A Menagerie o
Dogmatic Blund

A Critique of 'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' Gro
Understanding of Fascism

Abhinav Sinha

‘Lalkaar-Pratibaddh’ Group’s Understanding of Fascism A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders

Abhinav Sinha

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PART 1

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. Before embarking upon this critique, we would like to extend the invitation to the editor of ‘Pratibaddh’ for the five-day international seminar on fascism in the Twenty-first century, going to be organized by the Arvind Institute of Marxist Studies in Hyderabad from 29 December 2024 to 2 January 2025, for an open public debate on the question of fascism. If he has trouble coming to Hyderabad, we can have this public debate somewhere in the North India itself. We are ready to bear all the expenses of organizing this public debate, though we are not very optimistic about the prospect of Sukhwinder accepting the invitation for such a public debate, because in the past, on every question, Sukhwinder has run away from any such debate under some childish pretext. Still, it was our duty to extend this invitation.

Before the readers start reading further, we would like to inform them that we will upload this long essay (to be published as a separate book eventually) in parts for the convenience of the readers, because it is too lengthy. In the present part, we will deal with Sukhwinder's ignorance about some basics of Marxist political theory (the dialectic of form and content, the form of the State and the State, etc.), his completely vulgar and non-Marxist understanding of economic crisis, his vulgar economistic and evolutionist understanding regarding the concept of political crisis, and his poor dogmatic and historicist understanding of the concept of fascism.

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 'facade' 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 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 finds itself.* 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.

A. 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*. It is true that proletariat is always in favor of bourgeois democratic republic as the best form of bourgeois state, suited to the class struggle of the proletariat. As Lenin writes:

“We are in favor of a democratic republic as the best *form of state* for the proletariat under capitalism. But we have no right to forget that wage slavery is the lot of the people even in the most democratic bourgeois republic. Furthermore, every state is a “special force” for the suppression of the oppressed class.” (Lenin, V.I. 2020. *State and Revolution*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 20, *emphasis ours*)

Lenin writes further:

“Democracy is *a form of the state*, one of its varieties. Consequently, it, like every state, represents on the one hand the organized, systematic use of violence against persons; but on the other hand, it signifies the *formal* recognition of equality of citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure of, and to administer, the state.” (*ibid,* p. 98, *emphasis ours*)

More:

“To speak of *forms of government* in this connection is trebly stupid, for every schoolboy knows that monarchy and republic are two different *forms of government*. It must be explained to Mr. Kautsky that *both these forms of government,* like all transitional “forms of government” under capitalism, *are but varieties of the bourgeois state*, that is, of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

“Lastly, *to speak of forms of government is not only a stupid but also a very crude falsification of Marx*, who was very clearly speaking here of this or that *form or type of state, and not of forms of government.*” (Lenin. V.I. 2021. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 11, *emphasis ours*)

Regarding the smoke-screen created by Kautsky, Lenin points out:

“That is a muddle, a disgusting muddle, Mr. “Muddle Counsellor!” Dictatorship is not a “form of government”; that is ridiculous nonsense. And Marx does not speak of the “form of government” but of the *form or type of state*. That is something altogether different.” (*ibid,* p. 15, *emphasis ours*)

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.

B. 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 Horkhiemer says, "Anyone who does not wish to discuss capitalism should also stay silent on the subject of fascism." Commenting on this statement of Horkhiemer, 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!

He gives Poulantzas's view on how

"Fascism is only one form of regime among others of the exceptional capitalist State (Etat capitaliste d' exception). There are others, notably Bonapartism, and the various forms of military dictatorship. The specific political phenomenon of fascism can therefore only be analysed by positing at the same time a theory of the political crisis and the exceptional State which also fits other types of exceptional capitalist regimes." (*ibid,* p. 10)

Then Sukhwinder summarizes the points made by David Abraham in the article 'State and Classes in Weimar Germany' from the book *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1945*:

"State is the product of class contradictions. Its control is with that class which owns the means of production. Alongside repressing the rival classes state also performs economic and ideological activity. State forms policies regarding its societies main economic and social relations. It regulates the equilibrium of entire society. Finally, through the agency of state, dominant social classes are organised. This means that they rise above their selfish, personal interests and organise on the basis of common class interests. Only the private and competition-based character of surplus appropriation attempts to increase the structural split between capitalist. It is through state that the dominated classes are disorganised. Their interests are reduced to the level of individual, citizen and the interests as members of a nation.

"State in the capitalist society is relatively autonomous from individual capitalists. Formal equal competition between factions of ruling classes under parliamentary democracy rule further increases this autonomy. Constant cut throat competition amongst the different fractions of capitalist class, between different groups of monopolists, between monopoly capital and non- monopoly capitalists for the

maximum appropriation of surplus value, capturing of the largest share in the market. Generally, a conflict goes on between the interests of capital as a whole and the interests of a part of capital, between various fractions of capitalists for immediate and long-term interests. This conflict becomes the reason for the relative autonomy of capitalist state. This autonomy operates in the limits ascertained by the logic of capitalist development.

“This autonomy of the state is ascertained by those methods through which the economic sector depends upon the state’s activity. Broadly, these methods are -:

i. State makes organisational and legal rules for the capitalist system

ii. Its constructs/establishes the material prerequisites of production

iii. State regularly participates in economic activity so that the growth rate can be maintained, crisis may be averted or solved.

iv. The state tries to maintain the legitimacy of capitalist system and people’s loyalty towards it through the policies of “social welfare”, foreign occupations etc.

v. To prevent social crisis, state regulates the disputes between labour and capital. It attempts to keep these disputes to a certain limit.” (*ibid*, p. 10-11)

After this, Sukhwinder gives the following quotation of Engels and writes:

“Friedrich Engels had said about the modern bourgeois state that, *“modern State, again, is only the organization that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists. The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine — the state of the*

capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital." (*ibid,* p. 11)

Finally, Sukhwinder sums up his *quotationings, summarizings* and *plagiarizings* in the following way:

"Generally, the state functions in the interests of the entire bourgeois system. It strives to make certain that capitalist production and reproduction continues in a proper manner. The above reference of Friedrich Engels includes this. But in the era of monopoly capital, state primarily functions in the interests of monopoly capital. Though, sometimes the regulation of state goes against the interests of some monopolist groups, but on the whole it works in the interests of monopoly capitalists. It represents the interests of monopoly capital." (*ibid,* p. 11-12)

There is no need to comment on the above quotes or "summarizations" as they have been lifted *verbatim* from previous Marxist authorities, without further elaborations or contextualizations by the author. He is simply paraphrasing. Nothing else. Subsequently, Sukhwinder moves to the question of the conditions in which fascism rises to power. Here, too, Sukhwinder limits himself to the sphere where he feels the safest: quotationing, summarizing and plagiarizing from authorities. Sukhwinder writes:

"The capitalist class is not a monolith and nor can it be so in any instance. The Capitalist class is split into many factions. On the basis of size, there exists monopoly, middle and small capitalists. Similarly, capitalism is also divided on the basis of occupation (sector) like industrialist, commercial and agricultural capitalist etc. A cut throat competition prevails between these factions of the capitalist class for appropriating maximum profit.

"For the protection and furtherance of their interests, these different factions of the bourgeoisie create different political parties or back various political parties by giving them financial assistance. The various factions of the bourgeoisie generally fight out their interests through political parties. The task of these political parties, which

represent the interests of different factions of the bourgeoisie, is to gain mass support for the bourgeois system. Generally, these political parties participate in elections with the backing of some faction of the capitalists. Wealth has a decisive role in these elections. Normally that very party is victorious in the elections for which a large chunk of the capitalist/monopolists have loosened their purse strings. Parliamentary system is best suited for capitalist structure due to the factional division of capitalists, the incessant conflict that goes on between them. Generally, in this system (parliamentary) the various contradictions between the different factions of the bourgeoisie are peacefully resolved.

"During an economic and political crisis, when the strife between bourgeois factions cannot be resolved in the parliamentary sphere or there arises a threat (that of proletarian revolution) to the existence of bourgeois system, a faction of the bourgeois can attempt to abolish the parliamentary system. If this faction succeeds then an exceptional form of bourgeois rule (fascist, military dictatorship etc.,) is set up." (*ibid,* p. 12-13, *emphasis ours*)

Let us now deal with this exhibition of exemplary ignorance.

A. 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).

Let us now come to the last paragraph of the above quotation from Sukhwinder's essay. Here the author assumes that when the bourgeoisie is faced with a political crisis of the state, it *necessarily* resorts to dismantling the *form* of parliamentary system. This assumption again stems from the dogmatism and historicism of the editor of 'Pratibaddh'. Let us comprehend the historicist illusions of Sukhwinder in a little detail.

B. 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. Marx writes:

“In parliament the nation made its general will the law; that is, it made the law of the ruling class its general will. It renounces all will of its own before the executive power and submits itself to the superior command of an alien, of authority. The executive power, in contrast to the legislative one, expresses the heteronomy of a nation in contrast to its autonomy. France therefore seems to have escaped the despotism of a class only to fall back under the despotism of an individual, and what is more, under the authority of an individual without authority. The struggle *seems* to be settled in such a way that all classes, equally powerless and equally mute, fall on their knees before the rifle butt.” (Marx, Karl. 2021. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 107)

Marx points out further:

“Only under the second Bonaparte does the state *seem to have* made itself completely independent. The state machinery has so strengthened itself vis-à-vis civil society that the Chief of the Society of December 10 suffices for its head – an adventurer dropped in from abroad, raised on the shoulders of a drunken soldiery which he bought with whisky and sausages and to which he has to keep throwing more sausages. Hence the low-spirited despair, the feeling of monstrous humiliation and degradation that oppresses the breast of France and makes her gasp. She feels dishonored.

“And yet the state power is not suspended in the air. Bonaparte represented a class, and the most numerous class of French society at that, the small-holding peasants.” (*ibid,* p. 108-09)

Marx here talks about the *social class basis* of Bonapartism. However, Bonapartism sets the task of serving the bourgeois order for itself. Marx opines:

“As the executive authority which has made itself an independent power, Bonaparte feels it is his mission to safeguard “bourgeois order.” But the strength of this bourgeois order lies in the middle class. He looks on himself, therefore, as the representative of the middle class and issues decrees in this sense. Nevertheless, he is somebody solely due to the fact that he has broken the political power of this middle class and daily breaks it anew. Consequently, he looks on himself as the adversary of the political and literary power of the middle class. *But by protecting its material power, he regenerates its political power.* The cause must accordingly be kept alive; but the effect, where it manifests itself, must be done away with.” (*ibid,* p. 116, *emphasis ours*)

Engels wrote to Marx in a letter regarding the situation of the bourgeoisie in the particular conjuncture of that period:

“It is becoming increasingly clear to me that the bourgeoisie does not possess the qualities required to rule directly itself, and that therefore, *unless there is an oligarchy as here in England capable of taking over, for good pay, the management of state and society in the interest of the bourgeoisie, a Bonapartist semi-dictatorship is the normal form;* it promotes the great material interests of the bourgeoisie even against the bourgeoisie, but allows it no share in the government itself. Conversely, this dictatorship itself is in turn compelled unwillingly to adopt these material interests of the bourgeoisie.” (Marx, Karl and F. Engels. 2010. *Collected Works, Vol. 42,* Lawrence and Wishart, Digital Edition, p. 266, *emphasis ours*)

Lenin in his *The State and Revolution* accepts Engels’s thesis, outlined in his *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* that

“By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power as

ostensible mediator acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both…

“Such were the absolute monarchies of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Bonapartism of the First and Second Empires in France, and the Bismarck regime in Germany.” (Lenin, V. I. 2020. *op.cit.,* p. 14, *emphasis ours*)

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 Sakellaropoulos 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 following rather lengthy quote from Sakellaropoulos is noteworthy. He begins with the process in which Bonapartism came into existence in the Nineteenth century:

"The story begins when the proletariat takes the initiative of staging an uprising that results in the emergence of a democratic state, grounded in universal suffrage in which all social classes are represented in the decisive political institutions. The proletariat harboured the illusion that enlargement of the electorate and popular mobilization would be sufficient for moving forward in a transition to socialism. *But without social alliances, without political organization, without a political program, none of this was possible when faced with an opponent that was preparing from day one to neutralize the proletariat.* The bourgeoisie, by contrast, on the one hand forged social alliances, isolating the proletariat, and on the other constructed a materiality of state (military fortifications, normalization of the functions of parliament so as to preclude any overruling 'from the street', activation of ideological apparatuses for the enforcement of 'order') whose functioning led to the defeat of the proletariat.

"Of great interest is the sequel, when the democratic faction of the bourgeoisie came into conflict with the Party of Order which, however, rallied the great mass of the bourgeoisie. What was created in consequence was *a political schism within the bourgeoisie, but not a social schism.* The bourgeoisie did not judge that it was represented only by the Party of Order. And because the bourgeois democrats, the petty-bourgeoisie and even the socialists

continued to be a presence in the representative institutions, the Party of Order was obliged to enter into alliance with Bonaparte and the executive. On the other hand, Bonaparte was elected President, supported by a broad alliance of social and political forces opposed to the policies of the moderate bourgeoisie.

…

“Does all this signify a process of delinking of the political from the economic? This depends on what we mean. If we mean the relative autonomy of the state from the individual interests of various factions of the bourgeoisie, this is something inherent in the materiality of the bourgeois state. *If, however, we are referring to the endeavour of the great mass of the bourgeoisie, to use the exact expression of Marx, to free itself from the restrictions imposed by bourgeois democracy, then we are coming closer to the truth.* The February Revolution gave the bourgeoisie *in toto* access to political power, on the precondition, however, of its granting numerous concessions to its allies. Gradually with the development of the class struggle (a process in which the manoeuvres of Bonaparte are also to be included) *it succeeded in disencumbering itself of its allies, and in consequence was also able to revoke the institutional compromises it had already made, in other words, to be rid of France’s Second Republic.* It was of *little significance to the great mass of the bourgeois class whether this liquidation should be the accomplishment of a political party or an individual personage…*

“This is a critical point. *Contrary to a fairly widespread belief that capitalism and parliamentary democracy go together*, in fact the institutions of mass political representation were imposed on the dominant classes through the struggles of the dominated classes. ***Nowadays the disjuncture between relations of representation and capitalism is becoming ever more obvious: what is involved is an inexorable erosion of the powers of representative institutions and, in consequence, the shift of power to centres impermeable to popular control (from committees of technocrats in the various ministries to the all-***

powerful – for the countries in the Eurozone – European Central Bank)…When the intensity of popular reactions diminishes, the bourgeoisie prefers to be represented directly by the state mechanisms and not by the representative institutions that are characterized by the materiality of the presence of the dominated classes…

"As for the question of whether Bonapartism is to be categorized as a form of national emergency state, or in other words a marginal variety of authoritarian state whose further oscillations will result in breakage and transformation into a dictatorship, we have two basic objections to this. *The first is historical in character in the sense that in the 19th century the bipolar schema of parliamentary versus anti-parliamentary regime is not present,* precisely because parliamentary democracy is not the rule, at least in the contemporary sense, in most national formations. The second is methodological and rejects the bipolar model one extreme of which is the healthy parliamentary democracy and the other the national emergency state. *On the contrary we believe that there are no impermeable dividing walls between these different forms of state because in reality they are the results of class struggle, or more properly opposing trends within the tendency of the capitalist system not to have its dynamic restricted by institutions of popular representation."* (S. Sakellaropoulos. 2020. 'Re-reading the 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: The Phenomenon of Bonapartism as a Capitalist State Without Popular Representation', in *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Enquiry,* Vol. 11, No. 1 (Summar 2020), *emphasis ours*)

The point that Sakellaropoulos 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 Sakellaropoulos 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*)

Further:

"The distinction between the forms of state is, of course, related to *variations of the articulation of the economic and the political within the limits set by the dominance of the CMP in the periodization into phases of a capitalist formation*: it concerns a whole series of transformations of state functions, of displacements of dominance between these functions, of differentiations of forms of the intervention of the political in the economic and of the economic in the political." (*ibid,* p. 309, *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. He contends:

"In fact, although in the framework in which parliament predominates, legitimacy tends to be conflated with legality, that is to say with a specific normative system of rule-making, which presents itself as the general will decreed by the people's representatives, the ideological processes function in a different way as regards the legitimacy of the executive: the role of parliamentary publicity decreases and this produces a masking of real knowledge about the bureaucracy (i.e. about the preponderant role of the state apparatus indicated by the predominance of the executive); 'charismatic'

elements inserted, of course, in the type of bourgeois legitimacy, become important since they concentrate hierarchical legitimacy by delegating the power of the state apparatus to the person of a ‘leader’ (*chef*). *This ‘leader’ presents himself as the representative of the unity of the people-nation, through a whole gamut of ideological weapons, grasped today by the ideological phrase ‘personalization of power’.* Thus, the state’s relation as ‘representative’ to the social classes is short-circuited and operates here by embezzling the role of parties and by the state apparatus’s direct manipulating of public opinion, etc.

“Marx’s analyses (and in particular those of The Eighteenth Brumaire) in which he points to the displacement of dominance from the legislative to the executive as the relevant criterion for *forms of state* must be interpreted in this sense. The bourgeois forms of legitimacy are transformed: and this, it seems to me, is exactly what Marx wished to stress when he said that ‘the executive power, as opposed to the legislative power, expresses the nation’s heteronomy as opposed to its autonomy’. This point must be stressed, for a whole parliamentary tradition of the working-class movement has expressed its distrust of the executive power (a distrust due in particular to its idyllic illusions of the legislative) by interpreting these analyses as a challenge to the executive’s legitimacy. This has allowed them to make a cheap critique of the executive’s predominance and to refuse to make an adequate critique of the capitalist state as such.

“In short, this tradition sees parliamentary legitimacy as the only ‘authentic’ legitimacy of bourgeois political democracy (i.e. the sole legitimate expression of the ‘people’); and it sees in the predominance of the executive an illegitimate power, a kind of deformation of the national popular-class-state. It could not be more false: in the framework of the capitalist class state, parliamentary legitimacy is no ‘closer to the people’ than that legitimacy which corresponds to the predominance of the executive. *In fact, these are always ideological processes in both cases. In the case of a predominance of the executive, legitimacy can perfectly well be*

inserted in the framework of the popular sovereignty of the capitalist type of state: unlike other types of legitimacy (e.g., charismatic legitimacy through divine right) which it resembles only in a very superficial way, this legitimacy is only a differential form of the type of bourgeois legitimacy. In his analyses of the Second Empire, *Marx demonstrates quite clearly how Louis Bonaparte managed to get his executive power to pass as the representative of the unity of the people-nation, as the incarnation of popular sovereignty, by even actually re-establishing the universal suffrage previously abolished by the parliamentary Republic.*

"Thus, the executive's legitimacy is often characterized as a series of ruses, *whereby the predominance of the executive attempts to mask its illegitimacy by borrowing features from the one possible kind of popular sovereignty, that of parliament.* In fact, the situation is not at all like this: rather their common characteristics are based on the fact that they are merely differential forms of the popular sovereignty of the people-nation. The ideological processes which govern classical parliamentary legitimacy, and therefore the legitimacy of French Bonapartism, are in fact only differential forms of the same type. ***The proof, as history has shown, is that the popular sovereignty of political democracy finds its expression equally well in a classical parliamentarism and in a Bonapartist semi-dictatorship."*** (*ibid,* p. 311-12, *emphasis ours*)

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*)

And finally:

"It is now necessary to consider the problem of the unity of the capitalist state in the case in which the legislative and executive are differentiated, in the manner established above. The predominance of one of these powers represents the central instance of the unity of the state in that it concentrates within it the two following principles of state unity: (i) it reflects the political legitimacy of a formation and (ii) it is the seat of the hegemonic fraction's organization. *In a given period, however, certain dislocations may occur:* ***parliament may continue to present itself as the representative place of popular sovereignty, of the unity of the people-nation, whilst the hegemonic fraction is reflected in the executive.****"* (*ibid,* p. 316-17, *emphasis ours*)

We have quoted observations of Poulantzas in such a detailed fashion for a reason. 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.

Sukhwinder's "Pearls of Wisdom" regarding Economic Crisis of Capitalism: An Exhibition of Ignorance and Dogmatism

Now let us move to Sukhwinder's struggles regarding the concept of economic crisis of capitalism and its relation with fascism. Sukhwinder spills "pure pearls of wisdom" when he discusses economic crisis. This is what he writes:

"The economic crisis of capitalism finds expression at certain intervals of time in the form of Recession and Depression. *If Total Real Domestic Product in an economy shrinks for two consecutive quarters, then it is said to be in recession and if it shrinks more than 10% or it shrinks for three years consecutively then it is termed as depression.* (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 13, *emphasis ours*)

He writes further:

"What is the root cause operating in this recession or depression? This was unveiled by Karl Marx. According to Marx, the law of tendency of falling rate of profit operates in its foundation. Here we will not delve into the explanation of this law. For this, the readers can refer to Marx's work, Capital Vol III, Part III (The law of the Tendency of Rate of Profit to Fall). Besides this, in some other books too, this law is correctly explained.

“No economic crisis facing the capitalist system is permanent. If the working class does not abolish the capitalist system, then capitalism with time due to its internal motion (or interference by the state, like shifting the burden of crisis more and more on the working class and other toiling masses and capturing the financial assets/natural resources/regions of other countries or occupying entire countries) emerges out of this crisis. But this emergence again includes the seeds of a new crisis.

“Marx writes, *“The periodical depreciation of existing capital – one of the means immanent in capitalist production to check the fall of the rate of profit and hasten accumulation of capital- value through formation of new capital – disturbs the given conditions, within which the process of circulation and reproduction of capital takes place, and is therefore accompanied by sudden stoppages and crises in the production process…..”*

“Alongside the development of productivity there develops a higher composition of capital, i.e., the relative decrease of the ratio of variable to constant capital. These different influences may at one time operate predominantly side by side in space, and at another succeed each other in time. From time to time the conflict of antagonistic agencies finds vent in crises. ***The crises are always but momentary and forcible solutions of the existing contradictions. They are violent eruptions which for a time restore the disturbed equilibrium.”*** (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 13-14, *author’s emphasis*)

More:

“In our revolutionary movement, the trend of propagating capitalism being in permanent/everlasting crisis is dominant. Some claim that world capitalism is in permanent crisis since the last 4-5 decades. About India, they claim that its economy has been in crisis ever since 1980s or 1991 when the bourgeoisie of India extensively adopted neoliberal policies. Such claims regarding the crisis of capitalism are borne out of ignorance or surfacial knowledge of the Marxist theory of crisis.

In turn these claims serve to slander Marxist political economy." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 14, *author's emphasis*)

Sukhwinder is trying to involve in a shadow-boxing with us, here. His charge that few communists in India believe in the concept of 'permanent crisis', is directed towards us (Ajay Sinha, Don Quixote *de la* Patna, too, subscribes to this concept, even though he plagiarized this from us only, when we ourselves subscribed to this erroneous notion before 2016). Let us see what is the truth.

A. Sukhwinder's Dishonest Silence about his Views Regarding Capitalist Crises in General

First of all, Sukhwinder is showing characteristic dishonesty that he has demonstrated again and again during the last few years. He was with us in our organization till 2019. From 2016 itself, we had rejected the concept of 'permanent crisis' and had developed the understanding of chronic and protracted nature of the crisis that has persisted since the 1970s. We had written a public self-criticism about the evolution of our understanding along with some other developments in certain positions that we used to hold before 2016. However, what is noteworthy here is the fact that in 2016, Sukhwinder, too, was with us. 'Pratibaddh', the journal that he edits, published our understanding of 'permanent crisis' till then. In Issue 23 of 'Pratibaddh' in September 2014, Sukhwinder wrote:

"*The present crisis of world capitalism is its final crisis.* It is moving closer to its death. But it will not self-destruct. It will die at the hands of the working class of the world. The one after another radical strikes of the industrial working class all over the world states that the working class has geared up for the second round with world capitalism." (Editorial, 'Pratibaddh', Issue 23, September 2014, *emphasis ours*)

The above excerpt does not express our understanding of even 2014 as we were never so optimistic about the imminence of the second round of decisive battle between the working class and world capitalism, because for our organization, even then, the prospects of

breaking out of such a battle depended on the question of the vanguard. Here, Sukhwinder reveals his vulgar economism. We will deal with the vulgar economism of Sukhwinder later in the essay in greater detail. Coming back to the present issue.

‘Lalkaar’ wrote in its November 2015 issue:

“The two salient features of the crisis that occurs in the capitalist system are that the boom after every crisis paves way for an even deeper crisis, and secondly, that time period between two crises keeps shortening. For example, after the 1930s, the second great depression occurred in 1973 and was more detrimental. During this time between 1948 and 1970, the capitalist system lived its golden era. The next great depression after 1973 occurred in 2007, and during this time the capitalist system could not relive the boom it witnessed in 1948-73. *It has not witnessed any period of boom after 2007 apart from some minor reliefs for very short time periods along with persistent crises.* This is how the present crisis of the world economy is most scathing of all the crises, and the devisers and intellectuals of the capitalist system have been unable to propose a solution for the present crisis, and *there seems no such possibility.*” (*emphasis ours*)

We can clearly see the dishonesty of Sukhwinder once again. He has shown intellectual dishonesty and cowardice many times in the recent years from changing positions in every debate without any self-criticism and presenting false and manufactured quotes from Marxist documents and classics.

Whatever the case may be, but the question remains: *when did Sukhwinder realize that the concept of ‘permanent crisis’ is incorrect?* Has he written any self-criticism on this matter systematically anywhere? We could not find.

The fact is that he changed his position, when *we* wrote about it openly since 2017! Now, he is trying to impute this older erroneous understanding of ‘permanent crisis’ to us, whereas, *it was precisely our writings since 2017 that argued that the idea of ‘permanent crisis’*

is incorrect and from these writings itself, Sukhwinder, too, copied. In fact, in May 2021, Kavita Krishnapallavi and I wrote a note on the questions on which our understanding has been evolving since the first years of 2010s. This note was published online and since then it is available in the public domain.

Similarly, in terms of crisis theory, Sukhwinder, too, subscribed to the theory of overproduction before 2017 and not the law of tendential fall in the rate of profit. It was only after completion of *our* studies of *Capital* and *Theories of Surplus-Value,* that we concluded that overproduction as well as underconsumption and disproportionality are only symptoms of capitalist crisis, not its underlying cause. The underlying cause of recurring capitalist crises is the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit (LTFRP). Now, Sukhwinder plagiarizes *our organization's* latest positions on crisis theory (even though he understands least of it, as well shall see) and presents it as his own understanding, while at the same time, imputing the incorrect understanding to us today, that he shared with us till 2015-16. It would be useful to quote from the note that Kavita and I co-wrote in May 2021. We wrote in that note:

"Another incorrect line of thought that afflicted our thinking till mid-2016 was that since world capitalism did not see any considerably long period of boom since 1970s, the present crisis is a kind of permanent crisis or long depression, that may theoretically end with some global war, but since there are many deterrents in the present world that function against any possibility of a third world war, the present long depression will continue till the end of capitalism. We still think that it is possible that present long depression might continue for a long period to come, with no significant boom in near future and that before capitalism sees another significant boom, the series of revolutions might break out. *However, we do not think that the idea of permanent crisis is theoretically congruent with the nature of capitalist mode of production, as explained by Marx. In other words, to argue theoretically that capitalism can be permanently stagnant, mired in permanent crisis is incorrect. Theoretically, there is no such thing as 'permanent crisis'; the crisis can be short or long.*

However, that is a different matter altogether. Even the 19th century saw some long periods of recession, or long recessions, as has been pointed out correctly by the likes of Guglielmo Carchedi and Michael Roberts and many others. The reason why a ‘theory of permanent crisis’ is incorrect is that the very process of crisis (which might span for several decades) is simultaneously a process of devalorization of capital, destruction of productive forces and depression of average wages that restore profitability. What makes the ‘Long Depression’ of the late-20th and early-21st centuries different from earlier ‘long recessions’ is that this time the devalorization of capital has not proceeded in a rapid fashion for a variety of reasons that have been discussed by many Marxist political economists. In the last few years, there has been a lot of research by many Marxist political economists on this question which must be read by all Marxists. There have been lively debates among Anwar Shaikh, Michael Roberts, Guglielmo Carchedi, Andrew Kliman, David Harvey, Dumenil and Levy, Alan Freeman, Fred Moseley, Michael Heinrich and many others and those who have defended the classical Marxist position of *law of tendential decline in the rate of profit,* have not only dominated the debate theoretically but have also supported their position with ample empirical data. *Anyway, from 2016, it had become clear to us that the idea of a ‘permanent crisis’ is theoretically incorrect and cannot be supported with empirical evidence from the history of world capitalism. It does not matter whether a depression is a ‘long depression’ or a short-lived depression. Theoretically, no capitalist crisis can be permanent, even though, some crisis will definitely prove to be the last one!* The political assessment of world situation is a different thing altogether. It is very much possible that before this long depression ends, revolutions break out in the countries that can be called ‘hotspots turning into flash points’. The other possibility would be large-scale devalorization of capital in some way. Still, the idea of a ‘permanent crisis’ is theoretically incorrect and empirically untenable. Moreover, it is important to understand that the law of decline in the rate of profit is a secular tendency. It simply means that historically the rate of profit will fall, despite rebounding periodically. Every new crisis will

be deeper than the previous one and will make the contradictions of capitalism even sharper and more acute, precisely due to its recurrent nature. *The very theoretical idea of 'permanent crisis' is non-dialectical.*

"*From 2013-14 our serious and intensive studies of Marxist political economy gathered momentum. By the end of 2015 or beginning of 2016 it was clear to us that it is not overproduction that is the underlying cause of crisis, but the secular tendency of the rate of profit to fall. It is this crisis of profitability that leads to the crisis of overproduction on the one hand and under-consumption on the other.* The very basic teaching of Marx was that the driving force of capitalism is not consumption but profitability and 'any plethora of capital is the plethora that cannot be invested profitably'. Without understanding this, it would be impossible to define what is 'over'-production and what is 'under'-consumption and why it happens." (Sinha, Abhinav and Kavita Krishnapallavi. 2020. 'A Short Note on Something That Is Obvious but Which Certain Folks Do Not Understand', published online on 26 May, 2021)

Now, let us see what we have been writing since 2016. I wrote in 2017 in a paper presented at 150 years of the publication of the first volume of *Capital* at the New York Left Forum on 2 June 2017:

"In the end I would briefly summarize my views on the controversy over the LTFRP and Marxist theory of crisis. *In my opinion, any multicausal model is methodologically non-Marxist, metaphysical, descriptive, positivist and empiricist.* A Marxist cannot content herself with describing the immediate phenomenal expressions or proximate causes or triggers of the crises and would penetrate the layers of phenomena to reach the underlying factor; secondly, a Marxist cannot be satisfied with listing the different proximate causes and saying that a combination of these causes led to crisis without determining the principal contradiction and fundamental contradiction; she must explain their interrelations and in turn their relation with the main underlying cause. Most of the factors represented by these multicausal theorists actually are derived from

the law of accumulation and the LTFRP. However, they fail to see the interrelations between these and present a laundry list of causes of crises. This approach is mechanical and metaphysical and lacks the Marxist dialectical method." (Sinha, Abhinav. 2019. 'Marx's Capital 150 Years and Beyond – Old and New Controversies: A Critical Reappraisal' in *Subversive Interventions,* Rahul Foundation, Lucknow, p. 376-77, *emphasis ours*)

I wrote in the same paper:

"In brief, it can be shown that underconsumption, disproportionality, financialization, credit crisis, turnover of fixed capital and most of the other "causes" of crises as mentioned by multicausality theorists are not unrelated to profitability and in fact they are closely linked with profitability and determined by it in the long run. I called the approach of the multicausality theorists metaphysical and mechanical precisely because they fail to see the inter-connections between these factors which prevents them from transcending the arena of what Marx called "recording and systematizing the facts."" (*ibid,* p. 378)

Also, about the cathartic role of crisis, which itself restores the profitability of capital in case of large-scale devalorization and destruction of productive forces, I wrote in the same paper:

"The result is a crash leading to devalorization of existing stocks and fixed capital, decline in investments, decline in employment and decline in wages until the rate of profit is restored and to use Marx's words, the same crap begins all over. In this way, crisis plays its cathartic role in the capitalist economy." (*ibid*, p. 372)

We also wrote in the same paper why the recurrent crises would become increasingly chronic and protracted:

"Recurrent crises do not reset the counters to zero. Crisis cannot simply be reduced to a violent mechanism to restore equilibrium *ad infinitum* (Callinicos does not say that it will happen *ad infinitum*, but his logic leads naturally to this corollary). The fact is that the

occurrence of crises does not only happen in cycles, but in a spiral. And this is a downward spiral." (*ibid*, p. 375)

The harmonist illusions about capitalist crisis setting the counter back to zero and reproduction of capitalist system *ad infinitum* is actually shared by Sukhwinder. Due to lack of understanding of historical and dialectical method, Sukhwinder views the recurrent crises as a *circular process*, rather than a *spiral process,* in which crises assumes increasingly chronic form. We will show that this view of recurring crises forming a spiral, rather than a circle, was precisely the view of Marx and Engels.

In 2017 itself, in another paper on the theories of imperialism, presented in the Sixth International Arvind Memorial Seminar, in which Sukhwinder, too, was present with us, I wrote:

"Thirdly, the state of stagnation is not permanent because every major crisis or stagnation leads to devalorization of capital, restoring profitability by precisely this devalorization. Therefore, one must not forget that every crisis is *a sudden or a protracted* cathartic process for the system." (Sinha, Abhinav. 2019. 'Marxist Theories of Imperialism from Marx to Present Times: A Contemporary Critical Reassessment', in *Subversive Interventions,* Rahul Foundation, Lucknow, p. 441)

Therefore, Sukhwinder, as usual, is being dishonest about the fact that he, too, believed in the concept of 'permanent crisis', wrote about it (as we have shown above) and actually published my own writings which contained this concept before 2016 in 'Pratibaddh'; secondly, about the fact, that he did not understand that LTFRP as the principal explanation of the underlying cause of capitalist crisis and believed in the explanations based on over-production. Generally all Marxists who subscribe to the crisis theory based on over-production or under-consumption, too, time to time refer to the tendency of fall in the average rate of profit, however, they do not understand that the latter is the *underlying cause* of recurring crises, whereas the former are nothing but symptoms of this crisis of profitability. In other words, the Marxist theory of crisis is LTFRP.

Only through our writings, when we rectified our old error, that Sukhwinder came to know about the correct Marxist theory of crisis. He is silent like a log about this.

This again shows, besides the recent events happening in this opportunist and infantile group, that Sukhwinder has degenerated as a communist. Recent events have, in fact, only confirmed our prognosis that he would eventually degenerate. Misquoting from and distorting the Soviet constitution, too, was evidence of Sukhwinder's degeneration, for which he never publicly apologized. His shifting positions on MSP without any self-critical statement also showed his increasing degeneration. When narrow organizational interests and individualism and egotism are given priority over ideological and political considerations, such degeneration happens as a matter of rule.

B. GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of India and GDP (Gross Doltish Potential) of Sukhwinder

Now let us come to Sukhwinder's understanding of economic health of Indian economy. Subsequently, we will discuss Sukhwinder's idea of capitalist crisis in general. On this topic, since Sukhwinder knows nothing except plagiarizing (he plagiarized our position on MSP being a monopoly rent giving surplus-profit to the agrarian bourgeoisie as well, without self-criticizing his old position that MSP reduces inflation!), and since his political illiteracy and idiocy have been caught on so many occasions, he feels safe in sticking to either our group's writings (through plagiarizing) or sticking to reproducing what has been written in classics. That is why, whenever he tries to write anything about any social, economic or political novelty, he commits such ridiculous blunders, that one can fall laughing. Here, too, he has done the same. First let us understand the relation between GDP of Indian economy and the GDP of Sukhwinder.

Sukhwinder claims that "If Total Real Domestic Product in an economy shrinks for two consecutive quarters, then it is said to be in recession and if it shrinks more than 10% or it shrinks for three years consecutively then it is termed as depression." Does this definition of

recession and depression have anything to do with Marxism? No. Then, from where Sukhwinder has plagiarized this definition? Let us see. Popular bourgeois website *Investopedia* writes:

“A common rule of thumb is that two consecutive quarters of negative gross domestic product (GDP) growth indicate a recession.” (https://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/recession.asp)

Similarly, this website defines ‘depression’ as:

“A depression may be defined as an extreme recession that lasts three or more years or that leads to a decline in real gross domestic product (GDP) of at least 10% in a given year.” (https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/depression.asp)

Rings a bell? Bingo! You are right! Sukhwinder has plagiarized his definitions from this website, which is only putting forth what has been defined as ‘recession’ and ‘depression’ by agencies like IMF and World Bank since long. Someone might ask: what is the problem in relying on these definitions? What wrong poor Sukhwinder has committed? Well, the wrong committed by Sukhwinder is idiocy of accepting an incorrect and non-Marxist definition of crisis of profitability and, of course, plagiarizing without crediting the source. Now, let us see, what is the problem in confusing the GDP as the real indicator of profitability of a capitalist economy. There has been so much work on this question from Anwar Shaikh and Ahmet Tonak’s excellent study *Measuring the Wealth of the Nations* to Tsoulfidis and Tsaliki’s *Classical Political Economics and Modern Capitalism*, that we cannot present quotations from all of them. However, a few basic points and quotations would suffice to show the utter ignorance and stupidity of Sukhwinder.

Tsoulfidis and Tsaliki point out:

“The main problem with orthodox national accounts is that they present many activities as ‘production’ while they should be portrayed as ‘social consumption’. As the ‘personal consumption’ sphere contributes to the reproduction of individuals in a capitalist society, the non-productive activities, such as trade, financial

services or private security, in turn contribute to the reproduction and development of the capitalist system; however, their necessity does not negate the fact that as the total consumption (personal and social) increases, the part of surplus destined for the accumulation of capital is reduced and by extent the social wealth diminishes." (Tsoulfidis and Tsaliki. 2019. *Classical Political Economics and Modern Capitalism,* Springer, p. 402)

Shaikh and Tonak argue:

"The basic problem arises from the fact that conventional accounts classify many activities as "production," when in fact they should be classified as forms of social consumption. For example, the military, the police, and private guards protect property and social structure. Civil servants and lawyers administer rules and laws. Traders in commodities and paper circulate wealth or titles to it. It is our contention that such activities are actually forms of social consumption, not production." (Shaikh and Tonak. 1994. *Measuring the Wealth of Nations,* Cambridge University Press, p. 2)

Further:

"Within an orthodox national accounts framework, all such activities are viewed as resulting in additional output. But within a classical framework, because these same activities are viewed as forms of social consumption, their relative growth is seen as serving to absorb an increased portion of the national product and hence lower the share available for investment and accumulation." (ibid, p. 5)

Shaikh and Tonak explain further:

"The system we develop falls between these two polar extremes. On one hand, our production encompasses both goods and services. Indeed, the vast bulk of the traditionally defined service sector falls within our definition of production activities. On the other hand, we do not identify all activities as production: trading, military, police, and administrative activities are treated as forms of social consumption, not production. At the heart of the matter is a distinction between *outcomes* and *outputs. The outcomes of*

nonproduction activities may be socially desirable results, but they are not outputs." (*ibid,* p. 18, *emphasis ours*)

Thus, GDP is only an *approximate indicator* of movements of profitability. One has to work with the data of real GDP in order to calculate *the value-product* of a national economy, which is essential for estimating the average rate of profit. Sukhwinder is oblivious to these issues and takes the bourgeois sources at their face-value. The main question is identification of productive and non-production sectors of economy and subtract the non-production sectors from the calculations of any kind of national accounts, whether GNP or GDP, or GDP calculated based on production, or expenditure, or income, though the income approach is more appropriate to translate the bourgeois national accounts in Marxian value terms. Sukhwinder is dense like a paleolithic caveman about these issues.

Moreover, Sukhwinder's slogan is: *Modi ji ne kaha hai, to theek hi kaha hoga! (If Modi ji has said so, it must be true!)* Sukhwinder believes Modi government's data on GDP, the fakeness of which has been pointed out and demonstrated by a number of economists. Is the GDP of India really above 7 percent for past few years? Let us probe this. The fact is that the actual and real GDP growth rate in India has never crossed 5 percent since 2014 and has never crossed 3.7 percent since 2016. American economist Ashoka Mody has shown in his study that the GDP growth rate figures being publicized by the Modi government are false. Mody argues that the correctness of the GDP growth rate is probed by *the correspondence between the production income and expenditure.* The argument is simple: every sale is also a purchase. From the April-June 2024 data of Indian National Statistical Office, we can see that the production-income (that is income from the sale of production) has grown by the rate of 7.8 percent, whereas the expenditure in the same period has grown at 1.4 percent. These figures never completely overlap for a variety of reasons that every trained economist knows, but there is a broad correspondence. However, in India this data shows glaring discrepancy.

Moreover, whenever there is a real growth in productive sectors, there is a growth in the rate of employment, too. The growth in the rate of employment never matches the growth of the productive sectors, because of the rising organic composition of capital in the economy, the tendency to increase the relative surplus value as well as absolute surplus value, especially in the neoliberal phase through the processes of deregulation of the labour markets, etc. Despite this lag, the rate of employment, too, in general, expects some growth if the productive economy grows. However, in India, according to the report of the ILO, the employment growth rate in the year 2024 has been 0.01 percent! What does these statistics show? The GDP growth rate publicized by the Modi government is based on two things: first, fake data and secondly, speculative capital and non-production sectors. That is why, in the sectors like real estate, banking, insurance, the growth rate has been 12.1 percent in the same period for which Modi government publicized the data of GDP growth rate of 7.8 percent. Some economists have attempted to calculate the actual real GDP growth rate and in the tenure of Modi, the average remains between 3 percent and 4 percent.

However, Sukhwinder behaves like a Modi-*bhakt* here. He believes the fake data propaganda of the Modi government, in which the latter has outshone its fascist predecessors of the early-Twentieth century. Goebbles would have been ashamed of his failure in comparison to Modi government. Sukhwinder is bamboozled by India's GDP growth just like a dumb *bhakt.*

C. Sukhwinder's Understanding of Marxist Theory of Economic Crisis: A Revelation of Intellectual Bêtise of Highest Order

Now let us come to the question of the way in which crisis occurs today and see how in plagiarizing and paraphrasing from our writings as well as quotation-hunting with the instrument of a thing called 'index' and 'search' button, Sukhwinder forgot to read Marxist classics like *Capital.* We will show in what follows that Sukhwinder has totally misunderstood Marx's crisis theory as presented in

Capital, Volume 3 and Engels' editorial comments in the same as well as his 'Preface' to an edition of the Volume 1 of *Capital*. What, however, seems more likely to us, is that he has never read the volumes of *Capital* from cover to cover, as will become clear shortly. Let us start with the basic questions.

Are the capitalist crises recurrent and cyclical even today? Yes, they are. Are there any changes in the nature and occurrence of crises today, that is, after the 1970s? Yes, there are. Affirmative answers to both these questions makes the little head of Sukhwinder go dizzy like he is in a boat spiraling down in a whirlpool! However, those who understand the basics of Marxist political economy find it natural that the answers to both the above questions are in affirmative and can only be in affirmative. Now, let us elaborate upon what the dogmatic mind of the editor of 'Pratibadhh' cannot come around.

The process of crises is recurrent and cyclical, however, this process does not form a *circle* but a *spiral.* What does that mean? *It means that as a secular tendency, the crises become more structural, more protracted and deeper.* They assume a *chronic form,* along with periods of *acuteness.* Occurrence of crises is not complete *déjà vu,* as Sukhwinder assumes. In the 1886 Preface to the English edition of the first volume of *Capital,* Engels wrote:

"While the productive power increases in a geometric ratio, the extension of markets proceeds at best in an arithmetic one. The decennial cycle of stagnation, prosperity, overproduction and crisis, ever recurrent from 1825 to 1867, seems indeed to have run its course; *but only to land us in the slough of despond of a permanent and chronic depression.*" (Engels, F. 1982. 'Preface' to 1886 English edition, *Capital*, Penguin Edition, p. 113, *emphasis ours*)

Now, let us be clear, Engels is talking about the 'permanence' of the crisis in the *historical sense,* not *theoretical sense.* For Engels, too, the crises continued to be cathartic mechanism, through which the capitalist system deals with the fall in profitability by the devalorization of capital. However, without large-scale destruction of productive forces (such as in a war, etc.), sufficient devalorization of

capital does not happen as capitalist mode of production develops further, which pushes the capitalist system into a *long recession* and sometimes, a *long depression*. The protracted recession since the 1970s with short-lived interregnums of prosperity, often fueled by speculative frenzy, is a proof of this prognosis of Engels.

