

Excerpts from

'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' Group's
Understanding of Fascism

A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders

- Abhinav Sinha

(The following are the excerpts from the critique of a particularly dogmatic and fatuous brand of politics represented by a left group in Punjab on the question of historical fascism as well as contemporary fascism which was published by 'Rahul Foundation' in form of a book 'A Menagerie of dogmatic Blunders' earlier this year. 'The Anvil' strongly recommends its readers to read, in its entirety, this essential work on one of the most burning questions of our day. This work not only discusses in detail the question of classical fascism and its incarnations in Germany and Italy in the first half of the Twentieth century but also systematically and comprehensively deals with the question of the 'new' in contemporary fascist rise especially in the last quarter of the Twentieth century and the first quarter of the Twenty-first century, thus underlining the universalities as well as particularities of the fascism, as a form of exceptional state and as a very particular type of far-right reactionary social movement. Moreover, the aforementioned work also deals extensively with the question of anti-fascist strategy in the present times and presents a thoroughgoing Leninist critique of 'popular front' policy adopted by Comintern in 1935. A must-read for all political activists, students and scholars trying to make sense of the world around them.

Please note that all the references in the brackets correspond with the original text of the book. - Editor)

There has been a raging debate within the revolutionary left movement of India regarding the characterization

of the Modi-Shah regime, the nature of fascism in the Twenty-first century, the elements of change that characterize the fascist rise today and the possible proletarian strategy and general tactics to fight against the present fascist rise. In this debate, several positions have emerged hitherto. One characterizes the present regime as the 'dictatorship of the neoliberal capital'; another characterizes it as fascist, but at the same time, argues that the Indian bourgeoisie is comprador; yet another tendency believes that there are fascist 'tendencies' in the present regime, however, the fascization of the state is not complete; another tendency sees Modi regime as religious fundamentalist regime.

There is one tendency which is a peculiar example of idiocy represented by the 'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' Group. They argue (i) since India is a multinational country, fascism will find it particularly difficult to rise to power; (ii) since there is caste system in India, fascist rise to power is quite unlikely in India; (iii) since the GDP growth rate in India has been above 7 percent in the past few years, Indian bourgeoisie is not faced with a crisis of profitability and therefore, there is no basis for the rise of fascism in India; (iv) since there is no economic crisis, there is no political crisis, which appears as an evolutionary development of the economic crisis itself, in countries where the bourgeoisie is economically incapable of preventing the economic crisis from developing into a political crisis; (v) since, unlike Germany and Italy of the early-Twentieth century, there is no revolutionary political offensive of the proletariat or organized workers' movement in India today, the bourgeoisie does not have the need to fall into the arms of fascist reaction; (vi) since there is no danger of Bolshevism and proletarian revolution hovering over the head of the bourgeoisie, the latter would not resort to fascist reaction. And there are many other points which reveal the utterly poor understanding, or a complete lack thereof, regarding fascism in the essay of Sukhwinder, the editor of 'Pratibaddh' and the leader of the 'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' group.

In the present essay, we will deal with each of these assertions one-by-one systematically and show the particularly inane and dogmatic understanding of the leader of this group 'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh', Sukhwinder. We have demonstrated the non-Marxist, erroneous and dim-witted understanding of this group and its leader on the national question, linguistic question, the question of MSP and the agrarian and peasant questions in general, Covid crisis and several other issues. Consequently, when Sukhwinder presented his particularly imbecile understanding of fascism, we were not surprised at all. This group has singularly assumed the responsibility of spreading stupidity in the left movement of Punjab. As Marxists, we are obliged to deal with this infantile tendency repeatedly. This critique, too, is an addition in the same series. In the same process, we will also deal with certain other tendencies as a relevant and pertinent detour, which fail to understand the elements of continuity and change in the present fascist rise in India and the way in which fascism exists and functions in present phase of neoliberalism.

Now let us deal with the menagerie of dogmatic blunders committed by the 'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' group's leadership.

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How to Misunderstand the Basics of Marxism: The Sukhwinder Way

Sukhwinder contends in the very beginning of his essay:

It is held by some that the B.J.P. regime, in power since 2014, is a fascist regime. Here only a façade of bourgeois democracy remains. Yet Marxist understanding of bourgeois democracy is that it is only a façade for bourgeois dictatorship. Thus, the upholders of 'façade' theory obliterate the difference between bourgeois democracy and fascist regime. The upholders of 'façade' theory hold that since 2014 a fascist regime exists in India but they do not glean out any practical task from this. According to them even when bourgeois democracy existed in India, their central task was establishment of dictatorship of proletariat and even after 2014, since the establishment of fascist regime, the task remains that of the establishment of proletarian dictatorship. Thus, once again they obliterate the difference between bourgeois democracy and fascist regime. As Gramsci said that if you speak of changed situation but do not deduce any changed task accordingly then in reality this means that according to you the situation has not at all changed. (Sukhwinder. 2023. *On Fascism and On Fascism in India*, New Horizons Publication, p. 5)

The very opening paragraph of the essay written by Sukhwinder reveals his utter inability to understand the simplest of things.

By the way, the basic ethics of dialog is that one categorically mentions their opponent in the debate or critique. This is also a sign of basic revolutionary courage. However, Sukhwinder has erected various effigies to attack and never mentions *us* in particular, even when he is shadow-boxing with us. He never mentions us as one of the targets of his criticism. However, it is very clear that he is actually targeting his understanding of our position on various points. He involves in these "intellectual" acrobatics because he lacks the courage to engage one-on-one with us in any debate, as was clear in the course of debate on the national question, the question of language, farmers' movement, and the question of MSP. And in the case of fascism, too, he is resorting to the same cowardly tactic.

For instance, he argues that our claim is that only a "naqaab" (façade, an incorrect translation of the word 'naqaab' by this group) of bourgeois democracy remains today. However, those who have read our writings on fascism know that we make no such claim. We argue that in the neoliberal phase of the imperialist stage, the *shell* or *form* of bourgeois democracy remains, whereas the content of the bourgeois democracy remains in the perpetual process of decay, which is never complete.

Now, the form of a thing or a process, is not simply a "naqaab" or mask. The form of something is closely related with the its content; there is a relation of relative autonomy between the form and the content, but the form corresponds to the content with a dynamic lag temporally and spatially. It is not something artificial which has been imposed or put on from without having no rigorous, organic or logical relation with the content, as is the case with "naqaab" (mask).

Similarly, the claim that bourgeois democracy is a “naqaab” or mask of bourgeois dictatorship, is such an ignorant claim that no Marxist, acquainted with the basics of Marxism, would dare to make. Bourgeois democracy is a particular *form* that the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie assumes. It is the preferred and regular form of rule for the bourgeoisie. However, there can be other forms of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Bourgeois rule can as efficiently assume the form of a monarchy (constitutional or otherwise), a Bonapartist regime, a military dictatorship or a fascist rule. *The question as to what form the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie would assume depends on the historical context and political situation in which a bourgeoisie and a capitalist system find themselves.* These historical and political conditions include the process of historical transition from feudalism to capitalism in the country in question, the state of the capitalist economy, the political situation of the class struggle in the bourgeois society, the international situation in which a capitalist country finds itself, among others.

Sukhwinder juxtaposes bourgeois democracy with fascist dictatorship or fascist rule, *as if* bourgeois democracy represents the rule of the bourgeoisie whereas the fascist dictatorship represents the rule of a different class. Sukhwinder wonders how can we set the strategic task as the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat before 2014, when we believed that there was bourgeois democracy, and also after 2014, when we allegedly believe that bourgeois democracy has vanished (even though it is a particularly dishonest vulgarization of our position)? Does not this obliterate the difference between bourgeois democracy and fascist dictatorship? For Sukhwinder, the task of proletarian revolution and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat can be justified only if there is no fascist rule. Since, bourgeois democracy is also at the same time bourgeois dictatorship, the task of establishing proletarian dictatorship can be justified only if there is bourgeois democracy! In case of fascist rule, the task of establishing the proletarian dictatorship cannot be justified. Why? *What is the essence and class nature of a fascist dictatorship?* Is it feudal? Does it represent something else than the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie? As is clear, Sukhwinder is at sea regarding the question of *form* and *content* (*class nature*) of the state. Let us explain this point, so as to expose the total ignorance of Sukhwinder regarding the basics of Marxism.

The State and the Form of the State: The Dialectic of Content and Form

First of all, the bourgeois dictatorship (the class essence or nature of the state) can assume a variety of forms besides its regular and preferred form, namely, a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The form that it would assume depends on a variety of historical and political factors that we mentioned above.

Second, *the strategy of revolution* against the fascist rule, too, would depend on a variety of historical and political factors. The Comintern, or the German Communist Party or the Italian Communist Party did not assume that the immediate task in case of fascist rule *cannot be* the establishment of proletarian dictatorship, and this task will *necessarily* be that of re-establishment of the bourgeois democracy. It was not always axiomatic for the international communist movement. The Comintern as well as these communist parties adopted the program of re-establishment of bourgeois democracy as a result of combination

of two factors: first, a serious right deviation from 1933 on this question in the Comintern itself and second, it was adopted only when the proletarian resistance, communist movement and the working-class movement in general had been completely crushed and destroyed. Even in that situation, the correctness of this line is under serious questions, as we shall see later in this essay. On this question, our own understanding has evolved from serious suspicions about the policy of the 'popular front' to a full-fledged criticism of this policy. The readers will see this later on. Anyhow, before this political situation emerged, even in the fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the strategic tasks for revolutionary communists had been socialist revolution and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, even though in that period, too, the vacillation between the "left" as well as right deviation alternated. However, even those who maintained a relatively correct position among revolutionary communists did not consider it apodictic that in case of fascist regime, the only possible strategy of revolution for the proletariat would be restoration of the bourgeois democracy. We shall see the entire history of evolution of the Comintern line on the united front and also present a critical evaluation of the same, later in the essay. The point that we want to make right now is that Sukhwinder is totally oblivious about this history and when he does present an account of this evolution, that is completely off the mark.

For Sukhwinder, it is axiomatic that in case of the fascist rule, the *only* possible strategic horizon before the revolutionary communists, is the re-establishment of bourgeois democracy. We shall also see how Mao and Kang Sheng criticized this erroneous line. He is totally ignorant regarding the change in the strategy of revolutionary communists in the changing class political situation. This also reveals the illusions regarding bourgeois democracy that Sukhwinder harbors despite claiming that bourgeois democracy is just a "naqaab" of bourgeois dictatorship. Okay! Then the only difference between fascism and bourgeois democracy is that the bourgeoisie abandons that "naqaab", that mask! Or else, Sukhwinder believes that the class essence of fascist rule is not bourgeois dictatorship! If the class nature of the bourgeois democracy as well as the fascist rule is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, then there is no change in the class nature or the class essence of the state. Then what changes according to Sukhwinder? According to him, it is merely throwing off of the "naqaab" of democracy!

Why Sukhwinder commits this ignorant blunder? Because, instead of explaining the universal applicability of the strategy of the so-called 'popular front', he assumes it beforehand and then proceeds to the analysis of fascism, which assumes a transhistorical form, a rule whose class nature is, as it were, something else than the bourgeois dictatorship.

What Sukhwinder fails to understand is the distinction between the *essence* or *class content* of a state and the *form* or *shell* of a state. The bourgeois dictatorship can assume a variety of forms depending upon a number of historical and political factors, as we pointed out above. However, for Sukhwinder, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie assumes only one "naqaab" or mask, which is bourgeois democracy! While commenting on those who consider India semi-colonial, Sukhwinder concedes that "bare-naked dictatorship" (not "naqaab"!) takes different forms like fascism, military dictatorship, and Bonapartism. Sukhwinder comments:

A trend amongst those who hold India to be capitalist but semi-colonial assert that imperialism has adopted a form of bourgeois democracy to dupe the people. Bourgeois democracy is dictatorship it has been termed democracy to dupe the masses. Dictatorship has only two forms, bourgeois democracy and bare-naked dictatorship. India is moving towards bare-naked dictatorship. These comrades do not differentiate between different forms of bare-naked dictatorship such as fascism, military dictatorship, bonapartism. (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 6-7)

The question of the dictatorship of the class (the nature of the state) and the forms that this dictatorship assumes makes Sukhwinder completely dense and dizzy, as is evident from the first quote from his essay, too, that we have presented above. Let us clear the fog created by the imbecility of Sukhwinder.

First of all, bourgeois democracy is not simply a “naqaab” (a mask), but a *form/shell* which has a logical correspondence with the *content* of the class rule in its *particular political condition* and *particular historical context*. A “naqaab” (a mask) does not necessarily have a *logical connection* with the content; it is not rigorously *engendered* by the content of the thing in its particular stage of development. Under the shell of a custard-apple is a custard-apple and under the shell of a pomegranate is a pomegranate! And under the shell of stupidity, is the editor saab of ‘Pratibaddh’! *There is a logical relation.*

The form of the bourgeois state (the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie) has a logical connection with the particular political situation in which the bourgeois state finds itself. In normal conditions, the bourgeoisie as a political class is interested in preserving the regular and preferred *modus vivendi* of its rule, namely, a multiparty parliamentary bourgeois democracy, because this reflects the relative stability of the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. If the condition of the rule of the bourgeoisie is one of political crisis, then it can assume one of the exceptional forms. These exceptional forms include fascism, Bonapartism and military *junta*. Whether these forms will assume the appearance of a “bare-naked dictatorship” (whatever that means!), is not evident from these terms themselves. Even Bonapartist regimes and military dictatorships can function with *formal* parliamentary system; the same is true for fascism today.

Basically, Sukhwinder fails to understand the difference between the *class content of the state* and *the form of the state*.

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Thus, the first point that Sukhwinder fails to understand is the difference between the *class content of the state* and *the form of the state*, which can be materialized as a variety of types of government (for instance, a republic or a constitutional monarchy), despite no changes in the class content of the state. The dictatorship of the bourgeoisie can assume the form of a monarchy, a democratic republic, a military dictatorship, Bonapartism (of the monarchical or non-monarchical, of parliamentary or non-parliamentary type), or *open* fascist dictatorship. Therefore, the question of strategy of revolution is not simply resolved by showing that the bourgeois democracy has vanished (in form and/or content). *It is very much possible*

that the form of the state has changed from the bourgeois multiparty parliamentary democracy to fascist rule (with or without the form of parliamentary system) and yet the stage of revolution is socialist and the task of the day is the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The determination of the strategy will depend upon the political class situation, the alignment of class forces, the accumulation of the forces of the proletariat and its class struggle. To argue that bourgeois democratic restoration is the conditio sine qua non of the communist strategy against fascism, only betrays a total ignorance of the history of evolution of anti-fascist communist strategy with changing political situation and also an incorrigible bourgeois democratic illusion, class collaborationism and class capitulation.

So, what does Sukhwinder not understand? One, the general relation between form and content; two, the relation between the State and the form of State; three, the fact that just like bourgeois representative parliamentary democracy (of republican type or constitutional monarchical type); Bonapartism, military *junta* and fascist regimes, too, are mere *forms* of the bourgeois dictatorship; it is not as if democracy is a mere mask that is thrown away in times of crisis and then the true character of bourgeois dictatorship as the “bare-naked dictatorship” of the bourgeoisie emerges; nothing can be more puerile than that; even the exceptional bourgeois states like Bonapartism, military *junta* and fascist regimes are *forms* of bourgeois dictatorships and they, too, engage in ideological mechanisms for ensuring their hegemony like direct plebiscitary methods, as Poulantzas has shown; this is not to deny the fact that fascism in particular and other exceptional bourgeois states in general, represent particularly reactionary and exceptional forms of bourgeois dictatorship; four, even the exceptional bourgeois states can assume a variety of forms, besides *democratic parliamentary system*; it can retain the form of parliamentary system, while its *democratic content* is in perpetual decay; as well shall see later authorities as disparate as Poulantzas and Dimitrov, among others, had already alluded to this possibility, and which Sukhwinder missed due to not reading them comprehensively and only scavenging for “relevant” quotes to support his own idiocy.

The Sukhwinderian Proposal for Doing Nothing

Since, it is Sukhwinder who is unable to see any difference between the political situation before 2014, and the political situation which has prevailed after 2014, it is he, who fails to draw any practical conclusions. What is the particular strategy of proletarian resistance today? What is the difference between the proletarian strategy before and after 2014? Sukhwinder has no clue. Sukhwinder at one place accepts that the 1934-35 strategy of the ‘popular front’, as proposed by Dimitrov and accepted by the majority of the Comintern, is the only correct and possible strategy against fascism, which proposes alliance with anti-fascist sections of the bourgeoisie. At another place he criticizes those revolutionary communist organizations who, today, have allied with the revisionist and social-democratic parties in an anti-fascist front. *Why?* Social-democrats and revisionists, too, represent a section of the bourgeoisie which, at least, is ostensibly against fascism. If the strategy of the ‘popular front’ is the only possible correct proletarian strategy against fascism, then what is the problem with that? Sukhwinder might interject

that his objection is to the non-activity of such fronts. May be. But then why does not Sukhwinder form a 'popular front' in Punjab which would be truly 'active'? Why does not he ally with all other fractions of the bourgeoisie except "the most reactionary and chauvinist elements of the big monopoly finance capital", which are anti-BJP and anti-Modi?

May be, the problem according to Sukhwinder is that since fascization of the state is not complete, since fascist regime has not arrived yet, why make such a 'popular front'? This second option seems to be the case. We will see that this line of thinking has nothing to do with Comintern's line of 'popular front', which was incorrect anyway; according to the latter, even before fascists seize power, 'popular front' has to be formed by the communists, notwithstanding the fact that the Comintern formulated this erroneous line after the fascist seizure of power in Germany and Italy. In fact, in France and Spain, popular fronts had been formed without fascist seizure of the power and simply on the basis of existence of a fascist movement. In fact, the very line of the 'popular front' originated in France before its promulgation by the Comintern in 1935, as we shall later see in this essay.

Readers can see the sheer ludicrousness of Sukhwinder's position. He assumes that since the strategy of the 'popular front' was formulated when the fascist regimes had become consolidated in an unchallenged way in Germany and Italy, in India, too, the 'popular front' should be made when the fascization of the state is complete and fascist regime has become omnipotent in an unchallenged way! This is the way in which a dimwit mechanical dogmatist thinks! Even though Sukhwinder accepts that there is a reactionary fascist movement in India, he is stubbornly persisting with his belief that since the European communists transitioned to the line of the 'popular front' after the fascist power had consolidated itself completely (an assertion which only reveals the ignorance of Sukhwinder regarding history), he, too, will first wait that the communal fascists in India openly introduce exceptional laws, abolish parliament and assemblies, abolish elections, abolish all the bourgeois democratic institutions and processes *formally*, when the communists are totally suppressed and destroyed, *then* Sukhwinder will emerge from the ashes, from inside the crevices of the cavern of Raikot and form a 'popular front' among communists (who have become non-existent by then!) and the anti-fascist sections of the bourgeoisie! Wonderful! What kind of juvenile line of thinking is that? Formally, Sukhwinder even says that the European communists harmfully delayed the formation of the 'popular front' and corrected the "left" sectarian mistake only when it was too late, he himself does not set the task of forming a popular front in India or even in Punjab. His pretext is that the communist camp has disintegrated; however, if the line to be followed is that of the 'popular front', how does that stop Sukhwinder and his group from forming the 'popular front' at least "locally" in Punjab, with forces like AAP, SAD, Congress, etc.? Moreover, since, the exact re-enactment of the fascist drama of the Twentieth century is not going to take place, what Sukhwinder is waiting for will never happen. Thus, he has not done, he is not doing and he *will not do* anything against the fascist rise! This is the proposal of this senile group: *the proposal to suspend indefinitely the most important task entrusted to us by history today.*

Whatever he formally proposes in the end of the essay as “tasks” have nothing in particular to do with fascism: “abolishing” caste system (which would only create more fertile conditions according to Sukhwinder himself for the rise of fascism, because caste system for him is one of the major hindrances before the rise of fascism in India for Sukhwinder), fighting against national oppression, fighting against reactionary ideology of fascism, etc. All these tasks are relevant without fascist rise and apply in general against the rule of the bourgeoisie. They have nothing to do with fascism or fascist rise in particular. That is why Sukhwinder has nothing whatsoever to offer as a proposal for anti-fascist proletarian strategy.

