of that fact and also the admission of the failure of the Seventh Congress's policy on the anti-fascist united front and Dimitrov's theses, which was centred on the anti-fascist character of social-democrats and other liberal bourgeois forces.

The role of the social-democrats in the failure of the 'popular front' was admitted again and again by the Comintern documents since the end of 1938 itself.

"In France, where a number of communist deputies had been arrested and their party declared illegal, the arguments ran on similar lines, after the return of Guyot from Moscow on 20 September. *'It was in order to prepare war that the leaders of the radical and socialist parties, obeying the orders of reaction, broke up the popular front, destroyed unity of action, and provoked a new split in the CGT.'* Reaction, with Blum's help, had strangled the Spanish Republic, surrendered to Hitler, and obstructed the peace front proposed by the USSR. *'The present war is being conducted on both sides for imperialist aims that are wholly alien to the interests of the workers.'* After the Soviet-German treaty the CPF had made serious mistakes; it did not protest against the war but voted the war credits; this had made for confusion and weakened the mass struggle against war, against the treason of the socialists and the renegades from the CPF. '" (ibid, p. 442-43, emphasis ours)

Degras makes many such comments in her editorial notes to the documents of the Comintern since November 1938 itself. Therefore, let us see some of the original documents of the Comintern and what did they say about 'popular frontism' and the role of social-democracy especially since the practical failure of the policy of the 'popular front' in Spain and France. From November 1938, Dimitrov himself refers to "change in the situation" and argues that even though in the colonial countries the policy of 'people's front' are still applicable, in the rest of the capitalist countries, it is "no longer applicable"!

As will become clear by the quotations that we shall present in a little while, this was only a way to avoid a clear and open self-criticism on the policy of the 'popular front'. *In fact, in the colonial world, it is quite natural to form alliance with the anti-imperialist national bourgeoisie and in this regard, the 'popular front' has no relevance; much before the stipulation of the line of the 'popular front', it was a well-accepted general line in anti-imperialist anti-feudal struggle. Dimitrov was attempting to retain some 'partial applicability' of the policy of the 'popular front' by referring to the political situation in the colonial world.* However, it becomes very clear from the following statement of Dimitrov himself that the assessment of the anti-fascist role of the social-democracy and all other fractions of the bourgeoisie except 'the most reactionary and most chauvinistic elements of the big monopoly finance capital' made in the report of Dimitrov in the Seventh Congress of the Comintern was thoroughly and foundationally incorrect. Dimitrov writes in, what was termed as 'a fundamental document of the Comintern' as Degras points out, an article on 'The Tasks of the Working Class in the War', written in November 1939:

"The People's Front Movement awakened wide masses of people in town and country to activity, and rallied them to the struggle to uphold their own interests against the reactionary cliques. This movement rendered it possible to postpone for a time the outbreak of the European war. The tactics of the united people's front are fully applicable, even now, in China and also in colonial and dependent countries, the people of which are conducting a struggle for their national liberation.

"But these tactics, in the form in which they were conducted before the present war, are no longer suitable for other countries. The necessity of changing the tactics is conditioned by the *change in the situation* and the tactics [tasks] facing the working class and also by the position occupied in connection with the imperialist war by the leading circles of the parties that previously took part in the popular front.

"The tactics of the united people's front presupposed joint action by the communist parties and the social-democratic and petty-bourgeois 'democratic' and 'radical'

parties against reaction and war. But the top sections of these parties are now openly supporting the imperialist war.