Secondly, when Engels is talking about the growth of markets, he is not simply raising the question of realization, but the question of markets for selling, as well as, markets of cheap labour and cheap raw material, in other words, *opportunities of profitable investments.*

Again, in an editorial note in the third volume of *Capital*, Engels points out that the *chronic nature* of crisis was not something on which Marx would work in his manuscripts of *Capital,* that had largely been written in the 1860s, because this emerging change in the nature of crisis is product of tendencies that were only in embryonic forms at the time when Marx was writing and they assumed fuller form only after that. Engels also points out that as monopoly stage of capitalism approaches, the problem of realization, too, aggravates the crisis of profitability. Here, too, Engels talks about “cessation” of restoration of profitability in a *historical sense,* and not in the *theoretical sense.* Engels points out:

“Since Marx wrote the above passage, new forms of industrial organization have been developed, as is well-known, representing the second and third degree of joint-stock company. The speed with which production can nowadays be increased in all fields of large-scale industry, which is greater every day, is confronted by the ever-increasing slowness in expanding the market for this increased volume of products. What production produces in months the market can absorb only in years. On top of this there are the protectionist policies by which each industrial country puts up a barrier against others, particularly against England, and artificially boosts domestic productive capacity still further. *The results are general and chronic overproduction, depressed prices, falling profits, even their complete cessation;* in brief, the ancient and celebrated freedom of competition is at the end of its road and must itself confess its

evident and scandalous bankruptcy. A further reason is that in each country the big industrialists in a particular branch of industry come together to form a cartel to regulate production, a committee fixes the quantity each establishment is to produce, and has the last word in dividing up the incoming orders. In a few cases it came to the formation of temporary international cartels, for instance between the English and the German Iron producers. But even this form of socialization of production did not suffice. The conflict of interests between the individual businesses broke through too often and restored competition. The next stage, therefore, in certain branches where the scale of production permitted, was to concentrate the entire production of the branch of industry in question into one big Joint-stock company with a unified management." (Engels, F. 1991. Editorial note, *Capital,* Vol. III, Penguin Books, p. 568-69, *emphasis ours*)

Again, one of the footnotes inserted by Engels as part of his editing of the third volume of *Capital* makes it clear that Engels is not talking about a 'permanent' crisis in the theoretical sense, but the prolongation of the phase of crisis in the industrial cycle. The concept of industrial cycles and waves occupy a very central place in Marx's analysis of the overall dynamic of the capitalist system. Later, these concepts were empirically proven by various scholars like Mandel, Shaikh, etc. What Engels writes here might rescue Mr. Dizzy-head, the editor of 'Pratibadhh' from drowning in the slime of his own stupidity:

"As I have already noted elsewhere, (Engels is referring here to the 1886 Preface to the first volume of *Capital*, that we have quoted above – *author*) the last great general crisis represented a turning-point. *The acute form of the periodic process with its former ten-year cycle seems to have given way to a more chronic and drawn-out alternation, affecting the various industrial countries at different times, between a relatively short and weak improvement in trade and a relatively long and indecisive depression.* Perhaps ***what is involved is simply an extension of the cycle's duration. When world trade was in its infancy, 1815-47, cycles of approximately***

five years could be discerned; between 1847 and 1867 the cycle was definitely a ten-year one; might we now be in the preparatory phase of a new world crash of unheard-of severity? *Many things seem to point this way…And so each of the elements that counteracts a repetition of the old crises, conceals within it the nucleus of a far more violent future crisis.*" (*ibid,* p. 620-21, *emphasis ours*)

Again, in a letter to August Bebel in 1885, Engels pointed out the increasing chronic nature of crisis as capitalist mode of production road-rolls all obstructions, hurdles and hindrances in its path. Engels wrote:

"The *chronic depression* in all the decisive branches of industry also still continues unbroken here, in France and in America. Especially in iron and cotton. It is an unheard-of situation, though entirely the inevitable result of the capitalist system: *such colossal over-production that it cannot even bring things to a crisis! The over-production of disposable capital seeking investment is so great that the rate of discount here actually fluctuates between 1 and 1½ percent. per annum, and for money invested in short term credits, which can be called in or paid off from day to day (money on call) one can hardly get ½ percent. per annum. But by choosing to invest his money in this way rather than in new industrial undertakings the money capitalist is admitting how rotten the whole business looks to him.* And this fear of new investments and old enterprises, which had already manifested itself in the crisis of 1867, is the main reason why things are not brought to an acute crisis." (Engels to Bebel, 28 October 1885, London, *emphasis ours*)

Mind you, Engels is not simply talking about general overproduction here, but mainly about the *overproduction of capital,* which has led to decline in the interest rates next to nothing. Now, any Marxist acquainted with the basics of Marxist political economy knows the meaning of the "overproduction" or "plethora" of capital. As Marx himself pointed out, any plethora of capital is the capital which cannot be invested profitably. It points to the crisis of profitability.

Engels, too, here is alluding to the crisis of profitability, where capital cannot find opportunities of profitable investment. As the capitalist mode of production develops, Engels argues, *the chronic and protracted nature of crises is enhanced and increased.* And Engels is correct and has been proven historically correct on this point: *as a secular tendency, the capitalist crises will assume more chronic and protracted character giving rise to what we are witnessing today, namely, a long recession since the 1970s which periodically collapses into serious depressions, like the long depression that began in 2007-08.*

Since Sukhwinder himself goes round-and-round in his merry-go-round of stupidity, he assumes that the objective process of capitalist crises, too, forms a circle, whereas it forms a spiral, a downward spiral. What does the editor of 'Pratibadhh' lack besides basic intelligence? Dialectics and a historical view. He does not have the historical view of development because of unity of opposites and through the negation of the negation, through spirals, but has the idealist Hegelian view of history as a circle. In one of his lectures on Jagrup (a CPI leader in Punjab), Sukhwinder argues that in everything, one aspect exists and then an opposite enters (from outside!), then the struggle of opposites starts! Similarly ridiculous is his understanding of the concept of negation of the negation. Therefore, it is quite natural that he utterly lacks dialectics and historical method in investigating anything, including the question of economic crisis.

Now let us see what we have said about crises since 2017 and whether it is congruent with what Engels and several Marxists after him have pointed out in the context of the evolving nature of crises.

In 2021, I wrote in my critique of Ajay Sinha *aka* Don Quixote *de la* Patna, with whom Sukhwinder was having a *bon homie* until a few months ago, presenting an idyllic picture of the holy union of dummkopfs:

"Moreover, Marx also argues why crises and general overproduction cannot be a permanent state in capitalism. The reason is that crisis

is at the same time the process through which it is overcome. The theory of ‘permanent crisis’ goes against the very nature of capitalism and betrays an utter lack of understanding of the law of value and its derivative, the law of profitability.” (Sinha, Abhinav. 2024. ‘Ajay Sinha aka Don Quixote *de la* Patna’s Disastrous Encounter with Marx’s Theory of Ground-Rent (and Marx’s Political Economy in General)’, in *For a Proletarian Line,* Rahul Foundation, Lucknow, p. 234-35, *emphasis ours*)

In the same critique, I wrote:

“Supply and demand themselves are functions of movement of capital and profitability. *Constant general overproduction (that is in all branches of production)* is not a permanent condition of capitalist economy, except in periods of long depression, which take place due to slower *devalorization* of capital.” (*ibid*, p. 341-42, *emphasis ours*)

We also wrote in May 2021:

“We still think that it is possible that present long depression might continue for a long period to come, with no significant boom in near future and that before capitalism sees another significant boom, the series of revolutions might break out. However, we do not think that the idea of permanent crisis is theoretically congruent with the nature of capitalist mode of production, as explained by Marx. In other words, to argue theoretically that capitalism can be permanently stagnant, mired in permanent crisis is incorrect. *Theoretically, there is no such thing as ‘permanent crisis’; the crisis can be short or long.*..The reason why a ‘theory or permanent crisis’ is incorrect is that the very process of crisis (which might span for several decades) is simultaneously a process of devalorization of capital, destruction of productive forces and depression of average wages that restore profitability. *What makes the ‘Long Depression’ of the late-20th and early 21st centuries different from earlier ‘long recessions’ is that this time the devalorization of capital has not proceeded in a rapid fashion for a variety of reasons that have been discussed by many Marxist political economists…*Anyway, from 2016, it had become clear to us that the idea of a ‘permanent crisis’

is theoretically incorrect and cannot be supported with empirical evidence from the history of world capitalism. It does not matter whether a depression is a ‘long depression’ or a short-lived depression. Theoretically, no capitalist crisis can be permanent, even though, some crisis will definitely prove to be the last one! The political assessment of world situation is a different thing altogether. It is very much possible that before this long depression ends, revolutions break out in the countries that can be called ‘hotspots turning into flash points’. The other possibility would be large-scale devalorization of capital in some way. *Still, the idea of a ‘permanent crisis’ is theoretically incorrect and empirically untenable.* Moreover, it is important to understand that the law of decline in the rate of profit is *a secular tendency. It simply means that historically the rate of profit will fall, despite rebounding periodically. Every new crisis will be deeper than the previous one and will make the contradictions of capitalism even sharper and more acute, precisely due to its recurrent nature.* The very theoretical idea of ‘permanent crisis’ is non-dialectical.” (Abhinav, Kavita, *op.cit., emphasis ours*)

We wrote in 2017:

“Secondly, we have also shown above that underconsumption is not the cause of the crisis but the symptom of the crisis of profitability. Thirdly, the state of stagnation is not permanent because every major crisis or stagnation leads to devalorization of capital, restoring profitability by precisely this devalorization. Therefore, one must not forget that every crisis is *a sudden or a protracted cathartic process for the system.*” (Sinha, Abhinav. 2019. *op.cit.*, p. 441, *emphasis ours*)

Again, we wrote early in 2017:

“Crisis cannot simply be reduced to a violent mechanism to restore equilibrium *ad infinitum* (Callinicos does not say that it will happen *ad infinitum*, but his logic leads naturally to this corollary). The fact is that the occurrence of crises does not only happen in cycles, but in a spiral. And this is a downward spiral. Mandel has rightly pointed out that arguing for the ‘inevitability of collapse’ is not equivalent to

arguing for the ‘inevitability of socialism’.” (Sinha, Abhinav. 2019. *op.cit.,* p. 375, *emphasis ours*)

In 2017, we revised a part our 2016 essay ‘The Resistible Rise of Fascism in India’ and wrote:

“Unlike most of the previous crises, the present crisis is an unprecedentedly long depression. This is a characteristic feature of the phase of neoliberal globalization. The reason for its protracted nature is that the devalorization of capital has not been undertaken at a scale that would restore the profitability sufficiently. Even though this cannot be regarded as a permanent crisis, as any such idea is incongruent with the very nature of capitalist mode of production, because the crisis is also *always-already* a cathartic process for capitalism, which destroys the ‘irrational exuberance’; however, since the large-scale devalorization has not been possible for last 4 decades, the system is in a mild recession that degenerates into serious crises periodically and recovers only in a feeble way. Moreover, the decline in the rate of profit is a secular historical tendency, which simply means that even in the *longue durée*, the rate of profit of entire capitalist system will fall historically and every new crisis will lead to even more acute and violent contradictions and convulsions. This protracted nature of the present crisis therefore is nothing surprising from Marxist point of view. This constant dialectics of stagnation and momentum is the characteristic feature of the stage of imperialism, as Lenin pointed out.” (https://redpolemique.wordpress.com/2016/06/09/the-resistible-rise-of-fascism-and-the-challenges-of-the-working-class-movement-in-india/)

As the readers can see, we have said nothing new when we have talked about a chronic and protracted crisis; *theoretically speaking,* we have merely followed the development of Marxist thought on crises characterized by Engels’ views especially since the 1880s and the developments in the neoliberal phase which confirm this Marxist thought. Marx himself had pointed out that the periods of crises and stagnation will increase in the industrial cycle with the further

development of capitalist mode of production. Moreover, today most of the classical Marxist political economists have consensus on the increasing protracted nature of the capitalist crisis because it has been empirically proven by the history of past half century. What Sukhwinder has failed to understand is that in history, everything *develops;* it develops through the negation of the negation, that is, through spirals; the path of development is never circular; and this applies to the historical phenomena of capitalist crises as well.

Why is Sukhwinder trying so hard to show that India is not facing an economic crisis and is going through a boom? Because he wants to prove that India is not witnessing a fascist rise, as the fundamental precondition of the rise of fascism is existence of economic crisis. However, as we can see, he fails to show this, despite all his efforts, from misunderstanding and misrepresenting Marxist views on crisis to doing propaganda for Narendra Modi, regarding high but fake GDP growth rates.

Thus, what does, again, the editor of 'Pratibadhh' lack? It is dialectics and a historical view. Where does this lack lead him to? To a particularly crude and lousy version of dogmatism and historicism.

Such is the problem with the views of Sukhwinder on the nature of crisis historically. He stops at recognizing that crises are recurrent and cyclical, something that he learnt from our writings; however, whether this cycle is circular or spiral, he does not know, because he never reads anything from cover to cover. He, for being on the safer side, assumes that crises will keep recurring as it is, without any development or evolution of the way they occur and similarly, they will resolve the crisis of profitability, as usual, *ad infinitum.* This is precisely the harmonist illusions that led several people in the last century into the lap of social-democracy and revisionism. Why Sukhwinder falls in the pit of this stupidity? It is his general problem. *First of all, he does not read. Secondly, if he reads, he lacks the rigor to read anything properly and completely. Third, if somehow, he reads anything properly and completely, he does not understand it. And finally, he ends up making a fool of himself.* This is precisely

what he has done on the question of nature of fascism, the question of the relation between the state and the form of state, on the question of retention of the *form* of bourgeois parliamentary democracy in case of exceptional types of bourgeois dictatorship, the question of nature of crises and its relation with fascism, and the other questions. We have shown above that had he even read completely the texts that he himself has reproduced from, had he read the authors and authorities in totality that he himself has quoted, he would have saved himself from a lot of embarrassment. However, we suspect that he has even partially read these sources. It appears from his essay that he has plagiarized from a number of writings, including the writings of our organization, though without mentioning the source and without properly understanding. However, when you look selectively for quotes supporting your argument, while plagiarizing from your own opponents, you run the risk of not understanding things properly and with proper context and then babble gibberish with the confidence of a country bumpkin. Sukhwinder has behaved precisely like one. He had done the same on the national and linguistic question as well as the question of MSP.

Now let us come to the next important issue where Sukhwinder flounders in his typical silly fashion, that is, the question of the concept of *political crisis* and the pre-conditions of the rise of fascism.

How Sukhwinder Flounders Helplessly on the Concept of Political Crisis and the “other supporting factors” contributing to the Rise of Fascism

Let us first hear from the horse’s mouth:

“The economic crisis of capitalism can escalate and change into its political crisis or revolutionary crisis. But it doesn’t mean that this will be the case in every instance. Particularly developed capitalist or

imperialist countries with strong economies can postpone this crisis for some time. This is accomplished through governmental support to capitalist enterprises (like presently USA is acting in the case of banks such as Silicon Valley and Signature Bank which are collapsing), policies of credit expansion. But these measures cannot endlessly postpone crisis.

“In times of economic crisis, normally the rules attempt to shift the major chunk of the burden of crisis onto the shoulders of working class and other sections of the toiling masses. This is, often at times, resisted by the working class and toiling masses. *If a strong revolutionary communist party exists which can correctly lead the toiling masses’ protest in such a time, a crisis can emerge for the very existence of capitalist system. In such a scenario, the capitalist class removes its façade of democracy and endeavours to establish naked terrorist dictatorship. If in such a crisis ridden country a fascist party/movement exists, then this dictatorship comes to the fore in the form of fascist regime/dictatorship.* (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 14-15, *emphasis ours*)

Again, we can see the sheer ignorance of Sukhwinder regarding the basic concepts. Let us explain in a little detail.

A. 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.

By way of a meaningful diversion, we must point out that the US bourgeoisie has indeed been facing a *political crisis* since the beginning of the new millennium which aggravated particularly with the beginning of the 'long depression'. In fact, Trumpism and the rise of Trump following this crisis is nothing else, but a symptom of the political crisis, namely, the *crisis of hegemony* within the 'power bloc' due to a *particular conjuncture of class contradictions,* which precisely is the Marxist concept of political crisis. It is noteworthy that Trump was not the consensus candidate of the US big bourgeoisie. In the previous election it was Hilary Clinton. To say that the US ruling class successfully prevented a political crisis is to be politically and historically blind. In order to understand this, Sukhwinder will also need to understand that a political crisis does not necessarily lead to an exceptional state in every case. That again depends on a variety of other political and historical factors.

All of the gibberish of Sukhwinder means nothing! 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*. What makes Sukhwinder's argument ridiculous is that immediately after the above paragraph, he quotes Poulantzas, where the latter is making precisely this point and, if you may, is anachronistically refuting the vulgar economism of the likes of Sukhwinder:

"Nicos Poulantzas says, *"Fascism can only be explained by reference to the concrete situation of the class struggle, as it cannot be reduced to any inevitable need of the 'economic' development of capitalism…. Lenin and Mao have many times stressed the fact that, while economics plays the determinant role in the last instance (the fundamental contradiction), it is the class struggle (i.e. in the end politics and the political class struggle) which has primacy in the historical process."* (Sukhwinder. *op.cit.,* p. 15*, author's emphasis)*

Now, just compare this excerpt with the Sukhwinder's own line that economic crisis converts into political crisis where the bourgeoisie lacks the economic power to prevent the same! This whole line of argumentation lacks precisely the political point that Poulantzas makes in the above quote presented by Sukhwinder himself! We will come back to this point after a while in a little more detail. First, let us dwell on a couple of other absurdities of Sukhwinder.

On a secondary note, expansion of credit *does not prevent* the crises, but *aggravates it*. In case where the crisis of profitability expresses itself as a financial collapse and credit crisis, the governments may resort to reduction in the interest rates and expand credit as an immediate measure to prevent insolvency of financial institutions as well as spur the rate of investment. However, this only aggravates crises and, in all crisis-ridden countries, central

banks finally increase interest rates to prevent the speculative frenzy, which ultimately deepens the crises. This, too, does not alleviate the situation structurally, because the underlying cause of the crisis, is the decline in *the average rate of profit, about which no government intervention could do anything.* Moreover, even without governmental intervention, in the periods of crises, rates of interest have a tendency to decline, because the average rate of profit acts as a regulatory ceiling for the rate of interest. As the rate of profit falls, the demand for capital, too, falls and consequently the rate of interest falls. When there is an economic recovery, the demand for capital and the rate of investment increases and so does the rate of interest. *Wherever Sukhwinder even brushes against the fence of the territory of political economy, he badly bruises himself.*

Secondly, the countries which moved towards fascist rule in the first half of the Twentieth century, were not economically-backward countries, especially Germany. After the economic collapse and hyperinflation immediately after the First World War, from 1923 economic recovery began in Germany and the years immediately preceding the Nazi rise and before the Great Depression from 1929, were those of economic prosperity and rise of Germany as a major industrial power again. However, this could not prevent the development of a political crisis, neither could the Weimer state intervene to stall the development of economic crisis into a political crisis. What Sukhwinder fails to understand is that there is *no such non-dialectical, linear evolutionist and incrementalist relation between economic crisis and political crisis*.

Third, Poulantzas, the authority who Sukhwinder quotes to support his views regarding political crisis has no such view. For Poulantzas, economic crisis only provides *the general historical context* in which the *conjuncture of class contradictions might or might not develop into political crisis, depending upon the historical context of the political class struggle in a country*; it is precisely this *conjuncture* that we call ‘political crisis’. Evidently, the development of such conjuncture has a political dimension which has *a relative autonomy from economic factors*. Therefore, it is not the economic intervention

by prosperous capitalist states in the economy which, *in itself* and *by itself,* can prevent the economic crises from developing into a political crisis. Poulantzas writes:

“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. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 16, *emphasis ours*)

Further:

“This is the same as posing the problem of the political crisis, for the appearance of fascism corresponds precisely to a political crisis. The above propositions can therefore be clarified by making it evident that *the political crisis is composed of a number of particular characteristics of the class struggle: the problem raised here being similar to the problem posed by the revolutionary situation.*” (*ibid*, p. 57-58, *emphasis ours*)

More:

“The essence of a political crisis which can lead to the emergence of an exceptional State lies in *particular characteristics of the field of the class struggle – the field of ‘social relations’.*” (*ibid*, p. 63, *emphasis ours*)

It is not about the *economic ability, per se,* of a prosperous capitalist country to intervene in order to prevent the economic crisis from developing into a political crisis. Economic factor, here too, plays the role of *fundamental contradiction;* and as always, it is the *political class struggle* as a relatively autonomous factor, which plays the role of the *principal contradiction;* Sukhwinder has no clue regarding the relation between the *economic* and the *political,* even though he does talk about the “primacy” of the political factor, while the economic factor plays the role of fundamental contradiction. The above assertion is a classical Marxist thesis which, not only Lenin and Mao had presented, but Marx himself had presented in *Class*

Struggles in France, 1848-50 and many other writings. The same position was presented by Engels on several occasions.

B. 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. *Is the existence of a powerful revolutionary working-class movement and a revolutionary communist party as its leader, a necessary pre-requisite 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, Caeserism 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*)

About Trotsky sharing the same erroneous view about the political crisis which leads to fascist rise, he points out:

"With Trotsky things are more complex. In his writings on Germany, Trotsky for his part is very careful to distinguish between Bonapartism, which is based on an equilibrium between the two forces, and fascism. Nevertheless, he seems to neglect the question of the specific political crisis which characterizes fascism. He insists basically on two characteristics. They are significant, for they show that despite their differences, Trotsky basically shared the Comintern's view:

"1. That fascism represents an open 'civil war' by the bourgeoisie against the *'insurgent' working class*, and therefore a revolutionary offensive by the working class. *In this* ***mistaken characterization*** *Trotsky came close to the Comintern position.*" (*ibid*, p. 61-62, *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*)

Further, Poulantzas points out:

"The petty-bourgeoisie is itself divided into class fractions. This can have important consequences: although the petty-bourgeoisie as a whole basically has a common position in a conjuncture (the case of fascism is a particularly good example of this), it is also possible for dislocations to appear between its different fractions.

"These dislocations can even be deep enough for one fraction to swing one way, the other in the opposite direction. *Experience shows that a common political position is generally maintained in 'normal' conjunctures of class struggle, or in conjunctures of acute political crisis where the working class is on the defensive, as in the case of fascism.*" (*ibid*, p. 244, *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 maneuvered…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!

More importantly, the quotation that he reproduces from Poulantzas, has been selectively edited by Sukhwinder, because the portion that Sukhwinder omits critiques precisely the position held by Comintern, an obscenely poor and misunderstood version of which is being put

forth by Sukhwinder. Let us see the entire quote, with the parts omitted by Sukhwinder. Poulantzas argues:

“These considerations will make it quite clear that fascism can only be explained by reference to *the concrete situation of the class struggle*, *as it cannot be reduced to any inevitable need of the ‘economic’ development of capitalism.* It will also become clear how the Third International’s economism led it not only to miss the imperialist chain and the order of the links, but constantly to underestimate, theoretically and politically, the role of the class struggle in the pace and direction of the development of imperialism, which its analyses of fascism demonstrate.” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 39)

Again, Poulantzas points out:

“To go ahead some years, let us look at the International’s analyses of the question, especially from the time of the Fifth Congress (1924). It is no exaggeration to say that they are deeply economistic. This economism gave rise to a general characteristic of the analyses, which may be termed ‘economic catastrophism’, and was especially evident in its analyses of fascism in Europe.

“Economism here consists, first of all, in giving priority to the ‘productive forces’ at the expense of the relations of production. This is accompanied, in the second place, by an economistic-technologistic conception of the production process and the ‘productive forces’ as being somehow independent of the relations of production. This makes it impossible to define correctly the way in which the production process is articulated with the field of the class struggle. Class struggle is outside the picture, in the sense that it is reduced to a mechanical economic process which is attributed primacy in historical development. Yet Lenin and Mao have many times stressed the fact that, while economics plays the determinant role in the last instance (the fundamental contradiction), it is the class struggle (i.e. in the end politics and the political class struggle) which has primacy in the historical process.” (*ibid,* p. 39-40)

As you can see, an intellectual dwarf has summoned up all his intellectual might to distort the position of Poulantzas by selectively quoting him and omitting the most important parts of the quote to support his own ridiculous arguments. This also shows that Sukhwinder has the obsessive-compulsive disorder to misquote and misinterpret, as he has done it quite a few times now. This only shows his further degeneration.

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. As Poulantzas has written, "…to describe this political crisis as a 'weakness' of the bourgeoisie is to say something about its relation of force with the working class…". In other words, to speak about the relative strength of one term of the contradiction, is always, at the same time, to say something about the relative weakness of the other term. 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. As Poulantzas has shown, the turn to authoritarian statism in the phase of neoliberalism does not show the strength of the bourgeoisie in particular. He argues:

"Authoritarian statism does not correspond to a *univocal* strengthening of the State: it rather involves the dual aspect of *strengthening-weakening*, given that the transformations which mark the State sharpen the generic elements of political crisis." (Poulantzas. 2000. *State, Power, Socialism,* Verso, London, p. 241)

The specific feature of present conjuncture is not the absolute strength of the bourgeoisie, but the *excess of the proletarian weakness* over the weakness of the bourgeoisie, a situation of *dual powerlessness,* as it were. Thus, the strength of the bourgeoisie can be determined precisely on this *relation of forces,* not in the absolute sense. However, the bourgeoisie itself is certainly much more fragile economically and much more paranoid politically compared to the

early-Twentieth century. This is in congruence with the change in the nature of capitalist crisis itself, which we have talked about. In this situation, even spontaneous anti-capitalism of popular revolts suffices to drive this paranoid bourgeoisie into the arms of fascist reaction and other forms of far-right reaction and this has been proven repeatedly since 2007-08. Once again, Sukhwinder fails to understand the *movement* of history, the difference in the conjuncture of class struggle, nationally as well as internationally, that was present in the early-Twentieth century and one that is prevalent today.

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 Caeserism. 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 Silone, 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).

Moving on. Sukhwinder talks about “other supporting factors” that lead to fascist rise, *besides* the political crisis. Nothing can be more foolish than this. As all the other factors mentioned by Sukhwinder are nothing but the component of the political crisis leading to fascism itself. For instance, the threat of ruin that the petty-bourgeoisie faces, the treachery of social-democracy, etc.

C. Sukhwinder’s Theory of “Other Supporting Factors” besides the Economic and Political Crisis that Lead to the Fascist Rise: A Cacophony of Pure Nonsense

Sukhwinder presents his own idea of the other factors that contribute to the rise of fascism:

“We have discussed above the most important factor in the emergence of fascist state, namely the economic and political crisis of capitalism. Besides these, some other factors too need to be discussed here. These factors are-:

i. Capitalist development also means increase in accumulation of capital. This also hastens polarization in capitalist society. **Due to capitalist development, petty-bourgeoisie (middle class) is continuously proletarised. Its class position is adversely affected by capitalist crises. The sword of proletarisation always hangs over the head of this class. In the absence of a revolutionary alternative, this class becomes a part of reactionary movements due to the uncertainty, instability of its conditions. Fascism is a romantic reactionary social movement of the petty-bourgeoisie.**

ii. Capitalists, in the throes of economic crisis, attempts to shift the burden of this crisis onto the shoulders of working class and other toiling masses. **If in such a situation, working class emerges as a challenge for the capitalist system in the**

leadership of its party (communist party) but fails to accomplish revolution then fearing revolution, a faction of monopoly capitalists takes refuge in reaction or fascism so that the back of organised workers' movement may be broken.

iii. **"The treachery of the social-democratic or revisionist parties with the working class play an important role in fascism's ascension to power.** These parties blunt the class consciousness of working class by entangling them in trivial economic struggles. They avoid resisting fascist offensive and one by one retreat from the positions won by the working class. The treachery of social democratic parties is renowned worldwide in the case of fascists coming to power in Italy and Germany. In India too, the revisionist parties (CPI, CPM, Liberation) tremendously helped the growth of fascist forces via the above-mentioned methods." (Sukhwinder, *cit.,* p. 15-16, *emphasis ours*)

First of all, let us repeat that the revolutionary onslaught of the working class is not a precondition of the fascist rise. However, had that been the case, why would this factor not be a part of the political crisis, that is, the conjuncture of class contradictions? Why would it be counted twice? Why would it be included in "other supporting factors" *besides* political crisis?

Moreover, the other two factors, namely the economic insecurity of the petty-bourgeoisie as well as the betrayal of the social-democracy, too, are constitutive parts of the economic crisis as well as the political crisis, which is nothing but a conjuncture of class contradictions. Why count them separately as "other supporting factors" besides economic and political crisis?

As the readers can see, Sukhwinder utterly lacks any understanding of the very notion of political crisis, not to speak of his equally absolute ignorance about the concept of economic crisis. There are no "other supporting factors" because the political crisis is nothing but a result of confluence of many factors pertaining to the *political*

situation of class struggle, or *the conjuncture of class struggle*. Sukhwinder must have thought that such a major movement like fascism must be product of “many supporting factors” besides political and economic crisis! He found himself compelled and obliged to count the very component parts of political crisis as separate factors contributing to the fascist rise. That is the reason why we have remarked repeatedly in this essay that Sukhwinder does not read anything in totality; whatever he reads he fails to understand; he misquotes and misrepresents; whatever he writes, as a consequence, breaks a riot of laughter among people who comprehend even the basics of Marxism.

Now let us see the particular “other supporting factors” and the particular views of Sukhwinder about them.

Again, our editor *saab* is giddy-headed due to spinning in the whirlpool of contradictions! He claims that petty-bourgeoisie drifts towards fascism under the conditions of economic crisis (which is actually the condition where accumulation of capital has hit its natural barrier, capital itself!) in the absence of a revolutionary alternative. However, at the same time, he claims that it is the continuing accumulation of capital which leads to the ruin of the petty-bourgeoisie, which in turn, drives the petty-bourgeoisie into the arms of fascist reaction! Sukhwinder once again reveals his ignorance at many levels.

What does he not comprehend? First, the economic crises are result of the accumulation of capital, which cyclically leads to the problem of the crisis of profitability as a result of increasing organic composition of capital. Second, the crisis itself demonstrates the limits of accumulation of capital and consequent devalorization of capital. Third, in the periods of crises, *it is precisely this devalorization of capital which expresses itself as the ruin of, particularly, the small and medium capitalists as well as sections of petty-bourgeoisie.* Fourth, it is this social and economic insecurity that ultimately becomes the cause of the reactionary turn of the petty-bourgeoisie, which can lead it into the arms of fascism, if there

is a fascist vanguard to misarticulate the discontent of the petty-bourgeoisie through fascist ideology and constructs a false/imaginary enemy in the shape of a sizeable minority before this petty-bourgeois reaction.

Sukhwinder fails to understand the process through which economic uncertainty and insecurity created by capitalist crisis leads the petty-bourgeoisie into the camp of fascist reaction. Moreover, he also fails to understand that *this crisis is, in fact, the crisis of accumulation,* created by the situation where in the words of Marx it is revealed that 'the real barrier to capitalist production is capital itself.' In other words, it is precisely accumulation of capital which, at a certain point, leads to the crisis of profitability and devalorization of capital.

Then, contradicting his first and second point, Sukhwinder claims that it is not in the absence of revolutionary alternative presented by the proletariat that fascism rises. It is only when the revolutionary onslaught of the proletariat to realize this revolutionary alternative fails, that fascism rises due to the fear of revolution! Wow! How can a person zip together so many contradictions, in so few words! On all these points (which are contradictory anyway!), the editor of 'Pratibaddh' is foolishly and embarrassingly incorrect.

First of all, as we saw, fascist rise begins with the *political defeat* of the proletariat, not its political offensive. This defeat is caused not by the failure of political offensive, but the inability of the proletariat to constitute itself as a *political class* and emerge as the leader of the masses. It is the mistake of economism and the absence of massline, that prevents the proletariat to accomplish the above tasks and mount a revolutionary political offensive in the true sense. Secondly, it is not the failure of the political offensive of the insurgent proletariat, but the *absence* of such an offensive that leads to fascism. The revolutionary onslaught of the proletariat creating an 'equilibrium crisis' leads to other forms of reaction, like military dictatorship or the Horthy's regime in Hungary or Salazar's regime in Portugal, as the quote of Zetkin presented by Sukhwinder himself shows. Zetkin points precisely to this difference, which Poulantzas

also elaborates: the different kinds of political crises which lead to different forms of reaction.

Finally, Sukhwinder in the last line of the second point, also fails to understand the difference between an *organized workers' movement* and the *revolutionary political offensive of the proletariat*. This reveals the dogmatic economism and revisionism of Sukhwinder himself, which he himself attacks in the immediately next paragraph. This was precisely the point made by Poulantzas. A mere organized workers' movement might represent a defensive of the working class, rather than a political offensive of the working class. In fact, the organized working-class movement clinging to the already-won economic benefits and limiting itself to pecuniary logic, is precisely an expression of its *political failure.*

Sukhwinder continues to dabble in the quagmire of silly contradictions. He writes in the above quoted excerpt: "These parties blunt the class consciousness of working class by entangling them in *trivial economic struggles*. They avoid resisting fascist offensive and one by one retreat from the positions won by the working class. The treachery of social democratic parties is renowned worldwide in the case of fascists coming to power in Italy and Germany."

First of all, it is not about *trivial* or *significant* economic struggles! Would Sukhwinder be happy and gay, had these economic struggles been significant, rather than trivial? The Marxist critique of economism has nothing to do with trivial or important economic struggles. Economism is about limiting the working class within bourgeois legality, by limiting them to mere economic struggles, trivial or great! It prevents the working class from raising the political question, that is, the question of the state. Moreover, it also systematically trains it to give primacy to its *particular immediate economic interests* over its *general long-term political interests*. Thus, it prevents the proletariat from becoming the leader of the masses by defeating the hegemony of the bourgeois political line among the masses.

Moreover, the factor that contributes to the political crisis leading to fascism is not “one by one retreat from the positions won by the working class”; in fact, it is due to the working class intransigently clutching to the economic “positions” already won, which creates a situation of “profit squeeze” for the bourgeoisie in the times of crises. Had Sukhwinder read even the anthologies that he repeatedly quotes, he would have understood it. What is Sukhwinder dense about? The meaning of economism. It is not about fighting or not fighting for “trivial” or “important” economic rights, but limiting the working class to pecuniary logic which leads to the disabling of the working class from, in the words of Lenin, ‘raising the political question’, the question of the state and the question of transcending the historical boundaries of capitalism, as we pointed out above. It is precisely this refusal of the workers’ movement under social-democratic leadership, which exacerbates the crisis of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, this also disables the working class from becoming the leader of the working masses, including echelons of the petty-bourgeoisie. As a result, despite the weakening of the ideological and political hegemony of the bourgeoisie in times of crisis, the proletariat is not able to establish its own political hegemony among the masses, including the masses of the petty-bourgeoisie, because, as pointed out above, economism is a tendency that leads the proletariat to give primacy to its *particular immediate economic interests* rather than the *general long-term political interests.* As we can see, despite quoting Gramsci and Poulantzas, who have particularly emphasized the question of the *crisis of ideological and political hegemony of the bourgeoisie* which contributes to the rise of fascism, Sukhwinder completely fails to understand the same. However, the proletariat’s failure to establish its own political and ideological hegemony by getting rid of economism, creates a situation of dual absence. As a consequence, the bourgeoisie succeeds in re-establishing its hegemony through an exceptional means, through fascism.

PART 2

Sukhwinder on “Various Theories of Fascism”: Unintelligent and Shameless Plagiarizing and Paraphrasing and Few More Original Vacuities

Sukhwinder’s meanderings in the land of ludicrousness continue when he discusses various theories of fascism. Even though he refrains from saying anything new about these theories and limits himself to simply paraphrasing, quotationing and plagiarizing from three anthologies (*Resistible Rise,* edited by Margit Köves and Shaswati Mazumdar, *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany* edited by M. N. Dobkowski and I. Walliman and *Marxists in Face of Fascism* edited by David Beetham), he fails to understand what he is quoting which becomes apparent whenever he is trying to elaborate the ideas expressed in these quotations, plagiarizings and paraphrasings.

A. Sukhwinder, the Plagiarizer par excellence

He discusses these theories very briefly since they were discussed very briefly in the source text itself (Köves and Mazumdar’s anthology) and Sukhwinder has real difficulty in writing anything new and his past attempts at writing something new (remember his position on the National Question) have led to some really tragi-comic and disastrous outcomes! Also amusing is the fact that Sukhwinder only mentions Jürgen Kocka’s reference as taken from *Resistible Rise*, instead of honestly conceding that he has reproduced (by method of summarizing and sometimes word-to-word reproduction without using double-quotes) this segment of his article from the ‘Introduction’ to *Resistible Rise*! Anyways, he discusses the following (page no. 17-20 in Sukhwinder’s essay):

1. Theory of Führer state
2. Fascism as Totalitarianism

3. Fascism as a result of national particularities (Sukhwinder refers to Jürgen Kocka as the same was referred to in the source text)
4. The theory of centrality of Holocaust
5. Fascism as the reactionary social movement of petty-bourgeoisie

Now let us first see how Sukhwinder dishonestly and shamelessly plagiarizes from the ‘Introduction’ written by Köves and Mazumdar, almost *verbatim*, without using any quotation marks or giving any reference. The only minor differences in words come from the fact that he has translated these words of Köves and Mazumdar from English to Punjabi, which, then have been translated back to English. Still, the similarity is uncanny. It becomes clear to any reader that the portion has been plagiarized from Köves and Mazumdar, as we shall show shortly. This is typical of Sukhwinder and reveals his political degeneration.

This plagiarizing has been done to impress his own cadre with a false image of his intellect and erudition. However, all such attempts always go in vain and ultimately prove to be counter-productive. Let us compare what Sukhwinder has written and what Köves and Mazumdar have written. Sukhwinder writes about the first theory, that is, the Theory of the Führer state:

“This theory centres upon the role of Hitler. This theory is the explanation of fascism as the dictatorship of one person (with some leaders). This theory, in its original form, emerged after the end of second world war and the defeat of fascism. This theory mainly surfaced in Germany. This theory fails to answer many questions. For instance, why fascist movements emerged in almost all the capitalist countries after the first world war? Why do some classes more than the other are influenced by fascist propaganda? Why the big bourgeoisie benefits from the crushing of the workers’ movement?” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 17)

Now let us see what Köves and Mazumdar have written:

“This theory centred essentially on the role of Hitler and explained fascism as the dictatorship of an individual (along with some other leaders)…In its basic form the theory emerged soon after the end of the Second World War and the defeat of fascism, particularly in Germany…The theory of Führer-state does not explain several facts. Why did fascist movements emerge in almost all capitalist countries in the period after the end of the First World War? Why were certain social classes more susceptible to fascist propaganda than others? Why did big business benefit whereas the working-class movement was crushed…?” (Köves and Mazumdar. 2003. *op.cit.,* p. 5)

Now let us come to Sukhwinder’s uniquely “original” views about the theory of totalitarianism:

“This theory emerged during the staring period of cold war, when the anti-fascist alliance between Soviet Union and western powers collapsed. The central idea of this theory is that both fascism and communism, in its nature are essentially same. meaning both are totalitarian, both are threats to “democracy”. During cold war it was an important ideological weapon of the imperialists for combating the danger of communism. This is used even today in one form or another by the imperialists and their “thinkers”.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 17)

Köves and Mazumdar anachronistically (using a time-machine) “plagiarize” from the great thinker of Raikot:

“The most influential theory of fascism, which gained ground with the start of the Cold War and the end of the antifascist alliance of the Western powers with the Soviet Union, was the ‘totalitarianism’ theory. The central postulate of this theory is that fascism and communism are essentially alike in nature, both totalitarian…both a threat to democracy… in the confrontational climate of the Cold War, this theory functioned as the major ideological weapon against communism…It is perhaps worth noting that the theory of ‘totalitarianism’ continues to play a decisive role…in the twenty-first century.” (Köves and Mazumdar. 2003. *op.cit.* p. 6-7)

Coming to the theory of national peculiarities or particularities (a change created due to the ‘loss in translation’!), Sukhwinder again shamelessly plagiarizes from Köves and Mazumdar. However, by this time, he has also developed some fear that sooner or later someone will catch this intellectual theft. So, he adds a note that the particular views of Kocka have been taken from Köves and Mazumdar’s book! However, we will see, that he is not only lifting Kocka’s views from this anthology, but the entire section from the ‘Introduction’ of the same. Let us see what Sukhwinder writes:

“This theory sees the roots of fascism, particularly those of German fascism in its pre-industrial backwardness, delayed nationhood, delayed industrialisation and underdevelopment of bourgeois democratic institutions resulting from it. Jürgen Kocka was one of the major theoreticians of this theory. JürgenKocka goes to the extent of making the false claim that “German society in the true sense has never been a bourgeois society.” Germany’s particular path of development is termed to be responsible for the popular effect of reactionary, anti-democratic and illogical ideologies which ultimately made fascism and its horrible crimes possible.

“Jürgen Kocka, transforms the above-mentioned quote of Max Horkheimer, in his own words, “One who does not wish to discuss pre-industrial, pre-capitalist, pre-bourgeois traditions should stay silent on fascism.”

“This theory, that terms fascism as the product of some national particularities, does not answer many questions. For instance, it fails to clarify the question that during sharp social conflicts why do certain classes as opposed to others not support reactionary movements/ideologies like fascism? This theory also does not answer this question as to why after the first world war fascism emerged in almost all the capitalist countries including countries such as France, England (no one doubts the validity of these being modern capitalist countries)? Etc. The upholders of this theory fail to see the roots of fascism in capitalism’s crisis.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.* p. 17-18)

Now let us see what Köves and Mazumdar have written:

"…saw the roots of fascism in Germany's pre-industrial political backwardness, that is, in its delayed nationhood, its delayed industrialization, and therefore in its inadequately developed bourgeois democratic institutions…One historian has gone so far as to say that 'German society was never truly a bourgeois society'. This peculiar German path of development was held responsible for the rise and mass influence of reactionary, anti-democratic and irrational ideologies that finally made national socialism and its heinous crimes possible…

"It does not adequately explain why these reactionary ideologies were actively supported and propagated by specific social interests against others at a time of intense social conflict…it diminishes the significance of the fact that fascist movements emerged in a specific period of crisis in almost all capitalist countries." (Köves and Mazumdar. 2003. *op.cit.,* p. 9-10)

Finally, let us move on to Sukhwinder's plagiarizing from Köves and Mazumdar's 'Introduction' regarding the theory of the centrality of the 'holocaust':

"In common folk's conception of fascism, the massacre of Jews on a large scale has an important place. After the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961, a trend emerged in the theory of fascism which stressed that racial ideology and 'Holocaust' (this term has been taken from ancient Greece which means sacrificing someone for the gods by burning) are characteristics that define fascism. This theory stresses that the inhuman crimes committed by Nazis are out of the ambit of scientific analysis and logical explanation. This theory ignores the fundamental causes of the origins of fascism. In this way it attempts to undermine the resistance against its re-emergence." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 18)

Now let us compare this with Köves and Mazumdar's words:

"In public perception, the organized mass murder of the Jews has come to be seen as the most striking and most characteristic feature

of German fascism. Yet scholarly engagement by German historians with these areas in fact only seriously began in the wake of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961… on the one hand, there emerged the tendency to interpret the 'holocaust' and the racist ideology on which it was based as the main defining feature of Nazism. (*in footnote, Köves and Mazumdar write: "…the term 'Holocaust' is derived from ancient Greek and has the meaning of a burnt sacrificial offering to God"-author)*…its extreme inhumanity was interpreted as being essentially beyond rational comprehension and scientific analysis…it refuses to look for causes and thus disarms efforts against the reappearance of such barbarity." (Köves and Mazumdar. 2003. *op.cit.* p. 10-11)

This is the limit of dishonesty and shamelessness, as the readers can see. This group's cadre, who are honest, too, must try to comprehend the level of cheap trickery and chicanery employed by their leader. Those who have decided to close their eyes to such levels of intellectual degeneration cannot be persuaded by anything in the world. Now let us see what our intellectual imposter writes about the theory of fascism as a reactionary social movement of the petty-bourgeoisie.

Under the last sub-head Sukhwinder writes:

"The abovementioned theories of fascism fail to scientifically explain this phenomenon. These are either surficial, piecemeal, incomplete theories or reactionary (like the theory of fascism as 'totalitarianism'). This theory fails to identify the grounds of the origin of fascism as well as the class roots of fascist movements. The theory that sees fascism as a reactionary social movement of the petty-bourgeoisie is the sole scientific theory of fascism. The large-scale involvement of petty-bourgeoisie in the fascist movements of the world attests to this fact. Petty property owners, traders, handicraftsmen, people involved in self-employment, government employees employed in unproductive sectors etc., make up the petty-bourgeoisie. The process of the accumulation of capital threatens their existence. The sword of proletarisation forever hangs over their head. In the

absence of a revolutionary alternative, the petty-bourgeoisie, especially urban petty-bourgeoisie comes under greater influence of fascist propaganda and actively becomes part of fascist movements. Fascist movement is a romantic upheaval of petty-bourgeoisie. Fascism in power does not fulfil any aspiration of the petty-bourgeoisie because fascism now, at the cost of all other classes interests, serves the interests of a section of monopoly capital." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 18-19)

Again, when Sukhwinder resorts to elaboration of the quotes that he himself has presented, he clearly reveals his utter inability to understand these very quotes! Let me elaborate.

B. The Question of Petty-bourgeoisie as a Social Class, Production Labour and Non-Production Labour: Sukhwinder's Befuddled Understanding of Political Economy

Among the echelons or sections of petty-bourgeoisie, Sukhwinder enumerates among others, "government employees employed in unproductive sectors". How can a sane person write a sentence so meaningless? What about the government employees in the productive sectors who are not involved in productive labour, or those whose salaries reflect wages over and above the average wages due to their being *a functionary of capital* in the process of production? Why the sections of petty-bourgeoisie in the unproductive sectors only? Sukhwinder is basically confused by Poulantzas's account of the class of petty-bourgeoisie! As a matter of fact, Sukhwinder gives a description, and an incorrect one at that, of the petty-bourgeoisie. He does not understand the *concept* in terms of political economy. What is petty-bourgeoisie? There are two elements of the answer to this question. First, as clarified by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, petty-bourgeoisie in terms of political economy is the class which is *neither the seller of labour-power, nor the exploiter of labour-power.* This term has often been carelessly used for small capitalists, too, however, in terms of political economy, the above-mentioned definition is the correct one. It is the class involved in simple commodity production. Poulantzas divides it into

two parts: *small-scale production* and *small-scale ownership.* However, if one reads the description, both are *essentially* the same.

The second element is the determination of the class in terms of their *political and ideological articulation within the capitalist social formation.* In other words, the political and ideological constitution of a class depending upon its political and ideological place in the state apparatus and in the social formation, in general. Here, Poulantzas points to the fact that one section is the non-production workers. However, he also points to a problem which he does not intend to deal with in his work:

“However, we can also define certain groups as part of the petty-bourgeoisie who have quite a different place in the economy. This is what may be termed the ‘new’ petty-bourgeoisie, whose importance was already recognized by Lenin. It is new in the sense that, unlike the first, it is not in the least fated to disappear; rather, the expansion of the capitalist mode of production (CMP), and its passage to the stage of monopoly capitalism, provide the conditions for its development and growth. I refer to non-productive salaried employees.