As we can see, it is Sukhwinder who draws no practical conclusions from the rise of fascism and prescribes waiting for fascism to rise to power in exactly the same way in which it did in the early-Twentieth century and only then move to the outdated and essentially incorrect strategy of the ‘popular front’ which mainly failed even in the early-Twentieth century and today it is bound to fail even more miserably as it is *totally* out of tune with the present times. It is no co-incidence that in the past 10 years, the ‘Lalkaar-Pratibaddh’ group has done nothing against the fascist RSS-BJP, except spewing Punjabi-nationalist and national chauvinist non-sense and reactionary identitarianism on the question of language, against an *anational* bourgeoisie (!) that oppresses all nations of the country! The silly thing is that, according to Sukhwinder, “blind nationalism” is a component part of fascism and this *anational bourgeoisie* has suddenly become “blind nationalist” in its fascist turn and is giving primacy to “nation” over “class”! He never specifies that the “nationalism” of fascists is based on a totally unscientific and ahistorical concept of “nation” based in turn on a *purely ideological community*, constructed by the *chauvinistic ideology* of fascism. It has nothing to do with the historical category of *nation*, as understood by Marxists and even rational social scientists. Sukhwinder talks about “blind nationalism” being a component part of fascism without any qualification, which leaves no trace of difference between the journalistic understanding of fascism and the Marxist one. Anyhow, if the Indian big bourgeoisie is *anational*, and fascism is representing the interests of the “most reactionary elements” of this big *anational* bourgeoisie, then Sukhwinder has a question to answer: “Blind nationalism” based on which nation?

That is why, it is Sukhwinder who quotes Gramsci against himself, though he has no idea about it. Readers can find the critique of the above non-Marxist non-sense in the book written by Shivani and myself, *Marxism-Leninism and the National Question: A Debate*, published by Rahul Foundation, Lucknow in 2024.

What is Fascism? Sukhwinder’s Ignorant, Confused and Dogmatic Meanderings

We shall begin with what Sukhwinder understands from the word ‘fascism’. Here he does not say a single word which can capture the elements of novelty and change in the phenomenon of fascism in the Twenty-first century. He completely distils his understanding of the political essence of fascism, from the exact forms that it assumed in the early-Twentieth century and precisely for that reason confuses *historical forms of fascism* with *the essence of fascism as a political movement*.

Sukhwinder writes:

Fascism is a particular form of bourgeois reaction, which comes into existence during the highest stage of capitalism, the stage of imperialism.

Max Horkheimer says, "Anyone who does not wish to discuss capitalism should also stay silent on the subject of fascism." Commenting on this statement of Horkheimer, Nicos Poulantzas said, "Strictly speaking, this is incorrect: it is he who does not wish to discuss imperialism who should stay silent on the subject of fascism. (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 9)

Again:

Fascism is a particular political phenomenon. Its understanding requires a deep probing of the conditions in which it originates. In the countries in which fascist dictatorship was set up, the study of their general and particular features is also necessary. In nearly 100 years of history, fascist dictatorship has been set up in two countries of the world, Italy and Germany. Franco regime of Spain is also termed as fascist dictatorship but it was more of a military dictatorship. Only on the basis of fascist dictatorship that were set up in Italy and Germany, can fascism be understood correctly, its necessary characteristics can be identified. Though there are naturally some national or country wise differences in the fascist movements that originate in different countries, but there are also common characteristics, which are necessary characteristics of fascism. Further on in this article we will identify the necessary characteristics of fascism. (*ibid.*, p. 9-10)

So, Sukhwinder believes that "only on the basis of fascist dictatorship that were set up in Italy and Germany, can fascism be understood correctly, its necessary characteristics can be identified." This is what we call *historicism*, and a particularly inane version at that. There is a qualitative difference between a *historical approach* and *historicism*. To say that fascism can *only* be understood on the basis of how it unfolded in a particular historical era of capitalism, is to say that history would repeat itself as it is. The fact is that differences in the fascist movements are based not simply on 'national or country wise differences' but also on the basis of the historical conditions and political situation in which world capitalist system as well as national capitalisms in different countries find themselves. Even the "necessary characteristics" or what can more accurately be called *universal characteristic features* of fascism emerge *historically*. To argue that the set of *universal features* of fascism that emerged in the Twentieth century is an unchangeable constant, in which nothing could ever be added in the future historical development of the phenomenon of fascism, is the most infantile variety of dogmatism and idiocy. We are not surprised, as we are talking here about Sukhwinder, who represents a particularly asinine trend in the left movement of Punjab.

Further.

What follows afterwards in this article is copious summarizing of already held positions. *Sukhwinder fills 47 pages out of 54 pages of his article by borrowing quotations from the past theoretical work or when he is not quoting from them, then he is summarizing and plagiarizing what is written in them!*

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Why is Bourgeois Parliamentary Democracy the Regular and Preferred Form of Bourgeois Rule: Fantastically Ignorant Ideas of Sukhwinder

Here first point to note is that parliamentary system is not simply the preferred form of the state *because* the bourgeoisie is by nature a class divided in many fractions. This is precisely what always happens with Sukhwinder. He lacks the ability even to correctly interpret the quotations from classics that he himself presents. *In fact, there has been no ruling class in the history of class society that is monolithic, homogeneous or not divided into many fractions.* Even the feudal aristocratic class was divided into many fractions and a number of wars among feudal houses took place precisely due to this division. The only difference is that the bourgeoisie is a class divided into fractions due to economic dynamic of the averaging of the rates of profit, whereas the case with the class of slave-owners or feudal lords was different, where political, social and historical factors were responsible for the internal divisions within the class. The point that Sukhwinder fails to understand is this: *it is not that since the bourgeoisie is divided into many fractions, therefore, there is cut-throat competition among its different fractions. It is precisely this "cut-throat competition", the averaging of the rates of profit, through which bourgeoisie is constituted as a class, which is naturally divided into many fractions.* What Sukhwinder has failed to understand is the line of causality of the process. As the readers can see, even plagiarizing can be of two kinds: dimwitted plagiarizing *à la* Sukhwinder, and smart plagiarizing, which at least understands what is being plagiarized. Anyhow!

Moreover, Sukhwinder fails to understand that parliamentary democracy is the regular form of bourgeois rule, *because* the bourgeoisie is the first exploitative ruling class in history whose rule is not based simply on *dominance* but *hegemony*, that is, ruling by taking consent. We do not need to mention that this consent itself is manufactured through a variety of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs).

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The Question of the State, State Apparatus and the Exceptional Forms

First, does the advent of any form of exceptional bourgeois state, like Bonapartism, military dictatorship and fascism, *necessarily* entail the dismantling of the *form* of bourgeois parliamentary system? The answer is a big and resounding No! What Sukhwinder does not understand is the *archetypal historical forms* of Bonapartism, military dictatorship and fascism, and their *essence* or their *content*. Instead of finding "relevant" quotes to support his dogmatism, had Sukhwinder actually read Poulantzas's classic *Fascism and Dictatorship* from the beginning till the end, he would have understood the difference. Poulantzas writes:

The question can only be posed accurately by studying both the

political crisis to which the exceptional State is a response, and the particular kinds of political crises to which its specific forms correspond. *But this requires, first of all, an analysis of the question of the historical period of capitalist formations within which these political crises and exceptional regimes occur. To avoid foundering in abstract typology, we have to be clear that the kinds of political crises which produce any given form of exceptional regimes, still have features which vary according to the period in which they arise. Nineteenth-century differs from twentieth-century Bonapartism, and the same is true of military dictatorship and fascism.*

Although the analysis of the general historical periods to which exceptional regimes belong does not in itself explain their emergence, it remains a fact that *the period affects the conjuncture of the class struggle (political crisis), which alone provides an answer.* (Poulantzas, N. 1979. *Fascism and Dictatorship*, Verso, London, p. 16, *emphasis ours*)

Had Sukhwinder understood this basic Marxist point that Poulantzas is making here, he would have saved himself so much time of writing a peculiarly muddle-headed essay. This also makes clear that to understand fascism *as it exists today*, one can learn certain elements from the likes of Antonio Gramsci, Clara Zetkin, Palmiro Togliatti, Nicos Poulantzas, David Abraham, Kurt Gossweiler, Anson Rabinbach, and others, but one has to develop a *historical* and *dialectical* view in order to be able to understand the *movement* of history and the elements of continuity and change implicit in this movement. Then, perhaps, he would have understood that the archetypal categories and historical forms do not *repeat* themselves as it is in history.

Now let us first deal with the question of the first exceptional form: Bonapartism. Is Bonapartist regime possible with the *formal* existence of bourgeois multi-party parliamentary democracy? Yes. It is. The leading example of such a regime today is the Putin's regime in Russia. There is a broad consensus among Marxist scholars today that Putin's regime represents a bourgeois Bonapartism, in a new form in the Twenty-first century. Ilya Matveev argues, "How is this organized politically? It would be wrong to call Russia "oligarchic capitalism" – rather, today's Russia has a Bonapartist regime. Bonapartism is a concept of Marxist theory." (<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7705>)

Volodymyr Ischenko agrees,

What I'm saying is exactly in line with the Marxist theory of Bonapartism that Ilya talks about. Because Bonapartism is nothing more than a regime in which the state, independent of any particular factions of capital, forcefully defends the interests of the class of big capitalists as a whole against threats from particular capitalists or particular factions of that class. (*ibid.*)

There are many other scholars as well as communist groups and organizations which contend that in essence Putin's regime is a new bourgeois Bonapartist regime. This analysis seems to be perfectly sound. Why? Bonapartism for Marxists

since the time of Marx is a situation where the executive of the bourgeois state subordinates its legislative and usurps its powers *in effect*; it happens in a situation where the bourgeoisie as a political class is unable to collectivize its class interests due to the political crisis created under the conditions of intense class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie (what Poulantzas calls the *equilibrium crisis leading to Bonapartism*), as well as, the internal strife among the fractions of the bourgeoisie. In such a situation, bourgeoisie is obliged to hand over several of its political freedoms to an individual/a clique, precisely in order to safeguard its long-term political interests. This individual/clique represents nothing but bourgeois interests, however, in a contradictory fashion, as it depends as the source of its power on petty-bourgeoisie and *lumpen* proletariat. This particular exceptional form of state assumes a greater amount of relative autonomy from the ruling class and *apparently* rules over it, besides ruling over its own social support base, namely, the petty-bourgeoisie and the *lumpen* proletariat; however, most importantly, it rules over and represses the working class.

...

Poulantzas argues that the capitalist state:

takes charge, as it were, of the bourgeoisie's political interests and realizes the function of political hegemony which the bourgeoisie is unable to achieve. But in order to do this, the capitalist state *assumes a relative autonomy with regard to the bourgeoisie. This is why Marx's analyses of Bonapartism as a capitalist type of state are so significant. For this relative autonomy allows the state to intervene not only in order to arrange compromises vis-à-vis the dominated classes, which in the long turn, are useful for the actual economic interests of the dominant classes or fractions, but also (depending on the concrete conjuncture) to intervene against the long term interests of one or other fraction of the dominant class: for such compromises and sacrifices are sometimes necessary for the realization of their political class interests.* (Poulantzas, N. 1976. *Political Power and Social Classes*, NLB, London, 284- 285, *emphasis ours*)

For Poulantzas, Marx in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* is discussing inherent structural tendency of the capitalist state to acquire relative autonomy in order to be able to efficiently organize the interests of the ruling class. Bob Jessop points out what is exceptional are the circumstances under which the autonomy comes into existence and not the autonomy itself. (Jessop, Bob. 2002. "The Politics of Representation and the Eighteenth Brumaire" in M. Cowling and J. Martin (eds.) *The Eighteenth Brumaire Today*, Pluto Press, p. 179)

Just because the way in which Bonapartism did this in the Nineteenth century, *by formally dismantling the bourgeois democracy*, it does not directly stem from this that Bonapartism will exist precisely in that mode, in which it existed in the Nineteenth century. Poulantzas is careful enough to point out that the archetypal forms in which the exceptional state of the bourgeoisie came into existence in history must not lead us to believe or assume that it would take exactly the same archetypal forms in the future. Putin's Bonapartist rule is a testimony to this fact.

Greek Marxist scholar Spyros Sakellariopoulos has captured some very important elements, while explaining that Bonapartism does not necessarily entail the formal dismantling of parliamentary democracy, especially in the neoliberal phase.

...

The point that Sakellariopoulos makes here is simply this: whether Bonapartism would assume the form of an *open* dictatorship, by dismantling the very *form* of bourgeois democracy, or it will retain the *form* of bourgeois parliamentary system, which has become increasingly devoid of democratic and representative content, with the real power shifting to executive bodies of the state, is not a question of theoretical necessity. It will depend on the condition of the bourgeois democracy and the situation of class struggle. This is a very simple point that most of the Marxist scholars of exceptional forms of the bourgeois rule are understanding and underlining today, as we shall see later in this essay. However, Sukhwinder due to his obdurate historicism and dogmatism, stubbornly clings to the idea of exact re-enactment of the Nineteenth and Twentieth century history.

In fact, what Sakellariopoulos elaborates above, was pointed out by Poulantzas much before him. In his seminal work *Political Power and Social Classes*, Poulantzas discusses the functions of legislative and executive and their mutual relations which determine the *form* of the state and the conditions in which they are retained or abandoned in the situations of crises. Here Poulantzas points out the relation between the two is essential to comprehend in order to properly understand the particularities of various *forms of state* and their *relative autonomy*. Poulantzas writes:

This relation between the legislative and the executive provides us with an excellent example for the concrete analysis of the problem of *forms of state and the degrees of unity and relative autonomy characterizing each form*. In the light of the preceding analyses, this will help us to establish the exact relevance of the criterion of legislative/executive relations for distinguishing between forms of state. (Poulantzas, N. 1976. *Political Power and Social Classes*, New Left Books, London, p. 308)

He points out further:

Apart from its political significance in the relations of class power, and leaving aside its constitutional-juridical expression which is most often an ideological product, this legislative/executive distinction covers several heterogeneous factors. *First of all, it covers factors of a technical order which concern the functioning of the state, in so far as the executive, in the broad sense of the term, encompasses in particular what has been called the state apparatus, i.e., the bureaucracy, administration, police, army. Its functioning within the capitalist state cannot be absorbed into the functions peculiar to the directly elective assemblies, i.e. the representatives in the strict sense. As a result, the distinction between these powers and the dominance of one of them over the other undoubtedly cover differential forms of*

the articulation of the economic and the political and indeed of the intervention/non-intervention of one in the other: for example, a predominance of the executive often implies a specific intervention of the political in the economic. (ibid., p. 308, emphasis ours)

...

What is Poulantzas pointing to here? He is arguing that within the state apparatus, the relation between the legislative and executive vary according to the economic condition and political situation in which the capitalist social formation finds itself. In certain political situations, it might be necessary for the bourgeoisie that the executive dominates the legislative, because a peculiar political intervention is required to maintain the *status quo*. Poulantzas moves on to show that it is very much possible that the executive becomes dominant, whereas the legislative *formally* maintains its existence.

...

Poulantzas points out further:

In fact, as far as the conquest of parliament by the dominated classes is concerned, class domination has at its disposal a whole gamut of defences to protect itself from such misadventures. Besides, the dominant classes have never in the long run been mistaken on this point. It is only in very rare cases that a predominance of the executive characteristic of a form of state has corresponded to any risk that the dominated classes might conquer parliament. *This is proved by the numerous western countries in which the predominance of the executive is nowadays asserted, but which, for the most part, are far from running this risk: a risk which has for a long time been defused in the classical parliamentary framework. (ibid., p. 313, emphasis ours)*

Poulantzas argues further:

In the state's relation to the power bloc, *the displacement of dominance from the legislative to the executive is a relevant criterion for differentiating between forms of state*, in that it concerns the modifications of the hegemonic fraction of the power bloc according to the stages of a formation and the displacement of those places in which the political power of this fraction with regard to the power bloc is reflected : cf. the displacements of hegemony from the industrial fraction to the financial fraction, and then the monopolist fraction. For example, the characteristic predominance of the executive where the monopolies are hegemonic is a direct response to a particular incapacity to organize this hegemony, with regard to the power bloc, in the parliamentary framework. *(ibid., p. 314, emphasis ours)*

...

It is clear from Poulantzas's above quotations that *the dominance of executive over legislative in exceptional forms of bourgeois rule is not only possible with the*

formal retention of bourgeois parliamentary system, it is becoming more likely in the neoliberal phase, that exceptional forms of bourgeois rule would not dismantle bourgeois democracy formally. In fact, since the 1970s, there have been so many Marxist scholarly studies which have demonstrated with evidence, that in the neoliberal phase, Bonapartism, military dictatorship as well as fascism can realize themselves without doing away with the form of bourgeois parliamentary democracy. We will come to the studies of these scholars later in the essay. In fact, towards the end of his life, in his work *State, Power, Socialism*, Poulantzas himself had begun working on this question, even though by this time, on several questions he had been assuming incorrect positions. Similarly, Domenico Losurdo has dealt with the same problematic in his work *Democracy and Bonapartism*, where he examines the forms that Bonapartism has assumed in the Twentieth century.

Now let us come to the question of military dictatorship. Can a military dictatorship come into existence while retaining the form of parliamentary democracy? Yes. There have existed situations in the recent history itself, where the real political power was in the hands of a military dictator, *in essence*, whereas the bourgeois parliaments and elections were not suspended formally. The most recent and nearest to us was the Parvez Musharraf's regime after 2002 in Pakistan. Here, a military dictator got himself elected as President, ran the country politically, with all powers of decision-making in his hands, while retaining the shell of bourgeois democracy, that is, bourgeois parliament, assemblies and bourgeois elections. The same is true for a period of Park Chung Hee's military dictatorship in South Korea.

Thus, what did the Trot-Bundists of 'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' not understand? Sukhwinder did not understand that the essence of history is *movement*. He fails to understand the difference between the *archetypal forms* of different political phenomena, with which these political phenomena express themselves in history initially, and their *actual political content*, which can assume very different forms in future. Again, our half-witted dogmatist does not understand the dialectic of *form* and *content*. Consequently, what he does not comprehend is the fact that just because these exceptional types of bourgeois rule had formally abandoned the *shell* or the *form* of bourgeois parliamentary system in their archetypal avatars in the Nineteenth century or the Twentieth century, does not mean that they would necessarily abandon the shell or form of bourgeois democracy today, too. This precisely is the particularly illiterate dogmatism and historicism of Sukhwinder. Since, he has been quite prolific in broadcasting shameful inanities and idiocies in the left circles of Punjab, we are not surprised at all that he has come up with such a gem about fascism in general and fascism in India.

...