"The social-democratic, 'democratic', and 'radical' flunkeys of the bourgeoisie, are brazenly distorting the anti-fascist slogans of the Popular Front, and are using them to deceive the masses of the people and to cover up the imperialist character of the war." (ibid, p. 455-56, emphasis ours)

It is clear from the above quote itself that Dimitrov is trying to circumvent the responsibility of self-criticism on the policy of the 'popular front'. One might ask: *did not he know the character of the social-democracy from its political behaviour in the pre-war period itself, which clearly reveals its principal culpability in the rise of fascists, from the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht to the betrayal of working class between 1924 to 1929 and then its complete capitulation during the policy of "lesser evil" during the authoritarian governments of Brüning, von Papen and Schleicher, and its support to all governments in repression of the German communists? Did not the social-democrats support the imperialist wars ever since 1914 itself? Was this behaviour of the social-democrats new or surprising in anyway? What else did Dimitrov expect? Did it become clear only when the social-democracy repeated these sins during the war?*

Moreover, the collapse of the 'popular front' in France and Spain happened *before* the war, not *during* the war. Therefore, Dimitrov's arguments regarding the "change in the situation" due to the war is not convincing at all. Much before the outbreak of the war, the disastrous results of the policy of the 'popular front' were clear as day-light.

Dimitrov writes further in the same article:

"It clearly follows from the above that the communists can have no united front whatsoever with those in a common front with the imperialists and support the criminal anti-popular war. The working class and all working people have nothing in common with the social-democratic, 'democratic', and 'radical' politicians who are betraying the vital interests of the popular masses. Between the masses of the people and these lackeys of imperialism lies the abyss of war." (ibid, p. 456, emphasis ours)

Is not this a complete *volte-face* by Dimitrov? Can one claim that Dimitrov came to know about this treacherous nature of the social-democracy, its anti-communist and anti-people character and its authoritarian tendencies only after the war? That would be a preposterous claim from the standpoint of history as well as theory. The non-transparent and circumventing attitude of Dimitrov becomes clear when he calls for a 'united front from below', 'militant working-class unity' and calls such a united front as the "real popular front"! Thus, on the one hand Dimitrov is effectively arguing against the policy of the 'popular front' in the name of "change in the situation due to the war" (which is a flimsy argument as we already saw) and on the other hand, instead of openly calling for reversion to 'united front of the working class', he talks about "real popular front"! *So, was the popular front before the start of the war, and proposed by the Seventh Congress through his report, as "sham popular front"? Of course not! Dimitrov is actually accepting the failure of the policy of the 'popular front' and calling for a return to the Leninist policy of the united front of the working class.*

Later, the Comintern documents call for this return by directly evoking the authority and legacy of Lenin, as we shall see soon. Dimitrov, in the same article, also accepts, in veiled terms, *the mistake of conflating the class with the parties and accepts that it is possible to win over the democratic, radical and left-leaning masses of the people directly, and not through their parties (social-democratic, syndicalists, anarchists, radical bourgeois parties)! Dimitrov fails to explain why this became possible only after the war! Moreover, he refers back to war again and again to hide the failure of the 'popular front'. However, as we know, the popular front had already failed before the war in Spain as well as France. Dimitrov writes:*

“In the preceding period the communists strove to secure the establishment of a united popular front by agreement with the social-democratic and other petty-bourgeois 'democratic' and 'radical' parties in the person of their leading bodies on the basis of a common platform of struggle against fascism and war. *But to the extent that the principal leaders of these parties have crossed over wholly and completely into the camp of the imperialists, while certain of them, such as the French radicals, are directly in charge of the conduct of the war, there can be no question of such agreements.*

“Now the mustering of the working class, of the peasantry, of the urban working folk and of the progressive intelligentsia can and must be brought about apart from and against the leadership of these parties, on the basis of the struggle against the imperialist war and reaction in **a united front from below.**

“Such a united fighting front of the masses cannot be brought about *without a most resolute struggle against the social-democratic, 'democratic', and 'radical' flunkeys of imperialism, for the elimination of the influence of these agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class movement and for their isolation from the masses of the working people.*” (*ibid*, p. 457, *emphasis ours*)