“*I shall leave aside the problem of the ‘technical personnel’ of the firm (the ‘bearers of science’) in order to avoid the complicated discussion about whether they are ‘non-productive workers’. I shall restrict myself* to the most important groups of employees whom Marx defined unequivocally as not being productive workers, that is, not direct producers of commodities and surplus-value in the CMP.” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 238-39, *emphasis ours*)

Even then the description of Poulantzas is not accurate, to which we will come later. However, this much is certain that Sukhwinder does not even understand the correct nuances of this inaccurate account. The inaccuracy is too much for Sukhwinder to understand, as he flounders like a drunkard in the realm of political economy.

First of all, Poulantzas has talked about *unproductive workers,* not the *unproductive sectors*, as Sukhwinder thinks; well, a mistake in

plagiarizing! We will come to this point after a little while. The fact is that Poulantzas “restricts” himself to the main category of unproductive workers, basing himself on Marx. However, even certain sections of productive workers constitute parts of petty-bourgeoisie, *ideologically and politically.* For instance, the higher echelons of the class of teachers of schools and more importantly the class of teachers in the university. Remember, for Marx, teachers constitute a class of productive workers. Marx wrote:

“For instance, Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost*, was an unproductive worker. On the other hand, a writer who turns out work for his publisher in factory style is a productive worker. Milton produced *Paradise Lost* as a silkworm produces silk, as the activation of his own nature. He later sold his product for £5 and thus became a merchant. But the literary proletarian of Leipzig who produces books, such as compendia on political economy, at the behest of his publisher is pretty nearly a productive worker since his production is taken over by capital and only occurs in order to increase it. A singer who sings like a bird is an unproductive worker. If she sells her song for money, she is to that extent a wage labourer or merchant. But if the same singer is engaged by an entrepreneur who makes her sing to make money, then she becomes a productive worker, since she produces capital directly. A schoolmaster who instructs others is not a productive worker. But a schoolmaster who works for wages in an institution along with others, using his own labour to increase the money of the entrepreneur who owns the knowledge-mongering institution, is a productive worker.” (Marx, Karl. 1982. *op. cit.,* p. 1044)

Marx also wrote:

“If we may take an example from outside the sphere of *material production*, a schoolmaster is a productive worker when, in addition to belabouring the heads of his pupils, he works himself into the ground to enrich the owner of the school. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of a sausage factory, makes no difference to the relation. The concept of a productive worker

therefore implies not merely a relation between the activity of work and its useful effect, between the worker and the product of his work, but also a specifically social relation of production, a relation with a historical origin which stamps the worker as capital's direct means of valorization." (*ibid,* p. 644)

The point is to understand that the same worker can be productive or unproductive depending upon *the social relation of production*. Then, there is the concept of labour that is productive *as such,* which adds to the wealth (use-values) of society, in tangible or intangible forms. However, this does not include the spheres of material production only. It also includes use-values which are not goods but services, which have a useful effect. For instance, the labour of a domestic help hired by a household produces useful things (for instance, food) as well as useful services (like cleaning, etc.). But this is not productive labour for capital in general, because it does not produce surplus-value. This labour is productive *as such,* but not *for capital.*

This particular point that a use-value can be a useful thing or a useful service applies to production of commodities, too. For instance, the transport sector does not produce a material good, but a useful service, namely, the change of place of persons and goods, where the production and consumption of this commodity are simultaneous. Marx includes transport among productive sectors. The capitalist mode of production considers only *that* labour productive which not only produces use-values but also values and surplus-value, that is, the labour which is productive *for capital.* Transport companies, for instance, involve productive labour that produce a useful effect as a commodity and thus produce value and surplus-value.

Finally, there is the question of non-production workers in the non-production sectors (like circulation labour in commerce) who are productive *only for the individual capitalists* because they allow these individual capitalists to appropriate a part of the surplus-value produced by productive sectors. These workers also do not form a part of the petty-bourgeoisie. Let us delve deeper in this issue to

understand the inaccuracy in the account of Poulantzas as well as the utter inability of Sukhwinder to understand either Poulantzas's position or Marxist political economy in general.

We can talk of many sectors which are productive sectors and within these sectors there is a class which is salaried employee and yet they are part of petty-bourgeoisie due to the ideological and political articulation that they find in the social formation. Singers, higher echelons of the class of teachers, trainers, etc. *hired by firms*, too, can be part of that. A part of the scientific and technical workers, too, form the part of productive workers. Marx points out:

"Since the immediate purpose and the authentic product of capitalist production is surplus-value, labour is only productive, and an exponent of labour-power is only a productive worker, if it or he creates surplus-value directly, i.e. the. only productive labour is that which is directly consumed in the course of production for the valorization of capital." (*ibid,* p. 1038)

Finally, Marx points out:

"The desire to define productive and unproductive labour in terms of their material content has a threefold source.

"(1) The fetishism peculiar to the capitalist mode of production from which it arises. This consists in regarding economic categories, such as being a commodity or productive labour, as qualities inherent in the material incarnations of these formal determinations or categories;

"(2) Looking at the labour process as such, labour is held to be productive only if it results in a product (and since we are concerned here only with material wealth, it must be a material product);

"(3) In the actual process of reproduction – considering only its real moments – there is a vast difference which affects the formation of wealth, between labour which is engaged on articles essential to reproduction and labour concerned purely with luxuries." (*ibid,* p. 1046)

Moreover, while talking about productive and unproductive sectors, we cannot determine the character of particular workers directly from it. The reason is simple: there are unproductive workers within the productive sectors, too. These are workers who are not directly involved in the production of surplus-value, but involved in *reproducing the social conditions which ensure the production of surplus-value.* For instance, a security guard at a factory-gate or a music concert held by a firm is working in the productive sector, but he himself is not a productive worker.

Therefore, Sukhwinder has created a muddle here and what is amusing is that he does not understand that he has created one! On the contrary, he is wallowing in the delusion that he has said something very profound! Also, Sukhwinder misunderstands Poulantzas. *Poulantzas is not talking about unproductive and productive sectors, but productive and unproductive workers,* as we pointed out above. He categorically says, “I refer to non-productive salaried employees.” And this is what Sukhwinder says, “government employees employed in unproductive sectors etc.” Unproductive workers work not only in the unproductive sectors, but also in the productive sectors. *The question here is not that of productive/unproductive sector, but that of productive/unproductive workers or employees.* Moreover, did it not occur to Sukhwinder why limit the definition to “*government* employees employed in the unproductive sector”? What about “employees employed in the private unproductive sectors”? Are they productive for Sukhwinder? He has confused this unproductive worker with himself, it seems! The crux of the matter is that he does not understand the Marxist categories of productive and unproductive workers.

Our only criticism of Poulantzas is that whenever we talk about *productive* and *unproductive labour,* we must specify whether we are talking about *labour that is productive as such*, *labour that is productive for capital in general* or *labour that is productive for individual capitalists, but not for capital socially.* The domestic work of the women, too, is productive as such, as it creates use-values, for instance cooking; however, that is not productive labour for

capital because it does not produce commodities and therefore does not produce any surplus-value. Moreover, the labour of the circulation workers working under a commercial capitalist, too, is productive for that particular capitalist, because it allows this particular commercial capitalist to appropriate a share of surplus-value from the industrial capitalist, even though, this labour is *not productive as such* and also *not productive for capital socially* because it does not produce use-values and secondly for the entire capitalist economy, too, it is not productive because it does not produce surplus-value. *Without these qualifications, as Marx points out, any talk about productive and unproductive worker would only create confusion.*

Also, Poulantzas does not mention those productive workers in the productive sectors, whose ideological and political role within the factory, as well as, the fact that he/she receives wages over and above the average social value of labour-power of the workers of his category, in general, and plays the role of functionaries of capital in production. These productive workers *can* and *do* become petty-bourgeoisfied and systematically and consciously represent the bourgeois line among the mass of workers. This can include higher echelons of technical and highly-skilled workers, foremen, etc. For instance, today, *a section of* IT industry workers (who are productive workers actually producing surplus-value as well as intangible commodities, namely, softwares), is certainly petty-bourgeoisfied and, *as a class fraction,* consciously supports a bourgeois line and sometimes even supports the fascist forces. *Therefore, the definition of petty-bourgeoisie presented by Poulantzas is incomplete and inaccurate.*

Similarly, all unproductive workers are not part of the petty-bourgeoisie even ideologically and politically. For instance, a common worker working in a shop as labour of circulation is not necessarily a part of the petty-bourgeoisie, but proletariat. The point here is not whether this worker is *producing* commodities, but the fact that *his/her labour-power* is a commodity, spent in non-production sector, but at the same time enabling his/her own

commercial capitalist to appropriate a share of surplus-value produced elsewhere (in the production sectors) which is greater than the value of his/her labour-power.

However, Sukhwinder does not even understand this inaccurate and incomplete definition of the petty-bourgeoisie. More importantly, he does not understand Poulantzas on those points, too, which are correct. As we have seen above, this is a general problem of Sukhwinder. He does not understand basic Marxist concepts and positions and continues to be on his own trip.

Following this, Sukhwinder unknowingly quotes Clara Zetkin against himself, where Zetkin points out the difference between the political crisis leading to fascism and other forms of political crises. We have already referred to this foolishness of Sukhwinder above, and have also presented the said quote of Zetkin there.

Some Other Prominent Follies of Sukhwinder regarding "Some Other Prominent Ideas on Fascism"

Under this subhead Sukhwinder briefly discusses the ideas of Kurt Gossweiler, Reinhard Opitz, Reinhard Kühnl, and Nicos Poulantzas. This section, too, has been reproduced from the 'Introduction' of *Resistible Rise* except for the quotation of Nicos Poulantzas, which has been taken from Poulantzas's work *Fascism and Dictatorship*.

Sukhwinder writes:

"**Kurt Gossweiler** in his analysis on fascism takes as the starting point Dimitrov's definition that **fascism is the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital.** But he also warns that this definition should not be considered as an all-encompassing, universal formula. Gossweiler says that in the era of imperialism fascism can originate in any country though the country might not have an iota of their own finance capital. Most importantly fascism

does not merely express the interests of finance capital but also other sections of the ruling class including the landlords.

“We cannot agree with Gossweiler’s criticism of Dimitrov’s definition of fascism. Firstly, Dimitrov does not say that fascism is the dictatorship of finance capital rather he says that it is the dictatorship of a fraction of finance capital. Gossweiler also incorrectly states that fascism is also the dictatorship of other sections of ruling class (including the landlords). Fascism primarily is the dictatorship of a fraction of monopoly capital. Later on, we shall discuss this further.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 20-21, *author’s emphasis*)

Sukhwinder writes further:

“**Reinhard Opitz** says that fascism represents the general interests of monopoly capital and not as stated in Dimitrov’s definition i.e., the interests of a particular fraction of finance capital.

“This criticism of Reinhard Opitz is incorrect. This sees monopoly capital as monolith. It does not consider the conflict between different factions of the capitalists.

“**Reinhard Kühnl** disagrees with Gossweiler and Opitz on this point that both reject the need of mass movement for fascism. He says that it is precisely mass movement that separates fascism from other reactionary terrorist dictatorships of monopoly capital. He opines that such differentiation is important not merely for academic correctness but also for political decisions as the strategies of combating both would be different. Kühnl’s criticism of Gossweiler and Opitz is correct to a large extent but Kühnl himself while stressing the mass movement character of fascism does not clarify as to which class’ mass movement is it primarily.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 21)

This, once again, is pure paraphrasing and plagiarizing from the ‘Introduction’ written by Shaswati Mazumdar and Margit Köves in their edited anthology named *Resistible Rise: A Fascism Reader.* What is not surprising at all is that Sukhwinder *does not understand* what he plagiarizes. Moreover, his utter ignorance of basic principles of historical materialism are evident at every step and in every line

that he writes. Let us see how Sukhwinder achieves this not-so-ordinary feat.

A. Sukhwinder on Gossweiler and Dimitrov: A Dramedy of Dogmatic Debacle

The fact is that Gossweiler does not refer to Dimitrov even once in his paper 'Economics and Politics in the Destruction of the Weimer Republic'. What Sukhwinder presents are the Margit Köves's and Shaswati Mazumdar's views expressed in their introduction to the *Resistible Rise* about Gossweiler's position. Sukhwinder in his hurry to plagiarize, forgot to cross-check and imputed the same to Gossweiler. Be that as it may, there is no denying the fact that fascists *did* receive support from the other sections of the ruling class including the landlords and, on this question, Gossweiler is correct. Now, Gossweiler did argue that fascism was a political decision for the top rung of the German ruling class, it was not an economic necessity for German capitalism. Gossweiler argues:

"This decision (*turn to fascist dictatorship-author*) was taken above all by the top levels of the most important German companies, the leaders of the landed aristocracy, and the Reichswehr generals. They were joined by the most of the big bourgeoisie politicians – except where the latter had already been commensurately active – as evidenced by their approval of the Enabling Act." (Gossweiler, K. 2005. 'Economy and Politics in the Destruction of the Weimer Republic' in Shaswati Mazumdar and Margit Köves (eds.), *Resistible Rise,* Left Word Books, p. 138)

Is this position correct? Yes, it is broadly correct. To see fascism as the 'naked terrorist dictatorship' of only 'the most reactionary fractions of the financial monopoly bourgeoisie' is not at all a Marxist position. Why? Because fascism emerges as a response to the crisis of the 'power bloc' of the dominant classes and class fractions which cannot be resolved through regular means. Even in general, there is the hegemony of one dominant class or class fraction within the ruling class. However, when a conjuncture of political contradictions is created in the general context of economic crisis, a political crisis

emerges. *What does this crisis consist in?* This crisis is *the crisis of hegemony* within the ‘power bloc’ of the ruling classes, where the hitherto dominant fraction is unable to establish its political hegemony through regular means; as a consequence, the *collectivization of the bourgeois interests* is jeopardized. In such a situation, this is achieved by an exceptional means: fascism, which restores the process of collectivization of the class interests of the bourgeoisie, but *in essence* through non-democratic means, even if the shell of formal bourgeois democracy remains.

However, if fascist dictatorship is the dictatorship of one class fraction, the very question of collectivization of class interests becomes irrelevant and superfluous. This collectivization always happens under the hegemony of one fraction of the ‘power bloc’. Under fascism, too, this happens through the establishment of the hegemony of one fraction, albeit, through exceptional means. If we do not understand this collectivization of the bourgeois class interests, and think that the fascist regime is only the rule of “the most reactionary fractions of the finance monopoly capital”, *then it becomes a fascist dictatorship on the other fractions of the bourgeoisie, too.* Such a line leads us to class collaboration with and capitulation to other fractions of the bourgeoisie. This is a thoroughly incorrect understanding of Dimitrov, to which we will come later in this essay.

This much is clear: it is precisely due to this collectivization of the scattered fractional interests of the bourgeoisie through extra-ordinary means that gives state under fascist regime a higher degree of relative autonomy. *In fact, if one fraction totally subordinates the state, then there is no need for relative autonomy at all!* Thus, Sukhwinder only learns from the mistakes of Dimitrov thesis of the Comintern, with the exemplary skill of a professional idiot.

Is fascism a dictatorship of the most reactionary fractions of financial monopoly bourgeoisie over all other dominant classes and fractions, including other fractions of the bourgeoisie? No. In essence and content, *it is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in general,* with the

hegemony of the financial monopoly bourgeoisie within the power bloc, established and maintained through exceptional means. Let us see what Poulantzas has to say about this. Poulantzas points out:

“The three main conceptions of this seem equally *mistaken* to me:

“(a) The conception, increasingly dominant in the Comintern, according to which, by contrast with the ‘parliamentary democratic’ State in the framework of which other dominant classes and fractions of classes play a decisive political role, the fascist State represents a total grip on the State by the big monopoly capital fraction alone. *According to this conception, the capitalist State has thus reached a stage of total subordination to the narrow interests of this fraction, the fascist State being simply the ‘agent’ (in the strong sense) of this fraction, a ‘tool’ which it can manipulate at will, to the exclusion of the other dominant classes and class fractions. Clearly this view allows the fascist State no relative autonomy from the ‘power bloc’ and its hegemonic fraction.*

“*This deep-rooted illusion in the Third International went back to a whole ‘instrumentalist’ conception of the State, closely combined with economism, and still governs the analysis present-day communist parties give of the State in the age of ‘State monopoly capitalism’. In this respect, the analyses of the fascist State and the present-day State are absolutely identical. This was the view which became dominant with Dimitrov and the Seventh Congress.*

…

“*This conception of the relation between the fascist State and big capital after fascism comes into power determines the major mistake, which we shall return to, about the relations between big capital and the fascist party throughout the rise of fascism. The fascist party is mainly seen as the ‘paid agent’ in the service of big capital. The fascist party, the ‘military weapon in big capital’s fight’ is often identified as a ‘pack of white guards’, a mere ‘armed militia’ in the pay of big capital, a tool it can manipulate at will.*” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.*, p. 83-84, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas argues further:

“So, on the one hand the question which attracts most attention is the financing of fascist organizations, whereas the organizational relation between the fascist party and the bourgeoisie is much more complex. On the other hand, the military aspect is not only seen as the main aspect of the rise of fascism throughout, but even as being detached from the political aspect of the phenomenon; whereas in fact, firstly, the military aspect is constantly determined by the political aspect of the process and, secondly, the political aspect holds the dominant role, except in the very final step. This latter feature is peculiar to the rise of fascism. In this respect, Clara Zetkin’s warning to the executive committee of the Comintern on 23 June 1923, is still correct: ‘The error of the Italian Communist Party lies mainly in the fact that it has seen fascism only as a military-terrorist movement, not as a mass movement with deep social roots. It must be stressed that before fascism wins militarily, it has already won the ideological and political victory over the working class…’” (*ibid,* p. 84)

Poulantzas has captured the crux of the matter here. In the last part of this excerpt, where Poulantzas quotes Clara Zetkin, this, too, becomes clear that fascism does not emerge when the bourgeoisie is threatened with a revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat, as Sukhwinder thinks. In fact, on the contrary, it is precisely on the basis of *political defeat* of the proletariat, that fascism emerges due to the internal crisis of the ‘power bloc’ of the ruling class, that is, the bourgeoisie.

To return to the present question, it is very clear that fascism does not represent the rule of one particular fraction of the bourgeoisie; it represents the rule of the bourgeoisie with the hegemony of one fraction (just like any other form of bourgeois rule), *established through exceptional methods in the conditions of political crisis.* Dimitrov thesis is even more vulgar as it narrows down the class character of fascism not even to the entire fraction of big monopoly capital, but to “the most reactionary elements/fractions of the big

monopoly capital." This led to disastrous results theoretically as well as politically.

Further.

B. Sukhwinder's Baffling Confusions Regarding What He Has Plagiarized and From Whom He Has Plagiarized

Regarding Reinhard Opitz, we cannot simply rely on what Mazumdar and Köves have written. Opitz's writings are not yet available in English. What Kühnl writes about Opitz in his essay in the anthology *Resistible Rise* (Kühnl's essay in *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany* has no reference to Opitz) has nothing to do with the *social movement-character* of fascism. It is about Opitz's and Kurt Patzold's understanding of the Nazi treatment of the Jews, its underlying causes, ideological use of anti-semitism by the Nazis to construct an image of false enemy. Then, from where do Sukhwinder's ideas about this come? From the paraphrasing and plagiarizing from the 'Introduction' of *Resistible Rise* written by Mazumdar and Köves. In fact, the entire excerpt from Sukhwinder's essay that we have just quoted, is not based on studying the original (Sukhwinder has not read even the original essays collected in the anthology!), but is merely plagiarization from the Mazumdar and Köves' 'Introduction'.

Still, had Opitz really said what Mazumdar and Köves argue and what Sukhwinder plagiarizes, would he be considered correct? Was fascism a dictatorship of the entire monopoly capital or certain fractions of monopoly capital? None! It was the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie under the hegemony of big monopoly capital. Any dictatorship of the bourgeoisie is always materialized through a 'power bloc' comprising of dominant classes and their dominant class fractions. The political crisis of the bourgeoisie emerges precisely when one particular fraction fails to establish its hegemony within the bloc. Why is this hegemony required? Because only through the hegemony of one fraction can the interests of the bourgeoisie as a political class be collectivized.

If we talk about the dictatorship of one fraction of capitalist class, we do not understand the very notion of political crisis and the problem of collectivization of the bourgeois class interests, because all other fractions, then, are at the receiving end of the dictatorship and therefore form a part of ‘the masses’ or ‘the people’. Moreover, if one fraction has established its dictatorship, then there is no such thing as collectivization of the bourgeois class interests, there can be no notion of the ‘power bloc’ and there can be no notion of ‘political crisis’. Nor can there be any concept of ‘relative autonomy of the state’ in general, or, more pertinently, the ‘higher degree of relative autonomy of the fascist state.’ It is precisely this view of things that presents a monolithic and homogenous image of a class, contrary to the claims of Sukhwinder.

Regarding fascism being a reactionary social movement, there is no need for an explanation. We can only say that what Sukhwinder has plagiarized from Mazumdar and Köves is broadly correct. However, Sukhwinder has to show that he is not just an empty pot, but also has something of his own to say. So, he says something. And as usual evokes a fit of laughter. He says that Kühnl should have specified the class character of the “mass movement” of fascism; which class is the main component of this “mass movement”. Has Kühnl denied the petty-bourgeois class character of the fascist social movement? Not at all; on the contrary, he has been criticized for allegedly reducing the class basis of fascism to the petty-bourgeoisie! Then why is Sukhwinder saying this? Because, about Kühnl, Sukhwinder plagiarizes from Anson Rabinbach’s essay in the same anthology, *Resistible Rise.* However, it is, in fact, Rabinbach who while criticizing Kühnl, argues that there is no need to identify the fascist reactionary movement with middle classes only and there can be other social classes that become the support base of this movement.

However, Sukhwinder failed to understand what is being said by Kühnl and what is being said by Rabinbach and he falsely imputes this argument to Kühnl that fascist movement has no particular class character, or, Kühnl fails to identify any class character of the fascist

social movement. In fact, Rabinbach critiques Kühnl for reducing the class character of the fascist social movement to the class of petty-bourgeoisie only. Let us see what Rabinbach has written, and you will understand how miserably Sukhwinder has failed to understand what he himself is plagiarizing:

"At the same time, however, the central problems of a theory of fascism are by no means solved in Kühnl's work, which should be seen as important, but preliminary step. With some justification, critics have pointed to a number of problematic aspects: to his formal and descriptive rather than analytic categories, to unsubstantiated assertions and insufficient considerations of those fascist movements that did not result in the seizure of power, to a lack of concrete socio-economic analysis and in the unwarranted case of Nolte, to 'political pamphleteering' instead of scholarship. Other problems are also apparent. His two major interpretive works do rely almost exclusively on secondary materials and lack adequate Italian sources. *Middle class support was central to fascist-type movements, but not necessarily universal, as exhibited by working class elements in Peronism, in certain European movements, and more recently in the Wallace movement in the USA.*" (Rabinbach, Anson. 2005. 'Towards a Marxist Theory of Fascism', in Mazumdar, Köves (eds.) *Resistible Rise,* Leftword Books, p. 66-67, *emphasis ours*)

Now, readers can see the utter imbecility of editor of 'Pratibaddh'. Sukhwinder has failed to see what is the point made by Rabinbach and what is the point made by Kühnl! Kühnl is being actually criticized for reducing the class basis of fascism only to petty-bourgeoisie, rather than seeing that this base could include many sections of other classes, including the working class. According to Mazumdar and Köves, Kühnl, also critiqued left-psychological theories, while accepting their contribution, which *essentialized* the fascist potential latent in the petty-bourgeoisie and concluded that there is something in the very social psychology of the petty-bourgeoisie due to which in times of crisis it *necessarily* swerves towards fascism.

Kühnl is completely correct on this point. However, he is not at all denying the essentially petty-bourgeois character of the fascist social movement. In fact, one can criticize Rabinbach for not comprehending the difference between *social class* and *political class* here, owing to the fact that certain sections of working class become social props of fascism, precisely because in their ideological and political articulations, they assume the positions of petty-bourgeoisie. In other words, these are sections of working class which are politically and ideologically petty-bourgeoisfied. However, this much is clear: *Sukhwinder seldom understands what he is plagiarizing. The above fiasco of Sukhwinder is a prime example of this fact.*

Sukhwinder's Rank Opportunism on the Question of Rural Petty-bourgeoisie and Fascism

Subsequently, Sukhwinder presents a quotation of Poulantzas:

"Nicos Poulantzas very concretely identifies the participation of different sections of various classes in fascist movements. He says that, *"Fascism is basically an urban phenomenon in that the class origins and 'militant wing' of fascism are rooted essentially in the towns…… As for its relationship to other sections of the peasantry (except the large landowners – author), even where fascism got active support going beyond mere voting, the impact of the peasantry within both the fascist and national socialist parties was entirely secondary. This is a remarkable fact, if fascism is contrasted with the 'reactionary' but essentially 'peasant' mass political movements which arose at the same period in the East European countries (Hungary, Romania, etc.) or even Spain. The explanation is that fascism really represents the interests of monopoly capitalism at a step at which its interests are in very strong contradiction with those of the agricultural sector as a whole….. the big landowners gave fascism direct and active support. This is also true of the rich peasantry, though some of them, depending on the region, seemed to share the doubts of the middle peasantry about fascism. The middle peasantry, next to the agricultural workers, seem to have*

resisted fascism more strongly than the other peasant classes, at least for a time. Although it cannot be said that the middle peasantry and some of the rich peasantry resisted fascism in the way that middle industrial capital did, there are still some similarities in their political attitudes. Further, it was middle tenants rather than middle landowners who swung towards fascism.

"The poor peasantry, small producers and rural petty-bourgeoisie, were particularly deeply divided over fascism. They were distinguished from the middle peasants by a more open and majority support for fascism, but their case is much more complicated than that of the urban petty-bourgeoisie. The rural petty-bourgeoisie in the majority swung over to fascism, but did not work actively in the fascist movement. Even their votes were deeply divided. Where there had been agrarian reform, creating the familiar 'parcels' of peasant land, the small-holders were much more resistant to fascism than the small tenants or the tenants of feudal estates…… They were also more divided than the urban petty-bourgeoisie." (Sukhwinder. *op.cit.,* p. 21-22, *author's emphasis*)

Sukhwinder continues:

"There are other instances where fascists could not establish their base in the peasantry. *"Conversely, some of the smaller fascist movements owed their weakness to the country population's relative immunity to their appeals. This applied to both Norway and Sweden, where farmers kept to the established framework of agrarian-labor cooperation, and to Finland, where neither the Lapua movement (1929-32) nor its successor, the Patriotic National Movement (Isänmaallinen Kansanliike-IKL; 1932-44), could break the hold of the Agrarian Union and Coalition Party on the smaller farmers."* (Sukhwinder. *op.cit.,* p. 22-23, *author's emphasis*)

This last quote is from Geoff Eley's article in *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany* titled 'What produces Fascism: Preindustrial traditions or a crisis of the capitalist state?'

Sukhwinder refrains from drawing any conclusions from what he has quoted. However, what he has quoted has *serious and conscious omissions*, in order to misrepresent Poulantzas's as well as Eley's position regarding the relation between the rural petty-bourgeoisie and fascism. Sukhwinder has to protect the rural petty-bourgeoisie, *in general,* because for the past couple of years, he has been trying to woo the rural petty-bourgeoisie as well as small capitalists. This is natural after his Trot-Bundist, national chauvinistic and *kulakist* turn. Let us comprehend this question of relationship between fascism and rural petty-bourgeoisie in a little more detail.

Needless to say, there has been a large consensus on fascism *originally* and *essentially* being a mainly urban phenomenon. It never takes roots in the rural petty-bourgeoisie *in the same way,* in which it takes roots in the urban petty-bourgeoisie. Moreover, it emerges *first* in the urban petty-bourgeoisie. However, from this Sukhwinder seems to draw the conclusion that fascism is *bound* to be weak in the countryside, due to the essential contradiction between the big monopoly capital and the agricultural sector as a whole in period of fascism. However, this is only one side of the story: the *economic* side. The other side of the story is the *political* side, that fascism does win over the support of various sections of the rich peasantry, the middle peasantry as well as the poor peasantry, differentially, through ideological and political misarticulation of the actual economic contradictions. The part of Poulantzas's argument that has been omitted by Sukhwinder is this:

"On the basis of this secondary contradiction, *fascism manages to disguise the principal contradiction in the countryside, between the big landowners and the popular classes, in a quite specific way. Fascism originally appears much more as a reaction of the whole agricultural sector against the capitalization of agriculture, than as the direct expression of the reaction of the poor peasantry, i.e. the rural petty-bourgeoisie, against the big landowners.* Under fascism, this petty-bourgeois revolt is directed almost exclusively against credit (banking capital) and the 'profiteering Jew', against falling

prices on the urban market, and against the industrial proletariat." (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 281, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas argues further (this, too, has been omitted by Sukhwinder from Poulantzas's position on the role of different classes in rural fascism):

"Because it can present itself as the protector of agriculture as a whole, fascism has from the beginning much closer political and organizational ties with big property in the countryside than in the towns, where it expresses the reaction of the urban petty-bourgeoisie to monopoly capital in a new way. *This does not of course mean that fascism has no ideological or even demagogic role among the poor peasantry. It means that, in the countryside, fascism is much more an ideological and military movement with direct ties to big property*, rather than a movement that *stems* from the rural petty-bourgeoisie. Fascism anyway had to pay the landed proprietors this price for the domination of monopoly capital, which it effected at their expense. Lastly, one of the basic tasks of fascism was to divide the popular classes of the towns from the popular classes in the countryside, by using the myth of peasant 'unity'." (*ibid*, p. 281-82, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas's position on this question is best summarized in the following excerpt, which Sukhwinder has missed due to his habit of fishing around for quotations using the fly-rod of the index, rather than reading the entire book:

"Fascism, then, presented a demagogic face to the poor peasantry, making false promises of 'colonization' and land distribution. But there was more to it: *fascism thoroughly exploited both the particular forms assumed by petty-bourgeois rebel ideology in the countryside, and the ideological theme of the solidarity and community of the soil.* It was this corporatist aspect which prevailed in the ideological role of fascism in the countryside. *Like the emphasis on ties of blood and ties of the soil, on personal loyalty, etc., this aspect linked up with the survivals of feudal ideology in 'rural fascism'.*

"*This fusion of rural petty-bourgeois rebel ideology with the relics of feudal ideology is what gives rural fascism its originality.* It is to be distinguished from urban fascism, in which monopoly capitalist forms of ideology are much more pronounced." (*ibid*, p. 280, *emphasis ours*)

Please note where Sukhwinder stops quoting Poulantzas: "They (the rural petty-bourgeoisie) were also more divided than the urban petty-bourgeoisie." Why? What was the reason? Was it something inherent in the class nature of the rural petty-bourgeoisie? No! Had Sukhwinder read a little further, he would have found the reason given by Poulantzas. Poulantzas argues that there is nothing essential about this behavior of the rural petty-bourgeoisie. It was precisely the ideological articulations that determined this division within the rural petty-bourgeoisie. Poulantzas points out:

"*This (division) was not, as a whole series of 'third force' ideologists would like to have it, because of the innately 'democratic' powers of small-holding.* This idea, which led Tasca to maintain that one of the reasons for the success of fascism in Italy was the absence of agrarian reform and a significant class of peasant smallholders (*proprietari contadini*) is quite incorrect. In fact, like the urban petty-bourgeoisie, the small-holders are at once drawn towards 'democratic' radicalism, and, as Marx pointed out, especially likely, in given circumstances, to give massive support to Bonapartist forms of State. *Their division over fascism relates to its specific ideological and political features. Fascism is originally an urban phenomenon, and in the countryside it is directly tied to big property, which has feudal ideological features clashing with the ideological traits of the small-holders.*" (*ibid,* p. 282-83, *emphasis ours*)

Thus, there is nothing innate to the nature of rural petty-bourgeoisie which makes it relatively less attracted to or immune to fascism. What Poulantzas says about the ideological character of the big landed property in the then Germany or Italy, is important to note here. Does that apply to India or other capitalist countries today? Is the big property in rural areas of India thoroughly imbued with feudal

ideology today? It was precisely the direct support of this class of big property (rich landlords and farmers) to fascism, which created *a plurality of response among the rural petty-bourgeoisie* to fascism, as Poulantzas points out. In other cases, it is very much possible that fascism gains much larger support among the rural petty-bourgeoisie (not as big as urban petty-bourgeoisie, due to very different *place* that it occupies, economically, politically and ideologically, in the capitalist social formation) in different ideological and political situation, where the big landed property, the big landowners, are not *particularly imbued* with feudal ideology. Sukhwinder fails to apply Marxism creatively in the concrete conditions of the present. He tries to force-fit the reality in the categories engendered by a reality that has now become past.

Secondly, Poulantzas points out that fascism as a movement does not *stem (originate)* from rural petty-bourgeoisie, whereas it does stem from the urban petty-bourgeoisie. In countryside, its original link is with the big landed property, which in some ways is much stronger ("much closer political and organizational ties with big property in the countryside than in the towns" as Poulantzas points out). In countryside, fascism moves to win over different sections of peasantry with varying success, on the basis of ideological and political misarticulations.

Third, Poulantzas also argues that despite the real contradictions between the classes of the rich peasantry and landlords on the one hand and the poor peasantry on the other, fascism does win over sections of middle and even poor peasantry by political and ideological misarticulation of the real contradictions. That is why Poulantzas writes, "On the basis of this secondary contradiction, fascism manages to disguise the principal contradiction in the countryside, between the big landowners and the popular classes, in a quite specific way. Fascism originally appears much more as a reaction of the whole agricultural sector against the capitalization of agriculture, than as the direct expression of the reaction of the poor peasantry, i.e. the rural petty-bourgeoisie, against the big landowners." (quoted above).

Moreover, despite the contradiction between the rural elite (the big landlords and rich farmers) who supported fascists, on the one hand, and the middle and poor peasantry, landless small tenants and agricultural workers, on the other, *a sizeable chunk of the latter did support fascism.* Why? David Abraham points out:

"…the relationship of the peasant majority to the large landowners was very different from that of the worker majority toward the factory owners. Even when organized, peasants, unlike unionized workers, did not generally adopt an adversary posture toward their putative betters. Peasants simply did not hate the big estate owners the way workers hated the Herren of industry." (Abraham, D. 2003. 'State and Classes in Weimer Germany' in Dobkowski, Walliman (eds.) *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany 1919-45,* Cornerstone Publication, Kharagpur, p. 33)

Abraham points out how the support of peasantry swerved towards fascism after 1930:

"Further support for the ruling bloc (of Weimer Republic) was provided by the bulk of the peasantry. Unlike the "allies", these "supporters" of the ruling bloc obtained little in exchange for their support. Certain half-truths propagated by ruling-bloc-ideology shored up this support: an identity of the interests shared by all agriculturalists, big and small alike, and a fear of anti-property, urban reds. Although peasant support was retained within the range of the older bourgeois parties until 1930, *it too seemed to disappear overnight (among Protestants at any rate) as soon as an uncompromising advocate presented itself. Once the republic appeared to announce itself to the peasantry only with the tax collector, the peasantry announced itself to the republic with the "Emperor.*" (*ibid*, p. 37, *emphasis ours*)

Moreover, Sukhwinder completely misses the point: *it was precisely because fascism was able to win over sections of rural petty-bourgeoisie (middle and poor peasantry) besides the support of the big landlords and rich peasantry in Germany and Italy that it*

emerged victorious in these countries, whereas in countries where it could not win over this support, it failed to rise to power.

Geoff Eley makes precisely this point, which Sukhwinder, despite quoting him, has missed:

"*On the one hand, peasants proved especially important to a fascist party's ultimate prospects, because the transition from ideological sect to mass movement was achieved as much in the countryside as the towns. This was true of both Italy (1920-21) and Germany (1928-32).* Conversely, some of the smaller fascist movements owed their weakness to country population's relative immunity to their appeal." (Eley, Geoff. 2003. 'What Produces Fascism?' in Dobkowski, Walliman (eds.), *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism,* Cornerstone Publication, Kharagpur, p. 83)

This is what Eley writes in the part exactly before what Sukhwinder has quoted. This is what happens when you scavenge through books for quotations supporting your idiocy and opportunism, instead of reading books from cover to cover and trying to understand them.

So, in this particular part, what Sukhwinder fails to understand is this: *first, the historicity of divided support among peasantry for fascism in Germany and Italy; second, notwithstanding this, a sizeable chunk of rural petty-bourgeoisie did support fascism in both these countries and this became one of the reasons why fascism was able to rise to power in these countries; three, fascism can stem as a reactionary social movement from among the urban petty-bourgeoisie because the form and process of uprooting of the rural petty-bourgeoisie by the agricultural capitalist class is quite different from the form and process of uprooting of the urban petty-bourgeoisie by the industrial-financial capital; four, the above difference does not mean that the rural petty-bourgeoisie is immune to fascist demagoguery; five, fascist appeal develops in this class at a different phase in the process of rise of fascism and it assumes different ideological forms.*

Had Sukhwinder read the books from which he selectively picks quotes using 'search' tool or index, he would not have sanitized the

rural petty-bourgeoisie. By the way, it seems to us that this attempt might have something to do with Sukhwinder's apologetic attitude towards the capitalist farmers' and kulaks' movement in Punjab, regarding which he is performing an intellectual break-dance, full of acrobatic and sudden jerky movements, from the question of the MSP to the question of rich farmers and *kulaks* being an ally against "centralist Delhi" in "federalist" Punjab. Be that as it may, this much is clear: again, Sukhwinder falls flat-faced into the slime of stupidity.

Sukhwinder on "Necessary Characteristics of Fascism": Dogmatism and Historicism at its Worst

Describing the "necessary characteristic features" of fascism, Sukhwinder writes:

"1) Fascism is inseparably linked with the economic and political crisis of capitalism. Due to capitalist development the conditions of life of petty-bourgeoisie remain uncertain and instable. They swing towards fascism in the absence of a revolutionary alternative. Fascism, in its social structure, is a reactionary social movement of petty-bourgeoisie.

"2) Party based on ideology and cadres is a necessary characteristic of fascism.

"3) Fascism considers nation to be above all class contradictions and class interests. Nationalism is an important part of its ideology.

"4) To feed militarism and to initiate wars of occupation fascism takes the support of national chauvinism. Italian communist Palmiro Togliati said, *"War has an important place in all of fascism's activities."*

"5) To crush workers' movement fascism embarks on organised violence. For this it relies on gangs too. Extra-legal violence or violence from below is a mandatory characteristic of fascism.

“6) Racial ideology and racial massacres have central importance for fascism. In India, fascism terrorises religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians and uses communal ideology to execute killings. The essence of both is the same meaning enticing a section of masses to fight against the other. To present a false enemy for a section of the people in the form of other religions, races. It erects the concept of othering.

“7) Fascism in power abolishes all bourgeois democratic liberties. It abolishes bourgeois parliament, bourgeois opposition parties and it goes to the extent of abolishing rival factions in fascist party. (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* 23-24)

Sukhwinder contends further:

“Ignazio Silone says that, *“fascism had to be distinguished from the two other typical forms of capitalist reaction: in developed countries by conservative parties working through parliamentary means, and in less developed countries by military dictatorship.* ***Fascism differed from the latter, he argued, by the mobilisation of a mass movement, and from the former by its hostility to parliamentarism and constitutionality.”*** (*ibid,* p. 24, *author’s emphasis*)

Again, seeking justification for his erroneous thesis from classics, Sukhwinder argues:

“**Comrade Stalin too presents the fascist form of bourgeois state as opposed to its bourgeois democratic (parliamentary) form.** He says, *“In this connection the victory of fascism in Germany must be regarded not only as a symptom of the weakness of the working class and a result of the betrayals of the working class by the Social-Democratic Party, which paved the way for fascism;* ***it must also be regarded as a symptom of the weakness of the bourgeoisie, of the fact that the bourgeoisie is no longer able to rule by the old methods of parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy, and, as a consequence, is compelled in its home policy to resort to terroristic methods of rule-as a symptom of***

the fact that it is no longer able to find a way out of the present situation on the basis of a peaceful foreign policy, and that, as a consequence, it is compelled to resort to a policy of war." (*ibid,* p. 24, *emphasis ours*)

Finally, Sukhwinder summarizes his position on the misreading of many texts and dogmatically following some of the conjunctural assessments of a certain period in case of contemporary fascism:

"On the basis of the above characteristics fascism can be thus defined, *"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."* (*ibid,* p. 24-25, *author's emphasis*)

We will show the readers point by point that wherever Sukhwinder is attempting or pretending to say anything "original" or "interpret originally", he is embarrassingly incorrect in the inanest fashion. Wherever he is relatively correct he is plagiarizing from a variety of sources, including our writings. Let us begin.

A. Fascism, 'A Response to the Revolutionary Upsurge of Proletariat', or, 'the Absence of Revolutionary Alternative' or the Presence but 'Failure of Revolutionary Alternative': Sukhwinder's Intellectual Wobbling

In the first point itself, Sukhwinder contradicts himself again. Elsewhere in the essay, he had contended that fascism is a response to revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat under the political leadership of a proletarian party. Threatened with the prospect of revolution, the bourgeoisie resorts to fascist reaction and fascism rises to power. Here, he says that fascism rises in "the absence of revolutionary alternative". At yet another place, he argues that fascism emerges when the revolutionary alternative is there, but it fails to realize! *Why so many different positions?* Because

Sukhwinder has quoted from variety of disparate sources without understanding the fact that their positions on this question are different! For instance, on this question he quotes Comintern, Poulantzas, Gramsci, Zetkin in line; however, Poulantzas, Zetkin and also Gramsci believe that fascism rises on the ruins of the revolutionary working-class movement, whereas, Comintern believed that fascism is a response of the reactionary bourgeoisie to the threat of proletarian revolution. It was only towards the Seventh Congress, that Comintern slowly and tacitly began to move from this erroneous idea.

Moreover, Sukhwinder also gets dense about this question because he is utterly incapable of making a distinction between the existence of a strong organized workers' movement clinging to economic benefits already-won, under the social-democratic leadership on the one hand, and a revolutionary proletarian movement under the leadership of the communist vanguard that aims to go beyond the limits posed by capitalism, on the other. Sukhwinder gets dizzy about it and as a consequence totters like a pathetic "economist" here.

Second point is well-established among Marxists, though in different and scattered forms. There is no need to make a comment on that except that Sukhwinder has just paraphrased on this question from previous writings, including our writings, talks and lectures (for instance, my lecture at this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vDvajbntFo, from 24 April 2020). In our writings on fascism, we have time and again pointed to the *particularity* or *particular unity of the fascist ideology* and *cadre-based organization,* as two universal *differentia specifica* of fascism.

B. The Particularity of the Fascist Ideology: Sukhwinder's Incorrigible Philistinism

The third point of Sukhwinder in the above excerpt reveals his ignorance regarding the particular unity of the fascist ideology. *Fascism does not consider nation above all, above class-contradiction and classes, as Sukhwinder believes! In fact, in his writings, it is Sukhwinder himself who has, in practice, considered*

‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’ above class and class contradictions! Fascism and fascists are not that stupid.

Thus, ideologically, what does fascism do? Fascism constructs *‘a purely ideological community’* based on race, communal identity, region, even caste, national identity, or ethnicity. *It is not nation as a historical category that fascism talks about.* For instance, Aryan race is not a nation; in fact, the German Jews were no less German than their non-Jewish German counterparts; ‘Hindu Rashtra’ based on communal identity, is not a nation; the glory of the great Roman Empire and Roman people, that Mussolini appealed to, was not based particularly on the Italian nation! Fascism is not based on nationalism as such. *It is based on a chauvinistic ideology, which constructs a ‘purely ideological community’ and calls it ‘nation’, even though it is not.* This purely ideological community for Hindutva fascists is ‘Hindu Rashtra’ which resides in the land between *Sindhu* and *Sapta-Sindhu* and the Hindu identity for them is semitized and flexible enough to incorporate everyone in it, except Muslims and in certain cases the Christians, because, as Savarkar argued, they adhere to religions that originated not in the land between *Sindhu* and *Sapta-Sindhu* and therefore their ‘fatherland’ and ‘holy land’ is not in this land. Therefore, their loyalty can never truly be with the community (‘Hindu Rashtra’) that resides in the land between *Sindhu* and *Sapta-Sindhu*. However, all other religions/sects that originated in this land, even the protestant sects, belong to the fold of Hindu Rashtra, the Hindu civilization. So, this flexible identity incorporates the Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, etc.

Now, we know that this idea is *purely ideological and fetishistic* because it has nothing *real* about it. *Such a community, of course, does not constitute a nation. In fact, it does not constitute anything real.* That is precisely why it is ‘purely ideological’. However, a ‘purely ideological community’ is constructed by fascism by the use of chauvinistic ideology (the unit of which may be race, religion, caste, region, language, ethnicity, even a particular construct of national identity, etc. depending on the particular historical context of a country) and this particular community based on a negative identity

(based on *not* what the members of this community *are*, but on the basis of *what they are not*) is called as ‘nation’ by the fascists.