The Relation between Economic Crisis and Political Crisis: Sukhwinder's Crude and Vulgar Economism, Evolutionism and Incrementalism

Sukhwinder tries to follow Poulantzas, but he could not because of his inherent inability to read any work from the beginning to the end and also to understand what he reads. In case of political crisis, too, he staggers like a clown in his attempt to reproduce views of Poulantzas.

First of all, Sukhwinder's views regarding the conditions in which economic crisis might develop into a political crisis has nothing to do with what Poulantzas and many others have written. In fact, it has nothing to do with Marxist method as such. He argues that in a rich and developed capitalist country, the ruling class can stall the process of development of economic crisis into political crisis. He presents the example of the US, where the US government prevented the economic crisis from developing into a political crisis by supporting collapsing capitalist enterprises and expanding credit. Thus, if a particular ruling class has a larger mass of surplus at its disposal, it has the capacity to prevent the economic crisis from developing into a political crisis. Thus, it is about the *economic capability of the bourgeoisie to stall the process of transformation of the economic crisis into political crisis*. Such is the vulgar economism and particularly inane dogmatism of Sukhwinder.

...

It presents an evolutionist-economistic view of economic crisis developing into political crisis through *quantitative intensification*, which can be prevented by the opposite act of *quantitative easing* by the state, in case, where the ruling class is rich enough! According to Sukhwinder, if the state of a capitalist country can intervene to prevent the economic collapse from expanding, it would not develop into political crisis. The parallel of this stupid economism can be found in the revisionist argument which contended that economic struggles themselves transform into political struggle through a process of development and intensification. Such argument does not understand the *relative autonomy of politics from economics*. In the context of the particular kind of political crisis which gives rise to fascism, it fails to understand that political crisis is *a conjuncture of contradictions pertaining to political class struggle* and specifically, the struggle within the *power bloc*, among the dominant classes and dominant fractions of the dominant classes, in the *general conditions of economic crisis*.

...

Is a Revolutionary Proletarian Offensive a Pre-Condition of the Rise of Fascism? Sukhwinder's Orrery of Errors

Now, let us come to the second point. *Are the existence of a powerful revolutionary working-class movement and a revolutionary communist party as its leader, necessary pre-requisites to the rise of fascism? The answer is: NO!* It is strange that Sukhwinder keeps quoting, paraphrasing and plagiarizing from Poulantzas and yet could not understand that *Poulantzas was thoroughly opposed to this particular idea of the political crisis leading to the rise of fascism, where the revolutionary working class is resurgent and presents a threat to capitalism*. Sukhwinder also attempts to quote Clara Zetkin in his support, however, fails to see that Zetkin clearly pointed out that fascist offensive began *after* the subsiding of the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat. In fact, Poulantzas very clearly argued like many other Marxist scholars, that the political crisis which gives rise to fascism *begins* with the defeat of the revolutionary proletarian movement. It is not a real 'red scare' in a country that gives rise to fascism. It is the decisive defeat of proletarian revolution, which gives rise to fascism. Let us dig a bit.

There is a conception of two types of political crises in Poulantzas (and many other Marxist writers before him), which lead to different types of exceptional states. One conception is that of *equilibrium crisis*, to which we have referred above, too, and which is characterized by the situation where the warring classes balance each other so nearly that a political crisis emerges leading to the state becoming relatively *more* autonomous in order to collectivize the class interests of the dominant class. This type of crisis leads to *Bonapartist state*, not fascism. Thalheimer and Gramsci, in different ways (Bonapartism for Thalheimer, Caesarism for Gramsci, with slightly different models of *equilibrium crisis*), subscribed to this idea for the explanation of the fascist rise, too, in different degrees and certain ways.

Poulantzas opposed the line of many in the Comintern as well as that of Leon Trotsky who argued that it was the 'insurgent working class', 'rise of the revolutionary working class' and 'threat of socialism' which led the bourgeoisie into the arms of fascist reaction. Poulantzas ridicules this idea and says that this is tantamount to not making a distinction among *different types of political crises* which lead to *different types of exceptional states*. Poulantzas points out that the particular type of political crisis that leads to the rise of fascism is not characterized by ostensible equilibrium between the main warring classes and the revolutionary rise of the working class, threatening the existence of the capitalist system and bourgeoisie as the ruling class. *On the contrary, the political crisis which leads to the rise of fascism is characterized by the political defeat of the working class in the very beginning.* Let us see, what Poulantzas has to say about this:

To come to the problem of the political crisis, the crucial question is whether it is possible to distinguish general features of a political crisis apart from those of the revolutionary situation in the strict sense of the term, i.e. of determining a quite specific form of State and specific forms of regimes. There are two sides to the one problem: is it possible to grasp a 'crisis' as a general concept and so to determine the special peculiarities of the exceptional State to which it leads? Further, within the general framework of the political crisis, is it possible to determine the different and particular variants of crisis, each leading to specific forms of the exceptional regime (Bonapartism, military dictatorship, and fascism). (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 59)

Poulantzas opines further:

As far as I know, Thalheimer and Gramsci were alone in formulating clearly the thesis on fascism which relates the political crisis to the 'equilibrium' between 'equal' forces. It is nonetheless true that from Otto Bauer to Angelo Tasca and Arthur Rosenberg, the same conception seems to underlie many old and contemporary attempts by Marxists to explain fascism. I need only mention how contemporary studies of fascism are rediscovering the work of Thalheimer in Germany and Gramsci in Italy. *But these analyses, though they include important points, seem to me to be wrong on one essential point. Neither in Germany nor in Italy did the triumph of*

fascism correspond to a political crisis of equilibrium in any sense of the term. The working class had already been thoroughly defeated by the time fascism came into power, and the bourgeoisie did not have to pay for this defeat with any catastrophic equilibrium. In other words, throughout the rise of fascism, the bourgeoisie remained the principal aspect of the principal contradiction. (ibid., p. 61, emphasis ours)

...

Again, Poulantzas differentiates between different types of political crises giving rise to different types of exceptional state:

The general characteristics of the political crisis can easily be defined. The element of equilibrium between 'equals' is specific to certain kinds of political crisis (i.e. the general equilibrium crisis and the catastrophic equilibrium crisis). *These are not the kinds of political crisis of equilibrium to which fascism corresponds.* Moreover, although the conjuncture of class struggle peculiar to fascism has the general characteristics of the political crisis, it also has the particular characteristics of a quite specific political crisis. (*ibid.*, p. 62-63, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas argues that the political crisis that leads to fascism is not at all created by the tangible threat of proletarian revolution and the revolutionary onslaught of the working class. Rather, it is more of an *internal crisis* of the power bloc of the ruling classes and ruling class fractions. Poulantzas argues:

The appearance and rise of fascism correspond to *the deepening and sharpening of the internal contradictions between the dominant classes and class fractions, which is an important element of the political crisis in question.*

This can only be understood on the basis of a correct conception of the alliance of classes and class fractions in relation to political domination. In a social formation composed of many social classes, and in particular in a capitalist social formation, where the bourgeois class is constitutively divided into different class fractions, no single class or class fraction occupies the field of political domination. There is a specific alliance of several classes and fractions, which I have elsewhere described as the 'power bloc' (*le bloc au pouvoir*). Thus, the contradictions between the dominant classes and class fractions often take on sufficient importance to determine the forms of State and of regime. (*ibid.*, p. 71, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas categorically defines the particular type of political crisis leading to fascist rise as one which is *internal and immanent to the power bloc*. In other words, it is the internal crisis of the ruling class, and working class's revolutionary onslaught plays no direct role in it, because the defeat of the working class is part of the preconditions of such political crisis:

In the case of the growth of fascism and of fascism itself, no dominant

class or class fraction seems able to impose its 'leadership' on the other classes and fractions of the power bloc, whether by its own methods of political organization or through the 'parliamentary democratic' State.

Basically, the power bloc, like every other alliance, does not generally consist of classes and fractions of 'equal importance', sharing the crumbs of power among themselves. It can only function on a regular basis in so far as a dominant class or fraction of a class imposes its own particular domination on the other members of the alliance in power, in short in so far as it succeeds in imposing its hegemony and cementing them together under its leadership.

The inability of any class or class fraction to impose its hegemony is what characterizes the conjuncture of fascism; that is, ultimately, the inability of the alliance in power to overcome its intensified contradictions of its own accord. This inability to impose hegemony within the power bloc is also, however, related to the crisis of hegemony experienced by it and its members in its political domination of the ensemble of the social formation. (*ibid.*, p. 72, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas explains further:

This being the situation within the power bloc, fascism also corresponds to a complete and specific reorganization of the bloc. This involves: (a) a modification of the relation of forces within this alliance – a redistribution of the respective weight of the forces in it; and (b) the establishment by fascism of the hegemony of a new class fraction within the power bloc: that of finance capital, or big monopoly capital. (*ibid.*, p. 72)

Then, Poulantzas clearly points out that the revolutionary onslaught of the working class is not only *not necessary* for fascist rise, it is *absent* as a necessary precondition of the rise of fascism:

What basically happened in the rise of fascism, was that a political crisis of the bourgeoisie corresponded to an offensive strategy. This means, of course, that things are not going too well for the dominant classes. *But to describe this political crisis as a 'weakness' of the bourgeoisie is to say something about its relation of force with the working class, and that is precisely where the Comintern was wrong in its interpretation (making the equation 'weakness of the bourgeoisie = power+offensive of the proletariat').* (*ibid.*, p. 81-82, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas explains this point in detail, while critiquing the positions adopted by the Comintern and also demonstrating the evolution of these positions from the Fourth Congress to the Seventh Congress:

It was not until the Seventh Congress of the Comintern that Dimitrov dared to suggest, in veiled terms, that the rise of fascism represented a defensive step for the working class. The suggestion came in

his criticism of the Fourth Congress conception of 'workers' governments', in that it adopted this slogan, and recommended the participation of communists in such governments. But, said Dimitrov, what the Fourth Congress did not do was to point out that such governments 'were quite definitely confined to the existence of political crisis': they could only be 'governments of struggle against fascism and reaction'. Reading between the lines, though Dimitrov was very careful not to say it explicitly, one finds the conception that *a rise of fascism corresponds to a defensive step by the working class*. Let us note in passing that Dimitrov was right to criticize the Fourth Congress, but the error of the Congress did not lie where he placed it. The slogan of 'workers' governments' was adopted by the Fourth Congress because of its conception of 'stabilization'. *It already denoted a reduction of the class struggle to the economic sphere, implying, in fact, the equation 'economic stabilization = working-class defensive', just as the Sixth Congress, in the opposite sense, believed in the equation 'end of stabilization = catastrophic economic crisis = working-class offensive'*. This explains the Fourth Congress 'workers' governments' slogan; *whereas Lenin, at the Third Congress, made no identification between stabilization and working-class defensive. He was referring to class struggle, and, moreover, only used the expression of 'relative equilibrium of forces'; and he put forward the slogan 'to the masses', a very different one from 'workers' governments'.* (*ibid.*, p. 82 *emphasis ours*)

...

In fact, in his uncareful collection of disparate quotations, Sukhwinder himself presents a quotation from Clara Zetkin which points precisely to the fact that fascism is *not* a response to a revolutionary onslaught of the proletariat; on the contrary, it is the result of the *failure* of the proletariat to even mount a revolutionary offensive against the bourgeoisie. Here is that quote:

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. (quoted by Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 19-20, *emphasis ours*)

This is amazing! Sukhwinder is quoting Zetkin against his own position that fascist rise is a response to the revolutionary onslaught of the proletariat. Why does this happen to Sukhwinder? Because, he quotes without understanding! He wants to show that he reads, and therefore, he is obliged to pile up quotations indiscriminately. The result is that he makes a fool of himself.

It is noteworthy that even Gramsci understood the fact as early as 1924 that fascist rise begins *after* the defeat of the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat. Fascism never engages with revolutionary proletarian movement. It waits till this movement subsides due to its own internal weaknesses. Gramsci pointed out:

Fascism has never manoeuvred...when faced with a massive movement in the streets. Rather, *it waited to move until working-class organization had entered a period of passivity and then fell upon it, striking it as such, not for what it "did" but for what it "was"...* (Gramsci, Antonio. 1978. 'Democracy and Fascism' (1924) in *Selections from Political Writings, 1921-26*, Lawrence and Wishart, p. 268, *emphasis ours*)

What is Gramsci pointing to here has been a well-acknowledged fact: fascism as a matter of rule thrives on the political passivity of the working class; it never engages with a working class which is ready to fight *politically*. We, too, have made this point in several of our writings on fascism.

Thus, what Sukhwinder fails to understand? Well, everything about the concept of political crisis!

...

He quotes Comintern's early view (that revolutionary working class movement was a necessity for the fascist rise), does not know that Comintern moved away from this position slowly and tacitly, and then also quotes Poulantzas in his support, who from the very beginning was opposed to the economistic idea that without a revolutionary working-class movement and threat of the overthrow of the capitalist system, there can be no fascist rise, which was also shared in a much more vulgar form, by Trotsky.

It is important to note here that during the first instances of rise of fascism in the Twentieth century, there was indeed the presence of a socialist state and proletarian power in the Soviet Russia and then the USSR. However, within Germany and Italy, the fascist rise began *after* the proletarian political offensive had already subsided due to its own economistic and "left" mistakes. As Gramsci pointed out, fascism never maneuvered when faced with an active revolutionary proletarian movement. It waited till this offensive subsided and then moved on to a frontal offensive. This does not mean that there was no *organized workers' movement* in Germany, especially, and also in Italy. However, this movement was thoroughly imbued with economism and trade-unionism under the social-democratic leadership and limited itself to clinging to the already-won economic rights, which was okay till the labour-capital compromise during the Weimer Republic and Giolitti's regime continued, that is, before the economic crisis broke out. However, faced with the economic crisis and the consequent political offensive of the bourgeoisie, social-

democracy was at complete loss, as it had no revolutionary strategy. The question is, was the presence of Bolshevik power in Soviet Russia essential for the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy? No. Of course, it did contribute to the fear of the bourgeoisie, especially till the proletarian offensive was under progress, and also to some extent after the subsiding of this offensive in Germany and Italy, as this offensive was still fresh in the collective memory of the bourgeoisie as a class. However, to count the presence of a red power *internationally* as one of the defining features of the rise of fascism is deductive method. Moreover, the world capitalist system is much more fragile today as compared to the early-Twentieth century...The world capitalist system is so fragile and decrepit economically today that it does not need the presence of a 'red scare' in the form of the international existence of a socialist state to move towards various forms of authoritarianism and exceptional state. Even the events like the Arab Spring, the Sri Lankan revolt, the Bangladeshi popular rebellion, Gezi Park movement, etc. can propel the paranoid bourgeoisie towards reaction. This has been proven in the past few decades, time and again.

...

What is important to understand is this:

one, the political crisis which leads to the rise of fascism is a particular one where there is no need for the threat of proletarian revolution or the onslaught of a working-class movement; quite the opposite; this crisis is precisely the product of prior political defeat of the revolutionary proletariat;

two, this political crisis pertains to the disorganization of the collective class interests of the bourgeoisie, as expressed in fractional interests becoming dominant within the power bloc of the ruling class;

three, in this situation, the hitherto dominant classes and class fractions within the power bloc of the ruling class, fail to perpetuate their political hegemony over the other fractions;

four, this happens in the particular situation where the working class has already been politically defeated;

five, this political defeat of the working class is owing, in particular, to economism, where an organized working class is stubbornly clinging to its economic benefits, but is systematically opposed to transcending the limits posed by the capitalist system;

six, the main force which leads the working class to the blind alley of economism is social-democracy and revisionism.

This was precisely what happened in Germany and Italy. And this is precisely what distinguishes *the political crisis leading to fascism* from *the political crisis leading to Bonapartism*, which is characterized by what Poulantzas has called *equilibrium crisis of two types: general equilibrium crisis* to which Thalheimer refers and *catastrophic equilibrium crisis* to which Gramsci refers in his analysis of Caesarism. This crisis is characterized by the situation where in the words of Engels, the warring classes balanced each other so nearly that state assumed a higher degree of relative autonomy (sometimes *appearing* to rule over all classes!) in order to collectivize the interests of the ruling class. That is why, Bonapartism for Marx was result of

a political situation in which the bourgeoisie has effectively been defeated in the immediate struggle, but the working class is not in a position to seize power.

Why does Sukhwinder commit such idiotic blunder? Because when he sat to write his “epochal essay”, an odyssey of stupidity, he did not read any single book from cover to cover. He directly resorted to the index to find quotations to support his poor and ridiculous position; moreover, he referred to the editorial introductions of some anthologies of Marxist writings on fascism and plagiarized from them; in this process, *he even fails to understand where the quotation ends and where the authorial voice of the editors starts, as we shall see shortly!* As a consequence, at one place, he has presented a quote of Ignazio Siloni, which is not actually the quote of Siloni, but the summarization of Siloni’s position on fascism by the editor of an anthology, David Beetham! *This is only a proof of the fact, that the editor of ‘Pratibaddh’ has again shown his particular knack for misquoting, after he had presented a false quotation from the Soviet constitution.*

It would have been better for Sukhwinder to first read the representative Marxist literature on fascism and then set out to write an essay. For one thing, this would have saved him from the embarrassment that now he is in for. Secondly, he would have realized another important point: even among the Marxist-Leninists during the 1920s, 1930s, and the 1940s and after the Second World War, there was no unified position. Even within the Comintern and among revolutionary communists of the 1920s, 1930s and the 1940s, there was no single understanding of fascism and the political crisis that leads to it. From Gramsci to Thalheimer, from Togliatti to Zetkin, from Bordiga to Thalman, from Trotsky to Dimitrov, from Lukacs to Tasca and others, there were multiple positions. Third, even temporally speaking, the positions of Comintern continued to evolve from its Fourth Congress to its Seventh Congress. *Why this multiplicity and plurality? Why this evolution?* The reason is simple: *the communists were trying to understand a phenomenon which was new and unfolding before their eyes. The same is true for the re-emergence of fascist movements in the neoliberal period. Here, too, we need to understand that we are witnessing a new unfolding phenomenon.*

The resources to understand the elements of novelty and change, would not be available merely in the past. While it is essential to understand the communist positions regarding the rise of fascism in the first part of the Twentieth century (whose understanding Sukhwinder singularly lacks anyway!), it is imperative to comprehend the fact that merely on the basis of these positions, we cannot understand contemporary fascism. Simply because in the phase of neoliberalism in the stage of imperialism, the entire world capitalist system, the nature of crises, the character of the bourgeoisie as well as the bourgeois state, the form of parliamentary system (which is not necessarily bourgeois democratic in all cases, as we shall see) has undergone profound changes. *That is why, for the problems of the analysis of the present fascist rise, the answers will not simply and merely be found in the past, but in present class struggle and future.*

This is precisely what Sukhwinder does not understand. He is imprisoned in a time-capsule and a space-capsule. While studying fascism, he just cannot get out of the Germany and Italy of the 1920s and the 1930s (though he does not even understand the German and Italian situation of 1920s-1930s!), whereas the world

capitalist system, the bourgeoisie, the evolution of imperialism, the working class as well as revolutionary communism has moved much beyond that and has reached the Twenty-first century. This is precisely why we have called Sukhwinder a crude, vulgar and politically illiterate dogmatist (who is not even well-read from a Marxist perspective).

...