Can anyone differentiate between the terminologies used about the social-democrats in this article of Dimitrov from the terminologies used about the social-democrats before the stipulation of the policy of the ‘popular front’? Can such a U-turn regarding the *very political character of the social-democrats* be explained by the contingent factors? No! Dimitrov becomes even more unequivocal about his condemnation of the role of the social-democrats. In this process, he inadvertently accepts that the social-democrats had already revealed their chauvinistic and deceiving character during the First World War! But, then how did the communists forget about this while presenting the line of the ‘popular front’? Dimitrov opines:

“*The social-democratic leaders will not succeed for long in deceiving the masses, as they were able to do during the first imperialist war. Their treacherous policy, their anti-communist, anti-Soviet drive is already causing acute discontent in the ranks of the social-democratic parties themselves.*

“If the communists are to be able successfully to fulfil this role of theirs, they must show an example of the correct understanding of the essence of the present war and utterly smash the legend regarding its allegedly anti-fascist, just character so assiduously spread about by the social-democratic leaders.

“*Explain, explain, and once again explain the real state of affairs to the masses.* This above all at the present moment is the most important condition for the mobilization of the masses for the struggle against the imperialist war and capitalist reaction.” (*ibid*, p. 458, *emphasis ours*)

In the same article, we also hear about the ‘independence of the communist parties’ in their ‘leading role’, which was in effect sacrificed by the very policy of the ‘popular front’, as pointed out by none other than Mao and under his guidance, by Kang Sheng, as we saw above. Dimitrov writes:

“The communist parties must rapidly reorganise their ranks in accordance with the conditions of the war, purge their ranks of capitulatory elements, and establish bolshevik discipline. *They must concentrate the fight against opportunism, expressed in slipping into the position of ‘defending the Fatherland’, in support of the fairy-tale about the anti-fascist character of the war, and in retreat before the acts of repression of the bourgeoisie.*

“The sooner the communist parties achieve all this the better will they be able to carry through *their independent leading role in the working-class movement* and the more successfully can they fulfil the tasks now facing them.” (*ibid*, p. 459, *emphasis ours*)

Readers might have noticed that there is partial reversion to the call of concentrating fight against social-democracy, too, in the above excerpt, which was completely given up after the Seventh Congress under the leadership of Dimitrov and Manuilsky. A little note about the relation of the war with the end of the policy of the popular front is needed here. Let us remember that the popular front collapsed before September 1939, when the Second World War started. The following endnote from the second volume of the *Selected Works* of Mao (edited by the CPC under the leadership of Mao himself), clears this fact:

“The defence of Madrid, starting in October 1936, lasted for two years and five months. In 1936, fascist Germany and Italy made use of the Spanish fascist warlord Franco to launch a war of aggression against Spain. The Spanish people, led by the Popular Front Government, heroically defended democracy against aggression. The battle of Madrid, the capital of Spain, was the bitterest in the whole war. *Madrid fell in March 1939 because Britain, France and other imperialist countries assisted the aggressors by their hypocritical policy of “non-intervention” and because divisions arose within the Popular Front.*” (Mao Tse-tung, 2021. *Selected Works, Volume 2*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 17)

As is clear, the ‘popular front’ was in tatters much before 1939 began. In France, the ‘popular front’ collapsed in the autumn of 1938 itself. *Therefore, this repeated reference by Dimitrov to the outbreak of war as the nodal point, which necessitated the shift back to the policy of the united front of the working class from the policy of the ‘popular front’, is not convincing at all.* The change in attitude towards the social-democrats is a virtual return to the attitude towards them before the Seventh Congress. Degras points out that Manuilsky’s words from 1940 reveal this fact clearly:

“In the same issue of the periodical Manuilsky wrote: ‘Never during the two decades the Comintern has been in existence has *the question of the liquidation of social-democratism in the working-class movement been so acute an immediate practical task as it is at the present time.*’” (*ibid*, p. 464, *emphasis ours*)

From here on, the call for ‘united front from below’, ‘united front of the working class’, the ‘popular front of the working people’ (excluding the bourgeoisie!) is repeated again and again. The ECCI in its May Day Manifesto from 1940, says:

“Peace, bread, and freedom—such is the battle cry of the many millions of the army of labour.