Thus, Sukhwinder relies on some popular writers on fascism who argue that ‘jingoism’ and ‘nationalism’ are necessary constituent elements of fascism and its ideology. No. That is only the superficial argument. In essence, the basic fascist ideology is construction of a ‘purely ideological community’ through the instrument of a chauvinistic ideology, precisely in order to construct an imaginary enemy, the other (a point that Sukhwinder plagiarizes from our writings) through the instrument of ‘othering’ (another element of our analysis that Sukhwinder plagiarizes) based on the same ‘purely ideological community’. In fact, the ‘purely ideological community’ and ‘imaginary enemy’ are constructed simultaneously as a dialectical pair and this is quite natural. *However, instead of understanding the basic rigorous logic that stands behind these ideological and political terms, Sukhwinder just drops them and then stupidifies them.*

The point is to understand that *without qualifying what is this ‘nation’ of the fascists, without specifying the purely ideological character of this construct based on the chauvinistic ideology, measured in the units of race, religion, caste, region, language, ethnicity, etc., and without revealing the fact that these pathological forms of ultra-nationalism have nothing to do with the historical category of nation, as understood by Marxists, we would be accepting the claims of fascists on the face-value.* It is true that in countries where there is a nation-state, fascist chauvinistic ideology can also use the unit of a *particular construction of the national identity*; however, in any case, that will not include all the members of the *historical category of the nation*, because then the process of othering and construction of a false enemy cannot be undertaken. This chauvinistic ideology is the essence of fascism’s pathological forms of ultra-nationalism. However, this does not change the essence of the problem.

Therefore, we, in our writings, while discussing the nationalist claims of fascism have always qualified what the ‘nation’ of the fascists

consists of. Without this qualification, accepting that nationalism necessarily forms a constitutive component of fascism is a highly misleading argument, even when the ultra-nationalist and jingoist rhetoric is used by the BJP against the “threat” posed by China or Pakistan. Sukhwinder makes no such qualification and therefore his identification of fascism with nationalism reeks of journalistic descriptions of fascism.

C. Is War a “Necessary” Constitutive Element of Fascism? Sukhwinder’s War Against the Marxist Concept of Fascism Continues

Fourth point of Sukhwinder is even more inane. War is not a “necessary” or universal component of fascism. It was a component of fascism in countries which were imperialist, were part of two wars with their own kind of trauma or pathology, where fascism rose to power in the early-Twentieth century for particular historical reasons. The fact is that Sukhwinder does not understand the difference between two things: the *conjunctural* and *contingent* things and the *general, systemic* and *structural* things. When fascism emerged in relatively advanced and imperialist countries or countries which historically had a colonial empire, in the general context of economic crisis, it was natural that war-mongering and foreign aggression would be an inherent element of fascism in these countries. What else can one expect when fascism would rise to power in imperialist countries and colonial powers? In fact, one of the propaganda items of the Nazis was the return of German colonies, which had been snatched away from Germany under the Versailles Treaty. Similarly, Italy emerged a victor from the First World War, but in a very fragile economic condition vis-à-vis other imperialist powers in Africa. As a consequence, the imperialist aggression of fascist Italy, too, was rooted in the particular location of this country in the history and political economy of the contemporary world.

Another problem with Sukhwinder’s argument is that if war and foreign aggression is a “necessary” characteristic of fascism, then fascism cannot ever rise to power in any relatively-backward post-

colonial capitalist country of the so-called ‘Third World’, because most of them neither need nor can afford to be in wars to annex areas, countries, regions, etc., that is, in imperialist aggression.

Sukhwinder also does not understand that fascism in the early-Twentieth century rose to power in an imperialist world whose *modus vivendi* was still colonial, semi-colonial and neo-colonial system. Therefore, any new country entering the rank of capitalist countries would immediately be embroiled in the scramble for colonies, either as aggressor or at the receiving end. *That is not the situation even for the imperialist countries today.* On this question, Sukhwinder’s particularly historicist dogmatism is at full display. Togliatti’s comment about a particular conjuncture, where war indeed was a component element of fascism, proves nothing about the Twenty-first century fascism, nor Togliatti had even an iota of the idea that his historical analysis of a conjuncture would be used by an intellectual Lilliput almost after a hundred years in this half-witted fashion.

Sukhwinder’s fifth point, again reflects the scattered character of the understanding of the editor of ‘Pratibaddh’. Sukhwinder argues that fascism uses organized violence against workers’ movement and it relies on gangs, too! Well, fascists not simply “relies on gangs too”, fascism *primarily* relies on its gangs, much before it rises to power and is able to use state violence. It is one of the ways in which fascism *proves its candidacy for the political leadership of the capitalist class*: *reactionary social movement of the petty-bourgeoisie as a counter-weight to the workers’ movement!* Sukhwinder thinks in a peculiar way. He reads flaps, scavenges for quotes, notes them down at one place, while writing about any phenomenon, but fails to understand the rigorous dialectical link between different factors and forces that contribute to the emergence of that phenomenon. That is why, in this case, what is essential and basic to the *modus operandi* of fascism appears to Sukhwinder as something which “happens too” in fascist rise!

Sixth point again is so ridiculous that so many pages can be written about it. However, we will limit ourselves to those basic points which

are sufficient to shed light on the particularly slow-witted character of editor *saab*. Racial ideology and racial massacres are not an inherent part of fascism, as Sukhwinder claims in this point. Chauvinistic ideology is the constitutive part of fascism, with its unit as race, religion, caste, region, language, or anything else, whichever works for fascists in a particular historical context to construct an 'imaginary enemy'. It has been noted by a number of scholars that pragmatism is one of the component parts of fascist ideology. Racism *per se* has no causal relation with fascism. It can be any chauvinistic ideology.

D. 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. It must also remove all opposition within the fascist party. For this, Sukhwinder quotes Poulantzas, mostly, but others also, including Stalin, Dimitrov, etc. Let us probe the correctness or incorrectness of this claim.

First of all, let us discuss Stalin's quote and the quote that Sukhwinder *thinks* belongs to Ignazio Silone but actually belongs to Beetham.

Sukhwinder has quoted Stalin selectively and then also misunderstood him. Stalin is not making a universal judgment here. He is discussing about the particular cases of fascist rise that the world had been witnessing then and the communists had been trying to understand and theorize. Just before the excerpt that Sukhwinder has quoted, Stalin writes:

"It is not surprising that fascism has now become the most fashionable commodity among war-mongering bourgeois politicians. *I am referring not only to fascism in general, but, primarily, to fascism of the German type*, which is wrongly called national-socialism—

wrongly because the most searching examination will fail to reveal even an atom of socialism in it."

Stalin himself is saying that he is primarily referring to the fascism of the German type. Moreover, had Stalin made any such generalization regarding fascism based on the experience of fascism in Germany and Italy, which were quite novel to the world, there is no reason for communists *today* to accept that generalization, despite the evident changes in the *modus operandi* of fascism. Moreover, Stalin never set out to present a systematic analysis of fascism and all his references to fascism are part of his fragmentary comments, while discussing other issues. That is why, even Pilsudski of Poland and even Japan are referred to as fascists, which I do not think, even Sukhwinder would agree with.

The fact is that Comintern, the contemporary communist leaders and theoreticians were striving to understand the phenomenon of fascism and there were many mistakes and mechanical interpretations involved in their theorizations. It is understandable, as they were trying to comprehend a phenomenon that was still unfolding. What they did not know is that almost a hundred years after their formulations, someone would be so dogmatic and inane to repeat their formulations *ad nauseum* to understand fascism in the Twenty-first century.

As far as Silone's quote is concerned, Sukhwinder has again paraphrased it, and that too, not himself but taken it from David Beetham's 'Introduction' to the anthology *Marxists in Face of Fascism*. Thus, he has performed a 'paraphrasing of the paraphrased'! However, Sukhwinder lacks the basic intellectual ability, integrity and honesty and put something within quotation marks which actually does not belong to the one it has been attributed to.

With Ignazio Silone's quote, Sukhwinder once again commits the same blunder that he commits repeatedly in anything that he ever writes. We have demonstrated this time and again and in present essay also. What has happened this time is this: Sukhwinder did not

read the original writings of Silone. Instead, he read the introduction written by David Beetham to the anthology *Marxists in Face of Fascism. This time, too, Sukhwinder could not understand where the authorial voice began and where the quote from the original source ended. As a consequence, Sukhwinder presents the words of Beetham as the words of Ignazio Silone!*

There is another reason how we know he did not read Silone. Sukhwinder subscribes to the view of Silone, which has so many problems and weaknesses that we cannot even begin to point them out. However, if Sukhwinder had read the original two pieces by Silone included in the aforementioned anthology, he would have known that *Silone did not believe that militarism is an intrinsic tendency of fascism.* Sukhwinder has made his list of "necessary characteristics" from different book-flaps and introductions and prefaces to different anthologies edited by Beetham, Köves and Mazumdar, Dobkowski and Walliman, etc. *However, in each case, he fails at many levels. Sukhwinder fails to understand who is saying what. He also fails to understand the overall position of any author.* The same is true about Sukhwinder's enumeration of the line of "fascism means war and militarism" (it has been copied from different statements made in the Comintern and a few revolutionary communists, who had not often been talking about universal features of fascism, but the fascism as it was unfolding before their eyes). Silone argues:

"This is not to deny that there is also a militaristic element in fascism, *but it is not its basic one*." (Silone, I. 1983. 'What is Fascism?', in Beetham (ed.) *Marxists in Face of Fascism,* Manchester University Press, p. 239, *emphasis ours*)

Had Sukhwinder read the original article of Silone, he also could not have "theorized" that in economically advanced and wealthy countries fascism cannot arise, because the ruling class has sufficient economic resources at its disposal to prevent the economic crisis from "developing into" political crisis, an argument which smacks of the most vulgar breed of economism and does not

understand the meaning of the relative autonomy of politics. Because Silone writes:

“Fascism originated in a few countries with *relatively* weak economies, where a unified national state was still a recent creation and lacked any rooted tradition among the masses…*German fascism proves, however, that economic advance is insufficient to render a country immune from fascist threat.*” (*ibid,* p. 241, *emphasis ours*)

We certainly do not subscribe in general to Silone’s views for a variety of reasons. His contribution was to distinguish fascism from other forms of reaction like what he called consolidation of “reactionary tendencies of old/ancient states”, military dictatorship, etc. However, the way he makes the distinction has many problems. First, he ascribed the form of military dictatorship to backward capitalist or non-capitalist countries only (Beetham, *op.cit.,* p. 239), which is certainly incorrect. It is not necessary that this form would emerge only in the backward or non-capitalist countries, as the history of the modern world shows. He also thinks that military dictatorships cannot reorganize new forms of industry for the big monopoly capital (p. 239). This, too, is incorrect, as the example of Park Chung Hee’s military dictatorship in South Korea and military dictatorship in many other countries have shown. Despite the distinctions that he makes between fascism and other forms of reaction, Silone considers Polish case of Pilsudski, the Austrian case as well as the Finnish case in the first part of the Twentieth century as examples of fascism (p. 241, 242). The same is true of his inarticulate equating of fascism with abandoning of the form of parlimentarism, even though Silone is only describing what he had been witnessing in Germany, Italy and from his own perspective in other countries like Poland, Austria, Finland, etc. Anyway, Silone’s account is not going to be very helpful for ‘Marxists in face of fascism today.’

Now that we have discussed the utter inability of Sukhwinder to understand what he reads (which is only book-flaps and

introductions anyway!) and what he quotes, let us come to the crux of the matter.

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. Let us hear from Poulantzas himself, what he has to say

regarding the profound changes in the nature of the bourgeois state as well as its forms in the phase of neoliberalism.

Poulantzas points out:

"*In western capitalist societies, the State is undergoing considerable modification. A new form of State is currently being imposed – we would have to be blind not to notice* (and passion always blinds, even if it springs from the noblest motives). For want of a better term, I shall refer to this state form as authoritarian statism. This will perhaps indicate the general direction of change: *namely, intensified state control over every sphere of socio-economic life combined with radical decline of the institutions of political democracy and with draconian and multiform curtailment of so-called 'formal' liberties, whose reality is being discovered now that they are going overboard.* Although some of these changes have been operating for a long time, the present-day State marks a veritable turn in relation to previous state forms." (Poulantzas, N. 2000. *State, Power, Socialism,* Verso, London, p. 203-04)

Poulantzas opines that these changes are taking place due to the changes in the *modus operandi* of world capitalism in the present (neoliberal) phase of imperialism:

"More fundamentally, therefore, authoritarian statism is bound up with the periodization of capitalism into *distinct stages and phases. It seems to correspond to the current phase of imperialism and monopoly capitalism* in the dominant countries, in the way that the liberal State referred to the competitive stage of capitalism and the various forms of interventionist State to the previous phases of monopoly capitalism. *Authoritarian statism is thus dependent upon those structural modifications in the relations of production and the processes and social division of labour which characterize the present phase at both the world and national levels.*" (*ibid,* p. 204, *emphasis ours*)

This turn to authoritarian state in the period of neoliberalism is not simply the strengthening of the state, but also at the same time

reveals its increasingly fragile character:

“If this image is false, it is not only because of the structural limits that mark all capitalist States: authoritarian statism is articulated to the political crisis and the crisis of the State. It is also a response to the elements of crisis, including those of its own crisis. Thus, such statism does not designate univocal strengthening of the State but constitutes the effect of a tendency to strengthening-weakening of the State, the poles of which develop in an uneven manner. The authoritarian statism of the contemporary State is terrifyingly real. But in spite of this (or rather because of it) the State remains a clay-footed colossus, fleeing ahead on treacherous ground; it should indeed be remembered that wild animals are most dangerous when they are wounded.” (*ibid,* p. 205)

Further, Poulantzas refers to the current phase of world capitalism:

“*The whole of the current phase is permanently and structurally characterized by a peculiar sharpening of the generic elements of political crisis and state crisis – a sharpening which is itself articulated to the economic crisis of capitalism.* Authoritarian statism appears also as the result of, and as a response to, the sharpening of these elements of crisis. But in certain European countries, we are witnessing a real political crisis which finds expression, moreover, in a crisis of the State.” (*ibid,* p. 206)

Poulantzas is very careful in pointing out that this authoritarian state is *still not an exceptional state form* like fascism, but a new reality of the present phase of capitalism in which the bourgeois democratic *form* is retained, whereas the *content* is in perpetual decay:

“Thus, the emergence of authoritarian statism cannot be identified either with a new fascist order or with a tendency towards fascism. The present-day State is neither the new form of a genuine exceptional State nor, *in itself,* a transitional form on the road to such a State: *it rather represents the new ‘democratic’ form of the bourgeois republic in the current phase of capitalism. If I may dare say so, it is both better (in maintaining a certain democratic reality)*

and worse (in that it is not merely the fruit of a conjuncture which need only be reversed for shrunken liberties to be restored)." (*ibid,* p. 208-09, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas immediately reminds us that he is not implicating that in this stage exceptional states cannot emerge:

"I am by no means arguing that the possibility of an exceptional State is henceforth excluded in Europe – whether in the shape of fascism or in that of military dictatorship or a *strong-arm neo-Bonapartism.*" (*ibid,* p. 209)

Here Poulantzas's comments need to be understood in the historical context in which they were made. It is the late-1970s. Many countries were still colonies, semi-colonies or neo-colonies. However, today these observations have a universal applicability to the bourgeois state in all *capitalist countries,* not only those of Europe. Even then, they perfectly applied to the US, too. However, Poulantzas refers only to Europe as it was his particular area of research.

Then Poulantzas alludes to the persistent and protracted nature of the present crisis, the resultant changes in the state (rise of authoritarian state and decay of the democratic potentialities of the bourgeois democratic form) and the fact that in the new conjuncture, the rise of fascism would not assume the old form:

"The present-day State exhibits a certain peculiarity which we should now note. *In a phase when the generic elements of crisis undergo structural intensification, even corresponding in some countries to a real political or state crisis, fascistic elements or tendencies appear in the democratic form of State to a much more marked degree than previously.* Authoritarian statism also involves the establishment of an entire institutional structure serving to prevent a rise in popular struggles and the dangers which that holds for class hegemony. This veritable arsenal, which is not simply of a legal-constitutional character, does not always come to the fore in the exercise of power: it is revealed to the mass of the population (that is, to all except

certain ‘anti-social’ elements) above all through sudden jolts to its functioning. *Hidden under a bushel, this arsenal is still in the republic’s reserve-stock, ready to be unleashed in a fascist-type enterprise.* Probably for the first time in the history of democratic States, the present form not only contains scattered elements of totalitarianism, but crystallizes their organic disposition in *a permanent structure* running parallel to the official State. Indeed, this duplication of the State seems to be a structural feature of authoritarian statism, involving not a watertight dissociation between the official State and the structure in question, but their functional overlapping and constant symbiosis. ***As a result, any fascist-type process that may be unleashed will undoubtedly not take the form that it did in the past.***” (*ibid,* p. 209-10, *emphasis ours*)

The new forms which fascist rise will assume, would consist in the internal take-over and infiltration from within, rather than ‘outside’ infiltration, as happened in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy:

“Unlike the previous experiences of fascism, however, *such a process would involve not so much outside infiltration or investment of the state apparatus as a break within the State following lines that have already been traced in its present configuration.*” (*ibid,* p. 210, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas alludes to the reason for this change:

“*In a parallel process, the sharpening of contradictions within the dominant classes has also become a permanent, structural feature of the current phase.* This is true of contradictions between monopoly and non-monopoly capital stemming from the present forms and rhythms of the concentration of capital and from the transformations which these induce in the relations of production; and it is also true of the contradictions that have grown within monopoly capital itself. All these contradictions are becoming intensified in the context of economic crisis and can only be fully grasped if we take into account the present conditions of the internationalization of capital… *Taken as a whole, these factors define a structural characteristic of the present phase: namely, the*

hidden but permanent instability of the bourgeoisie's hegemony in the dominant countries." (*ibid,* p. 211-12, *emphasis ours*)

Further:

"The paradox lies in the fact that authoritarian statism is not simply the means with which the State equips itself to tackle the crisis, but the response to a crisis which it itself helps to produce. This role of the State proves to be at once the accelerator of the generic elements of political crisis and the generating force of that crisis itself. *The counter-tendencies to the falling rate of profit, which are brought into play by the State in order to avoid crises, become factors of a crisis that, for this very reason, goes beyond a straightforward economic crisis.*" (*ibid,* p. 212, *emphasis ours*)

Subsequently, Poulantzas points to the decline of the democratic potential of the form of bourgeois democracy, with the rise of authoritarian statism in the neoliberal phase:

"*The decline of parliament, the strengthening of the Executive, the political role currently assumed by the state administration – these now constitute the leitmotiv of political studies.* But while they are the most evident features of change in the State, they are also the most difficult to grasp in their real dimensions.

"Now, these changes have marked the State since the end of competitive capitalism and the beginnings of monopoly capitalism. Of course, just as the State's economic role under the latter should not make us think that the liberal State of competitive capitalism did not intervene in the economy, so the strengthening of the Executive does not imply that the liberal State rested on an all-powerful parliament and the virtual absence of an Executive. Varying from country to country, the state-bureaucracy-administration has always occupied an important place in the organization and functioning of the bourgeois State. The fact remains, however, that the strengthening of executive power has been under way since the emergence of monopoly capitalism, thereby marking the passage from the liberal to the interventionist State. *Moreover, the*

phenomenon has now assumed quite novel forms, which to an uneven degree affect the developed capitalist countries as a whole." (*ibid,* p. 217, *emphasis ours*)

The role of parliament (the legislative) becomes increasingly formal whereas the executive becomes all powerful:

"…because the phenomenon is much more general: the decline of parliament and the strengthening of the Executive are intimately related to the growing economic role of the State." (*ibid,* p. 218)

Through the example of legislations, Poulantzas shows how the process of autocratization has progressed in the current phase of neoliberalism:

"Thus, the relative distinction between legislative and executive power is becoming less sharp: through a process correlative with changes in the nature of such regulation, the power to fix norms and enact rules is shifting towards the Executive and the state administration. That legitimacy embodied by parliament which had as its frame of reference a universal rationality is gradually passing over into a legitimacy characterized by the instrumental rationality of efficiency and embodied by the Executive-administration. *Indeed, the general and universal laws still enacted by parliament – which are, at bottom, merely framework-laws – are applied only after the Executive has passed them through a process of concretization and particularization. This is the stage of decrees, judicial interpretation and civil service adjustment, without which the norms enacted by parliament do not enter into the practice of the law. It is by now quite widely known that this allows parliamentary decisions to be not only obstructed but actually distorted.*" (*ibid,* p. 218-19, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas argues further that the changes in the relations between the legislative and executive have profound implications for the functioning of the bourgeois multi-party representative democracy:

"Today, however, the Executive and the administration monopolize the role of organizing and directing the State with regard to the 'power bloc' as a whole: *that is to say, they elaborate the bloc's long-*

term political interests and ensure the reproduction of its hegemony. They therefore concentrate the role of legitimizing the State in the eyes of the dominated classes. As a result, the place of the parties of power not only declines but undergoes complete transformation. *This change has important effects on the entire state structure, involving representative democracy in a radically new mode of political functioning.*" (*ibid,* p. 222, *emphasis ours*)

Explaining further, Poulantzas points out:

"The remarkable thing today is that the decline of parliament runs parallel to a process whereby the ties of representation between deputies and State are being broken. The state bureaucracy has shut itself up in a watertight container, almost completely blocking the access channel formerly open to deputies and political parties as legitimate representatives of the 'national interest'…In general, deputies have access to the administration only in capacities other than that of national-popular representatives: when they express particular local interests (for example, through possessing a mayor's mandate) or, most often, when they directly embody dominant economic interests." (*ibid,* p. 223)

Summarizing this particular point, Poulantzas writes:

"*Real power is thus rapidly being concentrated in tighter and tighter structures, tending to move towards the pole of the governmental and administrative summits.* Always of a more or less fictitious nature, the already greatly reduced separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers in the bourgeois State is itself subject to final elimination. This process is displacing the limited distribution of power among various centres that used to characterize the configuration of the State. In the same way, the political centralism of the state apparatus is continually being strengthened." (*ibid,* p. 227)

Poulantzas then moves on to the question of changes in the nature of various non-fascist bourgeois parties, due to which it is not necessary for an exceptional state to formally suppress all of them:

“Transformation of the parties of power, transformation of their personnel from class representatives acting in the summits of the State-to-state representatives and plenipotentiaries (or even *missi dominici*) among social classes, transformation of the same kind in the role of parliament and of deputies – all these developments involve an important shift away from representative democracy towards authoritarian statism… In however limited a way, and of course in combination with direct popular struggle, the representative party system was always an essential mechanism whereby citizens exerted some control over state activity and ensured a certain maintenance of democratic liberties. Within the modern State, extension or curtailment, retention or suppression of political freedoms was always a direct function of the existence and role of parties. *Fascism, military dictatorship and Bonapartism have suppressed not only working-class or revolutionary parties, but all the traditional democratic parties, including bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ones. They have done so because these parties, while discharging class functions, expressed the presence of certain popular demands of which they had to take account.* The maintenance of representative democracy and democratic liberties is strictly correlated not just with plurality of parties, but also with parties functioning in an organic manner and at a certain distance from the State’s central administrative apparatus. It is the present subversion of this mode of functioning – often disguised by a continuing plurality of parties – which determines the curtailment of democratic liberties under authoritarian statism…

“*Authoritarian statism hardly leaves parties with any choice: either they must subordinate themselves to the administration, or else they must give up all access to it.* Citizens are obliged to face the administration head-on, and it is not surprising that, beyond their participation in elections, they are generally disaffected with parties that are supposed to represent them in the state administration. We know only too well that, besides the considerable restriction of democratic liberties already incurred, this situation lays the ground

for a possible evolution of power towards Bonapartism." (*ibid,* p. 230-31)

That is precisely why, today it is not necessary for fascism, too, to either abolish the form of representative multi-party parliamentary bourgeois democracy or the various political parties of the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie. The reason is that the form of the bourgeois democracy as well as the bourgeoisie as a political class has become increasingly bereft of its democratic potential and content.

The observations of Poulantzas are very original, though under-developed. The reason is obvious: Poulantzas was trying to theorize about a change which was still unfolding. These changes in the nature of the particular form of bourgeois regime were still in their initial stages. One has to give credit to Poulantzas for at least identifying these initial trends in a highly original manner. One does not have to agree with every point that Poulantzas makes in *State, Power, Socialism,* nor one has to agree to the thoroughly incorrect political prescription that he proposes. These observations of Poulantzas hold relevance in any case.

Finally, Poulantzas points to a development which is remarkable in the study of present fascism. He points out that the concentration and centralization of power in the executive runs against certain limits repeatedly, because while retaining the form/shell of bourgeois democracy, the executive cannot directly fulfill all the functions required to sustain the fragile political hegemony of the ruling class. The role of, what Poulantzas calls, the *dominant mass party* becomes important here. Poulantzas points out that on the one hand the functionaries in bureaucracy gravitate towards this party and on the other, the party itself infiltrates into the state apparatus. Poulantzas argues:

"It can play its role only by being directly present (as a state party) at the heart of the administration. But this presence is not the main factor in politicizing the administration: it is rather the effect of the political role that has now devolved upon the state administration –

an effect which, in turn, extends the scope of such politicization. Charged with the role of organizing hegemony and directly confronted with socioeconomic interests that it must itself handle politically, the state administration is less and less successful in maintaining the fictitious distinction between administrative and political decisions. Of course, it was never neutral in any real sense; but it is now being openly and massively politicized as the decision-making centres become lodged in its own circuits. *In a parallel course, the dominant party lays siege to the upper reaches of the administration: it pushes its pawns forward, monopolizes the command-posts for its members or sympathizers, expels or neutralizes persistent offenders by shunting them into side-tracks, breaks the traditional civil-service hierarchy, and bends state institutions in order to create the best conditions for action.*" (*ibid,* p. 234, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas explains further:

"It is a two-way trajectory: *given the direct politicization of the administration, civil servants gravitate towards the dominant party just as much as the party propels its trusted men into the administration. Now inscribed in the materiality of institutions is a veritable symbiosis of the state apparatus and the dominant party.*" (*ibid,* p. 235, *emphasis ours*)

These are extremely pertinent pointers or allusions to what was to come. Of course, Poulantzas is referring to *a generic and general possibility* in the era of authoritarian state and is not talking in particular about a fascist party, and he could not have talked in such particular sense, because that would have been engaging in pure speculation; still, these observations hold immense importance for analyzing the internal take-over of the state apparatus by the fascists.

It is noteworthy that Poulantzas died in 1979. This book was published in 1978. He had not yet seen the rise of fascism to power in the neoliberal phase of the imperialist stage, as yet. However, the changes in the *modus operandi* of the bourgeois state, the changes

in the nature of bourgeoisie as a political class and therefore the nature of the bourgeois political parties themselves, the necessity and possibility of the emergence of a dominant mass party, which infiltrates the state apparatus to sustain the political hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the conditions of the rise of the authoritarian state are keenly observed by Poulantzas. Of course, he could not have predicted the particular forms that this process would assume. However, in terms of the essential character of the overall process, he makes very important observations.

Poulantzas also points out that the above factor of dominant mass party does not formally abolish the multi-party system:

“Of course, as I said earlier, present-day authoritarian statism is not a disguised form of totalitarianism, similar to regimes with a one-party system in the strict sense of the term.” (*ibid,* p. 236)

Summarizing the changes in the form of bourgeois democracy with the autocratization of the state apparatus in the neoliberal phase, Poulantzas writes:

“At any rate, we should be quite clear that *authoritarian statism corresponds to important changes in democracy.* These transformations may be summarized as follows: greater exclusion of the masses from the centres of political decision-making; widening of the distance between citizens and the state apparatus, just when the State is invading the life of society as a whole; an unprecedented degree of state centralism; increased attempts to regiment the masses through ‘participation’ schemes; in essence, therefore, a sharpening of the authoritarian character of political mechanisms.” (*ibid,* p. 238, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas reminds repeatedly that the authoritarian state of the neoliberal phase itself is not yet fascism:

“Authoritarian statism is thus distinct from totalitarianism and cannot be regarded as a new type of fascism or as a process of creeping fascism. *Nevertheless, it is unlike the previous democratic forms of State. It does not merely carry the seeds or certain scattered*

elements of fascism, but crystallizes their organic arrangement in a permanent structure running parallel to the official State." (*ibid,* p. 239, *emphasis ours*)

We have quoted Poulantzas's last work in such a detailed fashion for the reasons that must already be clear and apparent to the readers. These are some of the pertinent observations regarding the significant changes in the form of bourgeois representative democracy that Poulantzas made in 1978, that is, the first phase of the neoliberal offensive. Many of these elements have become much more pronounced today and many of the tendencies identified by Poulantzas have developed further and assumed myriad forms. Despite the fact that Poulantzas's political prescriptions during this time (that of democratic socialism) smack of his desperation and pathological response to what had happened in the Soviet Union and what was happening in China, besides his Althusserianism. However, his scattered observations pertaining to the authoritarian state in the neoliberal phase allude to a new-emerging reality of the capitalist state in the neoliberal phase.

What is this new reality? *This new reality refers to the perpetual emptying of the bourgeois democratic content of a particular form of the bourgeois state, namely, multi-party, parliamentary, representative bourgeois democracy. Precisely due the very form becoming increasingly bereft of all substance, the need to abandon or abolish it becomes superfluous.* As a consequence, Poulantzas points out that, still, in the process of the rise of fascism (as well as other forms of exceptional state), there will be some elements of rupture, but this rise will assume totally new and different forms since the beginning of the neoliberal phase and the rise of what he calls 'the authoritarian state'.

Here a caveat is necessary. Poulantzas has used the term 'totalitarianism' and 'totalitarian state'. However, his meaning and usage has nothing to do with anti-communist Arendtian usage of the term. Even in terms of nuances of political analysis, Poulantzas distances himself from all non-class Arendtian notions of

totalitarianism in his earlier work *Fascism and Dictatorship* itself. In his last work, he never refers to Arendt.

Bob Jessop presents a succinct summarization of Poulantzas's observations regarding the changes in the form of the state in the neoliberal phase:

"He (Poulantzas) identified this new form as 'authoritarian statism'. Its basic developmental tendency is described as 'intensified state control over every sphere of socio-economic life combined with *radical decline of the institutions of political democracy* and with draconian and multiform curtailment of so-called 'formal' liberties' (SPS, pp. 203-4). More specifically, Poulantzas argued that the principal elements of 'authoritarian statism' and its implications for representative democracy comprise: first, a transfer of power from the legislature to the executive and the concentration of power within the latter; second, an accelerated fusion between the three branches of the state – legislature, executive, and judiciary – accompanied by a decline in the rule of law; third, the functional decline of political parties as the leading channels for political dialogue with the administration and as the major forces in organizing hegemony; and finally, the growth of parallel power networks cross-cutting the formal organization of the state and holding a decisive share in its various activities." (Jessop, Bob. 1985. *Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy,* Macmillan, p. 98)

Jessop points out further that this change is permanent and belongs to the particular neoliberal phase of the imperialist stage of the capitalist mode of production:

"*These changes are a permanent, structural feature of the modern state.* They correspond to a peculiar sharpening of the generic elements of political and state crisis accompanying the *long-term economic crisis* that is supposedly besetting the entire current phase of the CMP." (*ibid,* p. 98, *emphasis ours*)

Jessop points out how the parliamentary system is retained but becomes increasingly bereft of real political power, whereas the

organs of the executive, the real and the most important part of the state apparatus, becomes all powerful:

“There is also a strong tendency towards fusion of the legislature, executive, and judiciary – each of which enjoyed at least a formal autonomy in the liberal state… *Thus the institution of parliament has become a mere electoral ‘registration chamber’ with very limited powers.*” (*ibid,* p. 101)

Jessop directly links Poulantzas’s theory of authoritarian statism with the long recession since the 1970s:

“Thus, Poulantzas argued that the capitalist type of state is now ‘permanently and structurally characterized by a peculiar sharpening of the generic elements of political crisis and state crisis’. *This reflected the long-term structural economic crisis of contemporary capitalism that was manifest in the 1970s and its condensation in a variety of political and ideological crises* that were fracturing the social bases of the interventionist state…” (Jessop, Bob. 2016. *The State: Past, Present and Future,* Polity, p. 225)

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

“Moreover, reflecting the much greater integration of the world market now than in the mid-1970s, crisis tendencies have become more multiform, more multiscalar, and more polycentric than Poulantzas envisaged and are motivated by many more cleavages, material and ideal interests, and identities.” (*ibid,* p. 225)

Jessop continues:

“*The various trends that Poulantzas identified in his analysis of authoritarian statism have become more marked in response to the growing political crisis in the power bloc, the representational crisis of the political system, the legitimacy and state crises associated with the twin failures of the postwar interventionist state and the neoliberal turn, and the growing challenge to the primacy of the*

national territorial state in the face of globalization. We should particularly note the *continued decline of parliament and rule of law, the growing autonomy of the executive, the increased importance of presidential or prime ministerial powers,* the consolidation of authoritarian, plebiscitary parties that largely represent the state to the popular masses, and – something neglected by Poulantzas – *the mediatization of politics as the mass media play an increasing role in shaping political imaginaries, programmes, and debates.*" (*ibid,* p. 245-46, *emphasis ours*)

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 imperialist stage. Ugo Palheta, who has worked on the emergence of far-right and fascism in the contemporary neoliberal phase, argues:

"*Fascists of our times cannot use exactly the same means to achieve their ends, neither can they express their goals clearly or refer explicitly to fascism, as this would condemn them to the electoral margins.*

"*But they still maintain most of fascism's objectives and their strategy largely borrows from that of the fascist leaders of the interwar years, albeit in a historical context that, unlike the 1920s and 30s, lends itself more to a "war of position" than to a "war of manoeuvre""* (https://socialistworker.co.uk/socialist-review-archive/how-fascism-has-been-reinvented/)

Despite disagreeing with Palheta on a number of points, we would concede that on this particular point, Palheta has captured a very remarkable feature of contemporary fascism: *fascism as a long 'passive revolution' through what Gramsci called a 'war of positions'.* We were pleasantly surprised to find this point in Palheta, as we, too, had pointed precisely to this feature of contemporary fascism in embryonic form in 2009 itself and in clear terms since 2016 itself. In fact, many other scholars have been able to see this particular trait of contemporary fascism, namely, *the long incubation period, molecular permeation, protracted rise through the dialectic of 'war of*

positions' instead of 'war of movement', even though even today, fascism resorts to 'war of movement' for short periods. For instance, noted historian Mukul Kesavan writes:

"Nazism, in this view, is majoritarianism speeded up. *Alternately, contemporary majoritarianism in south Asia, is fascism in slow motion.*" (Mukul Kesavan, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/sep/08/india-slow-motion-rise-of-fascism)

Marxists from Marx to Lenin and Mao have learnt from serious liberal and other non-Marxist as well left academicians who have done objective research on social, political and economic phenomena. Lenin using the work of Hobson or Marx using the empirical research of university academia, factory inspectors, etc. are few examples of this fact. In India, too, there are various serious and noted political economists, historians and other social scientists who are observing the changes in the form of bourgeois parliamentary democracy in the neoliberal phase of imperialist stage. Prof. Neera Chandhoke is one such political scientist. Prof. Chandhoke has keenly observed the developments in the Indian politics for a long time. She points out:

"Over the past decade, Indians have helplessly borne witness to the imprisonment of civil society activists, journalists, university students, and dissidents; institutional capture; dissemination of hate-speech and violence against Muslim and Christian minorities; and suppression of a civil society that has been wonderfully chaotic and messy but creative. The visual and print media have been brought to their knees. And universities have been stripped of their primary function: to inculcate the spirit of critical reasoning in students.

"Some have already exercised their franchise, and others will do so, in a society where *democratic institutions and practices have hollowed out*. The vote will be cast against the backdrop of diminished democracy.

"India is not the only country that presents the spectacle of democratic backsliding. There was a time when democracies in

significant parts of the world were murdered by ceremonially decorated army generals in midnight coups. *Authoritarian leaders have learnt their lessons.* The take-over of governments by the use of violence propels simmering discontent at the least, if not outrage and uprising. The price countries have paid for army coups has been heavy.

…

“Today aspirant autocrats do not commit mass murder or carry out the proverbial midnight coup. These carry the risk of provoking mass uprisings. *Instead, they slowly but surely whittle away at democratic institutions and practices, until the point when only elections are left as a symbol of their democratic credentials. This process is called autocratization.*

“Less than 25 years after the political scientist Francis Fukuyama’s declaration, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, that the future belonged to liberal democracy, significant parts of the world has seen waves of autocratization. *Notably, the gradual erosion of democracy is carried out under the guise of legalism. Constitutions are not dispensed with, institutions remain in place, and rituals of democracy are observed. But they have become hollow shells.*

“The hollowing out of institutions that restrain power, the gradual chipping away at civil society activism and a free media, the weakening of the opposition through intimidation and the use of financial regulatory institutions, the attempts to control the judiciary, and the relentless concentration of power in the executive – all these marked a process of autocratization.

“*The key element of autocratization is the concentration of power in the chief executive at the expense of other institutions…*This has been observed in India, particularly in the case of the Election Commission of India (ECI), or the use of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to threated leaders of the opposition.

“Autocratization is a process, not an end. It is a process that is designed to lead to the establishment of authoritarianism. But it is impossible to predict the end, for politics is chancy, contingent, and unpredictable.” (Chadhoke, Neera. 2024. ‘Rise of the Autocrats’, in *Frontline,* Vol. 41, No. 10, 31 May, 2024)

Prof. Chandhoke has certainly captured some salient features of the process whereby in the neoliberal phase the democratic potential of the form of bourgeois parliamentary system as well as the other democratic processes and institutions are undergoing a process of perpetual decay. She has also correctly pointed out that this process is not going to assume the shape of an event. Notwithstanding the liberal illusions, which afflict all liberal academicians, Prof. Chandhoke has certainly made some very pertinent comments and observations regarding this process.

Dave Renton has engaged with Palheta on the question of contemporary fascism and has criticized Palheta on the question of the role of non-state street violence (which the latter does not consider a necessary characteristic of fascism, whereas the former sees it as a constitutive element of fascism). However, Renton agrees to one basic point of Palheta:

“Thanks are owed to *Historical Materialism* for publishing Palheta’s piece, which is wide-ranging and compelling. I have learned from it, and I am sure other readers feel the same. His article begins from an instinct *that we have to explain the crisis of the present, rather than merely repeat models developed from the past. Like him, I despair of the tendency of the left to assume that, because some writer in the distant past said that fascism must take certain forms, so it is necessary to read those forms into the present, even where they do not exist.*” (https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/on-violence-a-reply-to-ugo-palhetas-fascism-fascisation-antifascism/)

Alberto Toscano is another scholar who has worked on the present incarnations of the fascist right. His analysis is prone to a number of over-generalizations regarding the character of the imperialist racist state in the US and other North-Western countries, which are off the

mark. However, he, too, has correctly identified some of the basic features of fascism in the neoliberal phase. Toscano argues:

“Ruthless hostility to a substantive, socio-economic notion of democracy, such as Polanyi’s, is not simply something that the anti-state state, as rhetoric and practice of neoliberalism, shares with the new faces of reaction. *Neoliberalism’s racialised anti-democratic animus creates the material and ideological conditions for efforts to win popular interpellations for the far right, in the electoral arena and beyond.*” (Toscano, Alberto. 2023. *Late Fascism,* Verso, p. 77, *emphasis ours*)

On this particular point of versions of fascism that appeared after the Second World War in certain countries, Toscano also refers to a point made by Adorno:

“In a famous lecture first delivered in 1959, ‘The Meaning of Working Through the Past’, Adorno declared that he considered *‘the survival of National Socialism within democracy to be potentially more menacing than the survival of fascist tendencies against democracy’.*” (*ibid,* p. 89, *emphasis ours*)

Similarly, Enzo Traverso, too, has captured this point, despite his problematic analyses on various questions pertaining to the contemporary forms of fascism:

“In the twenty-first century, fascism will not take the face of Mussolini, Hitler, and Franco; nor (we might hope) will it take the form of totalitarian terror. *Yet it is also clear that there are many different ways to destroy democracy. Ritual references to the threats to democracy—and in particular Islamic terrorism—usually depict the enemy as external, but they forget a fundamental lesson from the history of fascism: that democracy can be destroyed from within.*” (Traverso, Enzo. 2019. *The New Faces of Fascism,* Verso, p. 12, *emphasis ours*)

Richard Saull has understood the nature of changes in the content of the bourgeois democracy in the neoliberal phase of the imperialist

stage, broadly correctly. Saull writes in the ‘Introduction’ of his book on the contemporary rise of far-right and fascism:

“*The far-right’s embrace of democracy rests on the evisceration of some of the core features of democratic processes and institutions. Democracy is reduced to the role of sanctifying the sovereignty of majoritarian power, defined as representing ‘the people’.* In this framing, the substantive workings of a democratic politics – whether those of parliamentary representation and the politics of negotiation, deliberation and compromise in law-making, or of civil society as representative of social and cultural plurality in the democratic process – are all marginalized or actively undermined.” (Saull, Richard. 2023. *Capital, Race and Space: The Far Right from Bonapartism to Fascism,* Brill, p. 11, *emphasis ours*)

It is precisely the point that we have been making for more than one-and-a-half decade, that is, since 2009. Another scholar who has persuaded us to think about the changes in the content of the particular form of bourgeois democracy, in the neoliberal phase, is Gasper Miklos Tamas. The Hungarian Marxist thinker Tamas is misguided on a lot of other political issues pertaining to Marxist theory. However, despite several shortcomings, his analysis of present fascism (which he calls as ‘post-fascism’) has encouraged us to observe several elements of novelty, even though we do not agree with his analysis in totality. Tamas points out:

“Post-fascism finds its niche easily in the new world of global capitalism *without upsetting the dominant political forms of electoral democracy and representative government.* It does what I consider to be central to all varieties of fascism, including the post-totalitarian version. *Sans* Führer, *sans* one-party rule, *sans* SA or SS, post-fascism *reverses the Enlightenment tendency to assimilate citizenship to the human condition*.” (https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/g-m-tamas-post-fascism/, *emphasis ours*)

Tamas argues further:

“We are, then, faced with a new kind of extremism of the center. This new extremism, which I call post-fascism, *does not threaten, unlike its predecessor, liberal and democratic rule within the core constituency of “homogeneous society.”*” (*ibid, emphasis ours*)

Finally, Tamas points to certain elements of what he calls “post-fascism”, which we consider an unnecessary epithet:

“Post-fascism does not need stormtroopers and dictators. *It is perfectly compatible with an anti-Enlightenment liberal democracy* that rehabilitates citizenship as a grant from the sovereign instead of a universal human right.” (*ibid, emphasis ours*)

In fact, Poulantzas in his original work on fascism itself, had pointed, rather inadvertently to something which anticipated his later analysis of new forms of fascism. Poulantzas points to a certain stage in the rise of fascism where the parliamentary form is retained, while the nature of relationship between the executive and legislative undergoes qualitative changes and the role of bourgeois parties, too, undergoes changes. The only thing that Poulantzas could not see in his early work (which is quite natural) is that fascism does not have the *necessity* to move to the stage of formal abolition of the bourgeois parliamentary form in the phase of neoliberalism. In his later work, that we have already quoted, he was beginning to realize this. However, the following excerpt from the early work *Fascism and Dictatorship,* reveals that there is a continuity in his thought process:

“To come back to the question of the breaking of representational ties, it was a progressive break, firstly affecting the relation of ‘representation’. *With the beginning of the rise of fascism, while the ‘parliamentary democratic’ form of State apparently remains intact*, the relations between the ruling classes and class fractions on the one hand, and the State apparatus on the other, are no longer mainly established through the medium of these political parties, but increasingly directly.” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 74, *emphasis ours*)

One of the implications of the above, Poulantzas argues further, is this:

“A new growth in the role of the State apparatus itself (i.e. the army, the police, the courts, the administration) *to some extent short-circuiting the role of formal government, characteristically reversing the established juridical order, displacing the real power from the forum of the parties, now mere cliques (i.e. from Parliament) to the State machinery proper*.

“In short, by analogy with the situation of ‘dual power’ which specifies the revolutionary situation, we may call what we see here a characteristic which specifies the distortion between ‘formal’ power and ‘real’ power political crisis.” (*ibid,* p. 74, *emphasis ours*)

In the same work, Poulantzas had already pointed to the general theoretical foundations of determining 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 *conjuctural* 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. See what Poulantzas has written:

“Before embarking on the concrete examination of the fascist State, a few words are required about *the relevant criteria which specify it as a form of State and a form of regime…* I would simply point out that *the factors for differentiating forms of the capitalist State are: (a) the relationship of the economic, the political and ideology at a given stage of the capitalist mode of production; (b) the general characteristics of the class struggle in the corresponding period of capitalist formations: in this instance, the general features of political crisis, leading to the exceptional State.* The factors in differentiating the forms of regime are the concrete methods of political class struggle in a determinate conjuncture: in this instance, the specific political crisis to which fascism corresponds.

“In the framework of a capitalist State, these factors are expressed according to a rigorously governed set of criteria. For the form of State these are:

“1. The *forms and modalities of State intervention in the economic and in social relations in general*, and the forms and modalities of the relative autonomy of the State from the dominant classes.

“2. The role, forms and inter-relationship of the State apparatus proper and the ideological State apparatuses, corresponding to modifications in the law, which is precisely what governs them.

“3. The general relationship of the branches of the repressive State apparatus itself, corresponding, for the capitalist State, *to the general relationship between executive and legislative.*

“4. The general relationship between the ideological State apparatuses.” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 311)

Let us understand what Poulantzas is arguing here.

In the above excerpt, the first point refers to *the particular mode of regulation* and *regime of accumulation*, if we may borrow purely terminologically from the *French Regulation School.* Neoliberalism refers to a particular regime of accumulation characterized by deregulation of labour and financial markets, privatization of the state sector and the commons, attack on the democratic rights of the labour, busting of unions and other working-class organizations, and globalization of capital to new limits. *Neoliberal capitalist state stems from a new mode of regulation characterized by direct interventionist role of the state (those who see neoliberalism as the ‘retreat of state’ suffer from political blindness) on the behalf of big capital in particular and capital in general*, which expresses itself in *new forms of legality, formulation and implementation of policy, and dealing with the mass resistance.*

The second point of Poulantzas refers to *the new ways of constructing the bourgeois hegemony through direct plebiscitary model, where mass media plays a dominant role in unprecedented ways, scale and forms.* We have quoted the later work of Poulantzas where he has directly pointed to this element of novelty in the ideological state apparatus and Bob Jessop has clearly pointed out the role of mass media in this phase. The same holds true for the case of law.