Fascism and the Form of Bourgeois Parliamentary System: The Intellectual Poverty of Sukhwinder's Dogmatic Credo

Now, we come to the last and most important recurring error of Sukhwinder. The seventh point. The contention that fascism must abolish the form of bourgeois parliamentary democracy and with it all bourgeois democratic liberties. Without this, according to Sukhwinder, fascism cannot rise to power.

...

What is the general relationship between bourgeois parliamentarism (one form of bourgeois dictatorship, namely, the form of bourgeois democracy) and fascism (one of the exceptional forms of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie)? Are they universally and trans-historically incompatible? Can we evaluate this relationship merely on the basis of the particular experience of fascist regimes in certain countries, like Germany and Italy in the early part of the Twentieth century? Or do we need to analyze the particular stage of capitalism and the particular phases of the different stages of capitalism? *Why did fascism do away with the shell of bourgeois democracy in the first part of the Twentieth century? How the state project of fascism took shape and why did it take shape in the way that it did? Are there structural reasons behind that? What could be the reason to argue that fascism as a form of bourgeois rule (just a bourgeois democracy, too, is a form of bourgeois rule with a particular form, that is, parliamentary system), must materialize in exactly the same fashion in which it did in its first historical examples?* Let us delve deeper on all these questions.

First of all, let us deal with the question, why it was necessary for fascism to destroy the shell of bourgeois democracy in the early-Twentieth century. The reason is simple: *bourgeois parliamentarism as a form of bourgeois rule still had not exhausted all of its bourgeois democratic potential. The same is true of the bourgeoisie as a political class.* It still retained some of this potential in the period preceding the Second World War and particularly before the end of the Great Boom. Why? Because the very political economy of capitalism after the beginning of the long recession and the neoliberal phase of the imperialist stage of capitalism, underwent profound changes. The nature of crises, too, underwent significant changes, in exactly the same way that Engels and several other Marxists of the late-Nineteenth and early-Twentieth centuries had predicted. We have quoted Engels at length above. Readers can refer to the section on Sukhwinder's particularly ridiculous views on crisis, because he failed to plagiarize properly and correctly from us and other sources by misunderstanding what he was plagiarizing. This happens to him regularly.

In the period of long recession since the 1970s and the concurrent political offensive of the bourgeoisie worldwide, known as neoliberalism, particular versions of which

took shape according to the exigencies of the particular 'national' bourgeoisies in particular capitalist countries, the prediction of Lenin that with the passage of time, the democratic and republican bourgeoisie would be completely replaced by reactionary and chauvinistic bourgeoisie in the stage of imperialism, came true. The bourgeoisie in the particular neoliberal phase of the imperialist stage since the last quarter of the Twentieth century, has lost most of its democratic potential in varying degrees in different countries. The bourgeois state in its parliamentary form, too, has become increasingly authoritarian and autocratic, losing almost all of its democratic pretensions and potentialities.

One of the principal symptoms of this is the increasing shift of political power and political weight within the apparatus of the state from the legislative to the executive. This has happened not in a *contingent* fashion (the form in which it had happened in the times of Marx, too, which Marx had clearly identified) but in a *systematic* fashion. *This authoritarian turn of the bourgeoisie and bourgeois state today is not a knee-jerk, contingent and cataclysmic reaction to a catastrophic and cataclysmic crisis. It is a systemic and structural response to a crisis which does not, in general, assume a cataclysmic/catastrophic form, but assumes a chronic and protracted form, namely the form of a long recession, peppered with serious collapses (such as the 'long depression' since 2007-08).*

The very political economy of capitalism has undergone profound changes in the period following the end of the 'long boom' by the end of the 1960s. As a consequence, the political character of the bourgeoisie also underwent significant changes in this phase of the imperialist stage. *The form of bourgeois democracy became increasingly bereft of essence. The shell that is, parliamentary system, remains but the essence, that is its bourgeois democratic content, is in perpetual decay. The interesting point to note is that this decay is perpetually incomplete, too.* These are significant changes with equally significant implications for the *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* of the rise of exceptional bourgeois regimes, including fascist regimes.

Are we the only ones who have recognized these changes? No. After our position on fascism in the Twenty-first century had assumed a relatively more complete form, with its foundations firmly consolidated, we read the last work of Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*. Despite several serious weaknesses, especially in terms of its political prescriptions, which stemmed from the Althusserian Marxism itself, besides the pathology of the European left that emerged due to the failure of socialist experiment in the Soviet Union and the subsequent misdeeds of social-imperialism; Poulantzas makes certain accurate observations, though in undeveloped form and in the form of allusions, which revealed the changes in the content and form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

This work was published when a half-decade of neoliberal policies in Europe and America had lapsed. However, in the short period itself, many of the new characteristics of the authoritarian bourgeois state in the phase of neoliberalism had manifested themselves. Poulantzas was one of the first Marxists to mark these changes. Poulantzas argued that capitalism is in a long-term crisis now and this also creates a new political situation. In this new political situation, the power

within the bourgeois state apparatus would shift increasingly to the executive, the form of bourgeois parliamentary democracy would be retained, but it would become increasingly empty, and this brings several qualitative changes in the way in which fascism and other exceptional forms would emerge. The process would not be completely gradual, but the ruptures inherent in the process would assume novel forms. This was the last work of Poulantzas.

...

Jessop also points out that after the death of Poulantzas, the same tendencies that the latter had identified, had become even more pronounced.

...

Poulantzas and later Jessop are only two from among a continuously growing body of Marxist scholars, political scientists and historians, who have identified these changes in the neoliberal phase of the imperialism.

...

[...] what form a particular type of bourgeois state (normal or exceptional) would assume. *It is not given, but historically determined. It is not necessary for an exceptional bourgeois state (Bonapartist or fascist or even military rule) to formally abandon the form of bourgeois parliamentary system. Whether an exceptional state would abandon the parliamentary form or not, depends on the general relationships of the repressive state apparatus and ideological state apparatus, relationship among the various branches of the repressive as well as ideological state apparatuses, the particular conjuncture of class struggle, the relationship between the executive and the legislative, etc.* Here, Poulantzas points to something that Sukhwinder has always failed to understand as a particularly vacuous dogmatist and historicist: *the distinction between the conjunctural and contingent elements on the one hand and the systemic and structural elements on the other.*

There are elements in the rise of any political phenomenon which are *conjunctural* and *contingent*, which are determined by the particular historical context and political situation. Then, there are general *systemic* and *structural* elements which are *immanent* and *intrinsic* to the very content of that political phenomenon. This does not change and they represent the general systemic elements, which, indeed, can assume and do assume a variety of particular historical forms in the different stages of the capitalist mode of production, because these are determined by the particular political conjuncture of the historical moment in question. Poulantzas has explained this point in *Fascism and Dictatorship* itself, which Sukhwinder has claimed to have read. If he has, indeed, read the entire book from cover to cover, then it is obvious that he is totally dense about it.

...

These are some of the allusions and pointers that Poulantzas presents in this book. It is our task to take cue from this analysis and develop its correct Marxist elements further in the light of *actual historical experience* of the rise of fascism in *our times*. Poulantzas did what he could when he made these allusions. However, the world is not standing in the same conjuncture. The political situation in different countries and internationally, in general, has drastically changed. However, as a

true (though ignorant) dogmatist Sukhwinder refuses to move beyond the ambit of the historical experience and essentializes particular historical experiences by confusing the conjunctural and the contingent with the systemic and structural.

Above we have also seen from the excerpts of Toscano, Palheta, Traverso, Tamas, Neera Chandhoke and Saull, that besides this objective historical change, there has been a subjective change, as well. The fascists of the contemporary neoliberal phase have summed up the experience of their predecessors from the early-Twentieth century and have come to realize that neither is there any need to abandon the shell of the bourgeois democracy, nor is it desirable. Even the fascists perform what Walter Benjamin had termed 'redemptive activity': the act of redeeming oneself by correcting their mistakes through learning from history. It would be foolish to think that it is only communists who perform this activity.

Had Sukhwinder properly read Dimitrov (whose conception of fascism in terms of essence and appearance is highly mechanical and historically inaccurate) he would have not enumerated the abolishing of the bourgeois parliamentary form as a "necessary" pre-requisite of fascism. Dimitrov argued that fascism was more inclined to establish an open dictatorship and abandon parliamentary bourgeois democracy in countries where it was faced with a revolutionary working-class movement. Dimitrov points out:

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. 2022. *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International*, The November 8th Publishing House, Toronto, p. 6)

This means that Sukhwinder has not even read Dimitrov in totality. Interestingly, he cherry-picks all the incorrect or mechanically articulated formulations from Dimitrov, and leaves the relatively correct ones. I am saying relatively, because fascism, in general is seldom faced with a revolutionary working-class offensive in a significant way, as Dimitrov mentions in the above quote, because it begins *precisely* with the defeat of the latter. However, the point remains that Dimitrov, in passing, considered the possibility of retention of parliamentarism with fascism in

power, and Sukhwinder has missed this in Dimitrov, because he did not read even Dimitrov properly.

Overlooking the mechanical and some incorrect formulations, we can see that Dimitrov had already seen the possibility of co-existence of a *formal* parliamentary system with fascist regime under certain conditions. For Dimitrov, the conditions in which it can happen were exceptional. In totally different historical context and political situation, it has become the rule now. We can reproduce from many other scholars, historians, political scientists, Marxists and otherwise, who have worked on the changes in the nature of capitalist crises, resultant changes in the nature of the *modus operandi* of world capitalism as well as the bourgeoisie, the decline of the bourgeois democratic potential of the capitalist state and capitalist class in the neoliberal phase of imperialist stage, the consequent changes in the *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* of fascism and its rise to power and finally the fact that exceptional bourgeois state does not have the compulsion to abandon the shell/form of bourgeois democracy today. This has become quite obvious to the majority of communists, historians, political scientists and political economists. Then why did Sukhwinder fail so miserably and ridiculously in understanding this fact?

The problem with Sukhwinder's understanding is that he universalizes all the elements that were present in the fascist rise of the Twentieth century and bestows them with trans-historical value. He never even considers for once that since the 1940s and especially since the 1970s, with the beginning of the long recession, the world and the *modus operandi* of world capitalism have undergone many significant changes, the nature of crisis has become much more protracted and chronic, the limited kind of democratic potential that was still present in the bourgeois democracies and bourgeoisie of the Twentieth century has fundamentally decayed and degenerated, in the main, and consequentially the nature of fascist rise, too, has undergone change. Moreover, Sukhwinder has a particular talent for selectively looking for quotations from Marxist authorities to substantiate his idiotically doctrinaire and mulish, to the extent of being pigheaded, understanding and then concocts a veritable smorgasbord of quotations that often even go against one another!

Yet another problem with Sukhwinder, as is the problem with most dogmatic and obdurate breed of idealists is that he presumes that there is some kind of fixed, immutable, pre-determined and pre-given script that has to be followed in each and every instance of fascist rise. His understanding or lack thereof smacks of the assumption that there was an archetypal fascism that *a priori* existed in "idea" and the Twentieth century fascist rise perfected that idea in practice and thus followed that script to the T! And now in the Twenty-first century the same script is to be followed by the present-day fascist rise.

However, the problem with this kind of idealist thinking is that in reality things happen in exactly the opposite way. The historical materialist understanding of each and every phenomenon in society and thought reveals this to us every moment. Therefore, there was no such fixed pre-existing theory of fascism which was put into practice in Germany and Italy. Rather the concrete historical experience of fascist rise in Germany and Italy (and even in these two countries

the experience was not exactly similar) made it a living, burning and urgent task for the communists and Marxists-Leninists of the day to theorize this new political phenomenon and this is precisely the reason why sometimes the views expressed in their writings are contradicting each other as they were dealing with a constantly unfolding phenomenon. The same holds true for present-day communists and Marxists-Leninists. The elements of 'new' in the present-day fascist rise need to be theorized so that real resistance can be mounted against fascist onslaught in the changing conditions of neoliberal globalization. This is what Sukhwinder utterly fails to grasp. This is why the definition of fascism that Sukhwinder tries to copy and assemble from several disparate sources is so crude and vulgar:

Fascism is a particular form of bourgeois reaction that emerges in the imperialist stage of capitalism. It is a reactionary social movement of crisis ridden petty-bourgeoisie, which is led by an ideology and cadre based party. In the times of crisis, a fraction of monopoly capital backs it. Fascism comes to power with the slogans of blind nationalism, national purification. Fascism in power serves a fraction of monopoly capital. (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 24-25)

No, fascism does not serve only a "fraction of monopoly capital". We have quoted Poulantzas and others at length above, regarding this point. No, fascism does not adhere to a "nationalist" ideology, based on the historical category of nation, but relies on a chauvinistic ideology based on the construction of a purely ideological community (the unit of which could be race, religion, ethnicity, region, language, a particularly constructed national identity, etc.), which, then, is converted into the basis of definition of 'the nation'; and this construction is the dialectical other of the construction of a false enemy itself; both these constructions progress hand-in-hand. Why does Sukhwinder fail to understand this dialectic? Because he plagiarizes from a variety of sources that are ideologically and politically disparate and fails to see the contradiction among these sources on various points, and then puts all these paraphrased and plagiarized elements together!

...

Sukhwinder's Prescription for Class Collaboration and Indefinite Suspension of the Present Revolutionary Tasks of the Proletariat

Sukhwinder writes:

Here it needs to be discussed as to which situation is better for the development of working class movement? Is it the bourgeois democratic form or fascism or some other form of naked dictatorship? We should not forget that today in various capitalist countries the bourgeois democratic liberties that are available to the working class and other toiling masses, they aren't a form of charity by the rulers to workers/toilers rather the working class with the help of other toiling masses (especially peasants) has won these through century long struggles, uncountable sacrifices, martyrdoms. In the anti-feudalism struggles around the world, the ancestors of

the working class, handicraft workers spilled their blood. Modern working class, since its origin, engaged in long struggles in feudal system, colonial anti-colonial countries with the alliance of toiling masses. The struggle of workers/toilers for democratic liberties continued ever after the establishment of capitalism. As a result of these sacrifices, workers, toilers won democratic rights. This struggle for the safeguard and extension of democratic rights has an important place in the struggle of workers/ toilers for the construction of new socialist society. It is in bourgeois democratic system that the working class can correctly organise itself. It can ideologically, politically and organisationally prepare itself for the construction of new social system (socialism). *That is why, when the working class faces the question of choice between bourgeois democracy and fascist dictatorship (or some other form of naked dictatorship of the bourgeoisie) it sides with bourgeois democracy. Such was also the directive of Comintern's line of 'Anti Fascist Popular Front' in 1935.* (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 27-28, *emphasis ours*)

This statement reveals the pathetic bourgeois democratic illusions of Sukhwinder with utmost clarity. Sukhwinder argues that the 'popular front' line of the Comintern since 1934-35, provides a general framework of anti-fascist proletarian strategy and it does so even today. Does this claim hold any water?

First of all, even all the revolutionary communists of that period did not accept the universal application of the line of the 'popular front' espoused by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. Secondly, this was not the general policy, *temporally speaking*, even of the Comintern and was adopted in the conditions of complete defeat and destruction of the organized workers' movement, though, even in that situation, the line was afflicted with serious right-wing deviation, as we shall see. Thirdly, even in the 1930s, the harmful impact of the universal application of such policy without taking into consideration the character of the state, ruling class and social formation of a country, were quite evident. Let us discuss each of these in a little detail to reveal the bourgeois democratic illusions of our Trot-Bundist chieftain.

As we pointed out above, not all the leading revolutionaries of the period accepted the universal application of the line of the 'popular front'. Mao was one amongst them. Even though the use of the term 'fascism' by Mao and the CPC during the period of the Second World War and the period immediately after the war, was imprecise and inaccurate. For instance, it talks about 'Japanese fascism' of Tojo regime, the Polish fascism of the Pilsudski regime and even talks about 'KMT-comprador fascist regime', 'feudal fascist regime', etc. One reason for this erroneous tendency was the general lack of care in characterizing all the international allies of Germany, Italy and Japan as fascists; second reason was the tendency to characterize all forms of dictatorial reaction as fascist; however, these characterizations were certainly not accurate at all and they are not only present in the writing of Chou En-Lai but also in the writings of Mao himself, as well as, the CPC in general. At the same time, we also need to understand the historical context of the period in order to understand what led to such mistakes. Mao and the CPC were not alone in

committing these mistakes. Many other revolutionary communists committed this mistake during that period. One reason for that was also the fact that fascism as a political phenomenon was still evolving for the first time.

...

The CPC, Mao, the Comintern and the Policy of the 'Popular Front': Sukhwinder Nescience of History

Why is Sukhwinder so antagonistic towards history? He is not aware that the CPC as well as Mao had a critical attitude towards the policy of the Comintern in case of the strategic and tactical considerations of the Chinese revolution, as is well known now, and *also in the case of the implementation of the policy of the 'popular front' in Europe and especially in Spain*. However, the party did not voice these concerns and criticisms in a pronounced manner during the war. In the 1960s, critical statements regarding the policies of the Comintern pertaining to strategic class alliances and especially regarding the 'popular front' started to become more vocal.

We will show in what follows, the attitude of Mao and Kang Sheng regarding the 'popular front' policy of the Comintern. Those interested in reading Mao's and CPC's criticism of the Comintern can read Chou En-Lai's essay 'The Communist International and the Chinese Communist Party' from 1960: (<http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/CI60.html>) and also RCP's critique of Hoxhaite line, 'Beat Back the Dogmato-Revisionist Attack on Mao Tse-tung Thought': (<https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-5/rcp-hoxha/section1.htm>) where Mao's criticism of Comintern has been discussed in detail. Readers can also refer to excerpts from Mao's speech on the dissolution of the Comintern (a decision which in itself might be a matter of controversy, in which we cannot go into here): (https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-6/mswv6_36.htm). Those who would read the primary material related to this subject, would immediately realize that the Second United Front against Japan and the Dimitrov line of the 'popular front' *only coincide in time*, and not in theory or content, as Sukhwinder imagines. Chou En-Lai points to this fact in the aforementioned essay, as we shall see later.

First of all, let us see, how Mao constantly opposed the incorrect political line of the 'popular front'. Regarding this, J. Werner writes:

Unfortunately 1927 was not the last time in the history of the Chinese Revolution that the Comintern gave poor advice to the Chinese communists. We have already pointed out that the Wang Ming line, which Hoxha so stubbornly defends long after it has been proven to be wrong, was to varying degrees supported by the Comintern and perhaps by Stalin as well. From 1935 onward, during the period of the war against Japan, Wang Ming generally proposed a capitulationist line, and once again had the support of the Comintern in doing so. *Wang Ming called for a "united government of national defense" in direct opposition to Mao's call for a "people's republic" and for a united front against Japan.* Wang Ming at this time supported Chiang Kai-

shek's condition for unity with the Communists—namely that Chiang be given control over the Red Army. Of course Mao vigorously fought—and defeated—this.