“But the mass movement is as yet divided; the bourgeoisie are attempting to hold it back by their military and police terror. To break the barriers set up by bourgeois reaction, the proletarians and working people need united action. They need it so as to merge the as yet divided and scattered movements into one mighty current. *In each separate country they need a united workers’ front, a popular front of the working people, established from below by the masses.*” (*ibid*, p. 470, *emphasis ours*)

It is clarified that the united front of the working class can only be built by decisive and resolute struggle against the social-democrats! This manifesto points out further:

“Proletarians, working people, colonial peoples! The guarantee of the success of your struggle lies in the unification of your forces. Hammer out the *United Front of Labour* against the offensive of capital, the front of freedom against reaction,

the front of peace against imperialist war, the front of the exploited and oppressed against their exploiters and oppressors.

“Only in a ruthless struggle against the social-democratic leaders, against the treacherous top leaders of the Second International can the working people establish such a fighting front. Close your ranks with the great land of Socialism. Defend its peace policy, which expresses the innermost aspirations of the peoples of all lands. Demonstrate on May Day for peace, against the provocators and incendiaries of war.” (ibid, p. 470, emphasis ours)

As we can see, this time even the colonial world is accepted to be unfit for the application of the policy of the ‘popular front’ as formulated by Dimitrov in the Seventh Congress! In fact, if we read the Comintern documents closely, it becomes clear that even before the outbreak of the war in September 1939, the Comintern had started to accept the failure of the ‘popular front’, though putting all the blame on the social-democracy for the same! However, this pretext does not work because it was precisely the incorrect theorization of the class character of fascism (‘the most reactionary and chauvinistic elements of the big monopoly finance capital’), the character of the social-democracy and a false *necessary binary* (bourgeois democracy/fascist dictatorship) that had led to the practical disaster in France and Spain. A document immediately after the collapse of the French popular front (ECCI manifesto on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, November 1938), almost a year before the outbreak of the war points out:

“Workers! Do not let yourselves be led astray by the treachery of the bourgeois politicians to the People’s Front. Let the traitors break with the People’s Front movement - their departure will only be a gain to it. *You are faced with a big and noble task, namely, not only to strengthen but also to extend the front of the people.* New people and new sections of the population, who do not barter the fate of their country and their people, will join with you in the struggle against reactionary traitors, in the struggle to save the people.

“Who can hammer out this broad front against fascist brigandage? Only a united working class.

“The working class is the greatest force in modern society. It is the real master of the world, if it is united.” (ibid, p. 432-33, emphasis ours)

This is practically a call to revert to united front of the working class! The same manifesto writes further:

“In face of the international conspiracy of fascism, international working class unity has become a matter that brooks no delay. The Communist International carries on an unceasing struggle for this unity. It has repeatedly made the proposal to the Labour and Socialist International to establish united action by the international working class. Millions of workers throughout the world demand unity. Unity is desired by many social-democratic and trade union organizations.

“But this unity is not wanted by the reactionary leaders entrenched in the leadership of the Second International and in a number of social-democratic parties and trade unions. They systematically disrupt the formation of a united, anti-fascist, working-class fighting front. It is they who, while retreating step by step before fascism, conduct a shameless slanderous campaign against the land of socialism. It is they who gather up with a solicitous hand from the cesspool of fascism, the Trotskyist agents of the Gestapo, whom they allow to do wrecking work in the labour movement with impunity.” (ibid, p. 433, emphasis ours)

Again, a clear-cut admission of the mischaracterization of the social-democracy as an anti-fascist force in the particular situation that emerged after the complete defeat of the working class (not to be confused with the political proletarian offensive, which was defeated much before the beginning of the rise of fascism), by the Dimitrov theses.