The third point refers to, what we have discussed above in detail, namely, the change in the relationship of the executive and legislative, that is, a change in the relative weight of different parts of the state apparatus according the needs of collectivization of bourgeois class interests. Finally, the role of different branches of the ISA are referred to in the fourth point, that is, family, school, religion, law, media, through which the subject is interpellated.

Have all these elements remained the same in the neoliberal phase? Of course, not. Even a politically blind novice groping in the dark, cannot say something like that. Moreover, the changes have been *qualitative.* Due to these changes, the very forms of different types of bourgeois state have undergone a profound change. With the perpetual decay of the democratic potentialities of the form of bourgeois democracy and the bourgeoisie as a political class, the exceptional bourgeois state has been liberated from the compulsion of doing away with *the form* of bourgeois parliamentary democracy and this has made the rise of fascism and other exceptional types of bourgeois state even more hegemonic. There is no *essential anti-thesis* between the various types of the exceptional state which represent, just like the bourgeois liberal democracy, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and, the form of bourgeois parliamentary democracy. Poulantzas makes this point clear:

“But again, distinctions have to be made, especially in the case of the fascist State, because the prevailing line of analysis sees the fascist State (or the ‘totalitarian State’) as the antithesis of the ‘liberal State’. This is quite incorrect, as the liberal State is only a State form corresponding to the stage of competitive capitalism.” (*ibid,* p. 320)

As the competitive stage of capitalism comes to an end, the imperialist stage passes through various phases, where the form of particular types itself undergoes a change. The present phase is the neoliberal phase, where the very form of bourgeois representative democracy increasingly becomes an empty container, which can be used by various exceptional bourgeois states, too. The history of the world especially since the last quarter of the Twentieth century bears witness to this fact. Poulantzas already recognized this fact with the emergence of the interventionist state in the period following the Second World War and emergence of what he calls ‘the authoritarian state’ especially since the late-1960s. However, when he was writing *Fascism and Dictatorship* he had not yet formulated many of the things that he formulated later with his notion of the ‘authoritarian state’. Poulantzas wrote in *Fascism and Dictatorship*:

“The liberal and interventionist State forms are also different in this respect: the executive prevails over the legislative in the interventionist State, ‘parliamentary democracy’ declines in importance, and so on. Going beyond the juridical level, the differences in the relationship between the ‘executive’ and the ‘legislative’ essentially coincide with modifications in the functioning of the political parties, within an overall modification of the functioning of the ideological State apparatuses. There are resulting modifications in the means of representation, because of the difficulties monopoly capitalism experiences in organizing its hegemony in Parliament; for example, corporatist forms may spring up. The fascist State therefore has points in common with the interventionist State, since they originate in the same stage.” (*ibid,* p. 327)

In the context of the experience of historical fascism in Italy, too, Poulantzas makes certain observations which are pertinent. Poulantzas points out:

“The relevant criteria for distinguishing between forms of exceptional regime show the identical nature of the two cases, though the Italian fascist regime kept up a façade of constitutionality, because of the particular compromises it had to resort to. The king in principle still had the power to dismiss and nominate the Prime Minister (Mussolini); parliament was ‘elected’ on a single slate drawn up by the fascist Grand Council on the nomination of the various corporate bodies, *though it had only a decorative function*; alongside it was the Chamber of Fasci and Corporations, nominated by the fascist leadership; the Senate, appointed by the king, continued to exist, as did the State Council and the Court of Appeal. This was clearly only a façade, though it helped give Mussolini real standing in the eyes of some heroes of ‘Western freedom’: first among them, of course, being Churchill, the future executioner of Greece.” (*ibid,* p. 354)

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 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! That is why, he comfortably quotes Dimitrov on the pre-requisites of the rise of fascism (the threat of proletarian revolution) and Poulantzas and Zetkin, on the same question (who, like most of the other Marxist scholars points out that the rise of fascism *begins* with the defeat of the revolutionary proletarian movement), in the same breath, and fails to see the difference! Why?

Because, one, he does not read anything comprehensively from the beginning till the end; two, whatever he reads is simply 'Introductions', 'Prefaces' and book-flaps; three, he sees the index to find "appropriate" quotations to support his idiocies and inanities and fails to understand the context; four, whatever scanty he reads, he does not understand it and uses it, often against himself, while being completely unaware of the fact that he is committing intellectual hara-kiri; and five, rather than interpreting and elaborating the quotations from his own standpoint, he simply creates a chaotic collage of quotations to create an impression that he has referred to so many sources. What an intellectual Lilliput!

It is amusing that Sukhwinder regularly rebukes the semifeudal-semicolonial theorist for being imprisoned in a time-capsule and a space-capsule. However, he is imprisoned in the time-capsule and space-capsule in a much more serious manner, when it comes to the analysis of fascism. This is precisely what we have termed as his incorrigible historicism and dogmatism.

PART 3

Sukhwinder's Views on the Particularity of the Fascist Reaction: The Unbearable Lightness of a Trot-Bundist Mind

Sukhwinder talks about the particularity of the fascist reaction as a specific form of far-right bourgeois reaction and condemns various communists for harboring incorrect views about it and failing to understand this particularity. On the whole, there is no doubt that there has been a tendency in the world communist movement to regard any form of reaction and oppression as 'fascist'. This epithet has often been used for agitational purposes very carelessly to convey a pejorative meaning. Of course, this tendency is very harmful and most of the communist revolutionaries today understand it.

However, there are certain questions regarding this that Sukhwinder must answer.

Was he, too, a victim of the tendency to consider all forms of bourgeois reaction as fascist? If yes, when did he get rid of this? Let us see whether this malaise afflicted Sukhwinder or not and whether he ever self-criticized on this issue.

Sukhwinder had once characterized the *khalistanis* as fascists in one of his articles on Pash and *khalistanis* in July 2010. Sukhwinder wrote in an article 'Pash, Udasi, Communist, Khalistani', published in July 2010 issue of 'Pratibaddh':

"…Rajinder Rahi is a supporter of a reactionary ideology and is vouching for *a reactionary fascist upsurge like Khalistan*, the lewd comments passed by him on Pash and communist movement is not at all surprising. It is very consistent for the likes of such reactionaries.

…

“… Undoubtedly be it the case of attack on Harimander Sahib, the Sikh genocide of 84 in Delhi and other parts of the country, demolition of Babri Masjid, Gujarat pogrom of 2002 and also the mass killings of Hindu minority in Punjab at the hands of Khalistani fundamentalists. Communists have always raised voice against the attacks on minorities. Communists are against religion but they do not deny the fact of religious discrimination.” (Sukhwinder, ‘Pash, Udasi, Communist, Khalistani’, *Pratibaddh,* July, 2010, *emphasis ours*)

Does he still believe that? This view of Sukhwinder was expressed when he was still in our organization and even then, our organization had time and again pointed out that the imbecile tendency of characterizing all forms of bourgeois reaction as fascist is not only theoretically erroneous but it is politically harmful, too, as it disarms the working class and working masses from mounting an effective fight against fascism. By the time this article was published, we had already published our booklet on fascism where we had dealt with this childish tendency, too. We were unaware about this comment which was made in the Punjabi magazine. Recently, a comrade brought this fact to our notice. However, we did not know that Sukhwinder had such journalistic and infantile understanding of fascism. Now, is it surprising that he himself is borrowing various elements of his program from the *khalistanis* themselves!

It is a mark of honesty for communists to offer self-criticism. When we developed our understanding of economic crisis and arrived at the profitability-crisis-explanation, we openly wrote about it and self-criticized and accepted that it was the lack of comprehensive study of this question that had caused the mistake. The same was true for the concept of ‘permanent crisis’ which we had harbored erroneously and when we understood that *theoretically* this concept is wrong, even if the present long depression proves to be *historically* the last crisis, we openly wrote about it. We have quoted above this self-criticism that Kavita and I wrote. Since, 2016 itself, the shift in our writing was evident and we considered it our responsibility to express the evolution of our views on crisis theory.

However, Sukhwinder has the habit of opportunistically hopping like a frog repeatedly on various questions without offering any explanation or self-criticism on these questions. The readers might recall his pendulum-like vacillations on the question of MSP, on the national question, on the linguistic question, on the question of Soviet constitution and its allegedly ‘federal’ character, and many other questions. In fact, Sukhwinder completely shared our understanding of fascism, too, in all its evolution and changes, till 2019. However, in his booklet, he offers no self-criticism. He does make a self-critical comment about it in one of the recent editorials of ‘Pratibaddh’. However, what would have been honest, was the admission of this self-criticism in his essay itself, which has been written precisely on the subject in question and propagated as this group’s position on fascism. Moreover, Sukhwinder’s essay on fascism came much earlier and that fragmentary self-critical comment in editorial of one of the issues of ‘Pratibaddh’ came much later. We can understand why this happened. Someone might have pointed to him that he, too, subscribed to the understanding of our organization till 2019.

Again, Sukhwinder tries to stick to plagiarizing, quotationing and paraphrasing from classical sources, so that he does not goof up again. However, the moment he tries to elaborate and explain, he reveals his utter inability to understand the most basic of things. Let us see how our Trot-Bundist honcho bollixes everything out of order.

Sukhwinder writes:

“Comrade Dimitrov, in this regard, says that, *“Comrade Dutt was right in his contention that there has been a tendency among us to contemplate fascism in general, without taking into account the specific features of the fascist movement in the various countries, erroneously classifying all reactionary measures of the bourgeoisie as fascism and going so far as calling the entire non-Communist camp fascist. The struggle against fascism was not strengthened but rather weakened in consequence.*

“The trend of misnaming every form of bourgeois reaction as fascism can also be found in Chou-En-Lai’s article ‘On Chinese Fascism, The New Autocracy.’ In this article Chou brands Kuomintang Party as a fascist party. This party, in its ideology, in its social basis cannot be called a fascist party in any way. Chou-En-Lai’s understanding of fascism in no way accords with the understanding of fascism developed by Comintern, the parties associated with it, leaders, thinkers of these parties and Marxist intellectuals after the second world war. Here we cannot criticise it in detail.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 26, *author’s emphasis*)

First of all, the very injunction of Dutt, quoted by Dimitrov, is ignored by Sukhwinder: “there has been a tendency among us to contemplate fascism in general, without taking into account the specific features of the fascist movement in the various countries”. Sukhwinder suffers from this, too. Temporally as well as spatially, Sukhwinder fails to recognize the particularities of fascist rise in different countries and in different times. Notwithstanding the mechanical and economistic understanding of Dutt as well as Dimitrov, this particular point is noteworthy. Sukhwinder expects that fascism will assume exactly the same forms and will follow exactly the same trajectory that it did in the early-Twentieth century. This is precisely the childish and ignorant historicist dogmatism of Sukhwinder that we have identified time and again. The fact is that even the trajectory followed by the Italian fascism and that followed by the German fascism were very much different from each other, as we shall see later in this essay.

Sukhwinder writes further:

“To correctly understand the phenomena of fascism, it is important to differentiate between fascist movement and fascist regime. In the imperialist stage of capitalism, the reactionary movement of fascism can originate in any capitalist country. But it is not necessary that this movement will succeed in setting up a fascist regime. Fascist movements originated in almost all the capitalist countries after the first world war in the last century. But only in two countries, Germany

and Italy fascist regimes were set up. Whether the fascist movement will be able to set up a fascist regime depends on many factors. We have already discussed these factors. *The most important factor out of these was the economic and political crisis of capitalism. Fascist dictatorship can only be set up in the condition when a threat (from the working class) emerges for capitalist system.*" (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 26-27, *emphasis ours*)

So, this is precisely Sukhwinder's line of argument behind calling Modi regime not fascist: there is no economic crisis and consequently no political crisis of capitalism in India, and therefore, there is no political offensive of the working class. We have already seen the sheer ignorance of Sukhwinder regarding the very concepts of economic crisis as well as that of political crisis. We have also seen that he fails to understand that the Indian economy is, indeed, going through a crisis and stagnation.

We would urge the readers to mind these words of Sukhwinder: "Fascist dictatorship can only be set up in the condition when a threat (from the working class) emerges for capitalist system." This is *conditio sine qua non* for fascist rise to power for Sukhwinder. However, from Poulantzas, Zetkin, Gramsci and many others, we know there is no such necessary condition and Sukhwinder's befuddled and disoriented head has cooked this up so that he can take a rest and relax while fascists run amok on the streets and perform an internal takeover of the state apparatus, as for him, no such threat from the working class exists in India right now! We have already pointed this out that the group that he leads has not done anything real and material against fascists in power right now. We have already demonstrated that his views about economic crisis in India are ridiculously ignorant and also the fact that revolutionary onslaught of the proletariat or the threat of proletarian revolution is not a precondition for fascist rise. In fact, the fascist rise begins on the ruins of the political revolutionary movement of the proletariat, as discussed earlier in the present essay.

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.

In what follows, we have quoted Nicos Poulantzas at length on many questions, more than any other authority on this subject. The reason for this is the fact that among all Marxist scholars after the Second World War, Poulantzas, despite his Althusserian tendency of “ideologism” and “politicism”, fell nearest to the Leninist and Maoist position, approach and method on this particular question. His critique of Comintern complemented his critique of Trotsky, who were united in their understanding by their economism and lack of massline. Moreover, Poulantzas more-or-less correctly takes cue from the correct elements in the Marxist thinking of various Marxist revolutionaries and scholars, from Lenin, Zetkin and Gramsci to Togliatti and others. His presentation of the question is nearest to Lenin’s approach in some respects. We have also critiqued Poulantzas on certain questions, especially questions pertaining to political economy. Besides, we have pointed repeatedly to the incorrect and reformist political prescriptions of Poulantzas, evident in the last parts of his last work, which stemmed from the general pathology of the European left since the capitalist restoration in the USSR, the revisionist acts of the PCF in France and also the Althusserianism of Poulantzas.

However, despite these shortcomings, his understanding of fascism in the early-Twentieth century, his critique of economism prevalent in Comintern’s position, Trostky’s position as well as the positions of various communist parties of the period, his critique of the “left” as well as right-opportunist deviations in the international communist movement’s appraisal of fascism and the policy of anti-fascist united front, and finally, his appreciation of the changes in the *modus operandi* of world capitalism in the neoliberal phase of the imperialist stage, especially, his identification of the decay of the bourgeois democratic content of the *form* of bourgeois parliamentary system, and his position that the rise of fascism and other exceptional bourgeois states in the period since neoliberalism will assume qualitatively different forms from their avatars of the early-Twentieth

century, are very significant and relevant today. They provide very important pointers which can be developed and used by Marxist-Leninists today to analyze the contemporary rise of fascism and other far right movements and regimes.

A. Sukhwinder's Delusions Regarding the Second United Front Against Japan in China and the Policy of the 'Popular Front'

Sukhwinder's attempt to equate the Second United Front against Japan with Dimitrov line of the 'popular front' only betrays his complete ignorance of Maoist thinking and the history of the Chinese Revolution. After having a ridiculously inane discussion (to which we will come later) about the errors of the German Communist Party in refusing to form alliance with Social-Democratic Party as a broad anti-fascist front, Sukhwinder writes:

"For the construction of wide united front against a common enemy, we should learn from Comrade Mao. When people's war was striding forward in 1935 in China, Japanese imperialism attacked China. Before Japanese aggression the primary contradiction was with Kuomintang. But after Japanese attack the principal contradiction changed. The communist party of China, its leader Comrade Mao offered to forge a united front with Kuomintang for fighting against Japanese offensive. The understanding of Communist Party of China was that though reactionary elements dominated in Kuomintang but there were anti-imperialist and patriotic elements in it too, particularly in the masses which followed in its wake had large amount of patriotic elements. Thus, Kuomintang must be forced to join the anti-Japanese united front. But Kuomintang leader Chiang-Kai-Shek rejected this offer. But the communist party of Japan was steadfast in its position of forging a united front with Kuomintang against Japanese offensive and regularly issued appeals to Kuomintang for the same. This created a situation of split in Kuomintang. As a result, Kuomintang was forced to forge a united front with communist party against Japanese aggression." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 38-39)

Here, we will not discuss the highly imprecise use of terms like "primary contradiction" or mistakes which might be slips of pen (though, big ones!) like talking about the "steadfast policy of the Communist Party of Japan" of "forging a united front with Kuomintang"! We will continue to show the general problem of Sukhwinder, namely, imprecise use of various terms, serious slips like the one mentioned above, and also sheer and utter ignorance of history in what follows. For now, we return to the crux of the problem in the above excerpt of Sukhwinder.

Mao talks about the broad anti-Japanese united front as a front that will include various anti-Japanese fractions of the Chinese ruling class (including tactical alliances with fractions of comprador bourgeoisie, who were agents of British and US Imperialism, and as a derivative result of inter-imperialist rivalry, were opposed to the Japanese invasion) and whose aim would not be the establishment of workers' and peasants' democratic dictatorship, but repelling and defeating the Japanese invasion as the first principal task.

Sukhwinder has ignorantly used this as an example of Mao's general support for Dimitrov's line of the 'popular front'; evidently, Sukhwinder is unable to distinguish between *fascist rise*, which is *immanent to the political situation of a country* on the one hand, and *a foreign imperialist invasion,* which exists on *a different level of determination*, that is, inter-imperialist rivalry and class struggle at the international level, on the other hand. It goes without saying that there is a relation between the two levels, however, the strategic and tactical considerations for both scenarios are qualitatively different. One illustration of this fact is the correct communist criticism of the CPI's mistake of not participating in the 'Quit India Movement' in the beginning, on the pretext, that on the international level, Britain is part of the allied forces against fascism. Anyway, we need to understand the two different scenarios.

In the former case, the general line on strategic and tactical alliances would be different from those in the case of an imperialist invasion. *If the CPC considered KMT-rule as a "fascist one", why did it ally with it*

against Japan? And if CPC did not consider KMT as fascist, then why did it not ally with it after the defeat of Japan if it followed the line of the 'popular front', which was also another instance of CPC under Mao rejecting the line of the Comintern? Every serious student of modern Chinese history knows that the case of broad united front with the KMT was *only* in the conditions of Japanese imperialist invasion; in fact, when the Comintern prescribed alliance with the KMT except the periods of imperialist invasion of Japan, Mao did not agree with it, which again makes it clear that the broad united front against Japan was not a model of the 'popular front'. It was a broad united front of all forces ready to fight against an imperialist invasion. It had no idea of strategic class alliance behind it, in terms of stages of revolution in a country. The 'popular front' does have an idea of *strategic class alliance of all forces* opposed to *'the most reactionary elements of financial monopoly bourgeoisie',* of course, an incorrect idea, to say the least.

Regarding the character of the broadest united front against Japanese invasion, which intended to transform China into a total colony, Mao writes:

"At the present time, the basic task of such a government should be to oppose the annexation of China by Japanese imperialism. It will have a broader representation so that it may include those who are interested only in the national revolution and not in the agrarian revolution, and *even, if they so desire, those who may oppose Japanese imperialism and its running dogs, though they are not opposed to the European and U.S. imperialists because of their close ties with the latter.* Therefore, as a matter of principle, the programme of such a government should be in keeping with the basic task of fighting Japanese imperialism and its lackeys, and we should modify our past policies accordingly." (Mao Tse-tung. 1975. 'On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism', *Selected Works,* Vol. 1, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, p. 166, *emphasis ours*)

Mao clearly pointed out that the policy of the Second United Front was driven by the most important factor of the Japanese imperialist

invasion, where the internal contradictions of China have, temporarily assumed a secondary place (a completely different consideration from the one that led to the incorrect policy of the ‘popular front’):

“*As the contradiction between China and Japan has become the principal one and China’s internal contradictions have dropped into a secondary and subordinate place*, changes have occurred in China’s international relations and internal class relations, giving rise to a new stage of development in the current situation.” (Mao Tse-tung. 1975. ‘The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan’ (1937), *Selected Works,* Vol. 1, p. 263, *emphasis ours*)

Mao elaborates:

“*The contradiction between China and Japan has changed internal class relations within China and has confronted the bourgeoisie and even the warlords with the question of survival, so that they and their political parties have been undergoing a gradual change in their political attitude. This has placed the task of establishing an anti-Japanese national united front before the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people.* Our united front should include the bourgeoisie and all who agree to the defence of the motherland; it should represent national solidarity against the foreign foe.” (*ibid,* p. 264, *emphasis ours*)

Mao points out that the character of the Second United Front is actually that of *national united front against imperialist invasion:*

“The contradiction between China and Japan has changed matters for the masses throughout the country (the proletariat, the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie) and for the Communist Party, and it has changed the Party’s policy. More and more people have risen to fight for national salvation. The policy proclaimed by the Communist Party after the September 18th Incident was to conclude agreements with those sections of the Kuomintang which were willing to co-operate with us for resistance, subject to three conditions (stop

attacking the revolutionary base areas, guarantee the freedoms and rights of the people, arm the people), and it has developed into a policy of establishing *an anti-Japanese united front of the whole nation.*" (*ibid,* p. 264, *emphasis ours*)

More:

"In terms of relative political importance the development of the national contradiction between China and Japan has demoted the domestic contradictions between classes and between political groupings to a secondary and subordinate place. But they still exist and have by no means diminished or disappeared. The same is true of the contradictions between China and the imperialist powers other than Japan. Therefore, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people are faced with the following task — to make the appropriate adjustments with regard to those internal and external contradictions which can and must be adjusted at present so as to fit in with the general task of unity against Japan." (*ibid.* p. 265)

Many such quotations from Mao can be reproduced here, which is not needed. The above representative quotations themselves demonstrate that the very foundational thinking behind the formation of the Second United Front, had nothing whatsoever to do with the policy of the 'popular front' and in this same period, Mao and the CPC did not agree with the general policy of the 'popular front' as we will shortly see. Of course, the Second United Front against Japan was *objectively* a part of what Mao casually termed as 'world united front against fascism', because Japan happened to be part of the fascist axis, and also happened to be the country that invaded China. However, to conflate the Second United Front against Japan and the idea of 'popular front' reveals the most childish kind of ignorance on part of Sukhwinder.

Thus, we can see that the idea of broadest possible united front of all forces ready to fight against an imperialist invasion on the one hand, has nothing to do with the idea of the 'popular front' against fascism, on the other (even though the latter idea itself was incorrect), *because the very system of contradictions in the two cases are*

qualitatively different. Since Sukhwinder cannot find justification for his erroneous class capitulationist line, he misappropriates and distorts the history of Chinese revolution itself! Or, there is an equal possibility that despite racking his brains, he could not understand the history, which is a regular thing for editor *saab*.

Now let us come to the question of Comintern's policy since 1933-35, that is, the policy of the 'popular front' and the approach of Mao towards this policy.

B. 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 collaborationaism, 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.

C. 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)

Revealing the economistic understanding implicit in the position of Dimitrov and a number of others in the Comintern, Poulantzas points out:

“Finally, a remark on the definition of fascism, common in the Comintern, as the expression of the most ‘retrograde’ or ‘reactionary’ elements – see Dimitrov, among others. It is again necessary to take careful note of this, for where the Comintern leaders are concerned, such adjectives are not simple slips of the pen.

“If these adjectives were simply intended to describe a considerable increase in the economic exploitation of the masses, there would be good reason for using them. But this is something quite different: *this definition stemmed from the Comintern’s economistic conception* that imperialism and the supremacy of big capital, as the death agony of ‘decaying’ capitalism, automatically meant a halt in the development of the productive forces. The ‘productive forces’, in this economistic and technicist view, were seen as independent from the relations of production, the simple ‘advance’ or ‘halt’ of this ‘technical’ process determining the nature of the capital involved – in this case a ‘retrograde’ one.

“*Such illusions can only arise from posing the question the wrong way.* In fact, fascism really represented a development of capitalist forces of production, that is within the limits of imperialist social relations. It represented industrial development, technological innovation, and an increase in the productivity of labour – but all the while promoting the expanded reproduction of the conditions of capitalist production, that is, reinforcing class exploitation and domination. Caught in the trap of technicism, Marxist historians of fascism are still racking their brains to demonstrate its ‘economically retrograde’ character, as if that was more important in their eyes, than class exploitation and domination.” (*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*)

Poulantzas has captured some very crucial elements in the incorrect theorizations of the Comintern. Bob Jessop has more-or-less correctly summarized the crux of Poulantzas’s criticism of ‘popular front’:

“However, Poulantzas criticizes Dimitrov’s interpretation of the popular front on four separate grounds. First, in offering *an over-restricted definition of the class basis of fascism* as ‘the most reactionary, nationalist and imperialist elements’ of big capital,

Dimitrov permitted an alliance with other fractions of the bourgeoisie. Second, *Dimitrov gave primacy to the popular front over the proletarian United Front and thereby ignored the leading role of the working class*. Third, through *his fundamental misunderstanding of the representational ties between classes and political parties as somehow pregiven and organic, Dimitrov attached too little importance to communists' own mass work among the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie.* Instead he considered that they should be reached through their own parties even where these were under the leadership of the bourgeoisie and big landed interests. Elsewhere Poulantzas argues that exactly the same error informed the view of certain sections of the KKE towards the Greek peasantry and petty bourgeoisie. Finally, Dimitrov placed too much emphasis on the 'national' side of political struggle at the expense of proletarian internationalism." (Jessop, Bob. 1985. *op.cit.*, p. 274-75)

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-Lassallean 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.

D. 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)

After 1922-23, the alternating right-“left” swings began, as Poulantzas shows. Since the Fifth Congress and especially since the Sixth Congress, the ultra-left turn, precisely as an over-reaction to the right swing of the previous period, emerged. Poulantzas points out:

“The *Fourth Congress (1922–3) spoke of stabilization in an economistic sense for the first time, and drew from it wrong (‘ultra-right’) conclusions* about the step of the class struggle.

“The Fifth Congress (1924) was silent on stabilization as a characteristic step of the class struggle, apparently no longer accepting ‘economic stabilization’. *This congress took the Comintern’s first ‘ultra-left’ turn,* making an equally incorrect definition of the step, although in the opposite direction from the Fourth Congress.” (*ibid,* p. 45, *emphasis ours*)

Thälmann, according to Poulantzas clearly represented the essence of the ultra-left turn:

“As for the social-democratic masses, Thälmannn 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.'" (*ibid,* p. 160)

Poulantzas also argues that the ultra-left turn was more of a "left" phraseology, and actually it was never translated into action:

"This orientation led to disastrous results. But it would be quite wrong to think that behind this radical terminology, the KPD was carrying out an intransigent, if sectarian, struggle against fascism, and for the revolution. Not that it failed to carry out the implacable struggle it advocated against social democracy: *the problem was that it did nothing but that.*" (*ibid,* p. 161)

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. That is why Poulantzas points out:

"Let us now come to the antifascist popular front, an idea directly related to the recognition of the fascist danger, Dimitrov having tacitly admitted that the rise of fascism corresponded to a defensive step for the workers' movement." (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 163)

Poulantzas argues:

"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*)

Some other quotes on the same subject have been presented above.

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.

E. '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. That is why on this particular point, the Maoist Bob Avakian before his *new synthesis, which is neither new nor a synthesis,* was more-or-less correct:

"The international communist movement needs no more excuses on behalf of the Comintern. It needs the kind of blunt appraisal we can find in the discussion between Mao Tse-tung and Kang Sheng concerning the Spanish experience. In it, Kang Sheng says (in the context of what is mainly a long talk by Mao, and clearly expressing

Mao's viewpoint also): "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."" (RCP (USA). 1981. 'The Line of the Comintern on the Civil War in Spain', published in *Revolution,* Vol. 6, #1, June, 1981)

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: Moskvin, 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", economistic mistakes of a number of communist parties of Europe in the 1920s, the most vulgar version of which was presented by Trotsky.

F. 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 economistic, 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 the "Contradictions of Fascism in Power": An Intellectually Pauperized Version of the Incorrect Theses of Dimitrov

Here, too, Sukhwinder reveals his intrinsic inability to understand what he reads. The only thing he succeeds in is headstrong dogmatism. Sukhwinder writes:

"Dimitrov had said that fascism is a ferocious but unstable power. After capturing power, it is mired by many conflicts. The promises that fascism makes with the masses, especially petty bourgeois masses, while capturing power aren't fulfilled after fascism ascends to power. The empty phraseology of fascists that it considers nation above everything bursts like a water bubble. The real meaning of nation for the fascists comes to the fore in the form of interests of a fraction of monopoly capital. *There can be a temporary alliance of small and large owners for crushing the worker's movement.* But after fascism ascends to power it comes clear that the policies of interests of monopoly capital can be furthered only at the cost of the interests of middle class and working class. Accumulation of capital, inflation, burden on people of new taxes puts fascism in conflict with its mass base.

"Petty bourgeoisie's (middle class), which forms the axis of fascist movements, interests are hurt after fascism comes to power. Petty bourgeoisie, due to its class position, swings to and fro between capitalists and working class. It cannot make an independent economic policy for its interests. As part of the fascist movement, it assists in crushing the workers' movement. The capitalist class definitely benefits from the crushing of workers' movement; it becomes stronger which is also not in the interests of petty bourgeoisie. *This hastens the proletarisation of petty bourgeoisie. (*Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 28-29, *emphasis ours)*

Some of this does not make sense at all. We will focus on the points where Sukhwinder blabbers something that resembles something meaningful.

A. Fascism in Power and the Petty-Bourgeoisie: Sukhwinder's Philstine Phantasies

First of all, it is not clear what he means by "temporary alliance between small and big owners" to crush the working-class movement. It appears from what follows that he is trying to say that first the fascist bourgeoisie allies with the petty-bourgeoisie to crush the working-class movement and "benefits from it" and once it is in power it also attacks the petty-bourgeoisie for the benefit of the monopoly capital. This is the contradiction of fascism in power, according to Sukhwinder, a view for which justification has been sought from Dimitrov. However, Dimitrov's views regarding the 'contradictions of fascism' stem directly from his faulty understanding of the class character of fascism ("the most reactionary elements" of big monopoly bourgeoisie); moreover, he conflates parties with classes. Poulantzas presented a correct criticism of this understanding regarding the 'contradictions of fascism':

"The positions of the Seventh Comintern Congress and Dimitrov himself on 'political parties' and 'bourgeois parties' in particular are of interest here. Dimitrov, precisely because he did not see the parties as ideological State apparatuses, both overestimated their 'organizational' role for the fractions of the bourgeoisie, and thought that they were the only network within which power could circulate among the fractions. *This comes out in his analysis of the 'contradictions of fascism'*: 'Fascism undertakes to overcome the differences and antagonisms within the bourgeois camp, but it makes these antagonisms even more acute. Fascism tries to establish its political monopoly by violently destroying other political parties. But … the party of the fascists cannot set itself the aim of abolishing classes and class contradictions. It puts an end to *the legal existence* of bourgeois parties. But a number of them continue to maintain an illegal existence … the political monopoly of

capitalism is bound to explode.' (op. cit., pp. 576–7.) *Clearly, for Dimitrov the elimination of the 'bourgeois parties' meant that all fractions of the bourgeoisie other than 'the most nationalist and reactionary' big capital (the fascist party) were excluded from power, since they were seen as unable to participate in the exercise of power except through their 'parties', the only way in which they could possibly organize.* Hence the reasoning: *(a) the elimination of other bourgeois parties by fascism means the exclusion of other fractions of the bourgeoisie from State power; (b) this situation could not last long because of its 'internal contradictions'. The International's conception of non-proletarian parties had deep roots. It could be argued that the Comintern had a wrong and mechanistic understanding of Lenin's theory of the working-class party, unwarrantedly applying it to other social forces. It could not see that these other social forces could also be organized through other State apparatuses.*" (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 326, footnote, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas has captured a very important point here, about which Sukhwinder is completely ignorant.

First of all, fascism does not only represent some fractions of the monopoly bourgeoisie; moreover, it represents, not only monopoly bourgeoisie but *the bourgeoisie as a political class under the hegemony of the fraction (not certain elements of it!) of the big monopoly bourgeoisie.* The whole notion of crisis of the 'power bloc' of the ruling class consists precisely in the problem of collectivization of the bourgeois interests under the hegemony of one fraction.

Dimitrov, not only does not understand this, but also *conflates classes with parties.* Thus, if certain parties are banned out of existence by the fascists, the classes or class fractions supporting those parties, too, are seen to be removed from the political power. Sukhwinder makes the same mistake, though in a ridiculously vulgar fashion, in "bare-naked form", if you will. Moreover, Sukhwinder in the above excerpt talks about the "interests of monopoly capital" in general instead of "the most reactionary elements of the big

monopoly capital". Something must have transpired in his mind when he started writing and when he reached this particular point! Ergo, the transition from "the most reactionary element of monopoly capital" to "monopoly capital". We don't know what happened!

The second problem here is Sukhwinder's view of petty-bourgeoisie as a monolithic class. History shows that not all echelons of the petty-bourgeoisie faced the threat of proletarianization. It was mainly the lower echelons of the entrepreneurial petty-bourgeoisie which faced the threat as well as reality of proletarianization in Germany as well as Italy during the fascist regime and it is quite understandable. The monolithic view of petty-bourgeoisie as a class which gets completely ruined with fascism in power fails to explain the real history of fascism. Poulantzas, too, understands this. He argues:

"Secondly, fascism, once established, *did not radically eliminate the traditional petty bourgeoisie.* There is a particularly important *counter-tendency* in the stage of monopoly capitalism, to such a kind of elimination. The very establishment of the dominance of monopoly capitalism in a social formation in fact makes room for the *persistence of a weak sector of small-scale production and petty commerce.* The high prices and production costs of small-scale production, together with the high retail prices of petty commerce, make it possible to raise the cartel prices fixed by the big monopolies and chain stores. The big monopolies therefore disguise the profits they make by pointing to the prices of small-scale production and commerce. *This counter-tendency is therefore mainly of a political and ideological nature, and in the case of fascism, it generally works in favour of certain measures to protect small urban property.*

"As for the salaried employees, there is an important side of the question which should not be forgotten: *by a characteristic extension of the bureaucratic State apparatus, very well analysed by Gramsci, fascism provided openings for an important part of the petty-bourgeois masses.* There was an excessive growth of the State apparatus, what has been termed the 'fascist bureaucracy', and *this*

was one of the reasons for the support the petty bourgeoisie gave to the fascist State." (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 257, *emphasis ours*)

Togliatti, too, had identified this change in the composition of the petty-bourgeois support for fascism once it is in power. He points out:

"The supporters among the petty-bourgeois producers abandon fascism little by little. Henceforward the membership of the Party is predominantly composed of the non-producing petty and middle bourgeoisie (state functionaries, professional fascists, etc.)." (Togliatti, P. 2003. 'On the Question of Fascism', in Köves and Mazumdar (eds.) *op.cit.,* p. 216)

In fact, Sukhwinder presents the views of Togliatti by selectively editing it. He quotes Togliatti as follows:

"Togliatti informs as to how the structure of fascist party changes when fascism comes to power. We shall discuss some changes here because rest of the changes listed by him aren't that accurate. He says that:

"1) The supporters of fascism among petty bourgeois producers began to desert it bit by bit. Now the membership of the party (fascist – author) comes primarily from unproductive petty and medium bourgeoisie (employees of state, professional fascists etc.)

"2) The fascist cadre is almost entirely replaced. The former black vests are replaced by Fascists of the first hour, who occupy the leading posts are the representatives of the big bourgeoisie (industrialists, bankers, landlords and their agents)" (author's emphasis)

"*Togliatti did not add that the fascist party does not represent all the above-mentioned fractions of the capitalist class, strife and collisions continue between them.*" (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 29, *emphasis ours*)

Sukhwinder has shown, once again, dishonesty in quoting a source. The entire excerpt from Togliatti goes like this:

“One of the most interesting facts to note, furthermore, is that fascism was obliged to become reactionary in its own internal organization after the conquest of power; it was compelled to effect a quite rapid and far-reaching transformation in its structure and social composition. The principal forms of this process that we have been able to identify so far are the following:

“(1) The supporters among petty-bourgeois producers abandon fascism little by little. *Henceforward the membership of the party is predominantly composed of the non-producing petty and middle bourgeoisie (state functionaries, professional fascists etc.)* This fact is particularly important as it heralds a change in the balance of forces in the countryside.

“(2) The fascist cadres are almost completely changed. In the place of the former blackshirts, the ‘fascists of the first hour’, are the direct representatives of the big bourgeoisie (industrialists, bankers, landlords and their agents) who occupy the leading posts in the Party.

“(3) The Fascist Party gradually absorbs a part of the general staff of all the old parties of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

(4) At the same time democracy is completely eliminated at the centre of the Fascist Party, and replaced by a system of government from above.

“In consequence of this process, fascism proves itself conclusively to be not only an instrument of reaction and repression, *but also a centre of political unity of all the dominant classes: finance capital, large industry, the landowners.*” (Togliatti, P. 1983. ‘On the Question of Fascism, in D. Beetham (ed.) *Marxists in Face of Fascism,* Manchester University Press, p. 146-47, *emphasis ours*)

Sukhwinder has taken the quote from Beetham’s anthology mentioned above. As the readers can see, Sukhwinder has edited the quote according to his opportunist and dishonest ways to suit his propositions. *He has not even added ‘dots’ at places where he has made omissions in the quotations.* Thus, a reader would assume that

the entire quote has been presented *verbatim*! This is how the scatter-brained editor of 'Pratibaddh' functions.

He also edits the portion where Togliatti points out that fascism does not represent only one fraction of the bourgeoisie but the bourgeoisie in general. The last sentence of Sukhwinder's quote that we have presented above does not make sense, perhaps due to bad translation, but also perhaps because of the poor ability of Sukhwinder to articulate his own views. However, it seems that he is saying that the conflict among the different fractions of the bourgeoisie did continue, even though Togliatti contended that all these fractions found their political unity in the fascist state. This is to state the obvious. The question of attaining this political unity arises only when the interests of different fractions are not *always-already* united and that is precisely the point of fascism: to unite/collectivize these interests under the hegemony of the big monopoly capital in times of a political crisis, through exceptional means, as the regular means prove insufficient for this purpose. *Does this mean that the conflicts among different fractions vanish? No!* Had that been the case, there would be no continued need for fascism, or for that matter, any form of bourgeois state (as collectivization of the class interests of the bourgeoisie is not only the function of fascist state, but any bourgeois state, the only difference being that the former does this through exceptional means, whereas the bourgeois democratic parliamentary state does this through regular means, as we have discussed earlier in the essay). The emergence of fascist regime does not mean that the conflicts among different fractions cease to exist. This again shows complete obliviousness of Sukhwinder towards the basics of Marxist political theory as well as Marxist political economy.

B. Fascism in Power and the Proletariat: Sukhwinder Shoots Himself in the Foot

Sukhwinder further writes:

"To restore capital's falling rate of profit fascism in power, shifts the burden of crisis onto the toilers and especially the working class.

Naturally the working class opposes it. This sharpens the contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 29)

But wait! How does the working class oppose it when fascism is in power, that is, when there is fascist dictatorship? Will not the working class be busy restoring the bourgeois democracy by forming alliances with all other fractions of the bourgeoisie except "the most reactionary fractions of the big monopoly bourgeoisie"? Has not Sukhwinder argued a couple of paragraphs before that with fascism in power, the task of the working class is to "side with bourgeoisie democracy" and form a 'popular front' to restore the bourgeois democracy (even though, according to the Comintern, formation of the 'popular front' was not to be done only when fascism was in power, as Sukhwinder thinks!)?

We can see that the entire argument of Sukhwinder is self-contradictory. Also, how is the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat sharpened? *Because if except "the most reactionary elements of the big monopoly bourgeoisie", all other fractions of the bourgeoisie are excluded from the state power and are strategic allies till the restoration of the bourgeois democracy, because according to Sukhwinder with fascism in power, the proletariat "sides with bourgeois democracy", then how can the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in general, be sharpened or assume a principal status?*

If the strategic aim of the proletariat under fascism, as a matter of rule, is the restoration of the bourgeois democracy, then, of course, *the principal contradiction is between the "most reactionary and chauvinistic elements of the big monopoly finance bourgeoisie" (the class content of the fascist state according to Sukhwinder) and the rest of the masses, which till the accomplishment of the aforementioned strategic task, includes all other fractions of the bourgeoisie, too.* The very point of the line of the 'popular front' was to put the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie on the backburner, because the principal task was to restore the

bourgeois democracy, because the principal contradiction was “the most reactionary elements of the big monopoly finance bourgeoisie *vs.* all”! Then how is the proletariat going to deal with this “sharpening contradiction” according to Sukhwinder? Sukhwinder is again lost in the gunk of his own contradictions.

Sukhwinder continues his balderdash:

“Fascism in power abolishes the parliamentary democratic form of bourgeois rule. This shuts the door to the resolution of contradictions between the different fractions of bourgeoisie in parliamentary sphere. Fascism embarks on the path of eradicating rival factions inside it and rival bourgeois parties. It attempts the impossible task of forming a single party of the various factions of capitalist class. It miserably fails in this. The conflicts between various factions of the bourgeoisie sharpens after fascism comes to power. The strife between different factions inside the fascist party sharpens too.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 29)

The first argument is the same that fascism cannot retain the shell/form of parliamentary democracy. We have answered this inanity above in sufficient detail. There is no need to repeat that.

Secondly, again, due to quoting from disparate types of sources indiscriminately, Sukhwinder totally loses view and consciousness of the pile of contradictions into which he takes a plunge with a stupid smile on his face. Let us understand these contradictions.

If fascism represents only the “most reactionary elements” of the big monopoly bourgeoisie, then what is the material class basis of the existence of rival factions within fascism? Has Sukhwinder totally forgotten the ABC of Marxist class analysis? Oh, wait, no! He never understood them! Rival fractions within all bourgeois parties as well as the state always reflect the existence of rival fractions within the bourgeois class itself. They do not and cannot exist on the basis of individual contradictions or antagonisms alone. In fact, in most of the cases, the irresoluble individual contradictions always represent conflicting interests of the rival fractions of the class themselves.

If all the other fractions of the bourgeoisie except “the most reactionary and chauvinistic elements of the big monopoly capital” are excluded from the state and in fact the dictatorship of the latter has been established *on* them, too, then the contradiction between the fascist state and all the other fractions of the bourgeoisie is not “contradictions of fascism” but contradictions *between* fascism and the people, including the other fractions of the bourgeoisie.

Moreover, if fascist party (just like fascist state) represents only “the most reactionary and chauvinistic elements of the big monopoly capital”, then why does the contradictions among “rival factions within the fascist party” sharpen? Weren’t we told that fascism represents only “the most reactionary and chauvinistic elements of the big monopoly capital”? Such are the silly contradictions of Sukhwinder.

Sukhwinder on the Fascist Experience in Italy: Hair-Raising Idiocies and Political Illiteracy

Just like he did on all other issues related to fascism, Sukhwinder totally misreads and misinterprets the history of fascism in Italy and Germany. Besides the presentation of facts regarding the history of rise of fascism in Italy (though here, too, he misses some of the most important nodal events), all the interpretations (wherever they are not copied *verbatim* from Marxist sources) are thoroughly incorrect and reveal that in this case, too, Sukhwinder has not read anything about the history of Italian fascism in a comprehensive manner. Let us begin this tiresome exercise of revealing the ignorance of Sukhwinder regarding history (as well as theory) of Italian fascism.

A. Dogmatic Historicism of Sukhwinder at Full Display

In the very beginning, Sukhwinder makes a thoroughly dogmatist and historicist comment:

“Italy and Germany are those two nations in the history of fascism (almost 100 years) where fascist dictatorships were established. It is

from the experience of Italy and Germany that fascism can be correctly understood.**”** (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 30, *emphasis ours*)

Nope! Any political and ideological tendency cannot simply be understood by the exact historical experience in which they materialized in their first incarnations. This would tantamount to argue that socialism can only be understood on the basis of the exact experience of the Bolshevik Revolution or the Chinese Revolution. This, precisely, is the particularly idiotic and dogmatic historicism of Sukhwinder. For instance, socialist revolutions today *do not*, as a matter of necessity require the exact political conjuncture of the rise of the ‘dual power’ and a world war. Such an approach fails to understand that the political conjuncture leading to the Bolshevik Revolution must be *situated* in the real conditions of the national and international class struggle of that period.

Of course, one learns from the historical experience of any political and ideological phenomenon; however, while learning from the concrete historical experience, one must be able to distill *the elements that are constitutive, immanent, intrinsic, systemic and structural* and distinguish them from the elements that are *contextual, exogenous, extrinsic, contingent and conjunctural.* This is another example of the ignorance of Sukhwinder regarding the relationship between *content, essence* and *substance* on the one hand, and, *form, phenomena* and *appearance* on the other. That is the reason why until and unless everything happens exactly in the same way in which it happened in the *historical fascism* and *historical Nazism*, he would not accept that fascism has arrived.

Further.

B. Particularities of Capitalist Economic Development in Italy and the Rise of Fascism: Uneven Inanities of Sukhwinder

Sukhwinder opines:

“Up until the first world war there were many similarities in the economic development of Italy and Germany. First let us consider Italy. Capitalist development occurred at a later stage in Italy but

quite rapidly between 1890-1914. But as is the law of capitalist development, this development was quite uneven." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 30)

First of all, except two elements (constitutive of the emergence of economic conditions of the rise of fascism in both countries), nothing was common in the economic development of Italy and Germany. What were these elements?