This same tendency came out in much sharper form in 1945, following the defeat of Japan. *At that time Stalin argued strenuously that the Chinese Communist Party should cast away any perspective of completing the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the near future and should instead fight for a legal role in a bourgeois republic led by Chiang Kai-shek. In response to the situation following the defeat of Japan, Mao did, correctly, enter into negotiations with Chiang, but at the same time he made very clear that any coalition government that was formed would have to be on the basis of preserving the independence of the Communist Party, its base areas, and its army. It was in 1945 that Mao put forward his famous statement “without a People's Army the people have nothing” as a direct rebuke to those who would have had the People's Army dissolve and be absorbed unconditionally into a Chiang government. It should be noted that this policy, which was being urged on the Chinese Party, was the line that many of the parties of Western Europe (in France, Italy and Greece, for example) followed at the time, with the result that any immediate prospect for revolution was lost. (Werner, J. 1979. ‘Beat Back the Dogmato-Revisionist Attack on Mao Tse-tung Thought’, *The Communist*, Number 5, May, 1979)*

The last italicized portion is regarding the policy of the ‘popular front’ itself. Regarding the Wang Ming’s right deviation, what Chou En-Lai has written is actually a veiled criticism of the policy of the ‘popular front’. Chou En-Lai points out:

Although Comrade Mao Zedong was in charge of the Chinese Party during this period, the Communist International still had its influence. The main problem was the reappearance of the Wang Ming line. *Wang Ming came back from the International at the end of 1937 and said that he had talked with Stalin. Claiming to speak for the International, he proposed that “everything should go through the united front” and declared that the Kuomintang, like the Communist Party, had rallied excellent young people around it. After his return Wang Ming was placed in charge of the Changjiang Bureau. He deceived a number of people and pushed through his line a second time. Though this line was implemented for only a short time, it had an influence on the north, on the New Fourth Army and on Shanghai. It cannot be denied that the reappearance of the Wang Ming line had something to do with the Communist International. Stalin trusted Wang Ming, and Dimitrov was on friendly terms with him. Later, when I went to Moscow to talk about Wang Ming's errors, Dimitrov was surprised by what I had to say. (Chou En-Lai. 1960. <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/CI60.html>)*

Wang Ming implemented an even more capitulationist version of the ‘popular

front' in China, in terms of his prescribed approach towards Chiang and KMT. However, this, too, is clear from Chou En-Lai's account that the Chinese Communist Party did have serious reservations regarding the policy of the 'popular front'. These reservations began to be voiced more vocally since the late-1950s and 1960s. Again, those who are interested in reading, in particular, a critique of the 'popular front' from a broadly Maoist position, can refer to the article 'The Line of the Comintern on Spanish Civil War in Spain', written by Bob Avakian in his genuine Maoist period, published in *Revolution* magazine's volume number 6, issue number 1, in June 1981. Here we will concentrate on Mao's reservation on the 'popular front'.

Kang Sheng expressing Mao's viewpoint during a long talk by Mao pointed out:

*On New Democracy is of great significance for the world communist movement. I asked Spanish comrades, and they said the problem for them was to establish bourgeois democracy, not to establish New Democracy. In their country, they did not concern themselves with the three points: army, countryside, political power. They wholly subordinated themselves to the exigencies of Soviet foreign policy, and achieved nothing at all. (Mao: These are the policies of Chen Tu-hsiu!) They say the Communist Party organized an army, and then turned it over to others. (Mao: This is useless.) They also did not want political power, nor did they mobilize the peasantry. At that time, the Soviet Union said to them that if they imposed proletarian dictatorship, England and France might oppose it, and this would not be in the interests of the Soviet Union ... Also, when they fought, they waged regular war, in the manner of the bourgeoisie, they defended Madrid to the last. In all things, they subordinated themselves to Soviet foreign policy. (quoted in Schram, Stuart. 1974. *Chairman Mao talks to the People*, Pantheon Books, p. 218, emphasis ours)*

Readers are requested to concentrate on certain statements of Kang Sheng here that we have italicized.

The first italicized portion talks about the capitulationist policy of the 'popular front' of refusing to establish either a socialist republic or a people's democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants. Sukhwinder, too, commits the same blunder, though in a much poorer and much more ignorant and "bare-naked" fashion. It never occurs to him that even if we accept that under certain peculiar conditions, the strategic horizon in conditions of fascism in power is not the socialist revolution, then why it must necessarily be *restoration of the bourgeois democracy, and why not new democracy or people's democracy?* Such line reeks of rank tailendism and surrender of the political independence of the proletariat.

Lenin clearly stressed on the policy of 'united front from below' which was that of tactical issue-based alliances with social-democratic and socialist parties, but mainly organizing the rank-and-file workers and working masses from all kinds of organizations, including the social-democratic ones, against fascism. Lenin pointed out:

The victory of the Italian Communists is assured if they do not isolate themselves *from the masses*, if they do not lose patience in the hard work of *exposing all of Serrati's chicanery to rank-and-file workers in a practical way*, if they do not yield to the very easy and very dangerous temptation to say "minus a" whenever Serrati says "a", if they steadily *train the masses* to adopt a revolutionary world outlook and prepare them for revolutionary action, if they also take practical advantage of the practical and magnificent (although costly) object lessons of fascism. (Lenin, V. I. *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, Progress Publishers, p. 11, *emphasis ours*)

Elsewhere, Lenin writes:

The third fact is the most important. A meeting was held in Rome to organise the struggle against the fascists, in which 50,000 workers took part—representing all parties— Communists, socialists and also republicans. Five thousand ex-servicemen came to the meeting in their uniforms and not a single fascist dared to appear on the street. This shows that there is more inflammable material in Europe than we thought. Lazzari praised our resolution on tactics. It is an important achievement of our congress. If Lazzari admits it, then *the thousands of workers who back him are bound to come to us, and their leaders will not be able to scare them away from us*. "Il faut reculer, pour mieux sauter" (you have to step back to make a better jump). This jump is inevitable, since the situation, objectively, is becoming insufferable. (Lenin, V. I. *Collected Works*, Vol 42, Progress Publishers, p. 236-27, *emphasis ours*)

This was precisely the Leninist line, as Poulantzas, too, has noticed: *to the masses!* And this was precisely the Leninist line ('united front from below') abandoned by the line of the 'popular front' and which could not be implemented in a correct fashion during the right-deviationist period of the policy of 'united front of the working class' (since 1923) and then the "left"-deviationist period of the policy of 'united front of the working class' (since the Fifth Congress of the Comintern) and then the ultra-left deviationist period of the policy of 'united front of the working class' (since 1928). The reasons for these failures were implicit in the errors of economism and the lack of massline in the European communist movement, especially in the period after the death of Lenin.

Now, let us focus on the second italicized portion from Kang Sheng's statement. This refers to the disastrous results of the 'popular frontism' in Spain, where it was the communists who most resolutely organized against fascism and even registered some important victories in the first period of military resistance, but finally handed over the political lead to the bourgeoisie. This ultimately resulted in the victory of Francoism with the help of Britain and France. The help of Britain and France to Franco itself showed the erroneous nature of the line of the 'popular front'.

The third italicized portion from Kang Sheng's statement refers to another mistake of the 'popular front' line: the refusal to take power and the refusal to go directly

to the masses; instead, forming alliances with the bourgeois parties and social-democratic parties and assuming that a *united front of the ally classes can only be established through the alliance with the parties*. As Poulantzas has pointed out, this was confusing *the parties* with *the classes*. The final outcome of such policy was class collaborationism, tailendism and capitulation resulting in tragic defeat everywhere where the policy of the 'popular front' was implemented.

It is clear from the above discussion that Mao and his Maoist comrades did not subscribe to the policy of the 'popular front'; their rejection of Comintern's line regarding the Chinese Revolution in the 1930s was not unrelated to their rejection of the line of the 'popular front' as well as the "left"-deviationist version of the 'united front of the working class', as we have seen above.

The Policy of the 'Popular Front': Economism, Class Collaboration, Class Capitulation

Let us first discuss Poulantzas's critique of the line of the 'popular front'. Poulantzas's position is broadly correct. His criticism is detailed, systematic and structured and nearer to Lenin's position on resistance to fascism. Most importantly, Poulantzas traces the error of popular frontism in its incorrect analysis of the political economy and class basis of fascism. Poulantzas, whom Sukhwinder claims to have read and quotes repeatedly, pointed out the problem with the position of the Comintern on the nature of united front against fascists especially since 1933:

This leads us to *the problem of the Third International's definition of fascism*. Especially after the Seventh Congress went over to the policy of 'popular fronts', and because of its ideas about the relationship between fascism and economic class interests, *the field of interests which fascism 'exclusively represented' was held to be ever narrower*. From the dictatorship of capital 'in the period of its decline' (Fifth Congress), fascism became the dictatorship of big capital; dictatorship of finance capital (Sixth Congress); dictatorship of 'the most reactionary, chauvinist and imperialist elements of finance capital' (this was Dimitrov speaking); dictatorship of the 'two hundred families'. *The implications are very clear: popular front politics based on the broadest possible antifascist alliance, including all fractions of capital except the ever narrower one which fascism was considered 'exclusively' to represent*. The present consequences of this policy are well known: it is not at all surprising that this kind of formulation about fascism is again to be found in the same form in the analyses of 'State monopoly capitalism' as the exclusive instrument of a 'handful' of monopolists. What needs to be made very clear is that despite the actual text of Dimitrov's report, and despite the correctness of his formulae for united and popular fronts (*the fact that the formal claim was that popular front will be subordinated to the united front of the working class-author*), the turn occurs at this point. It is from this point on that the *International decisively went over to the conception of a continuous narrowing of the economic interests the State supposedly represents, and this opened the way to the whole subsequent strategy of alliances*.

So it was no accident that this definition of Dimitrov's finally boiled down to the social democratic conception formulated by Otto Bauer: 'While in bourgeois democracy the whole of the bourgeoisie is in power, although under the leadership and domination of big capital, under fascism, big capital and large landowners rule alone.' (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p 97, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas explains the basic methodological problem with the arguments of Dimitrov:

It is in fact correct that fascism represents an effective reorganization and redistribution of the balance of forces among the dominant classes and fractions. It accelerates the consolidation and stabilization of the economic supremacy of big finance capital over the other dominant classes and class fractions. *But this can by no means be interpreted as meaning that fascism represents the economic interests of big capital 'exclusively'. Fascism rather operates, in the economic sense, as a factor neutralizing the contradictions among these classes and fractions, while regulating development to ensure the decisive domination of big capital.* (*ibid.*, p. 98)

...

Poulantzas, after quoting Dimitrov's stated position in the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, presents a succinct critique of the problematic foundational elements:

Now these positions constitute an important step for the Comintern, although it is still necessary to distinguish what Dimitrov said at the time from the practical application of these directives and their later evolution. The important points in the theses themselves are as follows:

(a) Dimitrov's definition of the class basis of fascism is decisively restricted, so *opening the way to the broadest anti-fascist alliances with the liberal bourgeoisie.*

(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.*

(d) Official and pronounced emphasis is laid on the 'national' side of communist policy.

There is no more to be said here. We do know that in 'revised' and 'corrected' form these theses still govern the policy of frontist electoral alliances held by various communist parties today. *They*

were of course still some way from this: it would be wrong to equate Dimitrov with the present-day parties. But the way was already wide open. (ibid., p. 164-65, emphasis ours)

...

What many dogmatists do not understand that they do not become Trotskyite if they critique the reformist policy of 'popular front'. Many communists are afraid to criticize the incorrect line of the 'popular front' because they assume that by this they would be siding with Trotsky. This is an extremely harmful confusion and reveals ignorance regarding Mao's stand on this question. It is noteworthy that the question was not whether or not to form alliances with certain bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties based on particular issues in certain conditions (for instance, total defeat of an already-existing organized workers' movement, which must not be confused with the revolutionary political movement of the proletariat as a political class). Of course, such alliances can be formed under certain conditions. However, to define fascism in such a way in terms of its class character that *a strategic alliance* with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political parties as well as classes becomes the *conditio sine qua non* of anti-fascist proletarian strategy, is problematic.

Trotsky's critique of 'popular front' was a left-opportunist critique and revealed his neo-Lassalleian line. However, the critique presented by Kang Sheng under the guidance of Mao was not a Trotskyite critique. In fact, on this question, they also critiqued Trotsky's "left" deviation. Their argument was simple: *to put restoration of bourgeois democracy (rather than new democracy, that is, completion of bourgeois democratic tasks under the leadership of the proletariat, by establishing a people's democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry) as the only permitted and desirable strategic aim against the fascist dictatorship, is nothing but reformism and objectively the line of class collaboration and losing proletarian independence.* Objectively what is possible in a given political situation is a different question altogether. However, the subjective position and *a priori* strategic aim cannot be the restoration of bourgeois democracy.

However, Sukhwinder does not simply subscribe to the incorrect position of the Comintern since 1933 itself (when the Comintern began to move away from the position of the 'united front of the working class' as a pathological reaction to the ultra-left deviation in the implementation of this line). He presents an extremely imbecile, vulgar and obscene revisionist and social-democratic version of the policy of 'popular front' (which itself was incorrect), which converts an objective reformism into a subjective and conscious reformism, class-collaborationism and capitulationism of the worst and most disgusting type.

So, let us be clear about some basic things, which go over the head of editor saab like a bouncer: No, the communists never "side with bourgeois democracy" whenever faced with fascism or any other form of open dictatorship! *In terms of subjective approach, their first priority is people's democracy or new democracy under the leadership of the proletariat, or, depending on the political situation and historical context, even socialist revolution.* 'Popular front' policy did not understand precisely this class line of the CPC and Mao, which Kang Sheng summarized precisely and accurately in the above-quoted excerpt. Moreover, communists in that period

“sided with bourgeois democracy” only as a matter of compulsion created by the total vanquishing of the working-class movement, which, of course, was incorrect, too.

Evolution of Comintern's Policy from 1921 to 1935: From Leninist Position to Right, “Left”, “Ultra-Left” and Finally Ultra-Right Deviation

Related to the above point is the fact that ‘popular front’ was not the only strategic policy adopted by the Comintern from the beginning. In fact, Sukhwinder completely misses the evolution of the views of Comintern since the early-1920s to the 1930s, despite formally paraphrasing about it from a variety of sources, and knows only about the Trotskyite critique of the ‘popular front’ and about the critique by certain revolutionary communists of the “left” implementation of the policy of united front of the working class by certain communist parties in Europe, which helped the fascist forces objectively. The initial strategy of the Comintern has been summarized well by Köves and Mazumdar:

The strategy of action evolved by the Comintern to fight this threat was to organize for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system. In this strategy, the concept of a united front of the working class (quite different to the one adopted in 1935 by the Seventh Congress) played a central role. While this concept did not rule out appeals for united action to the social democratic parties and organizations, its basic thrust was aimed at *united action from below* which would also expose the reformism of the social-democratic leaders and their collaboration with the bourgeoisie. (Köves and Mazumdar. 2005. *op.cit.*, p. 14, *emphasis ours*)

Sukhwinder assumes that the whole period since the Fourth Congress, of the policy of united front, was the period of “left” deviation. This only reveals that he has not read anything systematically on the question of the emergence of Comintern’s policy on the united front against fascism. The policy of the united front of the working class itself can be divided into its relatively correct phase, its right-deviationist phase, “left” deviationist phase and its “ultra-left” deviationist phase. The latter began from 1928. However, the crux of the mistake was not *the use* of the term ‘social fascism’ for social-democracy. The error was to effectively obliterate the qualitative difference between social-democracy (which did contribute to the rise of fascism due to its policy of class-collaborationism and economism) and fascism as two qualitatively different political tendencies of the bourgeoisie, needed by the bourgeoisie at different types of political conjuncture. The peculiarity of fascism was eliminated in this theorization and the exceptional nature of the fascist regime, too, was diluted. It does not mean that a correct strategy against fascism would not include, at the same time, the task of exposing the social-democracy before the masses of the working class.

First of all, let us discuss the “left”-right swings during the period of the united front of the working class. Sukhwinder assumes that this entire period is one homogenous mass, especially after the Fourth Congress. This betrays his total lack of consciousness about the history of the evolution of front-policy of the

Comintern. Poulantzas points out:

To take the Italian case first. The Comintern, at its Third Congress, recognized a period of 'stabilization' of class struggle, and launched the slogan, 'To the masses'; six months later, in December 1921, its executive adopted the theses on the united front, in pursuit of this watchword. These theses, ratified by the First Plenum (February-March 1922) and the Fourth Congress under the title 'Theses on the unity of the proletarian front', were added in abbreviated form to the Fourth Congress resolutions. *It should furthermore be noted that these theses were elaborated under Lenin's direction. The Comintern recognized (i) a turn in the class struggle, (ii) its own sectarian errors during the previous period and (iii) the persistence of social-democratic influence in spite of the split. It now turned its efforts to the formation of a proletarian united front. A 'rank and file' united front, of course, implying the independence and autonomy of the communist parties within this front, and the participation of communists primarily in the rank and file organizations of the working class; but also implying a certain policy towards the social-democratic party, derived from a particular understanding of it.* (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 157, *emphasis ours*)

This is the period, that is, the period before 1922-23, where the policy of 'united front from below', formulated under the leadership of Lenin, was being prescribed by the Comintern and represented a correct proletarian line on this question. What was the crux of this policy? One, issue-based alliances with the social-democrats and socialists, while also maintaining the proletarian independence and the freedom of exposing the social-democracy and socialists for their objective role in the rise of fascism; two, making a distinction between the parties with working class base (such as social-democrats and socialists) and the working class itself; three, focusing on organizing the rank-and-file workers in the social-democratic, socialist and even petty-bourgeois organizations into anti-fascist organizations. This was the correct line, as it did not swing to the ultra-left position, which was later represented by Thälmann, as we shall see.

Poulantzas points out further:

The theses on the united front flowed directly from the Leninist slogan, 'To the masses'; but with the Fourth Congress and Comintern policy in the period straight after it, there was a change to the slogan of workers' governments (Arbeiterregierungen), or governments of alliance between communists and social democrats, with definite objectives...

...

I shall not discuss Comintern developments between the Fourth Congress (1922-3) and the Sixth Congress (1928), as this period is of no direct interest for the rise of fascism. I would simply note that it is characterized by a great confusion on the question of alliances, and that this stems from the Comintern's alternating definitions of steps.

...

The Fifth Congress made an 'ultra-left' turn, neglecting 'stabilization' and changing the position on workers' governments. While the Fourth Congress had seen these as a 'step' towards the dictatorship of the proletariat through revolution, the Fifth Congress – the Congress of 'Bolshevization' – identified them with the dictatorship of the proletariat, implying that they could not come as a particular step before revolution. This amounted in practice to a rejection of the theory of workers' governments. The theses on the united front remained intact in appearance, but (at the same time as the theory of social fascism first appeared) it was specified that the united front was 'nothing more than a revolutionary method of agitation and mass mobilization', and that 'its main objective lay in the struggle against the leaders of counter-revolutionary social democracy'.

...

With the Comintern's Sixth Congress (1928), the decisive turn took place. (*ibid.*, p. 158-59)

...

Thus, the period from 1920-21 to 1922-23, then the period from 1924 to 1928, and finally the period from 1928 to 1933, must be distinguished from each other. Formally, this, entirely was the period of 'united front of the working class'. However, in essence, the correct Leninist line of 'united front of the working class from below', began to be abandoned from 1923 itself, with the confusion prevailing in the Comintern and resultant *right-“left” deviation* followed by “left” deviation. From 1928, decisive ultra-left turn begins and leads to disastrous results due to the incorrect formulation of '*social fascism as the main enemy*'. Moreover, no attempt was being made to organize the rank-and-file workers from all organizations, including the social-democratic ones. *An over-reaction to this ultra-left turn was the decisive right swing to the policy of the 'popular front'*.