ECCI's May Day Manifesto from April 1939 clearly calls upon the workers associated with the social-democratic parties and organizations to "break the resistance of their leaders" to form a united front:

"Upon whom does the unity of action of the international working class now depend? Upon the Socialist and Trade Union Internationals. Should their leaders so desire, unity can become an accomplished fact tomorrow. The international working class will become a force exercising decisive influence on the march of events. By its unity of action it will launch a powerful people's front movement in all capitalist countries. This will mark a serious setback for fascism, the beginning of its downfall.

"Do you want this, Labour and Socialist workers? If you do, then break the resistance of your leaders to united action of the working class, and strengthen unity together with your class brothers, the communists." (*ibid*, p. 439, *emphasis ours*)

The calls to overthrow the social-democratic leadership to the mass of workers and the calls to abandon the old 'popular front' policy and revert to the policy of the united front of the working class becomes more vocal and clearer with time. In the ECCI Manifesto on the 22nd Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, we find these words:

"It is the Blums who, at the dictates of reaction, disrupted the united working-class and people's front in France. It is on the demand of Blum that members of the communist parliamentary group are being court martialled, that communist municipal councils are being disbanded, and that communists are being arrested in thousands. It is Blum, together with Jouhaux, who - on orders from the magnates of finance capital - is splitting the French trade unions. It is the Blums, together with the British Labour leaders, who prevented united action of the international proletariat.

"Proletarians and working people! More than ever before you need active unity for the struggle against war, reaction, and the capitalist offensive. But now this unity is only possible apart from, and against, the leaders of social-democracy, who have crossed over wholly and completely to the service of the imperialists.

"There can be neither a united Workers' Front, nor a People's Front, with them, or with the leaders of the other petty-bourgeois parties that are supporting the war.

*"Now working-class unity, and the united people's front, **must be established from below**, in a struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie, against the top leaders of the social-democratic and other petty-bourgeois parties, who have gone bankrupt and have crossed over to the camp of the imperialists, in a struggle to stop the imperialist war, that is bringing ruin, starvation, and death to millions of working people.*

"Hundreds of thousands of social-democratic workers now stand at the parting of the ways.

"Where is their place, in the camp of imperialist reaction, or with their class brothers waging a struggle against it? With the instigators of imperialist war, or with the millions of workers and peasants who are thirsting for peace? With the

stranglers and butchers of liberty, or with those who are self-sacrificingly defending it?" (*ibid*, p. 447, *emphasis ours*)

As is evident, the same leaders of the social-democrats, socialists and radical petty-bourgeois parties, like Blum, who were being considered as allies in fight against fascism and reaction, are not being blamed for the "failure of the popular front", as if the exhibition of such character by these parties and their leaders was something contingent originating due to the war! However, it is clear that the 'popular front' had already collapsed in autumn 1938 and the reference to the repression of the communists belongs to the period before the war itself! The above excerpt clearly calls for going back to the policy of the united front of the working class, the original Leninist version of it.

We can reproduce many such excerpts from the documents of the Comintern since the late-1938, where the Comintern is clearly rejecting the policy of the 'popular front' and is calling for a return to the policy of the 'united front of the working class'. Even though, at certain points, leaders of the Comintern try to create pretexts for this reversion, it becomes clear with time that actual practice has revealed the policy of the 'popular front' to have failed disastrously and also the fact that *the very foundational elements of the theory of the 'popular front', especially the characterization of the social-democrats and other radical bourgeois parties as well as the extreme narrowing down of the class character of fascism to 'the most reactionary and chauvinistic elements of the big monopoly finance capital' were incorrect and cleared the highway to class capitulationism and class collaborationism.*