The first element as pointed out by Poulantzas was the particular place of both these countries in the imperialist chain. Both emerged as industrial powers later than the other leading North-Western capitalist countries and joined the ranks of imperialist countries. However, by the time this process was achieved through the role of the state and finance capital, the world was more-or-less already divided among the old imperialist powers. As a result, Italy and Germany had a very small share in the colonial loot and plunder. Poulantzas points out:

"Germany and Italy were the weakest links in the chain after Russia – the latecomers, as I have said, to capitalism; though this often-used expression is misleading if it is taken to mean that they were the least economically developed countries. Weak and strong places in the chain cannot be explained by a chronological evolution of economic advance or backwardness, no more than uneven development can be explained as a simple rhythm of economic 'development'." (Poulantzas. 1979. *Op.cit.,* p. 25)

Poulantzas, after discussing the German case, comes to the Italian case and argues:

"Let us now turn to the case of Italy, which is quite different from that of Germany, though a similarity can be established if, and only if, we consider its position in the imperialist chain." (*ibid,* p. 29)

Poulantzas goes on to explain this point and shows that except this particular similarity, there is no similarity in the cases of the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy.

The second related common feature was the rupture and catastrophe involved in the *sudden rapid capitalist development* of these two countries*.* It is noteworthy that the unification of Italy as well as Germany happened in the second half of the Nineteenth century with very different kinds of political and economic dynamic. In any case, they emerged as nation-states in the stage of imperialism. As a consequence, the capitalist development in these countries revealed the role of two actors: *the state* and *the finance capital* (banks, etc.). Alexander Gerschenkron's work on the trajectory of late-industrializations in these capitalist late-comers and how it was different from the classical trajectory of capitalist development through the stages of handicrafts, technical division of labour and manufacture, and emergence of machinofacture, is relevant here (Gerschenkron, A. 1962. *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective, A Book of Essays,* Harvard University Press). Also, the lack of proper bourgeois democratic revolutions and radical bourgeois land reforms, contributed to the proneness of these two countries to the rise of a variety of far-right political tendencies as well as to the rupture that was involved otherwise.

Here a contingent rupture was involved. This is one of the most important constitutive element in the formation of social, political and economic conditions of the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany. As a consequence, the economic upheaval and resultant precariousness of the economic situation of the intermediate classes of petty-bourgeoisie involved a much more pronounced element of *rupture, discontinuity* and *break*. Consequently, the structure of German and Italian capitalisms was extremely fragile *in the political sense.* The economic condition created by state-led and bank-led swift industrialization in these countries was nothing comparable to what had been happening in Britain, France and some other North-Western capitalist countries since last few centuries. What was achieved in the latter in a long-drawn historical process, was to be achieved in these late-comers in the matter of a couple of decades.

Due to this, when the economic catastrophe following the First World War hit Germany and Italy, though in quite different ways, the

political ground for the drift of the already economically fragile petty-bourgeoisie was created. The sudden and catastrophic ruin first in the first few years after the end of the war and then again, especially in Germany, since 1929, led to a particular economic condition and political situation for the petty-bourgeoisie in both these countries. It goes without saying that this alone cannot explain the process of fascist rise and one has to understand the particular location of these countries in the imperialist chain and the political crises that the bourgeoisie in these countries faced in the general conditions of economic crisis. However, this much is certain that due to certain particularities of the historical trajectory of capitalist development and industrialization in both these countries, the economic condition as well as the political situation of the petty-bourgeoisie was particularly fragile.

Poulantzas refers to the rapid concentration of capital during the rise of fascism which pushed the petty-bourgeoisie into an economic crisis:

“The rise of fascism corresponds to an economic crisis for the entire petty bourgeoisie. This is an important fact: in both Germany and Italy, the petty bourgeoisie was particularly affected by the economic crisis the countries had just been through. But in so far as the crisis had begun to be resolved before fascism actually came to power, the essential point is the step of transition to the dominance of monopoly capitalism to which fascism corresponds. *The acceleration of the concentration of capital during the rise of fascism directly jeopardized the economic existence of small-scale production and small-scale ownership.*” (*ibid,* p. 247)

Poulantzas, in the case of Germany, supports this argument with some concrete figures:

“In Germany, small-scale production and commerce underwent a serious economic crisis, due above all to the process of capital concentration. Between 1907 and 1925, the proportion of ‘independent’ traders and producers in the population as a whole fell by about 4.5 per cent, and between 1925 and 1933 by a further 2 per

cent, which in all amounts to the considerable decline of some 6 to 7 per cent. At the same time, this fraction of the petty bourgeoisie, exploited by big capital (not only or even mainly by means of expropriation and proletarianization (in the strict sense), and subject to price movements, inflation, and the crisis of the 1929 depression, was one section of the population which suffered most 'economically'. In this process of pauperization, artisans and traders lost almost half their income." (*ibid,* p. 259)

This particular fact was present in the Italian experience, too:

"The situation of the urban petty bourgeoisie in Italy was broadly similar to that in Germany. In view of *the precocious and artificial concentration of Italian big capital, accelerated during the war, the position of the artisans and small traders became more and more critical throughout the rise of fascism.*" (*ibid,* p. 265)

In other words, the unevenness of the development of capitalism did not have any implication, per se, for the rise of fascism in both these countries, as Sukhwinder thinks. Why? Because in different quantities, this element is common to all instances of capitalist development. Of course, extreme unevenness can play a certain role in the rise of reactionary movements. However, in Italy, as Poulantzas pointed out, this unevenness was not so much the *unevenness of capitalist development*, not any more than any other example of capitalist development, but a *breach* in the economic development of Italy between *Industrial capitalist North* and the *Agrarian feudal and semi-feudal South*.

Thus, it was not, in particular, the *unevenness* of the capitalist development (a quantitative trait present in all examples of capitalist development) but the *way* in which and the *pace* at which the process unfolded, which created the fascist potentialities in these countries, besides the particular political conjuncture of class struggle that existed historically in these countries. Sukhwinder has completely missed this. As we can see, even while reading history, Sukhwinder is utterly incapable of distinguishing the elements of a phenomenon which are its *differentia specifica.*

C. Political Crisis in General, Revolutionary Crisis, and the Intellectual Crisis of Sukhwinder

Sukhwinder attempts to present a factual account of developments in the working-class movement in Italy in 1920, but in his trade-mark style, utters such inanities that no serious student of history and Marxism can think of. He writes:

"Italy was mired in deep economic crisis in 1920. *This situation gave rise to the revolutionary crisis in Italy in 1918-20. This further worsened the condition of toiling masses of Italy.* The workers' movement rose in this situation in Italy. In 1917, there occurred an anti-war armed rising of the Turin workers. Workers fought for increase in wages, 8 hour working day, right to form trade unions. Isolated strikes often turned into general strikes. In August-September 1919, two-month long strike took place in which 2 lakh metal workers participated. In the wake of the rising tide of workers' movement, ruling classes were forced to retreat and accept several demands of the workers." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 30)

Okay. So, Italy was facing a "deep economic crisis" in 1920; this gave rise to "revolutionary crisis" during 1918-20! And this revolutionary crisis itself "further worsened the condition of toiling masses of Italy"! How? Revolutionary crisis does not worsen the conditions of toiling masses any further, except the hardships imposed by the revolutionary class struggle itself. Sukhwinder does not understand the difference between the concepts of economic crisis, *political crisis in general* and *a revolutionary crisis in particular*.

First of all, political crises do not follow spontaneously and automatically from an economic crisis, as we have shown earlier in the essay; they emerge only in *particular conjunctures of class struggle in the general conditions of economic crisis*.

Secondly, only those political crises are converted into revolutionary crisis, which correspond to *the revolutionary offensive of the working class.*

Third, the revolutionary crises, in and by themselves, do not worsen the economic situation of the toiling masses; on the contrary, they emerge when the economic situation of the toiling masses have already, under certain situations of political class struggle, reached a bottle-neck and as such, are *a response* to this condition. Let us see how Poulantzas differentiates between political crisis in general and revolutionary crisis in particular:

“Experience shows that a common political position is generally maintained in ‘normal’ conjunctures of class struggle, or in conjunctures of acute political crisis where the working class is on the defensive, as in the case of fascism. *The dislocations appear above all in revolutionary conjunctures or in political crises corresponding to the working-class offensive, as in Germany and Italy between 1919 and 1921.*” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 244, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas is correct here. Only those political crises turn into revolutionary crises, which are accompanied by a *political revolutionary offensive of the working class.* On the contrary, fascism corresponds to a political crisis, which is accompanied by *the offensive of the dominant classes and the failure of the proletariat to mount a political offensive.* This is a qualitative difference and no element of evolutionism, quantitarianism or gradualism can be allowed to creep in here.

In other words, every political crisis is pregnant with dual possibilities. Depending on the accumulation of the subjective forces of different classes that constitute the different terms of the contradiction, it can assume a political crisis leading to reactionary outcome, or a political crisis leading to a revolutionary outcome. The first is the case which leads to one of the exceptional forms of bourgeois regime, whereas the other is the case which, accompanied by a revolutionary offensive of the proletariat, leads to systemic change and a revolutionary regime of the proletariat. In nutshell, there is a qualitative difference between the generic idea of a political crisis, and the revolutionary crisis, which is manifestation

of *a particular kind of political crisis corresponding to the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat.* All of this is lost on Sukhwinder.

D. Recurring Blunder of Sukhwinder: 'Fascism as a Response to Revolutionary Offensive of the Proletariat'

Sukhwinder attempts to present an image that the rise of fascism was a response to the emergence of a revolutionary working-class movement in Italy. He writes:

"In cities and villages, the struggle of workers and peasants was led by the socialist party of Italy. In 1920, this struggle of Italy's workers and peasantry reached its peak. *The struggle of toiling masses brought on agenda the question of power. In Antonio Gramsci's leadership the Ordine Nuovo group of the socialist party began creating factory councils and turning them into institutions of workers' state.* When the ruling classes began dismantling these factory councils, then a large strike movement started spreading in Northern Italy. The workers occupied the factories of Milan, Rome, Naples, Genoa, Turin and other cities. Workers set up factory councils and armed red defenders. Milan, Florence and many other cities were in the occupation of workers.

"But Italy's proletariat could not sustain this victory. The other sections of the socialist party showed no enthusiasm for furthering the workers' movement and taking it to victorious culmination. Two-line struggle sharpened inside the socialist party. Socialist party split in January 1921 and the Communist Party of Italy came into existence." (*ibid,* p. 31, *emphasis ours*)

Sukhwinder writes further, quoting Poulantzas:

""*In fact, during the rise of fascism, and despite their own mistakes, Gramsci and the Turin Ordine Nuovo group seem, in their position on the workers' councils, to have been the only section of the Third International in Europe to have grasped the problems of the united front."* But Bordiga's left sectarian line dominated over the party,

thus, Gramsci's thinking could not be turned into practical action." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 33, *author's emphasis*)

It is true that Gramsci presented a relatively correct line within the PSI and later within the PCI, too. However, Sukhwinder overestimates the offensive of the working class in Italy. Poulantzas has pointed out that in Italy, too, when the revolutionary offensive of the working class subsided due to its internal weaknesses (primarily economism, not the refusal to ally with the PSI, as Sukhwinder thinks), only then the fascist rise began. The interval between the two events was, of course, smaller than that in Germany, but Italian fascism, too, was not a response to 'red scare' in Italy; on the contrary, its rise began when the 'red scare' in Italy had already subsided.

Poulantzas himself writes:

"Firstly, the rise of fascism, and the preceding period as well, were again a very concentrated experience for the proletariat. *The stabilization period between the turning point of the defeat and the start of the rise of fascism was especially brief in Italy. The process of defeat in this case saw no attempt at insurrection in the full sense – apart from a local insurrection in Turin in 1917.* The proletarian offensive essentially took the form of strikes, in particular of political strikes. The process of defeat nevertheless took place in a continuous 'veiled' civil war between the two forces in operation." (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 198, *emphasis ours*)

As we can see, even in Italy the fascist rise *began* on the ruins of *political offensive* of the proletariat, contrary to Sukhwinder's belief.

E. Gramsci and the Conception of United Front Against Fascism: Sukhwinder's Complete Obliviousness towards History and Theory

Moreover, Gramsci's relatively correct view regarding 'united front' that Poulantzas talks about has nothing to do with even something comparable to the 'popular front', as Sukhwinder wants us to believe by way of an allusion. Let us see what Poulantzas writes about it,

which Sukhwinder has missed because he did not read the entire work of Poulantzas:

“Togliatti thus implicitly excluded medium capital (the ‘liberal bourgeoisie’) from the fascist bloc, but he apparently kept to Gramsci’s conception of the landowners. In fact, while he now emphasized the advanced and concentrated nature of Italian capitalism, and the hegemonic role of monopoly capital, which he had not done previously, Togliatti still retained the distinction between the ‘two sectors’ under fascism in Italy (a monopoly capitalist sector, and a very backward, therefore feudal, agrarian sector), and failed to see the penetration of agriculture by monopoly capitalism. But the theory of ‘feudal survivals’, apparently a continuation of his previous analyses, served a quite different purpose: it only corroborated the strategy of alliances advocated by Dimitrov. *As far as Gramsci is concerned, he did of course stress the need to fight fascism by a ‘popular anti-fascist revolution’, but only in the sense that he was opposed to making the foundation of a soviet republic the immediate objective of the struggle against fascism, and saw the need for transitional aims. Gramsci was in no way the disciple of Dimitrov.*” (*ibid,* footnote, p. 123)

In fact, the united front concept that Gramsci adhered to stemmed directly from the Leninist slogan of ‘to the masses’ in order to resist bourgeois reactionaries. This entailed the idea of the ‘united front from below’, which meant, a united front with the rank-and-file, even in the social-democratic trade unions, forming issue-based tactical alliance with the socialists, social-democrats, too, while at the same time not missing any opportunity to expose the role of social-democracy in the rise of fascism. Poulantzas has summarized this succinctly:

“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.*

“‘The united front tactic means that the communist vanguard must take the lead in the day-to-day struggles of *the broad working masses* for their most vital interests. In these struggles the communists are even *ready to negotiate with the treacherous social democrat and Amsterdam leaders* … The existence of independent communist parties and their *complete freedom of action in regard to the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolutionary social democracy is the most significant historical achievement of the proletariat, which the communists will in no circumstances whatever renounce … Nor does the united front tactic mean so-called upper-level “electoral alliances” which pursue some parliamentary purpose or other.* The united front tactic is the offer of a joint struggle of communists with all workers who belong to other parties or groups, and with all non-party workers … Its true realization can come only “from below”, from the depths of *the working masses* themselves. Communists, however, must not refuse *in certain circumstances* to negotiate with the leaders of the hostile workers’ parties, but the masses must be kept fully and constantly informed of the course of these negotiations …’

“The theses on the united front flowed directly from the Leninist slogan, ‘To the masses’…” (*ibid*, p. 157-58)

Thus, what Sukhwinder is allusions regarding the Gramsci's idea of united front only reveals his total inability to understand what Gramsci thought about united front in this period and why he was making more sense than others, ("left" as well as right within the PCI). The mistake of the Bordiga tendency was the "left" mistake of, in effect, rejecting even the 'united front from below', that is, communists-led 'rank-and-file united front' of all working-class masses, including those who were members of social-democratic trade unions and social-democratic parties. In Germany, Thälmann was the main representative of this same tendency. PCI under Bordiga did accept *economic united front* at the level of trade unions, only for particular economic demands. However, the idea of *the political front* at the level of the rank-and-file elements of the all-workers' organizations, was rejected outright. The excerpt presented by Sukhwinder, where Gramsci is being commended for having a relatively correct understanding about united front, is basically Poulantzas's reference to Gramsci's idea of following the Leninist call of 'to the masses' in the formation of united front from below, not simply an economic one, but a political one, which was completely and diametrically opposed to the "left" tendency represented by the likes of Bordiga and Thälmann. However, it was *equally and vehemently opposed to right-wing deviation of capitulationism in the matters pertaining to the question of the united front.*

F. Another Instance of Sukhwinder's Ignorance About History

Sukhwinder presents a highly inaccurate historical account of the rise of fascism in Italy. For instance, he contends that due to the maximalist program of PSI regarding agrarian reforms and its "left" attitude towards the rural petty-bourgeoisie, the latter ultimately joined the feudal lords of South Italy. Nothing can be farther from the truth.

It is true that due to the maximalist program, the PSI under Serrati failed to win over the rural petty-bourgeoisie, especially the poor peasantry, because it rejected any intermediate redistributive land program. *However, due to this, the poor peasantry did not join the*

feudal lords! It was politically demobilized and lost trust in the Italian socialists and immediately after that involved in spontaneous riot-like revolts against the semi-feudal lords (by the way, even the landlords in South Italy were not *feudal lords* as such, but semi-feudal lords undergoing a transition to capitalist landlordism due to the intervention of the monopoly capital. In fact, Poulantzas criticizes Gramsci for giving too little significance to this process). Ultimately, it was fascism which, by using the ideology of 'community of the soil', unified interests of all the rural classes vis-à-vis the urban classes and industry, and the ideology of what Marx had termed 'feudal socialism', won over, the chunk of rural petty-bourgeoisie; whereas, it already had, from the very beginning, the support of rural big property. Poulantzas points out:

"The end of the war saw a real peasant uprising in both countries, and in Italy it took particularly radical forms. *Many small-holders and tenants went over to social democracy.* The agricultural labourers were organized into social-democratic unions *en masse*, and some of them supported the communist party.

"But social democracy betrayed them. As for the KPD and the 'Maximalist' tendency in Italian social democracy, they both completely neglected the question of alliance with the poor peasantry, and so did the PCI to a certain extent, during the rise of fascism. This had its roots in the general political line of the parties and their specific practice in relation to alliances. Their policy did not allow them to advance any concrete transitional programme for the peasantry on the basis of distribution of land.

"*In this situation, the different peasant classes and fractions found themselves extremely disoriented politically, and their revolt increasingly took on typical jacquerie forms.* They too were in ideological crisis." (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 278-79, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas points out further:

“Fascism, then, presented a demagogic face to the poor peasantry, making false promises of ‘colonization’ and land distribution. But there was more to it: fascism thoroughly exploited both the particular forms assumed by petty bourgeois rebel ideology in the countryside, and the ideological theme of the solidarity and community of the soil. It was this corporatist aspect which prevailed in the ideological role of fascism in the countryside. Like the emphasis on ties of blood and ties of the soil, on personal loyalty, etc., this aspect linked up with the survivals of *feudal ideology* in ‘rural fascism’.” (*ibid,* p. 280, *emphasis ours*)

And finally:

“On the basis of this secondary contradiction, fascism manages to disguise the principal contradiction in the countryside, between the big landowners and the popular classes, in a quite specific way. Fascism originally appears much more as a reaction of the whole agricultural sector against the capitalization of agriculture, than as the direct expression of the reaction of the poor peasantry, i.e. the rural petty bourgeoisie, against the big landowners. Under fascism, this petty-bourgeois revolt is directed almost exclusively against credit (banking capital) and the ‘profiteering Jew’, against falling prices on the urban market, and against the industrial proletariat.” (*ibid,* p. 281)

Secondly, as we pointed out above, Sukhwinder tries to present a picture and Italian fascism emerged as a reaction to an insurgent working class. That, too, is untrue. In fact, the fascist rise began immediately after the political offensive of the working class had already become dormant and passive. This was a point, to which Gramsci also alluded when he said in 1924 that fascism never engages or maneuvers against an active political movement of the working class; it waits till this movement subsides, and then it falls upon it, for not what it does, but for what it is. We have presented this quote of Gramsci earlier in the essay. This a remarkable point. Poulantzas, too, shows that Mussolini’s rise begins with the political

defeat of the revolutionary communists as well as the maximalist Socialists under Serrati. He argues:

“Firstly, the rise of fascism, and the preceding period as well, were again a very concentrated experience for the proletariat. The stabilization period between the turning point of the defeat and the start of the rise of fascism was especially brief in Italy.” (*quoted above*)

After this Poulantzas goes on to show, in detail, why despite spontaneous militancy, the working-class movement failed *politically,* owing to the lack of the correct political line. On the one hand, was the right-wing of PSI under Turati, which capitulated to the bourgeoisie, on the other, there was the maximalist left tendency within PSI, under the leadership of Serrati, which never went beyond legalism and reactive defencism, despite often being radical in its phraseology. Similarly, under Bordiga, the PCI completely rejected the united front of the working class from below and also issue-based tactical alliances with socialists, especially, the Serrati faction. In fact, Lenin and later Bolsheviks had often advised the Italian communists to form particular alliances with the Serrati faction. On the other hand, there was the faction led by Gramsci, which did have a relatively correct understanding, but till 1924-25, did not declare open ‘war’ against the “lefts” because, as Gramsci himself had said, he did not want to be seen acting as a “surety” for the right-wing opposition (under Tasca) to Bordiga. Even when Gramsci assumed the main leadership, especially since 1926, the PCI could not implement a politically correct line. One of the reasons was the arrest of Gramsci. Moreover, it was too late by 1926.

Further.

G. Sukhwinder’s Quixotic Imaginations About the “Left” Deviation in the Communist Movement of Italy

After an inaccurate account of the history of rise of fascism and the mistakes of the PCI as well as the PSI which contributed to it,

Sukhwinder again reveals his ignorance when he presents a summation:

“The treachery of socialist party and the errors of communist party too helped to pave the way for rise of fascism in Italy and establishment of fascist dictatorship. Whereas the socialist party turned away from resisting fascism, the communist party under its leader Bordiga was prey to left sectarianism. The communist party could not detect the real character of fascism and underestimated its danger. Whereas the leader of Communist party, Bordiga was prey to left sectarianism, Tasca, on the other end of the spectrum was right opportunist. Gramsci’s understanding on fascism and the way of resisting was relatively accurate. He considered Tasca’s right opportunist line to be more dangerous. For resisting fascism, Bordiga was against the formation of united front with socialist party or any other group. It was Gramsci that correctly understood the importance of anti-fascist united front. *“In fact, during the rise of fascism, and despite their own mistakes, Gramsci and the Turin Ordine Nuovo group seem, in their position on the workers’ councils, to have been the only section of the Third International in Europe to have grasped the problems of the united front.”* But Bordiga’s left sectarian line dominated over the party, thus, Gramsci’s thinking could not be turned into practical action.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 32-33, *author’s emphasis*)

As we have already pointed out, Gramsci’s concept of united front was completely different from what Sukhwinder wants us to believe. We have shown this above with sufficient clarity. Gramsci was not in the favour of forming *general anti-fascist front* with the socialist party. First of all, the PSI itself was divided and there was no question, for Gramsci, of rapprochement with the right-wing and parliamentarist wing of the PSI; the question of alliance with the Serrati faction, too, was about particular tactical alliances; the united front for Gramsci was implementing a massline to form united front from below, among the rank-and-file workers from all kinds of trade unions and organizations (including the socialist-led organizations). Gramsci’s approval of participation in Arditi Del Popolo was precisely based on

this general understanding. Sukhwinder has fantastic ideas about this too:

“The first organisation that came into being in Italy to resist fascism was Arditi Del Poplo. It was founded by anarchist Argo Sokotari in June 1921. It included all types of anti-fascist fighters (communist, socialist, anarchist, republican). In a few months, Arditi had organised 144 sections to resist fascism which had 20 thousand members. In the beginning, Arditi had considerable success in resisting fascism. But in the Arditi could not survive in face of the fascist offensive. One cause for this was the open financial support to fascists by monopolists of Italy and second was the attitude of socialists and communists towards Arditi. On 3 August 1921, Socialist party affected a peace truce with Mussolini and withdrew support from Arditi. Socialist party was against armed resistance of Fascism. Its peace agreement with Mussolini allowed the fascists to re organise and sharpen its offensive. Under the influence of left sectarian line, Communist party rejected Arditi by branding it as a bourgeois trick and declared their withdrawal from Arditi. But the rank and file of both parties revolted against their leaders and remained in Arditi on a large scale.” (*ibid*, p. 33)

First of all, Arditi del Popolo was not founded *only* by Argo Secondari (who is this Sokotari, by the way?!). It was co-founded by Secondari, Giuseppe Mingrino (a socialist) and Gino Lucetti (an anarchist). PCI did not see Arditi as “bourgeois trick” as such. The sectarian line represented by Bordiga did not see Arditi del Popolo as a possible model of ‘united front from below’; he argued that communists cannot be part of any armed resistance group which is not under the strict control of and formed by the communist party itself and ordered to found communist military resistance groups of the PCI, which were, indeed, formed. However, this was certainly a “left” sectarian mistake. Gramsci differed and opposed this line. Poulantzas has quoted PCI’s views regarding Arditi del Popolo:

“The PCI denounced them and forbade its members to take part in them: ‘The “Arditi del popolo” apparently propose to use the

proletarian reaction to the excesses of fascism to re-establish the “order and morality of social life”. The aim of communists is quite different: they want to lead the proletarian struggle to the revolutionary victory. Their position is based on the implacable antithesis between the dictatorship of bourgeois reaction and the dictatorship of the proletarian revolution … They therefore point to the pernicious and defeatist nature of all distinctions between the defensive and offensive of the working class.’ The Arditi elements were branded as *‘suspicious’ and ‘confused’*, and the PCI organized its own communist squads, stressing ‘the value of isolation’.” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 212)

Of course, it was a serious “left” deviation criticized by Gramsci at that time itself. However, what Sukhwinder understands about it, is fantastic.

“The lack of understanding about fascism’s true nature, the trend of underestimating its threat wasn’t just prevalent in the Communist Party of Italy but also in the Communist movement of Europe. Most of them thought that fascism is a common tool of counter revolution which will quickly be outmoded. *Before long the bourgeois, with the help of social democrats, would return to the parliamentary forms of rule. That is why, the social democrats are the real barrier in the way of proletarian revolution.*” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 33-34, *emphasis ours*)

I do not properly understand what Sukhwinder means by “common tool of counter revolution”. Perhaps, he meant to say “ordinary tool”. Moreover, the last two sentences of the excerpt quoted above, have no rigorous logical relation. If fascism was misconstrued by certain communists as a temporary short-lived phenomenon and a temporary tool for the bourgeoisie in crisis, and if, due to this misconception, they believed that soon the bourgeoisie with the social-democracy would restore parliamentary democracy, then why would they consider the social-democrats as the real barrier to the proletarian revolution? Moreover, since Sukhwinder subscribes to the line of the ‘popular front’, he should not have any problem with

that, because in the case of fascist regime, the very task for Sukhwinder is “siding with the bourgeois democracy” and its “restoration”! Sukhwinder is unable to decide where to stand, where to jump, and where to sit.

Moreover, this depiction of “most of them (communists)” does not hold water. There was a fierce debate between and among parties, in Comintern, inside the Bolshevik Party as well as major Marxist thinkers. Besides, from the writings of the 1920s and the 1930s, we can clearly discern a general atmosphere of confusion regarding different elements of fascism, its relation with different classes and the political crisis which leads to fascist rise. This was natural, as we have pointed out many times in this essay. There was no precedence of the rise of fascism as a particular kind of far-right reaction of the bourgeoisie. Communists were becoming a witness to it for the first time and they were genuinely trying to grapple with it in order to draw practical conclusions from it.

The period till 1922 was of ‘united front of the working class from below’ which argued for issue-based particular and tactical alliances with socialists, social-democrats, but not general anti-fascist united front with them, while at the same time, organizing the masses of the rank-and-file workers, irrespective of their organizational affiliations to different trade unions, etc. From 1922-23, under the same name, the policy of ‘workers’ government’ was introduced, which failed, too, due to the non-implementation of the massline, which was the original idea at the foundation of the line of ‘united front of the working class from below’; this failure due to the right swing at the Fourth Congress, ultimately resulted in the reaction of the “left” swing from 1923 to 1928 and then to ultra-left deviation from 1928 to 1932, which led to the isolation of the revolutionary communists, even among the masses of the working class, not to speak of the utter neglect of political work among the other classes of the people; this led to near-total decimation of remaining communist organizations, crushing of the organized workers’ movement (not to be confused with the political offensive of the proletariat) and conversion of the resistible rise of fascism into the irresistible rise of fascism. This led

to the beginning of right deviation again, which began from 1933 itself and revealed it completely with the line of the ‘popular front’.

However, Sukhwinder fails to see this pendulum like motion from “left” to right and from right to “left”, in the absence of massline, correct understanding of the primacy of *the political* and due to the dominance of trade-unionism, economism, syndicalism and other alien bourgeois ideas in the communist as well as revolutionary working-class movement.

H. A Few Questions Regarding the Rise of Fascism in Italy that Sukhwinder Wants to Evade

Sukhwinder writes:

“By the end of 1920 Italy’s counter revolutionary forces and their leading fascist detachments’ activities gained pace. In November 1920 Fascists captured the city councils of Bologna which was previously led by socialists. In the parliamentary elections of May 1921, Fascists had great success.

“In 1922, fascists captured many cities of Italy. On 28 October 1922, they started the famous ‘march to Rome’. Fascist squads easily entered Italy’s capital, Rome. Governmental troops did not oppose them at all. The king of Italy, Victor Emmanuel declared Mussolini to be the prime minister. The fascists banned factory councils, trade unions. Peasants were removed from the lads captured from feudal lords; worker clubs were broken. The killings of trade union activists, socialists, communists began. The communist party was particularly targeted for repression which made it quite weak. To crush the workers’ movement fascists particularly depended on extra-legal violence along with “legal” means.

“*In 1926, through an order Mussolini was declared to be above the parliament.* Besides the fascist party, all other political parties and organisations were declared illegal.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 32, *emphasis ours*)

It is noteworthy that Sukhwinder is obliged to mention in this account that *in content* the parliament ceased to exist since 1926 in Italy. He also has to mention that in 1921 elections, the fascists performed well and he also mentions that the seizure of power by the fascists happened by the end of 1922. However, he intentionally omits the fact that in Italy another parliamentary election were held in 1924, even though the passage of the Acerbo Law had given an advantage to the fascist party in the elections. *In other words, the democratic content of the electoral process and parliament was in decay, a process which can take a variety of forms in different historical contexts.* Secondly, the parliamentary institutions were retained for a long time after the fascist takeover and some of them survived after 1926, even though it was *purely formal*. Why did Sukhwinder omit these important details? Because that would have raised several questions which he would not have been able to answer. What are these questions? Let us see.

First of all, Sukhwinder needs to answer this question: *when was the fascization of the state completed in Italy?* Sukhwinder sees that as an event whereas it took the form of a process. No doubt it was different from today, because the *differentia specifica* of the present experience is that this process itself is never complete, but assumes the form of a perpetually ongoing project. However, in Italy, too, this much is certain that it did not take the form of *an event*. Poulantzas has pointed out that in Italy after seizing the power, the fascists undertook the task of the *reorganization of the state apparatus* especially between 1926 and 1928. Poulantzas argues:

“1925-6, with the various ‘ultra-fascist’ laws, was a major turning point in the reorganization of the State system, and the party was increasingly subordinated to the repressive state apparatus. At the same time as power was concentrated in the executive, the dominant role among the branches of the apparatus shifted towards the administration: for example, the powers of the prefecture were extended, the prefects becoming ‘the highest State authority in the provinces’, which occasioned much discontent in the fascist party and among the regional secretaries of the fascia. In 1927, a new

circular about the administration and the prefects submitted the party hierarchy to the State hierarchy. The party itself was considered an ‘instrument of the will of the State’, and the circular stated that ‘squadrism is now an anachronism’. With the formation of the fascist Grand Council, the supreme body for decision-making, supplementing the Council of Ministers, the subordination of the fascist party to the State apparatus was finalized. *The process was completed with the proclamation, in 1928, of the ‘unity of party and State’,* which had the same meaning as in Germany: the petty bourgeoisie lost its presiding place.” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 352-53, *emphasis ours*)

This leads us to the second question: if fascist seizure of power took place in 1922 and till 1926 parliamentary system continued to be formally in existence, what should have been the proletarian anti-fascist front strategy and what should have been the stage of revolution for Italian communists? Fascism was in power and the parliament, too, continued to exist in form, though the content was truncated. In fact, 1924 elections, the communists and socialists did not form an alliance and fought the elections separately which was a big issue of debate. Was the seizure of power not complete? Sukhwinder does not and *cannot* answer these questions. It appears from his account that qualitatively the process of rise of fascism in Italy was quite similar to the process of rise of fascism in Germany, whereas, nothing can be farther from the truth.

Poulantzas has pointed out that in Italy the process of rise of fascism was very different from that in Germany. Poulantzas points out:

“The rise in fascism, firstly, was of a dual nature in Italy. *It was both more militarized and more parliamentary than in Germany.* The collusion of the repressive state apparatus with fascism was much clearer, and it will be remembered that the representatives of medium capital were much more conciliatory towards fascism.” (*ibid,* p. 350, *emphasis ours*)

He argues further:

“Italian fascism, once in power, proceeded to reorganize the State apparatuses on much the same lines as Nazism; but it did not go so far as Nazism, or follow the line right through. In particular, the suppression of the relative autonomy of the State branches and apparatuses was less marked than with Nazism; State intervention in all social activity, including repressive and ideological intervention, was more restricted, *and certain institutional forms of the ‘parliamentary democratic’ State were preserved.*

“The explanation lies in *the particular characteristics of the class struggle: the different features of big capital in Italy, the stronger resistance of medium capital and also of the masses, in particular the working class, i.e. the specific characteristics of the ideological and political crisis.*

“*During the first period of fascist rule, which was longer than in Germany, there was again a gradual reorganization of the repressive state apparatus under the dominance of the fascist party, whose members invaded all the apparatuses. The party’s dominance was stronger and more necessary in so far as parliamentary forms were preserved throughout this period:* the gap between real and formal power persisted to some extent, the party acting as the centre of real power, despite appearances on the political scene.” (*ibid,* p. 351-52, *emphasis ours*)

Finally, Poulantzas demonstrates the qualitative differences between the Italian case and the German case, which also blinded bourgeois authors like Arendt, who did not consider Italian case as an example of ‘totalitarianism’, a category as good as horse-shit anyway:

“The relevant criteria for distinguishing between forms of exceptional regime show the identical nature of the two cases, *though the Italian fascist regime kept up a façade of constitutionality, because of the particular compromises it had to resort to.* The king in principle still had the power to dismiss and nominate the Prime Minister (Mussolini); *parliament was ‘elected’ on a single slate drawn up by the fascist Grand Council on the nomination of the various corporate bodies, though it had only a decorative function;* alongside it was the

Chamber of Fasci and Corporations, nominated by the fascist leadership; *the Senate, appointed by the king, continued to exist, as did the State Council and the Court of Appeal.* This was clearly only *a façade*, though it helped give Mussolini real standing in the eyes of some heroes of 'Western freedom': first among them, of course, being Churchill, the future executioner of Greece." (*ibid,* p. 354, *emphasis ours*)

Sukhwinder has missed all these nuances which point to the qualitative differences between the Italian case and the German case, because that would raise questions to him that would make him uncomfortable. The complexity of the experience of the rise of fascism in the early-Twentieth century itself explains the plurality and multiplicity in the emerging views of the revolutionary communists in that period. Sukhwinder attempts to present a different monolithic and homogeneous view of the period.

In sum, we can safely say that Sukhwinder's account of rise of fascism in Italy is not even good for a class 8 history textbook. He has missed all the cardinal details, the important complexities, its specific differences from the German case and the peculiarities of the process of rise of fascism to power and the consequent reorganization of the state apparatuses. Even schoolboys studying history as a subject can present a more accurate and articulate account than that of Sukhwinder. It is not to say that we had expected something more from him. The experience of dealing with the hair-raising stupidities of Sukhwinder has trained us systematically in the past few years to expect only this much from him.

PART 4

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

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

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

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

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

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

After discussing the case of Germany in his book *Fascism and Dictatorship*, Poulantzas moves on to discuss the case of Italy. This discussion is in the context of the peculiarities of the economic history of Germany and Italy and their place in the imperialist chain at the beginning of the Twentieth century. Poulantzas points out:

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

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

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

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

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

Further:

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

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

“A passive revolution: the very words indicate the similarity to Bismarck’s revolution from above, pointed out by Gramsci himself. *Yet it was very different.* The Italian bourgeoisie capitalized on the broad popular movement, reaching political power in spite of its

weaknesses, but guaranteeing the landowners a thorough suppression of the movement by the State apparatus. These features of the Italian process explain both the existence of movements of the Jacobin type (e.g. Mazzini's Action Party and the Garibaldi movement) and their inability to take a real hold over the Italian bourgeoisie." (*ibid,* p. 33)

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

"In Italy, for reasons explained above, we also find crisis and contradictions within the power bloc. *On the one hand, these contradictions are deeper than in the German case; on the other, following from this, fascism as a means of achieving the hegemony of big capital meets with stronger resistance from the other members of the power bloc. So although the rise of fascism was quicker than in Germany, beginning between late 1920 and early 1921, reaching the point of no return during 1921 and taking power in 1922, the process of stabilizing fascism in power was much slower. It was only in 1925, three years after its installation in power, that Italian fascism was stabilized, with the ultra-fascist laws, and entered its second phase in power.*

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

Further:

"*In the Italian case, unlike the German, the traditional alliance between Northern bourgeoisie and Southern landowners was seriously jeopardized by the process of capital concentration and by the creation of big capital.* Although it held together politically, the

explosive seeds it carried at the economic level were brought into the light of day." (*ibid.* p. 115, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

Moreover, even the cases of German fascism in power and the Italian fascism in power were different, precisely due to the above-mentioned factors. It has been pointed out by many scholars that on the one hand the bourgeoisie in Italy was weaker than its counterpart in Germany, while on the other hand, unlike Bismarckian 'revolution from above', the Italian bourgeois-democratic revolution had certain elements of mass democratic movement. The reason for this was the alliance that the bourgeoisie formed with the masses against the

Southern landlords, though only to crush the masses once it seized power. However, this was a major difference having important repercussions for the political situation in which fascist rise began and finally seized power and existed in power. Poulantzas argues:

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

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

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

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

"*In Italy the process was the more concentrated and dramatic, producing interesting similarities with Tsarist Russia:* for example, the massive spurt of growth from the 1890s to World War I; the very high levels of geographical, structural, and physical concentration of

industry, which brought masses of workers together in a small number of centers and created new conurbations with politically volatile populations; the interventionist role of the state, linked to a powerful complex of railway, heavy-industrial, shipbuilding, engineering, and hydro-electrical interests, the selective involvement of foreign capital, and a well-knit oligopoly of government, industry, and banks; an exclusivist and oligarchic political system; and a dramatic discrepancy between north and south, between a dynamic industrial sector that in all respects was highly advanced and an agricultural one that was equally and terribly backward." (Geoff Eley. 2003. "What Produces Fascism: Preindustrial Traditions or a Crisis of the Capitalist State" in Dobkowski, Walliman (eds.) *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany, 1919-45,* Cornerstone Publications*,* p. 80-81)

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

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

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

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

Moving on.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“It is therefore understandable why attacks of the German Lefts on the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany for entertaining the idea of a bloc with the “Independents” (the “Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany,” the Kautskyites) appear to us to be utterly frivolous and a clear proof that the “Lefts” are in the wrong. We in Russia also had Right Mensheviks (who participated in the Kerensky government), corresponding to the German Scheidemanns, and Left Mensheviks (Martov), corresponding to the German Kautskyites, who were in opposition to

the Right Mensheviks." (Lenin, V. I. 2021. *"Left-wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 67)

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

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

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

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

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

Just a few lines before, Sukhwinder writes:

“The new government (*after the November Revolution – author*) undertook many reformist steps, controlled the production and administration of many departments. Martial law was removed. Freedom of speech, gathering and organisation, women rights, 8 hour working day etc., were recognised.” (*ibid,* p. 35)

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

After the November Revolution, the working class indeed had gained the right of 8-hour working day and the provisional government under Scheidemann and Ebert were willing to grant this because of, first, the Social-Democratic idea of labour-capital compromise for peaceful capitalism and, second, in the face of the militant working-

class movement, which was not decisively defeated (politically speaking) till the end of 1920, they had no other choice. However, the period from 1919 to 1923 was the period of the economic instability of the German capitalism due to the crisis created as the aftermath of war.

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

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

David Abraham points out:

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

Here Abraham is talking about the bloc of the ruling class consisting of heavy industry, estate owners, export industry, which he calls the ‘Anti-socialist Right Bourgeois Bloc’ that existed from 1922 to 1924 (see p. 40, Table 2). The third bloc continued this policy, which comprised of export industry, heavy industry in the main and tailended by rural labour, salaried employees and the proletariat. Abraham calls this bloc the ‘Class Compromise Bloc, 1925 to 1930’. As the name suggests, the bloc became possible only due to the capitulation of the SPD to the reactionary bourgeoisie for hopes of ‘peaceful development’ of the “organized capitalism” into socialism and in hopes of sidelining the KPD.

Poulantzas, too, points out:

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

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

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

Further.

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

Sukhwinder continues to blabber his gibberish:

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

"Political forces were sharply polarised in this period. The workers were fed up with the ruling class' parties (social democratic and other bourgeois parties). They were also displeased with the communist party. A considerable portion of the masses, especially petty bourgeois went into the fascism's influence. In parliamentary

(Reichstag) elections of September 1930, candidates of Nazi party received 65 lakh votes. In 1928, it had received only 8.1 lakh votes. In the parliamentary elections of December 1932, Nazi party received 1 crore 17 lakh votes. *Immediately after the elections, the reactionary ruling classes of Germany moved towards the setting up of fascist dictatorship. President Hermann Hindenburg declared Hitler as the head of state on 30 January 1933. This meant the setting up of naked dictatorship of the most reactionary elements of monopoly capital in Germany.* After this, the already transpiring fascist terror intensified further. The arrests, murders of communists, trade union leaders hastened. At the time, the communist party of Germany was the second largest communist party of Germany. Fascist state eliminated this party in a week. *The first task that Hitler's fascist state did was to cripple the organised workers' movement of Germany and unshackle the German capital of the danger of worker's revolution which was continuously circling over it.* (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 36-37, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

David Abraham points out:

"The bourgeois governments of 1924-28, under several DVP and Catholic chancellors, were able to compromise and maneuver as much as they did ·only at the expense of the parties that constituted the various coalitions. Cabinets and bureaucracies worked out a host

of compromises, but party life showed signs of becoming moribund as the transmission of interest-group pressures became an increasingly central activity. Already, formal and real power began to issue from different sources. Collaboration did not create consensus, and the centrality of the middle parties masked the decline and splitting of their constituencies. *The political crisis became increasingly acute after 1928, before the economic crisis had really set in.* No member or fraction of the dominant bloc was capable of imposing its direction on the other members of the bloc, either through parliament or other organs of the state." (Abraham, D. 2003. *op.cit.,* p. 54, *emphasis ours*)

Abraham points out further:

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

Similarly, Gossweiler points out:

"Attentive observers, however, have been quick to note a keynote feature, *namely that the offensive against the Weimar Republic began toward the end of 1927 and early 1928, that is to say, the temporary armistice initiated by capital came to an end considerably before the outbreak of the world economic crisis.* Singularly significant evidence in this context was the forming early in 1928 of the Association for the Renewal of the Reich, which, in rejecting the Weimar Republic, echoed the clarion call for establishing a Third Reich. Further symptoms along similar lines were the right-wing seizure of leadership posts both in the German National People's party (DNVP) and the Center party, namely, Alfred Hugenberg and the Prelate Kaas; the lockout of some 250,000 metalworkers by the Ruhr trusts in November 1928, and the memorandum of the Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie entitled 'Äscent or Demise" in December 1929.

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

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

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

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

be only very relative and had to be more fragile than was the case in the other developed capitalist industrial countries." (Gossweiler, K. 2003. *op.cit.,* p. 155, *emphasis ours*)

Abraham points out:

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

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

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

Further.

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

We will not focus too much on asinine statements of Sukhwinder like "They (workers) were also displeased with the communist party" as it completely misses the fact that it was not the question of being "pleased" or "displeased". The question was that the KPD could not rally the mass of the working class *politically* to resist fascism through implementation of massline, repudiation of economism and

failure to conceptualize and apply the line of ‘united front from the below’. Purely in terms of votes that the KPD got since 1924 show a trajectory of increase (mostly due to workers’ votes shifting from the SPD). KPD’s vote percentage was 9.2 in 1924, 10.7 in 1928, 13.1 in 1930, 14.3 in 1932 (I) and 17 percent in 1932 (II). It fell only in the last election to 12.2 in 1933 which happened with Hitler in power.

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

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

It was precisely this economistic line that led to increase of the *political* influence of social-democracy in the ranks of the KPD. (see Poulantzas for a description of the entire process: Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 173-175). Evidently, Sukhwinder fails, once again, to see

the difference between *the political* and *the economic.* There is no need to dwell any further on such asininity.