Therefore, Sukhwinder only reveals his ignorance of the pendulum-like motion of right and “left” deviation within the period of 'united front of the working class' since the Fourth Congress itself. The Fourth Congress represented the first departure from Leninist 'united front from below', mainly towards the right. On the other hand, the Fifth Congress represented a “left” swing by diluting the qualitative distinction between fascism and social-democracy (to be termed as social-fascism since 1928). With Sixth Congress, the “left” turn became the ultra-left turn. Thus, between 1922-23 (the Fourth Congress) to the Sixth Congress (1928), there were alternating right-“left” deviations and from the Sixth Congress to 1933, the ultra-left deviation dominated, resulting finally in the pathological reaction to this in the shape of the policy of 'the popular front'.

We have to understand the background in which the shift to the policy of 'popular front' took place. There are two basic co-ordinates of this shift. One was the “left” adventurist mistakes in the implementation of the policy of united front of the working class (which Sukhwinder mistakes as the “left” character of the very policy of the united front of the working class), which isolated working class politically.

The second coordinate was the mistake of *economism* and *lack of massline*, which again prevented the working class to constitute itself as a *political class* capable of assuming the political leadership of the people, by establishing the hegemony of the proletarian political line among the masses. This manifested itself in the lack or complete absence of political work in the classes and sections of the people or the masses, on the part of the communist parties. It is noteworthy that the mistake inherent in this “leftist” implementation of the policy of united front of the working class is essentially the same mistake in an inverted form, that was committed by the policy of ‘popular front’, namely, not organizing the peasantry and the petty-bourgeois masses directly, but only dealing with these classes through ‘their’ bourgeois or petty-bourgeois parties. Thus, both represented the same mistake of not implementing the Leninist directive of ‘to the masses’; the “leftist” version of the united front of the working class argued, in the words of Thälmann, that the masses associated with social-democratic and socialist mass organizations are “lost to us”; at the same time, the ‘popular frontists’ argued that the united front with the masses will be made only through their parties, so the revolutionary communists do not need to organize them directly. Both involved the refusal to implement the revolutionary massline as directed by Lenin in his slogan ‘to the masses’, though in an inverted fashion.

Both these mistakes resulted in the inability of the communist parties to mount a political offensive of the proletariat. *It must be noted here that the proletarian political revolutionary movement could not gain momentum because of its internal contradictions, reflected in the dominance of economism, instead of the fascist rise to power.* In fact, as Poulantzas has pointed out, fascism *began* to rise when the proletarian political offensive had already failed to build itself.

It was only with the complete defeat of the organized workers’ movement and the near-total destruction of communist organizations and groups that fascism rose to power. In this new situation, Dimitrov and various leaders of Comintern tacitly accepted, changing their previous line, in the Seventh Congress that fascism rose to power not due to the threat of the proletarian revolution, but due to the total defeat of this potential political offensive. This holds true in the context of Italy as well as Germany. The communist offensive was already in ruins and tatters, when fascism began to rise.

...

However, the reasons for the shift in the Comintern policy regarding the nature of united front against fascism (united front of the working class or the popular front) are not clear to Sukhwinder. Had he understood this history properly, he might not have swung to the extreme-right version of the already right-deviationist policy of the ‘popular front’. This shift is congruent with his overall political *volte-face* since the farmers’ movement itself, where he capitulated to the agrarian bourgeoisie of Punjab and also, on the question of ‘federalism’, where he capitulated to the entire regional Punjabi bourgeoisie. In such a situation, it is not surprising that the strategy of the ‘popular front’ appears to Sukhwinder as the panacea to the problem of anti-fascism today.

'Popular Front', the Erroneous Political Economy Behind it and Stalin

We also need to understand that the theory of the 'popular front' has roots in the erroneous political economy which emerged *after* Lenin. The particular version of the 'monopoly capital theory' which is evident in the textbooks of political economy published in the USSR even before the death of Stalin, reveal an incorrect line: the line of 'all vs. monopoly'. This leads to the erroneous policy of forming alliances with other fractions of the bourgeoisie against the monopoly bourgeoisie. It was precisely this political economy, whose vulgar expression was Dimitrov's argument that fascism is the dictatorship of the most reactionary elements (not even the entire class of monopoly bourgeoisie!) of the monopoly financial bourgeoisie. We have shown above why this political line led and lead even today various communists to irreparable damage and unpardonable blunders.

Third, even in the 1930s, the line of the 'popular front' wreaked havoc on the revolutionary communist movement by making it a tail-ender of the bourgeoisie, condemning it to lose its political independence and degenerating it to the level of class capitulationism and collaborationism.

...

Overall, the line of the 'popular front' was neither applicable universally in the 1930s (disastrous results of which became evident very soon) nor is it applicable today. Some scholars have doubted Stalin's role in the formulation of the policy of 'popular front':

A strange fact about this Report is that there have been a number of references of Lenin in the Report but not a single reference was made of Stalin by Dimitrov though Stalin was the top leader of the USSR at the time in whose capital city it was being held and who played the most important role in defeating Fascism. Stalin was also absent from the sessions of the Congress like the previous edition of 1928. A hard fact to believe, indeed. Some even argued that the Comintern reorientation – the switch from left to right – became possible at a time when the 'Marxist-Leninist elements' around Stalin remained a minority within its leadership. The new Political Secretariat elected by the Congress in 1935, for instance, included a strong majority of leaders who were the known critics Stalin. Members of the Political Secretariat elected by the Seventh Comintern Congress were Dimitrov (General Secretary), Togliatti, Manuilsky, Pieck, Kuusinen, Marty, Gottwald; candidates: Moskvina, Florin, Wang Ming. Further, the new popular front policies were never endorsed by Stalin which shows strong circumstantial evidence of his personal opposition to them. This opposition became almost evident at the 18th Congress of the CPSU (B) in 1939, when Stalin, in his long report, made no reference whatsoever to the Comintern policies. Besides, no attention at all to the people's fronts was paid by the official *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)—Short Course* published in 1939. (Steinmayr 2000) Stalin's problem with a section of the top most leaders of the CPSU has been the issue of plethora of writings and he was criticized severely by Khrushchev

in his secret speech in 1956. However, ‘every “revelation” in Nikita Khrushchev’s infamous “secret speech” to the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on February 25, 1956, is provably false’. (Furr 2011) This study of Grover Furr substantiates the position maintained by Steinmayr to an extent. (Deb, Bikash Ranjan. 2018. ‘Marxism, Bengal National Revolutionaries and Comintern, in *Social Trends*, Vol. 5)

Similarly, Monty Johnstone, too, argued that Dimitrov had to try hard to persuade Stalin to give nod to the shift of policy from the united front of the working class to the ‘popular front’, “Dimitrov had to battle with Stalin to overcome his opposition to a change in the old line for which he held major responsibility.” (Johnstone, M. 1985. ‘Trotsky and the People’s Front’ in Jim Fyrth (ed.) *Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, p. 91)

Jonathan Haslam points out that “the Popular Front was a French creation.” (Haslam, J. 1979. ‘The Comintern and the Origins of the Popular Front, 1934-35’ in *Historical Journal*, 22:3, p. 689). Notably, historian Eric Hobsbawm points out, “The relative roles of Moscow and Paris in the genesis of the Popular Front have been much discussed but it now seems clear that its real innovation, the readiness by Communists to extend the so-called “United Front” from other socialists to friendly non-socialist Liberals and essentially to all anti-fascists opposed to Communism originated in France.” (Hobsbawm, E. 2002. *Interesting Times: A Twentieth Century Life*, Allen Lane, p. 429, note 1)

Chou En-Lai, too, pointed out:

In this period the Chinese Party maintained fewer contacts with the Communist International. *The International held its Seventh Congress in July-August 1935. Stalin was more concerned with domestic problems, and Dimitrov was in charge of the International...* At that time the International developed the Anti-Fascist United Front, which *coincided* with the formation of the anti-Japanese National United Front in China. When Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng arrested Chiang Kai-shek in the Xi’an Incident, the International openly declared that Zhang was a running dog of the Japanese imperialists and that the arrest of Chiang Kai-shek suited the needs of Japan. This judgment was completely wrong. Our own approach to the Xi’an Incident was, on the whole, correct. (<http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/CI60.html>, *emphasis ours*)

Of course, these are circumstantial evidence and we cannot conclude on the basis of the above facts that Stalin necessarily and definitely did not subscribe to the policy of the ‘popular front’, even though this much is clear that he was not the one who formulated this line. This line was certainly formulated in France and in Comintern under Dimitrov’s leadership. Whether Stalin lent direct support to the line of the ‘popular front’ or he was reluctant to do so, is not important in itself. Since he was the leader of the international proletariat during that time, some responsibility does indeed lie with him.

We should not prevent ourselves, as revolutionary communists, from critiquing the right opportunist mistakes of the Comintern since 1933, as well as the “left”, economic mistakes of a number of communist parties of Europe in the 1920s, the most vulgar version of which was presented by Trotsky.

Is ‘Popular Front’ a Policy Against ‘Fascism in Power’ Only? Sukhwinder’s Quietist Illusions

Thus, Sukhwinder intentionally conjures up a *necessary binary* of fascism and bourgeois democracy in order to justify his support for the ‘popular front’ today. Moreover, this is especially important for Sukhwinder because of his conciliatory attitude towards the *kulaks* and the entire agrarian bourgeoisie of Punjab, as we pointed out above. If ‘popular front’ is indeed the only possible anti-fascist front and the horizon of proletarian line on fascism, then of course, all except the “most reactionary elements” of financial big monopoly bourgeoisie (for example, Adani, Ambani, etc.) have to be allied with and this obviously includes the rich *kulaks* and capitalist farmers as well! The demand for MSP, too, has been presented by the political representatives of *kulaks* as a demand which goes against the “corporates”, that is, the big monopoly bourgeoisie and it goes without saying that a few of them, Adani, Ambani, etc. represent its “most reactionary fractions”. Once the reader is acquainted with the rest of the class capitulationist and class collaborationist line of Sukhwinder, everything falls in place *vis-à-vis* his essay on fascism, which is more of a medley of his “bare-naked” versions of economic, class collaborationism, class capitulationist, dogmatist and historicist errors.

Obviously bourgeois democracy is the best possible scenario for working class to organize its forces. Nobody denies that. However, this false absolutist binary of “bourgeois democracy vs. fascist dictatorship” is Sukhwinder’s way of making the working class tailend the non-fascist bourgeois parties and classes (especially *kulaks* of Punjab) as well as social-democrats. *For him open fascist dictatorship (which is only a form of bourgeois rule itself) vs. socialist revolution is unthinkable! For him, even open fascist dictatorship vs. people’s democracy with democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants is unthinkable! It has to be bourgeois democracy!* It must be the restoration of bourgeois democracy in alliance with entire bourgeoisie, except, “the most reactionary fractions” of the monopoly bourgeoisie! This is precisely the class-collaborationist and class capitulationist line of the ‘Spanish comrades’ that Kang Sheng referred to under the guidance of Mao. The only difference being the fact that for the Spanish comrades (who were actually fighting with guns in their hands), it was an objective error stemming from the mistake of the Comintern, whereas, for Sukhwinder it is a subjective error stemming from his political quietism, cowardice, reformism, and class collaborationism.

Sukhwinder might argue that when fascist dictatorship is in place, the forces of working class are completely annihilated and destroyed, therefore, the task of socialist revolution will not be practical and feasible. However, again, why is he waiting for this ultimate catastrophe to befall the working class? Why is he not implementing Comintern’s “directive”, as he puts it, from the day 1? Why is he not aligning with Akali Dal, AAP, Congress and CPI, CPM, CPI (ML) Liberation from today itself to escape the fate that befell the working class in Germany and Italy?

Did the Comintern say that the 'popular front' will be formed only when fascism is in power? No. In fact, the first experiments of the 'popular front' began before the Seventh Congress of the Comintern and even after that they began even in the countries where fascism was not in power. For instance, at Comintern's directive, the 'popular front' was formed in June 1935 by PCE (Communist Party of Spain), which narrowly won the elections in February 1936 against right-wing coalition, whereas an exceptional state emerged only in July 1936 with the victory of Franco's forces which led to the fascistoid or quasi-fascist military regime of Franco. In France, too, the 'popular front' was formed before any fascist seizure of power, and it won elections in May 1936 leading to the formation of a 'popular front' coalition under the leadership of socialist leader Leon Blum. Here, too, the 'popular front' had failed because Blum's SFIO and the Radical Party of Daladier betrayed the anti-fascist stand of the 'popular front' very soon and essentially it collapsed within a couple of years, which only proved the incorrectness of the general policy of the 'popular front'.

Thus, forming a 'popular front' does not require Sukhwinder to wait for something exactly like Germany or Italy to happen, that is, a seizure of total power through a 'war of movement', as an event, by the fascist forces. Why wait for that? That was not the policy of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern! The policy was to form a 'popular front' even if there was a fascist movement, that is why, it was formed in Spain and France just before and just after the Seventh Congress itself and before any fascist takeover in these countries. If Sukhwinder has a correct understanding even of the 'popular front' policy of the Comintern, then he should immediately form an alliance with Akali Dal, Aam Admi Party, BSP and the Congress in Punjab! Maybe he will eventually, as his Trot-Bundism might propel him to do so ultimately, anyway.

...

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.

....

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 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.

...

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.

...

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).

...

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.

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*)

...

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.

...

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*)

...

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.

...

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.

...

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.

...

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 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.

...

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*.

...

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.

...

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.

...

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.

...

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’.

...

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*)*

...

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*)

...

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.

...

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:

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.

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.

...

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*)

...

The policy of the French party was already that of 'popular front', even before the Seventh Congress and Dimitrov Theses.

...

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.

...

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)

...

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 ECCI, 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.

...

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' is 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'?

...

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.

...

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!

...

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.

...

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 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, Manuisky 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.'

...

Is the Multinational Character of India a Hindrance to the Rise of Fascism in India? Sukhwinder's Farcically Fantastic Fancies

Sukhwinder writes under the subhead on 'obstacles' to fascist rise in India:

The multinational character of India is the biggest obstacle in fascism's path. Behind RSS's fascism there is not a united identity/force, like there was behind Hitler (the national identity of Germany). RSS talks of 'Hindu Rashtra', but Hindu is not a nation, it is a religious sect. It does not have a monolith, countrywide identity. Hindus of India are Hindus of different nations. Their language, culture and history are different. RSS (Sangh Parivar) is attempting to erase these differences and make India into a nation. This is impossible. As the BJP government is progressing on the path of centralisation policies, stripping the rights of various states, the contradiction between monopoly capitalists of India, which control the union government, and different nations is sharpening.

Caste is another obstacle in the path of RSS' fascism. RSS favours Varna system. Thus, Dalits, who form nearly 16% of India's population, do not trust it. (Sukhwinder, op.cit., p. 50-51)

This is all that has been written under this subhead by Sukhwinder and every claim and assertion made here are no less than outrageous, as it betrays unbelievable ignorance of history, as well as theory, and also reveals the fundamentalist and chauvinistic idea of nation harbored by Sukhwinder. Let us elaborate it.

Every single sentence in the above excerpt is foolish and betrays the worst of the street journalistic understanding that you hear from liberals in TV debates. Consider the first sentence. It says that the German fascism was based on a unitary

identity of the German nation. Sukhwinder accepts the Nazi definition of what a German nation was, what it included and what it did not. Were the Jews in Germany a part of the German nation? Yes, they were. They spoke the German language, they lived in what became Germany for several generations, they actually represented the best of the German culture, intellectual traditions, language, etc. The only difference was racial and, in some cases, religious. The Nazi idea of what a German nation was, is a purely ideological concept based on a chauvinistic idea of racism, religion and ethnicity. Moreover, many of the other national minorities who were considered the descendent of Germanic Aryans or Nordics, were easily accommodated within the idea of what was truly German! Except the Jews, Blacks and the Romani, and Slav and Turkish people, most of the whites of North-Western descent were considered Nordic and Aryan and assimilated within the idea of German-ness by the Nazis. Thus, the whole Nazi idea of *German nation* was based on a purely ideological construction, stemming from the chauvinistic racist ideology. It had nothing whatsoever to do with the historical category of German nation. However, due to his utter ignorance about history, Sukhwinder has no clue about it. He takes things at the face-value and then takes off for the flights of imagination, on the runway of stupidity.

In other words, the 'German Aryan Nation' that the Nazis talked about and which fascinates Sukhwinder had nothing *national per se* about it, if we take nation as a historical category, and it was a purely ideological community built on the basis of a chauvinistic and reactionary ideology. It was a racist exclusivist idea. However, Sukhwinder's own idea of what a nation is, itself, extremely chauvinistic and communal and therefore we are not surprised by his agreement with the Nazi idea of nationhood. Just read these lines, "We must stand against the fascist attacks on national minorities especially the Muslims, Christians and Sikhs." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 54)

Thus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are national minorities! Sukhwinder shows his true chauvinistic colours here. At the same time, Sukhwinder argues, "Behind RSS's fascism there is not a united identity/force, like there was behind Hitler (the national identity of Germany). RSS talks of 'Hindu Rashtra', but Hindu is not a nation, it is a religious sect. It does not have a monolith, countrywide identity" (*ibid.*, p. 50)

But if Hindus are not a national community, or does not constitute a nation, how can the Sikhs, Muslims and Christians, constitute a national community, or a nation, or a national minority (which has every other trait of a nation, except, a clear territoriality)? Thus, for Sukhwinder, religion can become a basis for national identity for the Sikhs, Christians and Muslims, but not for Hindus! Such is the idea and understanding of Sukhwinder as to what a nation is. One is not surprised that he and his group have been spewing chauvinistic bullshit about migrant workers in Punjab demanding 'Punjabi jobs for Punjabis', 'Punjabi as a compulsory language for jobs in Punjab', have the most fantastic ideas about Punjab (and all nations and nationalities of India!) being an oppressed nation, have the basest kinds of identitarian ideas about languages, dialects and the relation between the two, and have the most infantile type of pygmy "imperialistic" idea about Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, all being basically parts of Punjab itself! So, let us get things

straight for the readers.

Muslims, Christians or Sikhs are not national minorities, as Sukhwinder fantasizes. They are religious minorities. Moreover, Punjabis themselves are not national minorities in Punjab. In Punjab, they constitute a nation. They have a clear territoriality. Punjabis living in Bihar, for example, constitute a national minority in Bihar. However, Punjabis themselves are not national minority, who do not have a territoriality. They do have a territoriality and constitute a nation, though they are not oppressed nation, because the national oppression originates with the oppression of the bourgeoisie of a nation, by another nation, on the question of the control of the domestic market, as Lenin and Stalin have clearly shown several times, and later, Maoist thinkers like Ibrahim Kaypakkaya, too, have demonstrated. Needless to say, once this national oppression comes into existence, it engulfs the rest of the classes of the nation, too, and results in various forms of political oppression, for instance, the restrictions on movement, restrictions on religion, language, press, freedom to assemble peacefully, right to expression, etc.

However, in the case of Punjab, there is no such contradiction between the Punjabi bourgeoisie and some *anational Indian big bourgeoisie (non-existent anyway!)*, as Sukhwinder believes. In fact, the big bourgeoisie of India is not some *anational big bourgeoisie*, but a multi-national big bourgeoisie, constituted and formed historically, through the organic participation of the bourgeoisies of many nations that reside in the country. The only nations which do not have any share in the political power and economic might, the bourgeoisies of which, themselves, are oppressed, do not have any control over their own domestic market, are Kashmir and nations residing in certain states of the North-East. There is no such thing as an *anational bourgeoisie*.