The question is not whether *particular united front from above*, that is, tactical alliances on particular issues can be formed with the social-democrats and other radical bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties or not. Of course, such particular united fronts from above were an inherent part of the Leninist policy of the united front of the working class. However, the question was whether a *general united front from above*, a general anti-fascist united front, based on the incorrect political economy of 'the most reactionary elements of big monopoly capital vs. all', should be formed or not. The question was whether all other fractions of the bourgeoisie, except this narrow circle of 'the most reactionary elements', can be allies in the anti-fascist struggle in general? *The actual historical practice made it clear that the policy of the 'popular front' cannot be the general anti-fascist united front policy for the communists. It failed in the 1930s and it would lead to (and, in fact, it is leading to!) even greater disasters today, as even the remaining democratic potentialities of the bourgeoisie in the 1930s, are rarities today.* Moreover, the very emptying of the form of the bourgeois democracy especially since the beginning of the neoliberal phase, following the crisis of the 1970s, has made such a policy totally an anomaly and absurdity today.

Sukhwinder has written a separate subhead in his essay on the Comintern and fascism; he has presented copious quotations from Dimitrov (though, without understanding most of them and often selectively leaving the portions that do not bode well for the idiocy of his line, as we have seen above); he has presented the policy of the popular front as the universal policy against 'fascism in power' to be applied by the communists and asserts that this policy is applicable even today! He claims that the policy of the 'popular front' was designed for 'fascism in power' only!

We have seen that all these claims of Sukhwinder are ridiculous and have nothing to do either with history or the Marxist theory or with the policy of the 'popular front' as adopted by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. *The editor of 'Pratibaddh' is completely unaware of the fact that the policy of the 'popular front' originated in France in 1933-34 itself and it was precisely this event that led Dimitrov and Manuilsky to formulate the policy of the 'popular front' and convince the rest of the CPSU (B) as well as the Comintern parties on this policy. Sukhwinder is utterly incapable to understand the fact that Dimitrov had proposed this policy as an antidote, not only to fascism in power, but against fascism in general, including the countries where there is a powerful fascist movement. Why he failed to understand this? Because he does not know that the policy of*

the 'popular front' was not simply attempted to be applied in Germany and Italy, but even before that it was being implemented in Spain and France; in fact, in his report to the Seventh Congress itself, Dimitrov talks about it and credits the French communists in the formulation of the policy of the 'popular front'. Sukhwinder is completely oblivious of the fact that, leaving alone the present conjuncture, the Comintern itself abandoned the line of the 'popular front' in 1938-39 itself and reverted to the Leninist line of the united front of the working class.

Why did not Sukhwinder comprehend it? Because he never attempted to read the primary sources, especially, the documents of the Comintern; he did not even read Dimitrov's report properly which his organization has now published as the guiding document of forming anti-fascist front in India, when fascism rises to power! Sukhwinder is also at sea about the entire history of the evolution of anti-fascist fronts since 1921-22 itself within the Comintern, the Leninist line of united front of the working class, the period of right-deviationism since the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, the period of "left" deviationism combined with right opportunism since the Fifth Congress, and finally the ultra-left turn since the Sixth Congress, the pathological reaction to which was the right-deviationist line of the 'popular front' rooted in an incorrect political economy and political theory; and finally, the realization of this mistake since the early-1938 and calls for reversion to the Leninist line of united front of the working class.

Due to the complete ignorance regarding the history of the evolution of thinking on the question of anti-fascist united front, Sukhwinder wanders in his wonderland of inanities. He imagines that the entire period preceding the Seventh Congress was a period of "left" sectarian deviations and it was Dimitrov, who then, incarnated to correct this mistake and facilitate the total conception of the supreme idea of the 'popular front'! Such is the scatter-brained character of the chieftain of the Trot-Bundists. As we can see from the above discussion, the policy which tragically failed during the 1930s itself, was abandoned by Dimitrov, Manuilsky as well as the rest of the Comintern leadership in favour of reversion to the Leninist policy of the united front, is being revived in the most farcical fashion as the 'universal general anti-fascist united front policy for communists' today, when it will and it is clearly leading to even greater disasters. This is the clearest example of 'first as tragedy, then as farce.'

(To be continued...)