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

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

The fact is that from 1930 itself the political crisis of the bourgeoisie was hitting the fan. From 1930 to 1932, the bourgeoisie tried to resolve this crisis through various authoritarian governments. The first combination that the bourgeoisie tried was that of the Brüning government. Brüning belonged to the Catholic Zentrum party. His government tried to manage the labour-capital compromise in order to maintain the mass base for the regime. Abraham writes:

"Heinrich Brüning, a leader of the Catholic Zentrum party, became chancellor following the collapse of the Grand Coalition in March 1930. He ruled without a parliamentary majority through the semiconstitutional mechanism of presidential decree. The Brüning regime functioned as a surrogate for the bourgeois parties, which had, by this time, lost nearly their entire electoral backing. They had become simple transmission belts for economic interests; under pressure from their industrial backers they had become creatures of "industrial egotism lacking any social concern."…The first year of Brüning's regime was, nevertheless, tolerated by the SPD, which could have toppled him. He attempted to implement a program bridging the differences among the three dominant fractions, and his economic policies were characterized by brutal deflationary budget-

balancing and belt-tightening. Brüning's modest efforts to force the estate owners to modernize, give up their huge subventions, or face massive peasant resettlement (land reform) led them to conspire with President Hindenburg's camarilla, and Brüning was abandoned. In fact, however, the heavy-industry fraction had already turned against him because he had not cut himself off entirely from the pressure of organized labor, Catholic and socialist. The dynamic-export fraction of industry, on the other hand, was prepared to continue supporting him, but it was no longer setting the tone or agenda for the dominant classes as a whole." (Abraham, D. 2003. *op.cit.* p. 57)

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

"Papen's government was heralded as being fully authoritarian and national, but throughout its six-month tenure it lacked any base of mass support and failed to unify the interests of the dominant fractions. It catered almost exclusively to the protectionist and autarkic strivings of the rural elite and heavy industry while failing to integrate the Nazi party as a junior member of the government. Papen was even less able than Brüning to harmonize the interests of the three dominant fractions, although he was certainly more energetic and effective in his repression of the SPD and unions. Because he incurred the wrath of the dynamic-export fraction and

failed to split and enlist part of the Nazi party, Papen was replaced in early December 1932 by General von Schleicher." (*ibid,* p. 57-58)

Papen government mainly represented the estate owners and secondarily the heavy industry, which were closer to one another in their *political reaction,* whereas the latter was closer to export industry in its shared economic interests *contra* the agricultural bourgeoisie. We know the issues of dispute between the two fractions: industrial and agricultural. The latter bourgeoisie wants higher prices for principal wage-good, namely, food, whereas the entire industry wants to keep the principal wage-good and all wage-goods as cheap as possible. However, within industrial bourgeoisie, the interests of the heavy industry, mainly based in Ruhr, and the export industry were different too in certain respects. The latter was more inclined to continue the capital-labour collaboration, whereas the politically reactionary heavy industry was totally against it. Schleicher represented mainly the export industry. Abraham writes:

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

It was only after the failure of what we can call the "knee-jerk" authoritarian governments of Brüning, von Papen and Schleicher,

that the bourgeoisie finally (not without apprehensions and fear) resorted to the fascist option and Hindenburg very unwillingly appointed Hitler as the chancellor. In fact, the first option that the reactionary bourgeoisie tried was to tame and subordinate the Nazi party, which they saw with suspicion and apprehension. It was only after testing all other possible options, they selected the Nazi option, as they were left with only that option. Abraham points out:

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

…

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

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

“All bourgeois parties, along with other groups and factions of the ruling class, quickly realized that the NSDAP would have to be directly involved in government. *However, its possible role and the leadership under which this was to happen became a matter of contention, resurrecting old rivalries and competitive bickering.* Hereby, as time passed and situations changed ever more, new considerations and combinations were brought into play. To simplify matters the following four major groups and strategies can be observed:

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

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

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

allow them to triumph over all contenders and to pursue a foreign policy bent on expansion solely in the East in alliance with the West.

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

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

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

“Thus, one of two remaining possibilities for attaining the dictatorship had to be chosen: either the risky coup d’etat backed solely by the army or the legal formation of a government for establishing a national dictatorship on the conditions demanded by the Nazi party,

namely, Hitler's chancellorship. In this situation the key ruling-class circles opted for the path of (at least) formal legality, thereby revealing that Schacht and Thyssen were indeed the better strategists. They had foreseen that, provided Hitler remained steadfast and did not lose his nerve, all other variants would surely fail. For sound reasons, a coup d'etat bid had to be avoided, yet the legal path was feasible only with the cooperation of the NSDAP, which now had more leverage and, being the most powerful government party, was in a position to insist on its claim to head the government." (*ibid,* p. 164)

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

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

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

Moreover, who is this Hermann Hindenburg that Sukhwinder is talking about? Hindenburg's name was Paul von Hindenburg. Why did Sukhwinder confuse him with some guy Hermann? Well, this guy

was basically the Hermann Müller, the last social-democratic chancellor of Germany, just before Brüning took over. During Müller's chancellorship, Paul von Hindenburg was the president. So, Sukhwinder came up with a brilliant idea. Why not resolve the political crisis of the German bourgeoisie by fusing Hermann Müller (representative of medium capital and partially export industry, with mass base in organized labour) with Paul von Hindenburg (representative of the junkerdom and partially the heavy industry) and create one 'Hermann Hindenburg'!

Such are the unique ways of the editor saab of 'Pratibaddh'!

Moving on.

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

The last paragraph of the above excerpt of Sukhwinder reveals his bourgeois democratic illusions and social-democracy in the clearest fashion. Here the readers clearly understand why Sukhwinder puts all the blame of failure in formation of a united front against fascism on the KPD, whereas, notwithstanding the "left"-right deviation of the KPD, the main responsibility in the last years up to the fascist rise to power, lay at the door of the SPD. Sukhwinder says, *"the Communist Party of Germany was the second largest communist party of Germany."* In other words, the KPD was the second largest communist party of Germany. Then which party was the largest communist party of Germany? The SPD! Thus, for Sukhwinder, the Social-Democratic Party of Germany was a communist party! Clearly, some scattered statements in Sukhwinder's essay about "treachery of social-democracy", etc. are only artificial additions to what is actually a particularly reformist piece. The readers must not forget that it was the social-democratic party itself (its defence minister Gustav Noske) who had directly recruited the right-wing militia, including the infamous *Freikorps* for the assassinations of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; also, the readers must not forget that it was this same SPD which in alliance with the bourgeois government, accepted the prolongation of the working day from 8

hours to 10 hours and even accepted its legalization by 1927; this party is considered by Sukhwinder as the largest communist party of Germany. Any revolutionary communist can only be disgusted at such a claim. This is nothing short of slander against revolutionary communism.

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

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

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

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

(kharra are the chits of paper that students use for cheating in examinations-author) of Punjab's left movement!

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

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

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

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

Poulantzas points out:

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

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

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

Due to not understanding this basic distinction which is clear to most Marxist theorists and historians who have worked on fascism, Sukhwinder conflates the formation of the fascist bands in Italy and formation of the Nazi party in Germany, with the process of fascist rise. The former refers to *the origins of fascism,* whereas the latter is *the process of fascist rise,* which *begins only after the political offensive of the proletariat has been decisively defeated.* The Nazis,

after coming to power, did not thwart the prospects of a workers' revolution. The prospects of a workers' revolution were decisively weakened in 1919 itself and then they were eliminated by 1923. It was only in 1926-27 that the first phase of the fascist rise begins. In this period, fascism begins to rise as a mass movement of the petty-bourgeoisie and also begins to get considerable support from certain sections of the bourgeoisie. Even Quintin Hoare, who is talking about the Italian case, points out:

"It was in late 1920 and early 1921 that sections of the Italian ruling class – first landowners in Central and Northern Italy, followed closely by powerful industrial and financial forces – began to turn to the hitherto insignificant fascists as an appropriate instrument with which to prosecute their class interests. Perhaps the foremost consideration which led them to do so was an awareness of the extreme weakness of the traditional state institutions and party-system created in the half-century since national unification. *In Italy, by this time, the revolutionary upsurge had already passed its peak, and the defeats inflicted upon the working class in April and September 1920 had been decisive ones…*" (Hoare, Q. 2015. 'Introduction', *Selections from Political Writings, 1921-26*, Aakar Books, p. ix-x, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

…

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

…

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

“1923. The great turn. The Fourth Congress of the Comintern had already taken place (1922-3); it had interpreted ‘stabilization’ economistically, identifying it with a ‘defensive’ for the working class, and launched the slogan of ‘workers’ governments’. Based on this slogan, the KPD, which had never attempted in the meantime to

build the rank and file united front, made a volte face towards a right-wing policy under Brandler and Thalheimer; *it somehow missed out the united front and went straight into parliamentary alliances between the leaderships.* At the KPD's Leipzig Congress in January 1923, the questions of mass action and the alliance between the working class and poor peasantry were neglected, while 'workers' governments' were formed with the social democrats in Saxony and Thuringia.

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

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

…

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

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

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

be long delayed." (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 168-169, *emphasis ours*)

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

Poulantzas points out:

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

More:

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

And finally:

"With the start of the rise of fascism, around 1927, the problem of reforming and centralizing the Reich became crucial. In the context of political crisis and failing hegemony, the provincial apparatuses operated more and more as 'autonomous' centres of State power for different classes and class fractions." (*ibid,* p. 339)

Therefore, it was not the hovering danger of proletarian revolution "which was continuously circling over" the German bourgeoisie throughout the 1920s and early-1930s, which the Nazis liberated it from! Rather, it is the continuously hovering cloud of dimwittedness

over the head of Sukhwinder, which leads him to nonsensical formulations unabatedly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moreover, even if the working class “rises above economic achievements”, it does not necessarily mean a *class political consciousness* for Lenin. It might lead to some kind of syndicalism, anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism, too, which *in essence* are finer varieties of economism itself. However, these tendencies do not necessarily limit themselves to economic achievements only. The *class political consciousness* is the highest stage of the development of the class consciousness of the working class, which begins with the realization of the working class that it has been born; the next step is seeing, not the machines, but the employers as the enemy; subsequently, seeing the *class of the employers* as the enemy; then, seeing *the state* not as an impartial third actor, but as a representative of the class of capitalists; and finally, understanding that to smash the state, the vanguard revolutionary party of the proletariat is required; this final stage is the stage of what Lenin called ‘party consciousness’ (see, for instance, among other writings, ‘Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution’ in Volume 15 of the *Collected Works* of Lenin). It is precisely by reaching this stage, *in the very process of struggle against various forms of economism,* that the working class can rise above the short-term, particular,

economic interests and reach the level of the consciousness of the long-term, general, political interests. Without this, the working class cannot constitute itself as a *political class, the proletariat, and emerge as the leader of the masses.* It goes without saying that the masses includes the masses of the working class, too, besides those of working peasants, lower and medium middle classes, etc. and also that this process is impossible without the agency of the vanguard party, which is nothing but the 'embodiment of the proletarian ideology' and 'advanced detachment of the proletariat' and itself emerges in the proletarian struggle against various alien bourgeois ideologies. However, for Sukhwinder, all the foundational elements of the proletariat becoming a political class are reduced to "rising above economic achievements"! A crude and vulgar economistic critique of economism!

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

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

Sukhwinder continues his assault on Marxism-Leninism and history:

“Like the communist party of Italy, the communist party of Germany too could not understand the real character of fascism and underestimated its threat. *Instead of fascism, it continued to consider social democracy as its true enemy.* It primarily targeted it (social democracy) in its attacks. The ‘social fascism’ theses adopted by Comintern in 1929, *which mistermed social democracy as fascist*, too played its role in this. *In Germany the communist party could not form a united front with social democracy and other anti-fascist forces against the rising tide of fascism. One of the reasons for this was also the fact that social democratic party too was unwilling to form a united front with communists. But the primary cause for this was the attitude of communist party towards social democracy (considering it as the primary enemy instead of fascism). Even though social democracy was not prepared to forge a united front with communists, still the attitude adopted by communist party should have been that if making an anti-fascist front with it.* The social democratic party had a larger basis in the workers of Germany. This entire basis could not have been in agreement with the capitulationist line of social democratic party. The continued appeals for forging a united front would have affected its social basis. Either this party would have been forced to construct a united front or it would have suffered a split and a section of it would have joined the united front. *This could not materialise due to Communist party of Germany’s incorrect understanding of fascism, its left sectarian line.*” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 37-38, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

1933. However, Sukhwinder presents this line as the general line of the KPD throughout the 1920s, which was finally corrected by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern!

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

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

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

sense), or as far as ideological or organizational forms are concerned.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thus, the seeds of a right-deviationist negation of Leninist line of 'united front from below' were present since the Fourth Congress

itself; Leninist line meant the winning over of the masses of workers and working people, including the ones who were members of social-democratic and other organizations. Instead, the policy of forming leadership-level alliances with the social-democrats was applied and the line of winning over the masses of workers in social-democratic organizations was abandoned by the KPD. The Fifth Congress, then, rejected the line of workers' governments as an intermediate step towards the proletarian power. But the Fifth Plenum of the Comintern again prescribed the line of maintaining contacts with the social-democrats at "the highest levels" of the leadership. Poulantzas writes:

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

…

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

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

"With the Comintern's Sixth Congress (1928), the decisive turn took place. Even though in Germany the defensive step of the workers' movement had just begun, with the start of the rise of fascism, the

end of ‘stabilization’ was defined, in ‘economist catastrophist’ terms, as a step of proletarian offensive and imminent revolution: the ‘offensive strategy’ was openly proclaimed. The theory of social fascism was put forward, and in the strategy of alliances a turn was made to ‘class against class’ and the ‘rank and file united front’.

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

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

Poulantzas continues:

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

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

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

“I shall now turn to the policy of the KPD during the rise of fascism. Its policy was dictated, amongst other things, by an incorrect understanding of the period (as one of revolutionary working-class offensive) and by an under-estimation of the fascist danger. The policy as a whole was ‘ultra-left’ only in appearance. I have given my views above about the description of the Sixth Congress as ‘ultra-left’, and these considerations are equally applicable to KPD policy,

taken as a whole. This does not mean that the KPD's specific policies did not have certain real 'ultra-left' aspects during this period." (*ibid,* p. 180-81)

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

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

"As far as the line itself is concerned, *the inclusive designation of social democracy and the social-democratic trade unions as social fascist and as the main enemy, bore a heavy responsibility for the*

failure of the united front. This was not so much because of the refusal of all contact between the leaderships, and even between the secondary ranks; it was particularly because of the policy towards the social-democratic masses, considered 'lost' as long as they were under the influence of social democracy." (*ibid,* p. 182, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

Dimitrov partially understood this failure of the KPD. Poulantzas points out:

“Even apart from the fact that the KPD’s main activity was still directed against social democracy, *this activity was conceived of as a struggle between ‘organizations’, not as a mass struggle on a mass line.* What really happened to the rank-and-file united front? The remarkable thing, as Dimitrov was correctly to recall, was that *nowhere did the KPD set up specific forms of rank-and-file united front organizations, which as organizations outside the party could cement the union by steps, combining economic and political struggle, with politics in command.* The only form of rank and file struggle the KPD accepted was trade-union struggle through the trade-union opposition, the RGO. The RGO was to be the spearhead of the rank-and-file united front, in the now all but defunct ‘factory committees.

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

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

In fact, after the Fourth Congress of Comintern and the right turn introduced by it, the KPD, which never really attempted to form rank-and-file united fronts, now capitulated to even more right and eagerly

formed parliamentary alliances with SPD and even formed governments in Saxony and Thuringia, without even attempting to form rank-and-file united front of the masses of workers. Poulantzas remarks:

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Many of the leading Nazis had been members of the Freikorps, demobilised patriotic soldiers and middle-class youth assembled by the Social Democratic Defence Minister, Gustav Noske, to end the November revolution. The Freikorps were responsible for the

murders of prominent Communists, including Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and almost seized power during the attempted Kapp putsch." (Renton, D. 1999. *Fascism: Theory and Practice,* Pluto Press, p. 34)

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

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

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

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

"In conclusion, SPD policy was faithful to its counter-revolutionary nature and function. There was no actual collusion between social democracy and fascism; throughout the rise of fascism, it still tried in its own way to defend and preserve the 'economic interests' of the working class, which it had to do to keep its representational base in the class. *None the less, it certainly bears the greatest share of responsibility for fascism's coming to power.*" (*ibid,* p. 180, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

"The first and most important commensurate outcome would have been the prevention of the disastrous further division of the working-class movement. *The unity of action so aptly displayed during the expropriation campaign of the princes would have been given new impetus in the struggle for agrarian reform.* As long as the Weimar Republic existed, even though its formation did not completely reflect the overall demands of the German Communist party (KPD), *the party had backed every real move in defense of democracy notwithstanding the fact that the Communist party never once*

relinquished its goal, namely the aim of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg to establish a socialist German republic. Moreover, the Communist party would never have hesitated to back to the hilt any initiative for the elimination of the hotbed of reaction, namely the East Elbe Junkerdom as, indeed, such action would have been fully consistent with the agrarian program of the KPD." (Gossweiker, K. 2003. *op.cit.,* p.157-58, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

"Fourth, if such policies had been pursued, severe restrictions and obstacles would have been imposed, in particular, on the possibility of fascism's developing into a mass movement. Fascism would have been denied one of its main arguments (namely, that Marxism in the guise of the SPD ruined the middle classes and the peasantry) and, moreover, would have faced a united working-class movement. As a result, fascism would not have found itself in a position of merely having to combat a powerless, divided working-class movement, engaged in constant bickering.

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

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

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

Gossweiler points out:

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

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

“*In practice this meant that the Hermann Müller government, in defiance of the SPD’s electoral promises, had to follow (and indeed followed) the basic policies of the preceding bourgeois bloc parties, that is, to step up the struggle against the Communist party and to continue the armaments program of German imperialism. This led to the Bloody May of 1929 with the subsequent banning of the Red Front Union (while the fascist SA and SS terror groupings could legally continue to exist!) and to the decision to build the armored*

cruiser, a project that was clearly rejected prior to the elections. Basically, this was a suicidal policy. *It even more profoundly widened the divisions within the working-class movement, weakened the reputation and standing of social democracy with large segments of the population, undermined the confidence SPD members had in their own party, and thereby decidedly weakened the entire left.* The counterforces on the right, however, in particular the Nazi fascists, gained ground as a direct consequence. Adhering to a policy that renounced positive political change was bound to pave the way for successive decline: *from a policy that defended the status quo to a policy that tolerated the "lesser evil" to the final capitulation to the greatest evil without even a semblance of a fight.*" (*ibid,* p. 159-60, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

Comintern, too, understood this fact by the end of 1938, as we shall see.

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

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

PART 5

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We will demonstrate it point-by-point in what follows and will quote copiously from the documents of the Comintern to acquaint the

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

A. How Sukhwinder Transformed Clara Zetkin into an Ordinary Liberal

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

Sukhwinder writes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Degras points out:

“Klara Zetkin, moving the resolution, referred to fascism as ‘the strongest, most concentrated, and classical expression of the general offensive of the world bourgeoisie’. *Historically, it was a punishment for the proletariat not having carried farther the revolution begun in Russia.* It was a result of the breakdown of capitalist society and a symptom of the dissolution of the bourgeois State. It was recruited from the middle classes impoverished and proletarianized by the war, from ex-officers now unemployed, and

from all those disappointed in reformist socialism who, instead of turning left, had lost hope in socialism. It had attracted thousands of disappointed proletarians who hoped that the will to build a new and better world would rise above class contradictions and find its embodiment in the nation. *The Italian CP had seen in fascism only a militarist terrorist movement, not a mass movement with a broad social basis which had already won a political and ideological victory over the working class before it came to power in Italy.* The communist parties must make the utmost efforts, politically and ideologically, to rescue those who had gone over to fascism, including the bourgeois intelligentsia. Against fascist force and terror the working class must organize for self-defence." (Degras, J. *The Communist International, 1919-43, Documents, Vol. II, 1923-28,* available at https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/documents/volume2-1923-1928.pdf, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

In the same report, Zetkin writes:

"Fascism is an international phenomenon; we all agree on that. Thus far, next to Italy, its strength is greatest in Germany. *Here the war's outcome and the failure of the revolution have been favorable for its*

growth. That is understandable, bearing in mind what we know regarding the roots of fascism." (*ibid,* p. 57, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

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

"The terror in Hungary began after the defeat of an initially victorious revolutionary struggle. For a moment the bourgeoisie trembled before the proletariat's might. The Horthy terror emerged as revenge

against the revolution. The agent of this revenge was a small caste of feudal officers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sukhwinder writes:

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

Further:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the “left”) and practice (veering in the opposite right direction at some times and towards “left” at others).

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

That is also the reason why Sukhwinder does not even once mention the Leninist line of ‘united front of the working class’ as presented in the Third Congress and ratified again by the Fourth Congress, which included the ‘united front from above’, on particular issues, that is, *particular united front from above,* subordinated to the general tactics of *united front from below.* The aim was clear: winning over of the majority of the masses of workers to the communist side, as it was accepted in the Third Congress that the revolutionary wave had subsided and the majority of workers are still under the political and ideological influence of social-democracy and reformism, whereas a period of stabilization and in Lenin’s words ‘relative balance of the forces’ had begun, and the need of the hour was the slogan of ‘to the masses’, in order to accumulate the forces of the proletariat to be able to resist the bourgeois reactionary offensive and subsequently mount the proletarian offensive. *This Leninist line, in general, was the correct line.* However, the “left”-right deviations alternating within the Comintern since 1922 itself and finally the ultra-left turn since the Sixth Congress prevented the correct implementation of this line. However, Sukhwinder does not even mention a word about the Leninist line of the ‘united front of the working class’. That is why he comes directly to the ultra-left error of the Sixth Congress on the question of fascism and united front (which were different from those of the Fifth Congress):

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

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

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

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

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

considers as the *only correct line on anti-fascist fronts applicable universally and even today*.

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

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

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

because of the absence of revolutionary parties able and willing to seize power.

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

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

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

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

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

"Considerable sections belonging to the old social-democratic parties also are no longer content with the campaign of the social-democrats and centrists against the communist vanguard, and are beginning to demand an understanding with the communists. *But at the same time, they have not yet lost their belief in the reformists, and considerable masses still support the parties of the Second and the*

Amsterdam Internationals. These working masses do not formulate their plans and aspirations clearly enough, but by and large the new mood can be attributed to the desire to establish the united front and to attempt to bring about joint action by the parties and unions of the Second and Amsterdam Internationals with the communists against the capitalist attack. To that extent this mood is progressive. In essentials the belief in reformism has been undermined." (*ibid,* p. 310, *emphasis ours*)

It is noteworthy that in the Third Congress all the references to the capitalist reactionary onslaught include fascists in Italy as well as attempts of the right-wing in Germany to seize power. However, the ECCI also recognized that the social-democracy is not inherently interested for particular alliances (particular united front from above), though it is being forced by the situation to agree to such alliances. Moreover, the reformists will push to use such united front to promote class collaborationism, if and when they are forced to form such alliances under the pressure of the rank-and-file workers of their unions. The ECCI points out:

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

the same kind as that apparent in the camp of the international bourgeoisie. This phenomenon is inevitable because the solidarity of the reformist ‘socialists’ with the bourgeoisie of their ‘own’ countries is the cornerstone of reformism…” (*ibid,* p. 311, *emphasis ours*)

ECCI argues further:

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

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

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

proposed, since the crisis could be resolved only by the proletarian revolution." (*ibid,* p. 311-12, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

bemoan the break with the social-patriots." (*ibid,* p. 312, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Further:

"But though the leaders of the Second, Two and-a-half, and Amsterdam Internationals reject one or another practical proposal put forward by the Communist International, *that will not persuade us to give up the united front tactic,* which has deep roots in the masses and which we must systematically and steadily develop. *Whenever the offer of a joint struggle is rejected by our opponents the masses must be informed of this and thus learn who are the real destroyers*

of the workers' united front. Whenever an offer is accepted by our opponents every effort must be made gradually to intensify the struggle and to develop it to its highest power. In either case it is essential to capture the attention of the broad working masses, to interest them in all stages of the struggle for the revolutionary united front." (ibid, p. 315, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

"In a speech on 20 October 1922 Trotsky, explaining the united front policy, said that the third congress had made it clear that the immediate task of communists in Europe was not to capture power, but to win the majority of the working class. 'If we consider that the party is on the eve of the conquest of power and the working class will follow it, then the question of the united front does not arise. But… if we become convinced that a certain interval must elapse, perhaps several years, before the conquest of power…it is necessary to consider what will happen in the interim to the working class.' At the fourth congress he said that *'the basic idea underlying the decisions of the third congress was as follows. After the war the masses were seized by a revolutionary mood and were eager to take*

up the battle, but there was no revolutionary party capable of leading them to victory. Hence the defeat of the revolutionary masses in various countries; hence the mood of depression and passivity. Today revolutionary parties exist in all countries, but they rest directly only upon a fraction of the working class…The communist parties must win the confidence of the overwhelming majority of the working class. When experience has convinced them of the correctness, firmness, and stability of communist leadership, the working class will shake off disillusionment, passivity, and dilatoriness…This can and must be achieved in the course of fighting for the workers' transitional demands under the general slogan of the proletarian united front.'" (*ibid,* p. 316, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

"At the first enlarged plenary session of the ECCI, which met from 21 February to 4 March 1922, and consisted of 105 delegates from 36 parties, *the French, Italian, and Spanish delegations opposed the united front theses, which were adopted by 46 votes to 10.* The chief argument of the opponents was that, having emphasized in all their propaganda that the social-democrats were the worst enemies of the

working class, the new tactics would only bewilder and confuse the workers. *The congress of the Italian Communist Party in Rome at the end of March 1922 passed, against 8 votes, a resolution put forward by Bordiga which rejected the application of united front tactics in the political field, while accepting them for trade union work.*" (*ibid,* p. 308-09, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and in defiance of the leaders and against the leaders if they sabotage the workers' united front.

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

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

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

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

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

In June 1922, the resolution of the enlarged ECCI warned the PCF of "left" as well as right mistakes in the implementation of the policy of the united front of the working class. This resolution pointed out that in order to weed out reformism from the working-class movement, it was essential to form particular united fronts with the social-democratic, socialist organizations and parties; only in the process of mass struggles against various forms of bourgeois reaction, can the true character of such parties be exposed. Masses

of workers cannot be persuaded by preaching, but by real experience of struggles. The resolution equally condemned the right deviation that saw the tactics of united front as mere electoral alliances. It says:

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

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

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

"The necessity of the united front tactic follows from all this. *The slogan of the third congress 'to the masses' is now more than ever appropriate.* Only now is the struggle for the formation of the

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

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

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

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

“Nor does the united front tactic mean so-called upper level ‘electoral alliances’ which pursue some parliamentary purpose or other. The united front tactic is the offer of a joint struggle of communists with all workers who belong to other parties or groups, and with all non-party

workers, in defence of the basic interests of the working class against the bourgeoisie….

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

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

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

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

“The slogan of a workers’ government (or a workers’ and peasants’ government) can be *used practically everywhere as a general*

propaganda slogan. But as a topical political slogan *it is of the greatest importance in those countries where bourgeois society is particularly unstable, where the relation of forces between the workers' parties and the bourgeoisie is such that the decision of the question, who shall form the government, becomes one of immediate practical necessity. In these countries the slogan of a workers' government follows inevitably from the entire united front tactic.*

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

…

"*Such a workers' government is only possible if it is born out of the struggle of the masses (not simply by electoral alliances from above – author), is supported by workers' bodies which are capable of fighting, bodies created by the most oppressed sections of the working masses.* Even a workers' government which is created by the turn of events in parliament, which is therefore purely parliamentary in origin, *may provide the occasion for invigorating the revolutionary labour movement.* It is obvious that the formation of a real workers' government, and the continued existence of a government which pursues a revolutionary policy, must lead to a bitter struggle, and eventually to a civil war with the bourgeoisie. The mere attempt by the proletariat to form such a workers' government will from the outset encounter the sharpest opposition of the bourgeoisie. *The slogan of a workers' government is therefore*

suitable for concentrating the proletariat and unleashing revolutionary struggles." (*ibid,* p. 425-26, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

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

"4. Workers' governments in which communists participate.

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

"*The first two types are not revolutionary workers' governments, but in fact coalition governments of the bourgeoisie and anti-revolutionary labour leaders.* Such governments are tolerated by the enfeebled bourgeoisie in critical times as a means of deceiving the proletariat about the real class character of the State, or to ward off, with the help of the corrupt workers' leaders, the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat and to gain time. *Communists cannot take part in such governments.* On the contrary, they must vigorously

expose to the masses the real character of these pseudo-workers' governments. But in the present period of capitalist decline, when the most important task is to win the majority of the proletariat for the revolution, even such governments *may objectively help* to accelerate the process of disintegration of bourgeois power.

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

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

"An important question of terminology should be pointed out here. Lenin appeared to be conscious of the economistic connotations the term 'stabilization' would have carried for the Comintern, implying 'economic stabilization'. He does not use this term but uses instead the term 'relative balance of forces', which refers specifically to the

class struggle. It was only afterwards that the Comintern, in quoting Lenin, substituted the term ‘stabilization’.

“That it did so was no accident.

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

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

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

Before the Fifth Congress and after the Fourth Congress, due to the intransigent attitude of the social-democrats and their open treachery against the communists in Germany and elsewhere, we see increasing emphasis on the united front from below, as the united front from above (that is, particular alliances with the social-democrats) was not working, the principal responsibility of which lay with the social-democrats, especially in Germany. However, we

clearly see a state of confusion. Degras quotes from an issue of ‘Inprekorr’ published in January 1923:

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

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

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

Further:

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

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

“Through united struggle to a workers’ government.” (*ibid*, p. 2, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

Degras points out further:

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

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

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

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

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

"At first, Zinoviev said, these tactics had expressed the realization that the communist party did not have on its side the majority of the working class, that the reformists were still strong and the communists on the defensive. But they were not evolutionary tactics, an attempt to form an alliance with social-democracy. They were a

strategic manoeuvre designed to mobilize the masses in a period when the revolution was temporarily halted. *It was never right to have a united front from above alone, and it was nearly always right to have it from below. The use of these tactics from above and below was correct in a country such as England. But they had to revise the exaggerated, imprudent, and incorrect formulation of the tactics introduced by Radek at the fourth congress.* Radek replied that no objection had been raised at the time to his speech at the fourth congress. He had said then that it might mean temporary coalitions with social-democrats. If the tactics were meant merely to 'unmask' them, on the assumption that they would not and could not fight, it was a misleading trick. They did want a united front, and were prepared to go along with the social-democrats as long as they were willing to fight. That was the idea behind the conference of the three Internationals in the spring of 1922. They had no confidence in the social-democratic leaders, but the struggle of the working class demanded unity of action. Saxony was a tragi-comedy for the party because it had not been prepared for. *It was a united front from above only, with nothing below. A number of speakers admitted that they were confused on these questions.*" (*ibid,* p. 142-43, *emphasis ours*)

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

"At the fifth congress it has become unmistakably clear that in some countries, of the utmost importance for the workers' movement, the representatives of the right-wing tendency tried to distort completely the tactics of the united front and of the workers' and peasants' government, interpreting them as meaning a narrow political alliance, an organic coalition of 'all workers' parties', that is, a political alliance of communists with social-democracy. *While for the Comintern the*

main purpose of the united front tactics consists in the struggle against the leaders of counter-revolutionary social-democracy and in emancipating social-democratic workers from their influence, the representatives of the right-wing tendency tend to interpret the united front as a political alliance with social-democracy. . . .” (*ibid,* p. 150, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

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

In 1926, too, the elements of confusion are apparent due to the vacillations between “left” and right, though increasing influence of the “left” deviation at least in the theorization of the Comintern are becoming increasingly apparent. *However, in practice, the right and “left” deviations continued to co-exist in the political practice of the*

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

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

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

Further:

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

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

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

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

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

The third mistake was that, in practice, *the communist parties did not even implement the policy of ‘united front from below’.* They often stuck to elections to measure their mass influence. This led the KPD to over-optimistic estimation of their political influence from 1928 to 1932, whereas the party cadre force from the working class was decreasing, the working class was being demobilized completely and

becoming politically dormant. This was precisely due to the more militant economism of the KPD and the absence of a massline, and the lack of political work among the working masses. Poulantzas rightly comments:

“As for the social-democratic masses, Thälmann has a revealing way of putting it: ‘As long as they are not delivered from the influence of the social fascists, these millions of workers (of the German Social-Democratic Party and its associated trade unions) are lost to the anti-fascist struggle.’

“*This strategy was accompanied by the concept of the main enemy being not fascism but social democracy, the defeat of which was the precondition, even chronologically, of a victory over fascism…*” (Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 160, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the same time, the KPD was going even more “left” that the Comintern and neglecting even the masses of workers in the social-

democratic trade unions and mass organizations. This was too “left” for the Comintern. So, the same Plenum of the ECCI says:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

fascist front, namely, the line of the ‘popular front’ was invented, which is applicable even today for the communists of the world!

What is really surprising is that as a person writing specifically on the evolution of the Comintern’s policy of united front against fascism, he *does not even know* about the policy of the united front of the working class. He never discusses it in his essay. The reason is that he did not study the primary sources, that is, the documents of the Comintern, especially since the Third Congress. As a result, for him ‘popular front’ becomes the ‘demi urgos’, the supreme idea, which existed *a priori,* but in an alienated form, and with Dimitrov thesis it attained its full conception again, just as the Hegelian supreme idea attained its full conception with the idealist system of Hegel! Such is the view of editor *sa’ab!*

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

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

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

“Thorez gave a picture of confusion, doubt, and indiscipline in the French CP: some communist municipal councillors had voted in

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

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

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

"*The condemnation of the CP of France for 'attempts to arrange blocs at the top' suggests that there was a strong group in the CPF which was agitating for a change in the communist attitude to the socialist party.* In January 1934 the French central committee met to approve the resolutions of the thirteenth ECCI plenum. Thorez said events were moving so fast in France *'that some elements in the party, yes, even in the central committee, became confused by the pressure of the enemy (defence of "democracy" against fascism, distortion of the Soviet Union's peace policy, etc.)'.* The party failed to understand the role of social-democracy, and some party organizations were not convinced of the necessity of a bitter struggle against the socialist party. *One central committee member [Doriot]*

made proposals which meant changing the entire political line about social-democracy, making united front proposals to the socialist leaders. 'This proposal was indignantly rejected by all members of the central committee unanimously, for it would have led to capitulation to social-democracy.' The meeting approved a resolution on the party's tasks which said: 'The central committee calls upon the entire party to apply resolutely the tactics of a militant united front from below, combating vigorously any opportunist attempt to propose a united front to the leadership of the socialist party.' Berlioz wrote that as a result of the longing for unity among French workers and of socialist manoeuvres, 'officials of the CP have in many places succumbed to this pressure and concluded vague agreements with the socialists in which the face of the CP is lost'." (*ibid,* p. 313-14)

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

"At its conference in Ivry on 23-26 June 1934 *the CPF reversed its attitude and no longer insisted on the 'united front from below only'. This, it said, was not a change in policy, but in tactics.* Duclos denied Doriot's assertion that the CPF was now belatedly taking his advice and pursuing the policy he had advocated; Doriot had wanted 'a Trotskyist bloc of the two parties'. *Communists, said Thorez, had always worked for the united front; they were doing so now in a way the social-democratic workers would understand.*" (*ibid,* p. 332, *emphasis ours*)

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

"In June 1934 Dimitrov, drafting the speech he proposed to make at the seventh CI congress (later postponed), *suggested that the terms 'social-fascist' and 'social-democratic treachery' should be dropped, and the policy of a united front only from below abandoned;* the

united front should be led and directed by the communists not in words but in action." (*ibid,* p. 333, *emphasis ours*)

Again, in April 1935:

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

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

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

Degras documents the events before the Seventh Congress and shows how the policy of 'popular front' developed in France and

even Dimitrov acknowledged the role of the French party in this process:

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

"*A joint socialist-communist committee was set up in July 1935 to discuss proposals for unification.* At the seventh Comintern congress (*where Dimitrov said that the actions of the French CP 'helped to prepare the decisions of our congress'*), Thorez said that *the CPF was prepared to take part in a popular front government, since its immediate goal was not revolution and proletarian dictatorship, but the defeat of fascism. The entire credit for the united front, he said, was due to the CPF, which had been anxious to establish it since 1922;* now the SFIO and CGT had been forced to come in." (*ibid,* p. 383, *emphasis ours*)

We have already quoted above Eric Hobsbawm, Monty Johnstone and Jonathan Haslam, who have shown that it was Doriot in the PCF who consistently stuck to the line of the 'popular front' since 1932 itself and consistently argued with the CC of the PCF as well as the leadership of the Comintern on this question. Jonathan Haslam presents the entire account of how Dimitrov was won over by the line of Doriot and then in a meeting with Thorez, a leading member of the PCF, expressed his agreement with Doriot's line. However, Doriot himself had distanced himself from the PCF as well as the Comintern and was denounced by the PCF as well as the Comintern as hobnobbing with the Trotskyites, etc. Based on the French experience, where the line of popular front was being implemented in fragments since 1933 itself and then more consistently in 1934, Dimitrov finalized draft of his plan of the 'popular front' and sent this plan in a letter to Stalin, too. When Dimitrov had presented his plan

to Stalin, Stalin had expressed his apprehensions, as Johnstone shows but he was persuaded successfully by Dimitrov, who then was given the responsibility to lead the Comintern. The role that Doriot had played in France, was played by José Antonio Balbontin in Spain. He also met the same fate as Doriot. Ultimately, France and Spain became the two countries where the 'popular front' policy was implemented, even before the rise of fascism to power in these countries and even before the Seventh Congress had proclaimed these tactics in the new political conjuncture which had emerged with the decisive victory of Hitler and repression of the communists as well as the social-democrats.

We need to understand a few basic things here.

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

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

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

Fourth, the right-wing deviation of the 'popular front' was implicit not only in the political developments of Europe but also in the incorrect political economy underlying this theory, namely, the theory of fascism as the 'dictatorship of the most reactionary and chauvinistic elements of the big monopoly finance capital'; the narrowing down of

the class character of fascism from the Fifth Congress of the Comintern itself till the Seventh Congress, had disastrous political implications of class collaborationism and class capitulationism, for which the world communist movement paid dearly;

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

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

E. Sukhwinder and the 'Popular Front': "Bare-naked" Parade of Intellectual Incompetence and Rank Opportunism

Sukhwinder writes:

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

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

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

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

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

“In the mobilisation of the toiling masses for the struggle against fascism, the formation of a broad people’s anti-fascist front *on the basis of the proletarian united front* is a particularly important task.

The success of the entire struggle of the proletariat is closely connected with the establishment of a fighting alliance between the proletariat on the one hand, and the toiling peasantry and the basic mass of the urban petit bourgeoisie constituting a majority in the population of even industrially developed countries, on the other." (*ibid,* p. 30, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

"*The most important thing in this report is the line of popular front for the resistance of fascism in power.* When fascist dictatorship is set up, the choice facing working class is not bourgeois democracy or dictatorship of the proletariat but rather bourgeois democracy or fascist dictatorship. In the latter pair, working class stands for the restoration of bourgeois democracy. It depends on the balance of

power in the anti-fascist united front whether after the toppling of fascist dictatorship, bourgeois democracy is restored or (temporarily) some people's democratic state comes to power in the leadership of the working class. (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 43)

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

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

Further:

"*And if in France the anti-fascist movement leads to the formation of a government which will carry on a real struggle against French*

fascism— not in word but in deed—will carry out the programme of demands of the anti-fascist people's front, the Communists, while remaining the irreconcilable foes of every bourgeois government and supporters of a Soviet government, will nevertheless, in face of the growing fascist danger, be prepared to support such a government." (*ibid,* p. 38, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What is and ought to be the basic content of the united front at the present stage? *The defense of the immediate economic and political interests of the working class, the defense of the working class against fascism, must form the starting point and main content of the united front in all capitalist countries.*" (*ibid,* p. 27, *emphasis ours)*

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

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

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

he has not read Dimitrov's report or he is intentionally distorting and trimming its operative part to justify his complete inaction.

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

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

Sukhwinder argues that whether the bourgeois democracy or people's democracy is established after overthrowing the fascist dictatorship will depend on the balance of class forces, *objectively speaking.* However, the subjective approach of the proletarian forces will be the task of re-establishing the bourgeois democracy. As Kang Sheng under the guidance of Mao argued that *the very subjective*

aim should be the establishment of a people's democracy/new democracy. Whether this materializes or not will depend on *the objective class situation* in a country. However, the positive aim of the communists cannot simply be restoration of the bourgeois democracy.

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

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

Further.

Sukhwinder blabbers:

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

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

Would such a government be a ‘transitional *form* of the state’, as Sukhwinder thinks? No. It shows that Sukhwinder does not understand what a state is and what the form of a particular kind of state is, a fact that we have already pointed to in the very beginning of this critique. What would be the form of the state in case of such ‘popular front’ or ‘proletarian united front’ government? It would be the *bourgeois democratic form of multi-party representational electoral parliamentary democracy!* The only difference in the case of people’s democracy or new democracy would be that this *form* will be a manifestation of the *democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants.* Those who know ABC of Marxism know that in such a dictatorship the *peasants as a whole* represent the radical bourgeois and petty-bourgeois element, whereas the proletariat represents the proletarian element; however, the *economic and social content* of such democratic dictatorship is nothing but *radical bourgeois democratic*, as it would implement the radical bourgeois democratic program (like the nationalization of land, democratic rights of the working masses, eight-hour work-day, etc.) not a socialist program. Moreover, the form of the state will not be *soviet democratic form*

which is engendered by the dictatorship of the proletariat, but, *bourgeois democratic form* of *multi-party parliamentary democracy,* even though the soviets/communes might exist along with such parliament/national assembly in certain cases of new democratic or people's democratic state. This is ABC of Marxism and we are not surprised that Sukhwinder is at sea here. His old record prevents us from being surprised.

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

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

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

determines the place and development of all other contradictions. Mao points out:

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, in the view of the changes in the *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi* of fascism in the phase of neoliberalism, the decay of the bourgeois democratic content of the shell/form of multiparty parliamentary democracy, the decline of the remaining democratic potentialities of the bourgeoisie as a political class, the shifting of the all decisive powers to the executive, the decline of the legislative, the change in the nature of economic crisis, consequent change in the nature of rise of fascism and its take-over of political power, the *redemptive activity of the fascist forces themselves,* has led to a situation in which the form of multiparty representative electoral bourgeois democracy, *in general,* will not be abandoned by the fascist forces, which will be characterized by a long incubation period, molecular permeation in the society, deep infiltration into the state apparatus. This will allow the fascist forces to go in and out of

the government, while maintaining its consolidated positions within the state and the society. This stems from the contradictions which naturally originate with the retention of the form of parliamentary democracy. This makes the fascist rise much more durable, much more hegemonic and chronic, though it can take acute forms, too, in certain political conjunctures.

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

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

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

Degras points out:

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

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

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

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

“*Comment on social-democracy reverted to the style in use before the popular front. An article in the same periodical at the end of the*

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

"*The breakdown of the popular front policy was shown also in the attack on pacifism.* 'It is absurd and at the same time distressing that the fear of war felt by the nations goes to increase the war danger, that pacifism is pouring oil on the flames kindled by the warmongers… While fascism fosters the ideology of a war of conquest, the accomplices of fascism in the democratic countries attempt to set up cowardice as a philosophy… The French Trotskyists … have coined the term "Better a slave than dead"… This contemptible principle is being put forward by the agents of the Gestapo with the object of emasculating the working class… It is contrary to the innermost essence of the working class… Freedom is more precious than peace.' The 'total pacifists' believed in friendly relations with gangsters; peace, they thought, could be saved by weakness, arguing that 'nothing could be more dangerous than to bar the way to fascism with an overwhelming superiority of military forces'. The intention behind the pacifist proposals was to weaken the democratic States so far that they would no longer be able to offer resistance to aggression, but would have to 'submit to German fascism without a struggle and without conditions'. The article ended with a quotation from Lenin: 'Pacifism and abstract peace

propaganda are ways of misleading the working class.'" (*ibid,* p. 427-28, *emphasis ours*)

Degras points out further:

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

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

"At the eighteenth CPSU congress in March 1939 *Manuilsky, reporting as chief Soviet representative on the 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.

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

against war, against the treason of the socialists and the renegades from the CPF. '" (*ibid,* p. 442-43, *emphasis ours*)

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

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

"The People's Front Movement awakened wide masses of people in town and country to activity, and rallied them to the struggle to uphold their own interests against the reactionary cliques. This

movement rendered it possible to postpone for a time the outbreak of the European war. The tactics of the united people's front are fully applicable, even now, in China and also in colonial and dependent countries, the people of which are conducting a struggle for their national liberation.

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

"*The tactics of the united people's front presupposed joint action by the communist parties and the social-democratic and petty-bourgeois 'democratic' and 'radical' parties against reaction and war. But the top sections of these parties are now openly supporting the imperialist war.*

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

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

democrats new or surprising in anyway? What else did Dimitrov expect? Did it become clear only when the social-democracy repeated these sins during the war?

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

Dimitrov writes further in the same article:

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

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

of the ‘popular front’ and calling for a return to the Leninist policy of the united front of the working class.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“The communist parties must rapidly reorganise their ranks in accordance with the conditions of the war, purge their ranks of

capitulatory elements, and establish bolshevik discipline. *They must concentrate the fight against opportunism, expressed in slipping into the position of 'defending the Fatherland', in support of the fairy-tale about the anti-fascist character of the war,* and in retreat before the acts of repression of the bourgeoisie.

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

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

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

As is clear, the 'popular front' was in tatters much before 1939 began. In France, the 'popular front' collapsed in the autumn of 1938 itself. *Therefore, this repeated reference by Dimitrov to the outbreak of war as the nodal point, which necessitated the shift back to the*

policy of the united front of the working class from the policy of the 'popular front', is not convincing at all. The change in attitude towards the social-democrats is a virtual return to the attitude towards them before the Seventh Congress. Degras points out that Manuilsky's words from 1940 reveal this fact clearly:

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

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

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

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

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

"Proletarians, working people, colonial peoples! The guarantee of the success of your struggle lies in the unification of your forces. Hammer out the *United Front of Labour* against the offensive of capital, the front of freedom against reaction, the front of peace against imperialist war, the front of the exploited and oppressed against their exploiters and oppressors.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“*There can be neither a united Workers’ Front, nor a People’s Front, with them, or with the leaders of the other petty-bourgeois parties*

that are supporting the war.

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

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

“Where is their place, in the camp of imperialist reaction, or with their class brothers waging a struggle against it? With the instigators of imperialist war, or with the millions of workers and peasants who are thirsting for peace? With the stranglers and butchers of liberty, or with those who are self-sacrificingly defending it?” (*ibid,* p. 447, *emphasis ours*)

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

We can reproduce many such excerpts from the documents of the Comintern since the late-1938, where the Comintern is clearly rejecting the policy of the ‘popular front’ and is calling for a return to the policy of the ‘united front of the working class’. Even though, at certain points, leaders of the Comintern try to create pretexts for this reversion, it becomes clear with time that actual practice has

revealed the policy of the ‘popular front’ to have failed disastrously and also the fact that *the very foundational elements of the theory of the ‘popular front’, especially the characterization of the social-democrats and other radical bourgeois parties as well as the extreme narrowing down of the class character of fascism to ‘the most reactionary and chauvinistic elements of the big monopoly finance capital’ were incorrect and cleared the highway to class capitulationism and class collaborationism.*

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

Sukhwinder has written a separate subhead in his essay on the Comintern and fascism; he has presented copious quotations from Dimitrov (though, without understanding most of them and often selectively leaving the portions that do not bode well for the idiocy of his line, as we have seen above); he has presented the policy of the popular front as the universal policy against ‘fascism in power’ to be

applied by the communists and asserts that this policy is applicable even today! He claims that the policy of the ‘popular front’ was designed for ‘fascism in power’ only!