Anyway, the point here is that, Punjabis are not *national minority*, even if Sukhwinder meant Punjabis by Sikhs (an assumption which itself is highly problematic). Moreover, Sikhs are not in any way a nation or nationality; they are a religious community and religious identity is not the basis of nationhood for Marxists and social scientists. It is the basis of nationhood for a variety of fundamentalists, chauvinists, fascists and reactionaries. From Savarkar to Shyama Prasad Mukherji, from Madan Mohan Malaviya to Golwalkar, the religious identity forms the basis of nationhood. For Jinnah and other Muslim identitarians, religious identity forms the basis of the nationhood. The CPI in its revolutionary period did commit the mistake to support the Partition on the basis of the same confusion, though they corrected this mistake very soon. It is shameful for a person, claiming to be a communist, to contend that Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are national minorities. If Sukhwinder believes that Sikhs constitute a national minority, what difference is there between his position and the position of the Khalistanis?

Coming back to the original point.

Behind Nazi ideology, there was no unitary nation, as Sukhwinder thinks. Is the "great German Aryan race" a nation? No. Were German Jews part of what can truly be termed as the German nation? From a Marxist-Leninist understanding, yes. Moreover, who was Jew, this definition itself was constructed and reconstructed by the Nazis repeatedly.

...

Thus, even Jewishness was not *always-already* given or pre-ordained in the Nazi discourse. These identities constantly shifted, mutated, transformed and re-defined in the general political and socio-economic context of the new Nazi reality of Germany. What we are trying to elaborate is merely the fact that *the very idea of 'German nation' put forth by the Nazis and their definitions of 'Jewishness' were part of their overall project to construct a purely ideological community, based on a chauvinistic ideology, in order to tap the potential of the petty-bourgeois reaction and weld it to the interests of big capital, and also a false enemy, which then can be blamed for all the sins of capitalism.*

However, as always, all the essential things and nuances make Sukhwinder dense like a rustic bum. He assumes that in Germany, the Nazis succeeded because their project was based on a unitary nation and nation-state, whereas in India, its multinational character will become the biggest hurdle, because, again, Sukhwinder taking things at face-value, argues, the intention of the RSS is to make India 'one nation' by imposing the slogan of 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'! Nothing can be more superficial. Sukhwinder does not understand that *rhetoric* and *the real project* are not the same thing. Moreover, as we pointed out above, fascism in all cases is in-built with the basest kind of pragmatism. In fact, Mussolini had once said that pragmatist thinker William Jones was one of the three principal philosophical influences in his thinking, whose slogan was "whatever works!" This holds true for all fascists. They are not so much bothered about principles, in fact, their principle itself is that there should be no principles! *Only pragma, no dogma!* They might use one slogan here, another slogan there, according to the political expediency. This precisely is the promiscuous adaptability of the fascist ideology and its propaganda, the Geoff Eley refers to. Moreover, the slogan of 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan' existed long before the fascists became a force. Most of the original fascists came from what Sukhwinder would call an "oppressed nation", that is, the Maharashtrians. They did not write in Hindi. Rather, they wrote either in English or in Marathi. In fact, fascism originally was not a phenomenon in the so-called "Hindi-belt", as Sukhwinder assumes due to his own national chauvinism and took hold in the Hindi-speaking area much later. Sukhwinder has no clue what is he talking about.

The idea that the Hindutva fascists cannot succeed in a multinational India is utterly foolish and any person acquainted with even some elements of the contemporary history of fascist rise in India cannot make this claim. It fails to explain why the BJP has such strong support base in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Odisha, even Rajasthan (because for Sukhwinder each separate language constitutes a separate nation), Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh (because for Sukhwinder every dialect is actually an underdeveloped language and every language constitutes a nation and the dialects spoken in Madhya Pradesh have nothing to do with Hindi and they are separate languages suppressed by Hindi!), Bihar (same, because Bhojpuri, Magahi, etc. are separate languages, constituting separate nations, like a Bhojpuri nation, a Magahi nation!), even West Bengal and especially Assam and Manipur! However, Sukhwinder is least bothered about facts.

The above facts only show that the multinationality of India is not an obstacle in the rise of fascism in India in anyway because fascism works on the basis of the most reactionary version of pragmatism, in terms of its mass propaganda, and is capable of using any communal/identitarian antagonism or divide for its own purpose, as it has been doing in so many states effectively, in the absence of effective revolutionary propaganda. They do not need a monolithic identity that is *real and historically constituted*; their whole project is based on *the construction of a purely ideological identity, a community which can adapt, adopt, adjust, re-adjust, mold and remold varieties of identities and communities within the remarkably flexible definition of that purely ideological community*; they can co-opt the Kannadiga Hindus, Lingayats, Chhara tribals in Gujarat, the fishing community of Odisha, a sizeable part of the Christians of Kerala, etc. with equal ease, because that is how the very definitional foundation of their project has been designed. Again, it has a promiscuous adaptability.

...

'Federal Functioning' of Sukhwinder's Logic and the Problem of Centralization

Now let us come to the next part of the quote of Sukhwinder that we have presented above, where he argues that the centralizing impulse of the Modi government will increase the contradictions between the "union government controlled by the monopoly capitalists" and the "different nations in India"! Mind you, not between the "union government controlled by the monopoly capitalists" and "the bourgeoisie of the different nations" but whole nations (which includes the regional bourgeoisie of these nations as well)! Of course, in such case, Sukhwinder must form alliances with the regional (national!) bourgeoisie (including the small and medium capitalists of Ludhiana for instance [but then what will the Textile Hosiery Mazdoor Union and Karkhana Mazdoor Union do!] as well as the *kulaks* and capitalist farmers of Punjab) to oppose the centralizing policies of the Modi government! Sukhwinder never even mentions whether there is a ruling class, a regional small and medium bourgeoisie, for instance, in these so-called "oppressed nations" or not! If not, then to what class the small and medium industrial capitalists and the rich *kulaks* and capitalist farmers belong! Are they part of the masses and the "oppressed nation"? If yes, why not ally with them for national liberation? If no, then what constitutes these "oppressed nations"? Only the working people? But then the whole Marxist-Leninist concept of the nation is obliterated! It is clear that Sukhwinder has no class analysis of Punjab because even a poor version of class analysis of Punjabi society will run counter to the chauvinist nationalist line of Sukhwinder and 'Pratibaddh' group. Sukhwinder utterly lacks the capability to measure the implications of the stupid proclamations that he regularly makes. Anyway, precisely for this reason, Sukhwinder proposes nothing for the operative part of the discussion.

Anyway, the above-referred sentence of Sukhwinder is full of so many asinine assertions, that it will take some time to refute all of them. However, we persevere!

First point, *the communist position is not against centralization in general and is not in support of federalism*. The revolutionary communist position against centralization by a reactionary bourgeois government is not a call for federalism,

but a call for *consistent democracy*. We are all for centralization, if done with consistent democracy for all nations and nationalities and other minorities. Why? Because the demand for federalism is a demand by the middle, small regional bourgeoisie of different states/nations. Sometimes, the representatives of big regional bourgeoisie, too, raises it, but only to put a weight on the scale of the bargaining for a larger share in the appropriated surplus. However, essentially, it is the demand of regional and small bourgeoisie (including the agrarian bourgeoisie). The demand of the working masses and working people is never for federalism, as it erects boundaries among the working people of different nations. Sukhwinder claims that this is the “old Marxist position” which was changed by Stalin. We have refuted this false accusation against Stalin and the attempt to turn Stalin into an ordinary liberal and anti-Leninist here:

<https://janchetnabooks.org/product-details?query=623>

Are Marxists in favour of decentralization? No. They never have been. If we are talking about an oppressed nation within a country, nothing can be more humiliating for the oppressed nation to demand federal rights and decentralization! For an oppressed nation, the Marxist-Leninist program is one of the demand for unconditional self-determination, the action slogan for which would be the demand for a plebiscite. They would find it insulting to demand decentralization, cultural and educational autonomy and federalism. In all other cases, the demand for decentralization is reactionary from the standpoint of proletariat. Instead, the proletariat demands centralization with consistent democracy. Wherever the democratic element is missing, the proletarian demand is not for federalism and decentralization, but for consistent democracy with centralization. Let us see what Lenin clearly indicated in 1913:

Marxists are, of course, opposed to federation and decentralization, for the simple reason that capitalism requires for its development the largest and most centralized possible states. Other conditions being equal, the class-conscious proletariat will always stand for the larger state. It will always fight against medieval particularism, and will always welcome the closest possible economic amalgamation of large territories in which the proletariat's struggle against the bourgeoisie can develop on a broad basis.

Capitalism's broad and rapid development of the productive forces calls for large, politically compact and united territories, since only here can the bourgeois class—together with its inevitable antipode, the proletarian class—unite and sweep away all the old, medieval, caste, parochial, petty-national, religious and other barriers.

*But while, and insofar as, different nations constitute a single state, Marxists will never, under any circumstances, advocate either the federal principle or decentralization. The great centralized state is a tremendous historical step forward from medieval disunity to the future socialist unity of the whole world, and only via such a state (inseparably connected with capitalism), can there be any road to socialism. (Lenin, V.I. 1977. 'Critical Remarks on the National Question,' in *Collected Works, Volume 20, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 45-46, emphasis ours*)*

Lenin writes further that with centralism, the proletariat from all the non-oppressed nations would rally the masses to fight for consistent democracy within a union, “*It would, however, be inexcusable to forget that in advocating centralism we advocate exclusively democratic centralism. On this point all the philistines in general, and the nationalist philistines in particular (including the late Dragomanov), have so confused the issue that we are obliged again and again to spend time clarifying it.*” (*ibid.*, p. 46, *emphasis ours*)

...

If the readers refer to the entire controversy on the national question, they will realize that the autonomy that Lenin refers to here is not cultural and educational autonomy, but territorial/regional autonomy of the nations under the same state, where they will look after the local administration and implementation of the central policies. In fact, Lenin was systematically opposed to Austro-Marxist and Bundist slogan for cultural autonomy, which was a big hindrance to the development of the class political consciousness of the proletariat across national lines.

Many such quotations can be presented from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. During the socialist construction, too, the Bolshevik Party clearly pointed out that the temporary federal structure was only a transitional step towards complete union, in the case where the lack of trust on the part of the erstwhile oppressed nations was still existing and they were *immediately* ready for the stage of a voluntary federation; however, this was made clear at the outset itself that the federation was not an end in itself and it was not the positive proposal of the revolutionary communists. Moreover, even for joining the federation, the pre-conditions were stipulated in strict terms, for instance, the central character of the foreign policy, monetary and economic policy, foreign trade, defence, etc. This is only an interregnum when the masses from different nations would democratically move towards complete union. The period of RSFSR (Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic) was later replaced with USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) which was initially and formally, a union with federal structure, but in essence, it assumed the form of a complete union, which was reflected in Soviet Constitution from 1936. It was precisely this constitution from which Sukhwinder blatantly distorted a quote and lied that USSR was federal! We have revealed this lie of Sukhwinder in the book *Marxism-Leninism and the National Question: A Debate* (written by Shivani and myself, published by Rahul Foundation in English in 2024 from Lucknow). We have also shown in the book that Stalin did not change Marxist-Leninist position on federalism, as Sukhwinder has claimed. Readers can refer to the above book for detailed explanation with quotes and other evidence.

Anyway, this much is certain: Marxist-Leninists do not demand decentralization or federalism. Either they demand consistent democracy with centralism (in the case of voluntary union on equal basis, of different nations residing in the same country, under the same state) or they demand the unconditional right to self-determination including the right to secede (in the case of oppressed nations). Sukhwinder’s demand for decentralization is nothing short of surrender and capitulation to the regional bourgeoisie of Punjab, which includes the *kulaks* and capitalist farmers, too. Sukhwinder erroneously considers Punjab as an oppressed

nation, but shies away from demanding the right to self-determination, as his knees shake like a leaf. So, he presents a Trotskyite argument: even if a nation is oppressed, the stage of revolution for that oppressed nation would not be national democratic revolution, but socialist revolution in the oppressor state itself! So, the oppressed nation of Punjab should directly work for socialist revolution...in entire India! This is precisely what the likes of Parvus and Trotsky would heartily support and this is what the Dutch and Polish communists of the 1910s would support, who were severely criticized by Lenin for not understanding the national question.

Moving on.

Sukhwinder argues that there is a dichotomy between the monopoly capitalists who control the state in India and the oppressed nations (for Sukhwinder, believe it or not, all nations of India!) and the contradiction between them is increasing due to the centralizing impulse of the Modi government. Let us probe the correctness of this claim.

First of all, the monopoly capitalists who lead the 'power bloc', which controls the state in India, is constituted by the monopoly capitalists from different non-oppressed nations of India themselves. They have not descended from the planet of Mars or Venus! Sukhwinder never mentions in this essay (what he used to claim earlier in his childish scribbles) what is the character of this 'monopoly bourgeoisie' that he is talking about. Is it the 'Hindi-belt' monopoly bourgeoisie? No. Is it only the Gujarati bourgeoisie? No. Is it simply a Marwari Rajasthani bourgeoisie? Not at all! Then what is its character? For Sukhwinder, as per his original position, this bourgeoisie does not have any national character, because its national roots have been severed. The proof of this severance, according to Sukhwinder, was the fact that most of the members of this big bourgeoisie, be it Gujarati, Marwari, or Punjabi or Tamil, live in Mumbai, not in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab or Tamil Nadu! Can you believe such stupidity? Of course, the capitalists generally prefer to focus their official and financial operations in the financial capital and centres of any country. Most of the Spanish big bourgeoisie have their main headquarters in Barcelona, rather than Madrid. This is quite natural. According to Sukhwinder, this anational big bourgeoisie is oppressing all nations of India and they should secede to form separate nation-states! However, Sukhwinder does not raise the demand for secession in Punjab! Rather, he begs for alms from this anational big bourgeoisie: alms of federal rights and decentralization! Wow! Nothing can be more shameful for a person claiming to be a Marxist.

Anyway, the point is that Indian big bourgeoisie is not anational. It is constituted by the bourgeoisies of many non-oppressed nations that live in India. All of them have representation in the political power and economic might. Of course, the co-sharing is not and can never be equal. The general law of capitalism, the law of unequal development applies here, too. Among capitalists no sharing of either surplus or of political power can be equal. Some factions of the bourgeoisie have been traditionally stronger as they are much older than other factions, such as, the Gujaratis and the Marwaris. Whereas, some other factions emerged in a different political economic process and have a robust economic base, for instance, the Tamil bourgeoisie, bulk of which was not transformed from commercial and

usurious capitalists to industrial-financial capitalists, but came into existence as entrepreneurial bourgeoisie itself, especially from engineering industries. Similarly, some other factions emerged much later from mining and metallurgy, due to shifting of huge surplus appropriated in the agricultural sector, for instance, Andhra and Telangana bourgeoisie.

We can go on to discuss the peculiarities of different bourgeoisies like that of Kerala, West Bengal, etc. Some factions of the bourgeoisie which share power at centre are backbenchers in terms of industrial and financial might, but in the game of bourgeois democracy, simply due to the demographic weight of their regions, they have a leeway. Of late, these factions have invested heavily in the real estate as well as certain industries and have increased their economic weight, too. For instance, the capitalist class in Uttar Pradesh. It goes without saying that the relative weight of the shares of different regional factions of the big bourgeoisie of India fluctuate due to the changing movements of profitability, which expresses itself differentially across regions, as well as changing internal political equations due to a variety of historical and political factors.

There is another reason why a bourgeoisie cannot be anational. Every dominant class needs *mass legitimacy*. Only an imperialist bourgeoisie can be “anational” within a colony or a neo-colony, because its rule is not based mainly on *hegemony*, but mainly on *dominance* through force and it cannot win mass legitimacy and it is least bothered about it, anyway. Or a comprador bourgeoisie can be “anational” in a totally different sense. Except these special cases, there can be no anational bourgeoisie in any possible sense of the term. *There can be a ruling bourgeoisie which has a unational character, in the cases of nation-states, or, there can be a multinational bourgeoisie in the cases of multinational countries, which has representations from the bourgeoisies of all the non-oppressed nations which reside in that country.* Without this, the dominant classes would not be able to manufacture consent and thus, attain mass legitimacy. This is very simple to understand. Only those would find it difficult to understand who do not understand the historical difference between the rule of the capitalist class and the rule of the pre-capitalist ruling classes and those who do not understand the very concept of hegemony, though they, too, use it frequently and carelessly, without understanding it. Sukhwinder is one of them.

Therefore, Sukhwinder does not make any sense when he claims that the contradiction between the (anational) monopoly bourgeoisie which controls the central state on the one hand, and all the other nations (because all are oppressed for Sukhwinder!), on the other, is increasing due to the Modi government’s centralizing policies. Because the multinational monopoly bourgeoisie has contradictions with no nations (except the oppressed nations of Kashmir and North-East); it has contradiction with the working masses, that is, the working class, the poor and lower-middle peasants, semi-proletariat, and lower echelons of the petty-bourgeoisie of all non-oppressed nations.

You will find no reference to the *class contradiction* in Sukhwinder’s essay. Everything has been reduced to the binaries of *centralization/decentralization*, *union/federation*, *central state/oppressed nations*, etc. Class analysis is totally absent. The real contradiction is between the multinational ruling bourgeoisie

and the working masses of all states and all non-oppressed nations of India on the one hand, and the oppressed nations on the other. This is symptomatic of the fact that Sukhwinder has completely departed from Marxism, though he could not be considered a serious Marxist, even when this departure had not been realized.

This position of Sukhwinder also dissipates the contradiction between the masses of these nations and their bourgeoisie. Because if all the nations are oppressed by the central state in possession of an anational bourgeoisie, then the principal contradiction is between these nations taken as a whole, including its national bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and, the ruling anational bourgeoisie on the other. If the entire contradiction is reduced to 'the centre vs. all the nations that reside in India' (which is intensifying under the Modi government's centralizing drive!), then, for example, the masses of Punjab do not have to fight the bourgeoisie in Punjab at all, because in that case, there must be considerable sections of the Punjabi bourgeoisie, which still retain a 'national character' (in the anti-national-oppression sense) and the proletariat must form strategic alliance with them to fight against the national oppression! Consequently, the Punjabi working masses, in strategic alliance with the Punjabi national bourgeoisie, only need to fight against the anational big monopoly bourgeoisie at the centre. Then how can Sukhwinder justify his prescription for the stage of socialist revolution? Such contradictions abound in the utterly nonsensical line of Sukhwinder. He never even mentions the contradiction between the working class of Punjab and the regional medium and small bourgeoisie of Punjab, because then the national chauvinist line of this group is jeopardized altogether. What is this if not giving lap-dance to the regional bourgeoisie of Punjab?

Sukhwinder argues in the end of his essay that at present there is no condition for the formation of an anti-fascist 'popular front' because the communist movement is disintegrated and one should focus only on local struggles. Thus, locally, too, the struggle would be against the big monopoly bourgeoisie of the centre (which has no representation from the Punjabi bourgeoisie according to Sukhwinder; the Punjabi capitalists who are part of the monopoly bourgeoisie have no national roots for him!); thus, of course, in this struggle the regional Punjabi bourgeoisie including the powerful agricultural bourgeoisie of Punjab would become an ally! This is where the line of Sukhwinder leads to: *complete surrender before, capitulation to and collaborationism with the regional Punjabi bourgeoisie*. This what his political line on the national question entails and this precisely is what his unbelievably poor and ignorant line on fascism entails. It is not surprising therefore that in its dying state, this group is frothing at its mouth about "giving Chandigarh to Punjab", "giving Panjabi University to Punjab", etc. We are waiting for Sukhwinder and his band of infants to demand "appropriate share in GST" from the centre!

Finally, if the centralizing impulse of Modi government is increasing "the contradiction between the centre ruled by anational monopoly bourgeoisie and the all nations of India since all are oppressed (!)" then how does BJP has such strong foothold and social base in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Assam, Haryana (also a nation according to Sukhwinder; earlier he used to say that it is Punjabi nation itself; later he claimed that Haryanvi is not a dialect but a language and since each language engenders a nation, Haryanvi people are a nation!), Bihar

(inhabited by many nations like Magahi nation, Bhojpuri nation, all oppressed!) and now also in Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and has clearly demonstrated signs of its creeping consolidation in even Kerala and Tamil Nadu, all of which are inhabited by oppressed nations according to Sukhwinder? This social base is not only reflected in the electoral fortunes (in which, they indeed do reflect) but in general in political and social mobilizations and organization.

As the readers can see, Sukhwinder has again gloriously landed into a steaming pile of crap.

Sukhwinder's Peculiar Anti-Fascist Slogan: Caste System is Obstructing the Rise of Fascism! Let's Abolish Caste System and Clear the Way!

Let us now move to the last part of the above excerpt where Sukhwinder claims that the caste system of India, besides the multinationality of the country, is another "obstacle" in the path of fascism in India. Sukhwinder writes, "Caste is another obstacle in the path of RSS' fascism. RSS favours Varna system. Thus, Dalits, who form nearly 16% of India's population, do not trust it." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 51)

However, in the section on tasks against fascism, merely after two and a half pages, Sukhwinder writes, "We will have to struggle for the abolition of caste system. Struggle would also have to waged against the patriarchal oppression of women. Come what may, the fascists of India wish to preserve these." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 54)

What? The caste system is an obstacle to the rise of fascism in India, and, the fascists want to preserve the caste system? Either the fascists have gone mad, or the editor sa'ab of 'Pratibaddh' deserves to go to a lunatic asylum! The latter possibility seems to be more real and tangible. We will go into the outrageously idiotic claim of caste system being an obstacle before fascism in India a little bit later, but what is this madness? Did Sukhwinder forget what he wrote a few paragraphs ago? Did he not see the clear contradiction between both these claims? Is he saying that the Indian fascists want to "preserve" the caste system because it is a hurdle in the way of rise of fascism? What a buffoon!

Now let us deal with this baseless claim that caste system poses a threat to the rise of fascism in anyway, in India. Also, the claim that the 16 percent dalit population cannot veer politically towards RSS and Hindutva fascism is factually incorrect and is an identitarian argument which replace politics with identity. All claims can be tested only on the basis of facts and history. Do these claims hold any water historically? No. Let us understand.

Do the dalits have some insurmountable doubt regarding the BJP? It does not look that way. This assumption itself is based on a fallacy, namely, that the BJP is some kind of a feudal landlordist brahmanical party, which is intrinsically incapable of winning the support of the dalits. BJP is a fascist organization and one of the components of its ideology is indeed the brahmanical thought, in its contemporary capitalist form; however, the ideological ensemble that the fascist ideology represents in India, also has other components like pragmatism, revivalist religious reformism, and most importantly communalism, which allows it to adapt to the concrete caste dynamic of different regions of India. In fact, these

components of the fascist ideology of the RSS are much more important.

Thus, what we see right now is this: in every state, the BJP has striven to win over all the dalit castes *except* the dominant dalit caste, which traditionally has its own party. The same tactics has been adopted in the case of the OBCs also. Thus, in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP has succeeded in winning over the bulk of non-Yadav OBC votes as well as non-Chamar and non-Jatav dalit votes. The Yadav votes go to the SP, whereas the Chamar/Jatav votes used to go mainly to the BSP and this time got partially divided between the BSP and the Azad Samaj Party, besides a considerable part going to the BJP as well. Similarly, in Haryana, too, the non-Chamar and non-Jatav dalit votes and non-Jat OBC votes went in bulk to the BJP. Besides, in Maharashtra, too, the non-Maratha OBC votes as well as the non-Mahar dalit votes have shifted to the BJP. In Gujarat, the bulk of dalit and tribal votes go to the BJP. The actual figures will explain this.

In 2014, in all the dalit reserved seats, the BJP won 27.6 percent votes, in 2019 in the dalit reserved seats the BJP won 35.3 percent votes and in 2024, in the same seats, the BJP won 34.5 percent votes. If we take the figures of the NDA, the same figures for the three elections would be 35.4 percent, 44.3 percent and 42.4 percent respectively. In Gujarat, 57 percent of the dalits voted for the BJP in the last Lok Sabha elections. In Odisha, too, 46 percent (the largest share) of the dalit votes went to the BJP. The vote share of BJP among the dalits decreased mainly in the UP and Haryana in the Lok Sabha elections of 2024, but in the Vidhan Sabha elections of Haryana, the story was totally different. Even in the West Bengal, where the BJP fell far behind TMC, the largest share of the dalit votes (45 percent) went to the BJP. In Assam, a state of the North-East, 70 percent of the dalits voted for BJP. Even in 2022 UP assembly elections, when the seat tally of BJP declined, 41 percent of non-Jatav dalit votes went to BJP and even 21 percent of the Jatav votes, a quite high figure, went to the BJP. In 2017, in the UP assembly elections, too, out of the 85 reserved seats BJP won 75 seats!

So, on what basis on earth, did Sukhwinder make such a preposterous claim? Did he read any data, any statistics, any report from psephologists, or even political scientists? No. May be he read some social media posts of identitarian dalits and Ambedkarites, who live in their own fantastic world, which has nothing to do with the concrete social reality.

There are many reasons for the shift of dalit votes to the BJP. One reason is the protracted decline, weakening and collapse of the bourgeois dalit parties, or their complete capitulation to the BJP. The second reason is implicit in the fact that the dalits themselves are divided into so many castes and sub-castes, with differential economic and social condition, as well as, political representation. Why the determination of sub-quotas within the SC reservation has found so much support among various non-dominant dalit castes explains this. Thus, for example, the non-Mahar, the non-Chamar and non-Jatav dalit votes have shifted *en masse* to the BJP. That is the beauty of dalit identitarianism! From the very beginning, there was a potential of this shift and now in the last two decades it has been happening in a big way.

The third reason is what certain sociologists have called creating a loyalty network

through “new welfarism”, by the Modi government. This has allowed them to win over a considerable part of the dalit voters who have long been feeling left-out and unrepresented. The class cleavages within the dalit population has been given an identitarian misarticulation by the BJP and through this political maneuver, RSS has trumped the traditional dalit parties. The same has been done with the non-dominant OBC castes in most of the states, albeit in a different way.

Finally, communal card trumps every other card in the Indian society, except the one “card” (it is not a card per se, but a political line and program) which has not been played effectively: the revolutionary proletarian politics. A lot of people thought that *mandal* had trumped *mandir*. It is hard to find such people now, except the ones who live in some kind of delusion. A lot of people have also pinned their hopes on the politicking around the caste census to trump BJP; may be in the short run, it might lead to slight decline in vote percentage of the BJP among dalits and the OBCs. However, the strengthening of the identitarian politics among the OBCs and dalit masses will only make the BJP stronger in the long run. Despite the Mandal agitation, who is winning the bulk of the OBC votes today? The BJP!

Besides, and importantly, as a general fascist methodology, the RSS targets the most vulnerable, most invisible, most unrepresented communities within the dalits, OBCs and tribals. All of these communities can be co-opted and are indeed being co-opted within the fold of Hindutva, in the absence of any revolutionary intervention. The RSS has host of particular mass organizations and institutions like the *Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram*, *Samajik Samrasata Manch*, etc. These organizations do holistic work among the dalit, tribal, and OBC masses, which includes patient ideological propaganda, political propaganda and agitation and building a communal consensus among these masses by co-opting them into the highly elastic narrative of Hindutva. The planned and organized political and ideological work among these masses by the RSS and its organizations is a very important factor in the shift of dalit votes to the BJP during recent many elections.

One mistake that prevents such revolutionary intervention is such stupid beliefs that there is something intrinsic within the dalit identity, which makes the dalits antagonistic or at least non-trusting towards the BJP. That is the liberals’ and identitarians’ castle in Spain!

Thus, Sukhwinder has fallen prey to the TV channel discussions and certain op-ed articles, which continue to calculate *ad infinitum* a subaltern caste equation that would checkmate the electoral machine of the RSS and the BJP. However, the fact is that there is no such subaltern caste equation that can trump the BJP. In fact, every such identitarian equation would strengthen the fascist forces in the long run. The logic of identitarianism is endless fragmentation of movements and resistance along the lines of identity. Once the fragments have been atomized, the BJP successfully subsumes them within the Hindutva narrative and Hindutva machine, just as, in manufacturing, when the technical division of labour develops to a stage where each task has been separated and simplified to the highest degrees, they can be easily automated in a compound system of tools with an automaton, that is, a machine. The RSS uses polyphony for this. On the one hand, in the internal life of BJP, brahmanical casteism prevails (just like in all other bourgeois parties it exists in varying degrees!), and on the other hand, they would give calls for abolition of

caste to unite the Hindu society, an old call of the Hindu nationalist and revivalist-reformist organizations and individuals. Even though such calls have no more than propaganda value and are no more than a political tactic, it does indeed work in the context of the social contradictions that pervade the society, even within the dalits, between the dominant and non-dominant castes. The fascist politics has that promiscuous adaptability to co-opt the discontent and dissatisfaction of all who feel left-out and unrepresented, even among the dalits and the OBCs.

There is nothing intrinsic in the dalit identity itself which makes it antagonistic to the BJP and fascism in general.

Not only the electoral fortunes of the BJP have improved as a secular, that is, a long-term trend especially since the early-2000s itself, the RSS and the BJP have expanded organizationally and socially, too, among dalits. This development, too, has been documented by various scholars. The increasing organizational base of the fascist forces among the dalits is a well-recorded fact and this tendency has increased especially since the new millennium.

Sukhwinder should have read at least something about the subject he is writing on. It is clearly visible that he does not understand the dynamics of caste politics and its intersection with fascism in India. There is a general idea embedded in Sukhwinder's brain (I don't know from where he got this foolish idea!) that for the rise of fascism, the country in question must be homogeneous in social structure, it must be a uninational country, that is, a nation-state, it must not be heterogeneous or diverse in any respect. This is such an outrageous fallacy and idiocy that any layman can comprehend its vacuity. We have only demonstrated with some representative facts and historical data, that such fantastic ideas of our Trot-Bundist chieftain have no basis in social and political reality. Neither multinationality of India is an obstacle to the rise of fascism, nor is the caste system an obstacle to its rise. In fact, the fascist ideology and politics are flexible enough and have sufficient digestive power to co-opt and remold all these elements to adjust them structurally in their own Hindutva fascist narrative and they have been doing this not without considerable success in the past few decades, as we just saw.

Is the Modi Regime Fascist? Sukhwinder Reveals His Dogmatism Once Again

Following the relentless bombardment of the readers with inanities of the worst type, Sukhwinder moves to the question of the character of the Modi government. Is it fascist? Is it not fascist? This is what Sukhwinder writes in the very beginning:

The union government of BJP is not a fascist regime. Fascist dictatorship has not been set up yet in India. The working class of India does not yet face the choice of fascism or bourgeois democracy rather the task facing it is that of setting up proletarian dictatorship in place of bourgeois democracy. This is so because at the moment the ruling classes, particularly the monopoly capitalists, do not face a serious crisis, neither at the economic front nor at the political one. The working class movement of India is scattered, broken up and disorganised. Here a countrywide communist party does not exist. The ruling classes of India face no such crisis which could threaten their existence. That is why, at the moment, naked fascist dictatorship

is not required by ruling classes. (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 51)

By now, the readers would have become capable of dissecting this ignorant paragraph. First of all, the government is not a regime! A regime represents the character of a particular state. Any kind of state might have a variety of state-forms and each state-form might have different kinds of governments. For instance, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie can be established through a multi-party parliamentary democratic republic, a constitutional monarchy, or a fascist government, a military *junta*, a Bonapartist rule (with or without the shell/form of parliamentary system). To confuse government with a regime or a form of state is an old Kautskyite disease, regarding which Lenin had only scorn and ridicule.

...

Anyway, Sukhwinder claims that Modi government is not a “fascist regime” (?). There are two things to consider here. What is the character of the Modi regime, then? Is it bourgeois democratic for him? If yes, then he should say so clearly. Moreover, when did he begin to have this position? Because in December 2019 editorial of ‘Pratibaddh’, Sukhwinder argues that the Modi government is indeed a fascist government. We did not find any self-criticism in his booklet on fascism, which would have been a mark of honesty on the part of Sukhwinder. However, by now, we have ceased to have any such expectation regarding him. So, we will analyze his present claims.

The second fallacy in Sukhwinder’s argument presented above is that the rise of fascism to power must happen in the same way in which it happened in the early-Twentieth century, namely, in the form of what Sukhwinder calls “bare-naked dictatorship”. We have already explained in detail earlier in this critique that whether the fascist forces would abandon the form/shell of parliamentary system or retain it, depends on a variety of historical and political factors.

We have demonstrated above and we will also elaborate towards the end that in the neoliberal phase, the rise of fascism assumes *qualitatively different form* due to some fundamental changes: one, the changes in the nature of capitalist crisis, whereby the crisis has assumed the form of a long chronic crisis, instead of much shorter cycles of boom and bust; two, the reactionary response of the bourgeoisie in the form of an aggressive onslaught of capital against the working class and working people in general, which has assumed varied forms in different capitalist countries; three, as a consequence, changes in the very structure of the form of bourgeois state in general, to which various scholars from Poulantzas and Meiksins Wood, to Tamas, Pallheta and others have alluded to; four, the consequent decay of the bourgeois democratic content of the form of bourgeois parliamentary system, due to the changes in the very nature of the state apparatus; five, the decay of the remaining democratic character of the bourgeoisie as a political class faced with a protracted crisis; six, the review of summation of their own historical experience by the fascists themselves who recognize the fact pretty well that abandoning the shell of the bourgeois democracy is neither required today in the light of the above changes, nor is it desirable, as it makes the fascist rise inherently fragile and the defeat of fascism assumes the form of total destruction and banishment from the stage of history for a long time.

All these fundamental changes are completely lost on Sukhwinder. He does not understand that why fascism required the abandoning of the form of the parliamentary system in the early-Twentieth century, why it had to assume a particular form of state-project, which must be fulfilled in the form of a cataclysmic event, and why today, the fascist project must be an ongoing project. He does not understand why today the fascist rise would have, to use Sumit Sarkar's words, '*a long gestation period*', which allows itself to assume the form of, again to use Aijaz Ahmad's words, '*a hurricane from below*'. In other words, it has a long incubation period, in which it wages a long 'war of positions' and intermittently moves to short and swift periods of 'wars of movement', depending upon the general context of the economic crisis and particular conjuncture of political class struggle. These short periods of wars of movement assume the form of paroxysms, just like 1992, 2002, etc. In this long incubation period it performs two tasks: one, deep infiltration into the apparatus of the state, including the police, the army, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and the premier institutions like the EC, the ED, the CBI, as well as what Althusser has called the ideological state apparatuses from schools, colleges, universities, media and religious apparatuses like *maths* (monasteries) and other religious bodies etc.; two, a molecular permeation into the very pores of the society through a patient and protracted institutional reform and cultural work.

These changes have allowed the fascists to accomplish, more-or-less, *an internal take-over* of the state. The mass legitimacy of the bourgeois system cannot, in general, be maintained in the long-term by abandoning the shell/form of bourgeois parliamentary system, and there is no need of this enterprise anyway due to the changes in the neoliberal phase noted above. However, certain contradictions stem from this obligation to maintain the shell of bourgeois parliamentary system. This entails the possibility of the fascist forces *going out of the government* due to losing elections in the periods of high economic discontent and their resultant political articulations, which do not bode well for the electoral fortunes of the fascist party. However, even during these periods outside the governmental power, the fascist forces maintain their positions within the political society, that is, the state, as well as the civil society. They do not only maintain these positions, they strive to strengthen these positions, in order to organize their next political offensive. Thus, the fascist forces today can go in and out of the government, while maintaining their positions in the state apparatus and the society, with the obvious support of the bourgeoisie. That is the reason why any other party or coalition, when in power, do not and cannot, in general, take any decisive action against the fascist forces. It is not about the will or wish of the likes of Rahul Gandhi or Tejashwi Yadav. It is about the will and wish of the bourgeoisie as a political class, which even the Congress or other bourgeois parties represent. The dominant classes would not allow any other bourgeois government to take any decisive action against the fascists; moreover, the state apparatus itself is not under strict control of such parties, whenever they are in power. This also relates to the increasing weight of the executive in the entire political process of capitalist system in the present conjuncture, which has been deeply infiltrated by the fascist forces.

This is a short recap of the reasons why the fascist forces would not abandon the shell of the bourgeois parliamentary system today, even if they sometimes run the risk of going out of the government. Their rise to power does not assume the form

of a cataclysmic event anymore (in which case their end, too, would have assumed the form of a cataclysmic event); it is an ongoing process or project which never ends but continues perpetually in a contradictory manner and precisely for this reason, it perpetually tends to completeness but is never complete. Thus, it has now assumed the form of a constantly and perpetually ongoing project, rather than a cataclysmic event.

That is why, the *going out of governmental power* for the fascists does not mean their total destruction and banishment from the stage of history. On the contrary, they remain in their consolidated positions within the state apparatus as well as the society. Haven't we been witnessing this process from the mid-1990s itself? With every paroxysm, the fascist forces become more entrenched in the state apparatus as well as the society. Their rise takes a *chronic form*, rather than *acute form*. Therefore, those, who, like Sukhwinder, are waiting for what Sukhwinder calls "bare-naked fascist dictatorship", would wait forever like the characters in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. That situation, in general, is not going to come. As a consequence, Sukhwinder has no anti-fascist strategy as we shall see.

Further.

It must be understood that in the past as well as today, even in the conditions of a fascist regime, the proletariat is not necessarily faced with the binary of bourgeois democracy/fascist dictatorship (a false binary even in the period of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern). Today, of course, it is not at all faced with this binary because the shell of the bourgeois parliamentary system is not abandoned by the fascists. However, as in the past, even if it was abandoned, it is not a *given* or *axiomatic* that the proletariat would face this false binary and would necessarily be fighting for restoration of bourgeois democracy. *Whether the proletariat in such a political situation would fight for the restoration of the bourgeois democracy (the excess of the weakness of the proletarian forces over that of the bourgeois forces), or people's democracy/new democracy (the excess of the weakness of the bourgeois forces over that of the proletarian forces) or socialist democracy or the dictatorship of the proletariat (the decisive strength of the proletarian forces), would depend on the accumulation and alignment of the class forces, or in other words, on the particular conjuncture of the class struggle.* Sukhwinder, like a loyal dogmatist, has mindlessly copied some formulae (incorrect anyway!) from his sketchy and dumb reading of certain quotations from variety of sources, and had converted it into the *conditio sine qua non* of anti-fascist proletarian strategy.

...

Such is the ideologically and politically bankrupt line of 'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' group, having no historical or theoretical understanding of fascism, no understanding of the peculiarities of the neoliberal phase of imperialist stage, no understanding of the history of the anti-fascist strategies employed by the revolutionary communists since the 1920s, and no understanding of absolutely anything related to the issue at stake. It is a small booklet of most ignorant, ridiculous, laughable, inane and asinine kind of idiocies and the best we can do is to alert the readers about it, if they want to retain their basic logic and reasoning.