We have seen that all these claims of Sukhwinder are ridiculous and have nothing to do either with history or the Marxist theory or with the policy of the ‘popular front’ as adopted by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. *The editor of ‘Pratibaddh’ is completely unaware of the fact that the policy of the ‘popular front’ originated in France in 1933-34 itself and it was precisely this event that led Dimitrov and Manuilsky to formulate the policy of the ‘popular front’ and convince the rest of the CPSU (B) as well as the Comintern parties on this policy. Sukhwinder is utterly incapable to understand the fact that Dimitrov had proposed this policy as an antidote, not only to fascism in power, but against fascism in general, including the countries where there is a powerful fascist movement. Why he failed to understand this? Because he does not know that the policy of the ‘popular front’ was not simply attempted to be applied in Germany and Italy, but even before that it was being implemented in Spain and France; in fact, in his report to the Seventh Congress itself, Dimitrov talks about it and credits the French communists in the formulation of the policy of the ‘popular front’. Sukhwinder is completely oblivious of the fact that, leaving alone the present conjuncture, the Comintern itself abandoned the line of the ‘popular front’ in 1938-39 itself and reverted to the Leninist line of the united front of the working class.*

Why did not Sukhwinder comprehend it? Because he never attempted to read the primary sources, especially, the documents of the Comintern; he did not even read Dimitrov’s report properly which his organization has now published as the guiding document of forming anti-fascist front in India, when fascism rises to power! Sukhwinder is also at sea about the entire history of the evolution of anti-fascist fronts since 1921-22 itself within the Comintern, the Leninist line of united front of the working class, the period of right-deviationism since the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, the period of “left” deviationism combined with right opportunism since the Fifth

Congress, and finally the ultra-left turn since the Sixth Congress, the pathological reaction to which was the right-deviationist line of the 'popular front' rooted in an incorrect political economy and political theory; and finally, the realization of this mistake since the early-1938 and calls for reversion to the Leninist line of united front of the working class.

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

PART 6

Sukhwinder's Understanding of Social-Democracy and its Role in the Rise of Fascism: A Motley Crew of Social-Democratism, Vacuity and Plagiarism

Here, too, Sukhwinder exposes his "bare-naked" inability to understand the basics of Marxist-Leninist concepts.

First of all, what Sukhwinder has written under this subhead 'Fascism and Social Democracy' has clearly been plagiarized from David Beetham's 'Introduction' to his anthology of Marxist writings on fascism *Marxists in Face of Fascism.* In fact, Beetham's subhead from where Sukhwinder has plagiarized, too, is titled 'Social Democracy and Fascism'! Readers will see that Sukhwinder discusses only the cases of Germany and Austria to demonstrate the relation between fascist rise and social-democracy and will wonder why the only other case of fascist rise to power, namely, Italy, has been left out! Because Beetham, too, has discussed only these two cases, that is, Germany and Austria! Thus, instead of reading any primary source and works from cover to cover, once again, Sukhwinder has relied on quotation-picking and plagiarism from the introductions and prefaces of anthologies. Let us first see what Sukhwinder has written, and then we will show how he has shamelessly plagiarized from Beetham in this case, towards the end of this subhead.

A. Sukhwinder, Bernstein, Kautsky and the Marxist Theory of Immiseration: The "Bare-Naked" Display of Editor Sa'ab's Intellectual Immiseration

He writes:

"In the end of 19th century, *when capitalism of free competition was developing into fascism,* the leader of the opportunist faction of

social democracy, Bernstein claimed that the centralisation of capital would definitely create such a situation in which capitalism will gain control over its crises. He claimed that the working class is benefitting more and more as a result of capitalist development. Its share is national income is regularly increasing instead of shrinking. Kautsky, who was then a Marxist, opposed the claims of Bernstein. But he himself committed serious mistakes in this regard. *Bernstein had rejected the impoverishment of working class in general.* He had claimed that wages were increasing not merely in absolute form but also relatively. *Kautsky demonstrated the relative impoverishment of working class under capitalism but not absolute impoverishment.*

“In a way he agrees with Bernstein that though the condition of working class is worsening relatively but it is getting better absolutely. *If the condition of working class is improving under capitalism, then why does it need to struggle for socialism?*

“This was the path (rejection of struggle for socialism) which Kautsky followed in the future.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 45, *emphasis ours*)

Please focus on the italicized portions of the excerpt presented above. First, let us deal with the most infantile mistakes.

Sukhwinder argues that towards the end of the Nineteenth century, free competition was developing into fascism! Even if it is a slip of the pen, it reveals extremely poor understanding of Sukhwinder. Towards the end of the Nineteenth century, “free competition” capitalism was developing into the *monopoly stage*, that is to say, the stage of imperialism, not fascism. Fascism is a particular political tendency that emerged in the stage of imperialism. Here, too, it does not mean that fascism will emerge only in the countries which themselves are imperialist. Imperialism, in this context, refers to the world-historic stage of the development of the capitalist mode of production, from its own immanent laws of concentration and centralization of capital and the general law of capitalist accumulation. *Fascism does not refer to an economic stage of capitalism, but a particular manifestation of bourgeois reaction in a particular kind of political conjuncture, in the general conditions of*

economic crisis in the stage of imperialism. Sukhwinder has equated two disparate things: one, an economic stage in the development of capitalism (“free-competition” stage) and two, fascism, which is not an economic stage, but a political phenomenon that comes into being under a particular political conjuncture, in a particular economic stage. However, for Sukhwinder, the one evolves into the other! If it is not a slip of the pen, then we need not say anything further on the intellectual bankruptcy of the Trot-Bundist chieftain. We are pretty sure that it is not a slip of the pen, given the record of Sukhwinder.

Secondly, Sukhwinder has plagiarized his account of the Bernsteinian revisionism, the critique by Kautsky of this revisionism and the weakness of this critique. Why? It is clear that Sukhwinder does not know about Marxist theory of the impoverishment of the working class under capitalism. Marx, since at least the late-1850s, never subscribed to the theory of *general* absolute impoverishment of the working class. He subscribed to the theory of *general* relative impoverishment of the working class and *periodic* absolute impoverishment of the working class, which happens during the periods of crises and stagnation and sometimes in the peripheries of world capitalism. In other words, the general theory (which must be applicable to the North-Western capitalism as well as capitalism in the so-called ‘third world’, in order to be a *general theory*) of Marx is that of *relative impoverishment of the working class.* On this question, Ernest Mandel has presented a very balanced account of the debate. Mandel writes:

“How, then, has it been possible for so many writers, for so long, to have attributed to Marx a ‘theory of absolute impoverishment of the workers under capitalism’ which obviously implied a theory of tendential fall in the value not only of labour-power but even of real wages? In the first place because Marx, in his youthful writings, did in fact hold such a theory – for example, in the *Communist Manifesto*. But this was formulated before he had brought his theoretical understanding of the capitalist mode of production to its final, mature conclusion. It is only in the years 1857-8 that we have

the birth of Marx's economic theory in its rounded, consistent form. *After he had written A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy and the Grundrisse, there was no longer a trace of any such historical trend towards absolute impoverishment in his economic analysis.*

"In the second place, because so many writers confuse Marx's treatment of *the value of labour-power* (which depends upon the value of the consumer goods the worker buys with his wages) with the category of *real wages* (determined by the mass of consumer goods his wages buy). *Under capitalism, given the constant increase in the productivity of labour, these categories can move in opposite directions.*

"In the third place, because two famous passages in *Capital Volume 1* have been consistently misinterpreted. In both these passages Marx does speak about 'increasing misery' and pauperism, and about 'accumulation of misery'. But the context indicates clearly that *what he is referring to is the poverty and misery of the 'surplus population', of the 'Lazarus layer of the working class', that is, of the unemployed or semi-employed poor.* Revealing studies on poverty in rich countries like the United States and Great Britain have strikingly confirmed that the misery of these old age pensioners, unemployed, sick, homeless, degraded or irregularly working lower layers of the proletariat is indeed a permanent feature of capitalism, including the capitalism of the 'welfare state'." (Mandel, Ernest. 1982. 'Introduction' to Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1,* Penguin Edition, p. 69-71, *emphasis ours*)

Mandel points out further:

"What we in fact have here is a theory of *a tendency towards relative impoverishment of the working class under capitalism in a double sense.* Firstly, in the sense that productive workers tend to get *a smaller part of the new value* they produce: in other words, there is a trend towards an increase in the rate of surplus-value. Secondly, in the sense that *even when wages rise the needs of the workers as human beings are denied.* This applies even to their *additional*

consumer needs that grow out of the very increase in the productivity of labour which results from the accumulation of capital. One has only to think of *the unfulfilled needs of workers in the fields of education, health, skill acquisition and differentiation, leisure, culture, housing,* even in the richest capitalist countries of today, to see how this assumption remains accurate in spite of the so-called 'consumer society'. But it applies much more to the needs of the worker as a producer and a citizen – his need to develop a full personality, to become a rich and creative human being, etc.; these needs are brutally crushed by the tyranny of meaningless, mechanical, parcellized work, alienation of productive capacities and alienation of real human wealth." (*ibid,* p. 72, *emphasis ours*)

And finally:

"In addition to this law of *general* relative impoverishment of workers under capitalism, Marx also notes a trend towards *periodic* absolute impoverishment, essentially in function of the movement of unemployment. This is closely linked to the inevitability of cyclical fluctuations under capitalism, that is the inevitability of periodic crises of overproduction, or 'recessions' as they are called today with less provocative connotations." (*ibid,* p. 72, *emphasis ours*)

Whatever the Trotskyite convictions of Mandel might be, this succinct summarization of Marx's views on the impoverishment of the working class under capitalism is correct. Later, we will also see various quotations from Marx, which present the Marxist theory of immiseration. However, let us first see what Lenin had to say about Bernstein and the critique presented by Kautsky.

Lenin, too, recognized the fact that the workers face both, the absolute impoverishment, as well as, the relative impoverishment, but the latter is more important and *the general tendency of capitalist accumulation.* The latter refers, not to the *real wages* of the workers (which might increase or decrease depending upon the combination of the impacts of the economic factors of the rate of accumulation and the reserve army of labour, and the political factor of class struggle), but to the *decreasing share of wages in the newly-created*

value. It is noteworthy that it is possible for the *real wages* (not to be confused with the value of the labour-power, which naturally decreases with every increase in the productivity of labour in the wage-goods industries and agriculture, since the latter produces the most important wage-goods like food, raw material for other wage-goods) to increase and yet the working class might become relatively poorer since its share in the newly-produced value decreases. In fact, Marx always fought against the idea that the real wages of the workers necessarily fall, an idea also known as “iron law of wages”, promoted by various authors from Malthus to Lassalle and rejected outright by Marx in the period of his mature economic thinking.

What was the mistake of Bernstein then? The argument that since the real wages in themselves will increase in absolute terms (even if they do not increase relatively as a share of newly-created value), the working class’s living standards will improve, blunting his revolutionary edge. Also, Sukhwinder does not know that Bernstein did not reject the idea of fall in the share of the workers in the newly-created value, that is, the fact the capitalists’ consumption increases faster than the workers’ consumption, or, real wages rise slower than profits. Anyway, still, the rise in real wages if and when it happens does not have a direct correlation with the revolutionary potential of the working class. It goes without saying that it was a crude and vulgar, not to speak of politically as well economically incorrect, variety of economism, which was a mirror-image of catastrophist versions of economistic analysis, which focused on the ‘final breakdown’ theory. Bernstein, further, pointed to the increasing socialization of production under capitalism as a factor that will suppress crises and promote peaceful development, by making socialist revolution superfluous. Needless to say, this, too, has been proven incorrect theoretically as well as historically.

Did Kautsky reject even the absolute impoverishment of sections of working class? *No, he did not.* In fact, he gave a concession to Bernstein on this question by limiting the absolute impoverishment of the working class to regions where capitalism as a dominant mode of production was established only recently. Kautsky focused on

relative impoverishment as the general theory of immiseration, which is, essentially, correct. Also, he rejected the argument that absolute impoverishment of the working class can be a general tendency that is universally applicable. Kautsky relates the theory of absolute impoverishment, among other things, with the theory of “inevitable breakdown”, which Bernstein chose as the effigy to critique the “mistakes of Marx and Engels”. Kautsky pointed out that Marx’s theory of revolution is not based on catastrophism and “inevitable collapse”, but on the recurrent and deeper crises. On this point, Kautsky was much more accurate than the critique of Bernstein put forward by Rosa Luxemburg that veered towards the “inevitable collapse” theory.

Lenin wrote in the review of Kautsky’s book:

“Bernstein declares that everyone has abandoned Marx’s “theory of misery” or “theory of impoverishment.” *Kautsky demonstrates that this is again a distorted exaggeration on the part of the opponents of Marx, since Marx propounded no such theory.* He spoke of the growth of poverty, degradation, etc., indicating at the same time the counteracting tendency and the real social forces that alone could give rise to this tendency. Marx’s words on the growth of poverty are fully justified by reality: first, we actually see that capitalism has a tendency to engender and increase poverty, which acquires tremendous proportions when the above-mentioned counteracting tendency is absent. *Secondly, poverty grows, not in the physical but in the social sense, i.e., in the sense of the disparity between the increasing level of consumption by the bourgeoisie and consumption by society as a whole, and the level of the living standards of the working people.* Bernstein waxes ironical over such a conception of “poverty,” saying that this is a Pickwickian conception. In reply Kautsky shows that people like Lassalle, Rodbertus, and Engels have made very definite statements to the effect that poverty must be understood in its social, as well as in its physical, sense. As you see—he parries Bernstein’s irony—it is not such a bad company that gathers at the “Pickwick Club”! *Thirdly and lastly, the passage on increasing impoverishment remains perfectly true in respect of the*

“border regions” of capitalism, the border regions being understood both in the geographical sense (countries in which capitalism is only beginning to penetrate and frequently not only gives rise to physical poverty but to the outright starvation of the masses) and in the political-economic sense (handicraft industries and, in general, those branches of economy in which backward methods of production are still retained).” (Lenin, V. I. 1977. *Collected Works, Volume 4,* Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 201, *emphasis ours*)

Again, Lenin points out in *A Draft Program of Our Party* that absolute impoverishment is a tendency which becomes a reality *only under certain conditions,* whereas relative impoverishment is the general tendency applicable in all cases of capitalism:

“This should be followed by an outline of the fundamental tendency of capitalism—the splitting of the people into a bourgeoisie and a proletariat, the growth of “the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation.” These famous words of Marx are repeated in the second paragraph of the Erfurt Programme of the German Social-Democratic Party, and the critics that are grouped about Bernstein have recently made particularly violent attacks precisely against this point, repeating the old objections raised by bourgeois liberals and social-politicians against the “theory of impoverishment.” In our opinion the polemic that has raged round this question has demonstrated the utter groundlessness of such “criticism.” Bernstein himself admitted that the above words of Marx were true as a characterization of the tendency of capitalism—*a tendency that becomes a reality in the absence of the class struggle of the proletariat against it, in the absence of labour protection laws achieved by the working class.* It is precisely in Russia today that we see the above tendency manifesting its effect with tremendous force on the peasantry and the workers. *Further, Kautsky has shown that these words on the growth of “the mass of misery, etc.,” are true in the sense, not only of characterizing a tendency, but of indicating the growth of “social poverty,” i.e., the growth of the disparity between the condition of the proletariat and the living standard of the bourgeoisie*—the standard of social consumption that continues to

rise parallel with the gigantic growth in the productivity of labour. *Lastly, these words are true also in the sense that in "the border regions" of capitalism (i.e., those countries and those branches of the national economy in which capitalism is only just emerging and clashing with pre-capitalist conditions) the growth of poverty—not only "social," but also the most horrible physical poverty*, to the extent of starvation and death from starvation—assumes a mass scale. Everybody knows that this is ten times more applicable to Russia than to any other European country." (*ibid,* p. 234, *emphasis ours*)

As the readers would already have understood, the "social poverty" refers to the relative impoverishment, whereas the "physical poverty" refers to the absolute impoverishment. Lenin clearly points out that "physical poverty" is not the *general law* but it does indeed happen periodically under certain conditions in capitalist mode of production, one of which is the conditions of absence of class struggle; whereas, the "social poverty" is the general law of capitalism even in times of prosperity and under conditions of advanced capitalism.

Thus, Sukhwinder without understanding what was Kautsky's critique of Bernstein, what Bernstein had written and how Lenin appreciated the critique of Bernstein by Kautsky, prattles his gobbledygook. Does Sukhwinder know on what point Lenin disagreed from Kautsky's critique of Bernstein? He might be unpleasantly surprised to know that. Let us see.

Lenin points out that one important fallacy of Bernstein that was left un-critiqued by Kautsky as well as Plekhanov was Bernstein's federalism! Lenin points out:

"*To confuse Marx's views on the "destruction of the state power—the parasitic excrescence" with Proudhon's federalism is positively monstrous!* But it is no accident, for it never occurs to the opportunist that Marx does not speak here at all about federalism as opposed to centralism, but about smashing the old, bourgeois state machine which exists in all bourgeois countries.

“The only thing that penetrates the opportunist’s mind is what he sees around him, in a society of petty-bourgeois philistinism and “reformist” stagnation, namely, only “municipalities”! The opportunist has even forgotten how to think about proletarian revolution.

“It is ridiculous. *But the remarkable thing is that nobody argued with Bernstein on this point. Bernstein has been refuted by many, especially by Plekhanov in Russian literature and by Kautsky in European literature, but neither of them said anything about this distortion of Marx by Bernstein.*

“*To such an extent has the opportunist forgotten how to think in a revolutionary way and to ponder over revolution that he attributes “federalism” to Marx and confuses him with the founder of anarchism, Proudhon. And Kautsky and Plekhanov, who claim to be orthodox Marxists and defenders of the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism, are silent on this point!* Herein lies one of the roots of the extreme vulgarization of the views concerning the difference between Marxism and anarchism, which is characteristic of the Kautskyites and of the opportunists, and which we shall yet discuss later.” (Lenin, V. I. 2020. *The State and Revolution,* Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 52, *emphasis ours*)

Oops! Sukhwinder did it again! As is clear from the above excerpt, on this question, Lenin would also have criticized Sukhwinder’s particularly stupid version of bourgeois federalism. Anyway.

Also, Sukhwinder again betrays his crude and vulgar economism, which would have made a Bernstein or Kautsky blush. He thinks that the working class plunges itself into revolutionary movement only when through absolute impoverishment it has been driven into pauperism. Such a claim has nothing to do with *Marx’s theory of class struggle.* Economic determinism and catastrophism of this kind was refuted time and again by Marx, Lenin and Mao, too. It is not the continuously and perpetually increasing economic poverty but *the struggle of classes* that will lead to political conjunctures which have the potentiality to result in a revolution. Can a socialist revolution take place in a country where there is no continuing absolute

immiseration of the working class? *Yes, it can.* The sharpening of contradictions between labour and capital takes the political form of class struggle, and absolute impoverishment alone is not the only or even principal expression of this process.

Moreover, proletarian revolution is not generally led and organized by the most pauperized sections of the working class, who mostly come from the ‘reserve army of labour’, instead of the ‘active army of labour’, even though the former, too, participate actively in lesser or greater degree, especially during the moments of certain mass actions depending upon the overall social, economic and political context. Especially, those sections of the reserve army which are alternatingly attracted and repelled by the capitalist industry, depending upon the movements of profitability, are politically more advanced. However, the sections which are constantly under- or unemployed, remain stuck in the drudgery of such life, become politically active, generally speaking, only in the particular mass moments of revolutionary process.

Besides, *economic and material hardships and thus class contradictions do not always take the form of immiseration.* Class contradictions often assume a variety of forms, from the working class’s resistance to the increasing intensity of labour, increasing working day, and decreasing share of the working class in the newly-produced value, even if the real wages are not falling absolutely, to political rights of union formation, and other demands emanating from the workplace. In fact, during the last few decades itself, in India, we can safely say that most of the examples of labour militancy have resulted from these factors, manifesting the *immanent contradiction of capitalism*, namely the *fundamental* contradiction between labour and capital; and we can hardly reduce the reasons behind such instances of labour outburst merely to the absolute impoverishment of the working class.

Sukhwinder’s understanding of the Marxist theory of revolution is unbelievably and extremely destitute and he does not understand politics, that is, the arena of class struggle at all. How far material

pauperism propels revolution is under serious doubt, however, this much is certain that intellectual pauperism drives Sukhwinder to the unexplored frontiers of idiocy and foolishness. Despite critiquing Bernstein and revisionist Kautsky, he is actually a backbencher and mediocre student in the class of economism run by the likes of Bernstein and revisionist Kautsky themselves, though the latter must have been embarrassed about this particular student of theirs.

The second question on which Lenin criticized Kautsky's critique of Bernstein was on the question of Kautsky's serious deviation on the question of smashing of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat, which for Kautsky was not a question of immediate importance in the controversy with Bernstein. (*see* p. 104-05 of the above quoted edition of *The State and Revolution.*)

We, too, wrote about the fallacy of the theory of absolute impoverishment in detail in 2021. The following long excerpt includes several quotations from Marx himself, which will clear any doubt regarding Marx's theory of impoverishment of the working class under capitalism:

"Such incorrect notions imposed upon Marx are particularly harmful because they make Marx and Marxism prone to "easy refutation". For example, it can be shown with factual evidence that the theory of absolute impoverishment of the working class cannot be sustained. One of the major bourgeois vulgar neoclassical economist Paul Samuelson (along with William Nordhaus), in fact, does precisely the same. First, he proves that the notion of absolute impoverishment of the working class cannot be sustained empirically and then he argues that, therefore, Marx was wrong! That is the reason why such incorrect notions ascribed to Marx and Marxism are very harmful and some bourgeois economists intentionally impute such incorrect notions to Marx…

"As we mentioned above, one such layman's notion is that of the absolute impoverishment of the working class. Let us dwell on this for a moment. This notion argues that working class necessarily becomes increasingly poorer and more pauperized with the

development of capitalism and especially so in the stage of monopoly capitalism. First of all, let us be clear that Marxism does not hold any such notion. *Marx's theory is one of relative impoverishment of the working class. This simply means the relatively declining share of wages in the newly produced value vis-à-vis profits.* This happens due to the historical decline in the value of labour-power owing to the increasing productivity of labour in the branches that produce basic wage-goods and the branches that supply means of production to those producing wage-goods.

"As one can understand with the knowledge of basic mathematics, *it is very much possible that profits as well as wages, both increase absolutely, even when wages are declining relatively as a share of newly-produced value.* Marx very clearly explained that it is the historical tendency of capitalism to decrease the value of all commodities, including labour-power, in the chapter on relative surplus-value in the first volume of *Capital. Those who do not understand that the value of labour-power historically declines under capitalism do not understand Marx's theory of relative surplus-value.*

"*The decline in the value of labour-power does not necessarily mean decline in the real wages*, though the capitalist class also depresses real wages of the working class, especially, when it is not already at the level of physical minimum and when the organization of the working class is unable prevent it from doing so for whatever reasons. The capitalist class also depresses the wages below the value of the labour-power, especially in times of crises, though it cannot be a long-term sustainable situation. *Therefore, in certain periods, we do witness the absolute impoverishment of the working class as well.* However, that situation is also reversed at times due to a variety of factors. For instance, in periods of boom, due to increased demand for labour, the average wages also go up. The same can happen due to a strong and organized working-class movement, given the limits posed by the accumulation of capital allow it.

“Then what are the factors that determine the movement of wages? *The movement of wages is determined historically by the lower limits fixed by the bare minimum requirements of the workers (which themselves vary due to the ‘historical-moral’ element involved in the determination of the value of labour-power though it cannot be pushed below the level of physiological minimum needs for a protracted period of time, as Marx pointed out) and the higher limits posed by the accumulation of capital.* In other words, wages cannot fall below the value of labour-power for a protracted period of time so that the working class is not able to reproduce itself physically or is able to reproduce itself only in a crippled state; secondly, the wages cannot rise above the value of the labour-power so much so that the accumulation of capital becomes impossible. Marx explains in the first volume of *Capital*:

“The ultimate or minimum limit of the value of labour-power is formed by the value of the commodities which have to be supplied every day to the bearer of labour-power, the man, so that he can renew his life-process. That is to say, the limit is formed by the value of the physically indispensable means of subsistence. If the price of labour-power falls to this minimum, it falls below its value, since under such circumstances it can be maintained and developed only in a crippled state, and the value of every commodity is determined by the labour-time required to provide it in its normal quality.”

“Marx also writes:

“On the other hand, the number and extent of his so-called necessary requirements, as also the manner in which they are satisfied, are themselves products of history, and depend therefore to a great extent on the level of civilization attained by a country; in particular they depend on the conditions in which, and consequently on the habits and expectations with which, the class of free workers has been formed. In contrast, therefore, with the case of other commodities, the determination of the value of labour-power contains a historical and moral element. Nevertheless, in a given

country at a given period, the average amount of the means of subsistence necessary for the worker is a known datum."

"Marx explains further:

"It is these absolute movements of the accumulation of capital which are reflected as relative movements of the mass of exploitable labour-power, and therefore seem produced by the latter's own independent movement. To put it mathematically: the rate of accumulation is the independent, not the dependent, variable; the rate of wages, the dependent, not the independent, variable."

"Finally, Marx shows how movement of wages is determined:

"…the relation between capital accumulation and the rate of wages is nothing other than the relation between the unpaid labour which has been transformed into capital and the additional paid labour necessary to set in motion this additional capital. It is therefore in no way a relation between two magnitudes which are mutually independent, i.e. between the magnitude of the capital and the numbers of the working population; it is rather, at bottom, only the relation between the unpaid and the paid labour of the same working population. If the quantity of unpaid labour supplied by the working class and accumulated by the capitalist class increases so rapidly that its transformation into capital requires an extraordinary addition of paid labour, then wages rise and, all other circumstances remaining equal, the unpaid labour diminishes in proportion. But as soon as this diminution touches the point at which the surplus labour that nourishes capital is no longer supplied in normal quantity, a reaction sets in: a smaller part of revenue is capitalized, accumulation slows down, and the rising movement of wages comes up against an obstacle. The rise of wages is therefore confined within limits that not only leave intact the foundations of the capitalist system, but also secure its reproduction on an increasing scale. The law of capitalist accumulation, mystified by the economists into a supposed law of nature, in fact expresses the situation that the very nature of accumulation excludes every diminution in the degree of exploitation of labour, and every rise in the price of labour, which

could seriously imperil the continual reproduction, on an ever-larger scale, of the capital-relation"

"Thus, within these limits, namely, the physiological minimum and the limits posed by accumulation of capital, the wages move due to a variety of factors. The most important one is *the class struggle of the working class* to increase its share in the newly-produced value, namely, wages. The other is *the overall condition of the capitalist accumulation*, in other words, whether the capitalist economy is in the phase of prosperity, stagnation or crisis. The supply and demand of labour is only a function of the industrial cycle, or the movements of accumulation, and not an independent variable as such. Under the combined impact of these factors, the wages move within the above limits. *This also means that the value of labour-power and the real wages can move in different directions in capitalist mode of production.* Those who do not understand this, actually confuse the value of labour-power with real wages. The first is the magnitude of socially necessary labour required to produce the means of subsistence of the workers; the second refers to the basket of consumer goods that a worker can buy with his money wages. However, it is essential to remember that wages, as a historical tendency, fluctuate around the value of labour-power just like the prices of all commodities hover around the centre of gravity of their value. Marx explains succinctly in the first volume of *Capital* how the value of labour-power and real wages can move in different directions under capitalist mode of production:

"The value of labour-power is determined by the value of a certain quantity of means of subsistence. It is the value and not the mass of these means of subsistence that varies with the productivity of labour. It is however possible that owing to an increase in the productivity of labour both the worker and the capitalist may simultaneously be able to appropriate a greater quantity of means of subsistence, without any change in the price of labour-power or in surplus-value. Let the value of labour-power be 3 shillings, and let the necessary labour-time amount to 6 hours. Let the surplus-value be, similarly, 3 shillings, and the surplus labour 6 hours. Now, if the

productivity of labour were to be doubled without any alteration in the ratio between necessary labour and surplus labour, there would be no change in the magnitude either of the surplus-value or of the price of labour-power. The only result would be that each of these would represent twice as many use-values as before, and that each use-value would be twice as cheap as it was before. Although labour-power would be unchanged in price, it would have risen above its value. However, now assume a fall in the price of labour-power, not as far as Is. 6d., the lowest possible point consistent with its new value, but to 2s. 10d. or 2s. 6d. This lower price would still represent an increased quantity of means of subsistence. In this way it is possible, given increasing productivity of labour, for the price of labour-power to fall constantly and for this fall to be accompanied by a constant growth in the mass of the worker's means of subsistence. But in relative terms, i.e. in comparison with surplus-value, the value of labour-power would keep falling, and thus the abyss between the life-situation of the worker and that of the capitalist would keep widening."

"The historical tendency of capitalism is to reduce the value of the labour-power because productivity increases in all branches of production including the ones producing wage-goods or those supplying means of production to them. This leads to decline in the *per unit cost* as well as the price of these wage-goods. The reason is that the increase in the productivity of labour means that the same or even less amount of value will be distributed over a larger mass of *use-values.* This happens with all commodities in capitalism including the commodities that enter into workers' consumption. Therefore, an important thing to remember is that capitalism decreases the value and therefore relative prices of all commodities, including wage-goods and, therefore, that of labour-power." (Sinha, Abhinav. 2024. 'Fragmentary Notes on a Few Pertinent Questions of Marxist Political Economy in the Special Context of Certain Ongoing Debates', in *For a Proletarian Line,* Rahul Foundation, Lucknow, p. 23-28, *emphasis ours*)

We quoted this section in detail for a particular reason. The illusions that we have critiqued in this excerpt are precisely the reasons for not understanding Marxist theory of the impoverishment of the working class under capitalism, namely, the theory of relative impoverishment in general, and the theory of periodic absolute impoverishment. It is by now well-known to readers and comrades that Sukhwinder is especially tight-fisted in the realm of political economy. Sukhwinder's travails in the realm of political economy remind you of Don Quixote's travails in persuading Dulcinea del Toboso!

Thus, Sukhwinder critiques Kautsky precisely where is he correct in his criticism of Bernstein, namely, his insistence on the theory of relative impoverishment, and at the same, he could not even identify the points on which Kautsky's critique of Bernstein was incorrect, namely, federalism and the question of smashing of the bourgeois state. It is quite natural given the bizarre blend of Bundism, Trotskyism, and revisionism that Sukhwinder exhibits.

Now let us see what kind of fantasies Sukhwiner harbours about Hilferding and why he fails to understand the evolution of Hilferding's revisionist position.

B. Sukhwinder on Hilferding: Spectres of Plagiarism and Phantoms of Stupidity

Sukhwinder writes:

"Another prominent leader of German Social Democracy was Rudolf Hilferding. In 1910, his book 'Finance Capital' was published. In it he claimed that cartelisation has no absolute limit in capitalism. Rather there exists the trend of its rapid expansion. Independent industries become more and more dependent on cartelised industries and in the end they are devoured by cartelised industries. As a result, a general cartel emerges. The anarchy of commodities and production comes to an end. The role of money vanishes. If capitalism correctly distributes production, then it can develop without crises.

“In this manner, Hilferding veils the fundamental contradictions of capitalism. *In 1927, Hilferding brought forth the revisionist theory of organised capitalism.* He stated that a monopoly firm could rationally plan production and free of any competition in the market, could achieve technical innovation. The superior socialist principle of planning made it possible for the same to stand on its own feet and stabilize itself.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 45-46, *emphasis ours*)

The fact that Sukhwinder has plagiarized this whole section from another source, will be discussed later under the ongoing subhead.

Leaving apart the inarticulate and inaccurate presentation of the issue at stake, Sukhwinder continuously makes historical mistakes and does not give any respite to the readers from his incessant bombardment of ignorance. He claims that Hilferding presented his revisionist theory of ‘organized capitalism’ in 1927. It is completely untrue. The theory of ‘organized capitalism’ was present in the very political economy of Hilferding from the times of *Finance Capital* itself. This theory continued to evolve through the 1910s and assumed fuller shape towards the end of the 1920s. In the mid-1920s, Hilferding added a couple of new elements in his theory of ‘organized capitalism’ which drove him closer to the neo-harmonist positions, as exhibited by the likes of Tugan-Baranovsky. However, Sukhwinder is at sea regarding the evolution of the revisionist and harmonist views of Hilferding. The reason is that he has plagiarized from the variety of sources, without understanding. Let us see.

Hilferding writes years before the mid-1920s, in *Der Kampf*:

“In place of the victory of socialism there appears possible a society organized, indeed, but hierarchically and not democratically organized, at the apex of which stand the combined forces of the capitalist monopolies and the state, under whom the working class are engaged in a hierarchy of agents of production. *Instead of the triumph of socialism over capitalist society we would have an organized capitalism*, better adapted than hitherto to meeting the immediate material needs of the masses.” (quoted in Howard, M. C.

and J. E. King. 1989. *A History of Marxian Economics, Volume 1, 1883-1929,* Princeton University Press, p. 272, *emphasis ours*)

In the mid-1920s, Hilferding clearly began to argue that this organized capitalism would be able to do away with the crises and wars. Alex Callinicos mentions this fact in his work on imperialism after presenting the above quote of Hilferding:

“But, if economic crises are caused by disproportionalities between different sectors and between production and consumption, could not an organized capitalism overcome these? In the mid-1920s Hilferding drew the conclusion that it could, and indeed that organized capitalism would rid the world of both economic slumps and imperialist wars.” (Callinicos, A. 2009. *Imperialism and Global Political Economy,* Polity, p. 56)

This was a new element in his theory of ‘organized capitalism’ which was openly proclaimed by Hilferding in the mid-1920s, but which had begun to emerge from the mid-1910s itself and had assumed quite concrete reformist shape by the end of the 1910s. There is certainly a relation between the inherent reformist and harmonist elements of the political economy of Hilferding and the reformist politics of the Independent Social-Democratic Party to which he was associated and which later merged with the SPD itself.

Why did Sukhwinder make this mistake of considering the year 1927 as the year of beginning of Hilferding’s theory of ‘organized capitalism’?

One of the reasons is that *we* had written in one of the papers presented during the Fifth Arvind Memorial Seminar on Imperialism, in which Sukhwinder, too, was present, that in 1927 at the time of the Kiel Congress itself, Hilferding had expressed his conviction that ‘organized capitalism’ is going to get rid of the anarchy of capitalist production! We did not say that Hilferding came up with this theory in 1927 itself. In fact, we clearly mention in our writing that from the 1920s itself, these ideas of Hilferding had congealed. In this paper, we first discussed how the Hilferding of *Finance Capital,* did accept

the antagonistic form of cartelization and argued that even though there is no limit to cartelization, the single cartel that will emerge, will not do away with class antagonism. However, the seeds of the theory of ‘organized capitalism’ as a capitalism free of antagonism, were present in this political economy itself. Later, since the beginning of the 1920s itself, Hilferding *openly* moved to the revisionist and reformist political conclusions, from this erroneous political economy. We wrote in 2017:

“Hilferding also misunderstood that monopolization in the age of finance capital cannot lead to a crisis-free capitalism while doing away with the anarchy of production. He argued that finance capital has socialized production to the maximum degree under capitalism. In Germany, all production is virtually controlled by 6 banks and whoever takes over these 6 banks takes over the entire national economy. Thus, the ground for overcoming capitalism is prepared. These were the seeds of theory of ‘organized capitalism’ by Hilferding. By 1920s, he was *clearly* talking about ‘organized capitalism’. In the age of dominance of monopoly finance capital, certain degree of planning has developed. This has increased due to the intervention of the state also. Consequently, the relations between the capitalist states after the First World War came to be characterized by what Hilferding called ‘realistic pacifism.’ He still believed that imperialism is a necessary stage but he seems to believe after the war that imperialist rivalry might become less prominent feature of this stage and that imperialism itself in its colonial form might be less permanent phenomenon. *In 1927 he contended, “We are moving…from an economy regulated by the free play of forces to an organized economy.”*” (Sinha, Abhinav. 2019. ‘Marxist Theories of Imperialism from Marx to Present Times: A Contemporary Critical Reassessment’ in *Subversive Interventions,* Rahul Foundation, Lucknow, p. 404, *emphasis ours*)

Please see the italicized part. We mentioned the way new elements were being aggregated in the theory of ‘organized capitalism’ by Hilferding. By 1926-27 he began to contend that ‘organized capitalism’ will be able to do away with the recurrent crises. Almost

all serious scholars know about the above-mentioned evolution of Hilferding's theory of 'organized capitalism'. However, as usual, Sukhwinder does not go to the original sources, never reads anything comprehensively, scrounges for quotes through index and search tool, plagiarizes from various sources (including our writings!) and consequently ends up humiliating himself again.

Second reason why Sukhwinder makes this mistake is that he has plagiarized his whole account under his subhead on social-democracy and fascism from the 'Introduction' of David Beetham's anthology *Marxists in Face of Fascism,* as we have mentioned earlier. We will later see, towards the end of this section, what Beetham has written in his 'Introduction' and then compare this with what Sukhwinder has written. We will reproduce the words of Beetham in a little while. First, let us focus on what is Sukhwinder's overall understanding regarding the role of social-democracy in the rise of fascism.

C. Sukhwinder's Social-Democratic "Criticism" of Social-Democracy and its Role in the Rise of Fascism

Sukhwinder goes on to present his entire understanding of the relation between social-democracy and fascism:

"These illusions of social democrats regarding the imperialist stage of capitalism became the basis for their illusions regarding fascism. According to them, fascism is an *uncommon obstacle, an aberration in the path of technological progress and political democracy. Kautsky, particularly was the supporter and originator of such ideas. According to him political violence is a historical deviation in an industrialised world. Like the violence of Bolsheviks and communist party of Germany are futile attempts to hasten the motion of history, similarly fascist violence is an attempt to pull history back, stop economic development and an attempt to solve problems with force.* As a movement fascism is supported by *'short sighted capitalists'* and the middle class which is a victim of confusion and ruination due to economic change.

“From this understanding of fascism the social democratic party of Germany and social democratic party of Austria gleaned the following practical tasks -:

1.

    1. For the protection of parliamentary democracy an alliance should be forged with far sighted elements of capitalist class
    2. If the alliance proves inadequate due to increasing popular support for fascism, then one should wait for the storm to pass or for the fascists to prove their economic incapability in power.

“Kautsky held that fascist violence is the other side of Bolshevik violence. Due to this thought process he preferred the creation of united front with far sighted elements of capitalist class rather than with communists.

“Hilferding held that support for Nazism isn’t just the matter of ‘near-sighted elements of capitalism” but rather it is a much wider attack on the social legislation of Weimar Republic. This attack is also on the parliamentary system which is responsible for this system. But he strongly opposed any kind of struggle against Nazism. He said that the result of any struggle against Nazism would be naked dictatorship. From such calculations he strictly opposed any program of non-parliamentary action in alliance with communists.

“Due to this capitulationist policies of the German social democratic party, it was split in 1931. In Max Sedewitz, a part of left social democrats separated from the party.

“In Austria, two “kinds” of fascism were at loggerheads with each other. One was the domestic fascist party (Celerio). Second was the imported Nazi movement which quickly expanded in 1932. In 1933 rightist prime minister Dolfuss decided for an antiparliamentary coup. The aim of this coup along with crushing the Nazis was to also crush the social democrats, which it did. The social democratic party of Austria did not immediately oppose this coup rather it tried to hold

talks with Dolfuss. The assessment of Otto Bauer, the leader of the party was that the result of general strike against the coup would be a civil war which would unite both the varieties of fascism. That is why more and more concessions were made for the peaceful solution pf the situation. But there was no beneficial effect of this. Dolfuss rejected any type of discussion. He continuously stripped the rights of workers. Due to the capitulationist policies of social democracy, the working class of Austria lost all its rights one by one." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 46-47, *emphasis ours*)

Please do not mind the incorrect spellings (for instance, Sedewitz, which is actually Seydwitz) and other proof mistakes. We cannot correct such mistakes in Sukhwinder's essay, in quoting, as the readers can understand. Also, the fact that the above portion has been plagiarized, will be discussed later. Right now, we will focus on the understanding presented by Sukhwinder in the above excerpt.

It would be difficult to find a poorer account of the relationship between fascism and social-democracy, historically as well as theoretically. One is surprised to see that this is all that Sukhwinder could understand about the role that the social-democracy played in the rise of fascism! Let us understand the poverty of this account in a little detail.

Do social-democracy's illusions about 'organized capitalism' and its harmonist fantasies about the stage of imperialism have anything *in particular* to do with the rise of fascism? These reformist views of social-democracy *are, in general, existent,* whether it is the conditions of the fascist regime or a non-fascist bourgeois regime. Is Kautsky's condemnation of the Bolsheviks and his argument that fascism was the flipside of the Bolshevist adventures, *in particular,* relevant to the objective processes that led to the rise of fascism? Kautsky's condemnation of the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution had started immediately after the revolution itself, when Kautsky wrote his diatribe against the Bolshevik Revolution, *Terrorism and Communism,* in 1919 and which was critiqued from the Bolshevik side by Bukharin, Trotsky and Lenin. This approach of

Kautsky existed long before fascism began to rise in Italy or Germany. It is a constant that did not change. *Sukhwinder has completely missed the essence of the historical role that social-democracy plays in the rise of fascism.*

Sukhwinder has completely missed the crux of the role of social-democracy in the rise of fascism. It would be advisable to discuss this crucial role in a little detail.

Despite all his mechanistic errors, one argument of Manuilsky is broadly correct: *social-democracy is the stepping-stone to fascism.* This, too, is a little bit deterministic, because in all cases, the sins of the social-democracy do not *necessarily* lead to fascist rise, which is dependent on a variety of other political and economic factors that we have discussed earlier in this critique. However, this, too, is true that in all cases of fascist rise, social-democracy, in general, played a very significant role. What is this role?

This is precisely the question which is absent from Sukhwinder's specific subhead on social-democracy and fascism. He reduces everything to the incorrect line of the social-democrats in most of the countries to form coalitions with the saner or "far-sighted" elements of the bourgeoisie, rather than the communists. Thus, the disastrous sin of the social-democrats was simply the refusal to form alliances with the communists, while forming alliances with the bourgeois parties that were formally antithetical to fascists! Through this sleight of hand, Sukhwinder creates a mirror-image of the mistakes of the revolutionary communists: *the refusal to form alliance with the social-democrats!* Thus, both the parties become equally responsible for the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy and other countries where aborted fascist attempts were made because both refused to form alliances with each other for different reasons!

The sympathy, rather empathy, which Sukhwinder has for the revisionists becomes increasingly difficult for him to hide! Basically, Sukhwinder tried to stand on the pedestal of seeming objectivity, kind of a non-partisan position, vis-à-vis the mistakes of the social-democrats as well as those of the revolutionary communists, which

are at par and comparable! He does not stand in the camp of revolutionary communism, from where a consistent immanent critique of the “left” and right deviations from the correct Leninist line, could emerge. As any student of Marxism knows, this third place or position, is nothing but a social-democratic position itself. Such positions are conjured up precisely to put the social-democrats out of the dock. Despite all their mistakes, the KPD comrades as well as the PCI comrades are our comrades and our critique of their aberrations and deviations from the correct communist line, emerges from a very different position. However, the social-democrats were not *aberrating* or *deviating* from any correct line, but that was precisely their line. We must expose the social-democratic treachery of Sukhwinder here. It is noteworthy that the social-democratic tendencies of Sukhwinder do not appear to be some kind of slips or aberrations; there is a remarkable consistency from his upholding of the line of the ‘popular front’ as the universal general line on the anti-fascist united front, to his defence of the social-democrats by equating their mistakes to those of the revolutionary communists.

Let us, therefore, understand what Sukhwinder has utterly failed to understand: *what is the essence of the role played by social-democrats in the rise of fascism? Is it simply the refusal to form a united front with the communists due to their harmonist illusions? The answer is a big and resounding NO! This critique of social-democracy is actually a way to absolve the social-democrats of their central responsibility in the rise of fascism.*

First point: the basic characteristic feature of the social-democracy, *in general,* is its policy of *limiting the workers’ struggles within the ambit of pecuniary logic.* The economism of the social-democrats is revealed by the way it systematically trains the working class to measure all its gains only through economic demands and benefits. This is the social-democratic politics of disabling the working class from raising the political question, that is, the question of power. It goes without saying that this breed of politics emerges from the ideological line of the social-democracy itself. This ideological line is that of reformism and revisionism which effectively negates class

struggle and formally and openly negates the dictatorship of the proletariat. It naturally involved the abandoning of the principle of smashing of the state, which stems directly from a non-class notion of the state itself. It is assumed that with the development of democracy (as a non-class determination), the establishment of universal franchise, the advancement of the proletariat due to the economic and 'political' training under capitalism, and the development of workers' organizations, it becomes possible to bring socialism through the non-violent and parliamentary means itself. The best summarization of these arguments by a social-democrat can be found in Karl Kautsky's book *Hitlerism and Social-Democracy.* Similarly, Rudolf Hilferding argued that the Weimer state was not an instrument of the class rule of the bourgeoisie. Ben Fowkes has correctly summarized the views of Hilferding:

"The Kiel Party Congress of 1927 was dominated by Rudolf Hilferding's defense of coalitions. His basic theoretical justification for coalitions between the SPD and the bourgeois parties was that *the state was not inevitably an instrument of the ruling class.* The ruling class under the Weimer Republic was the capitalist class, but the parliamentary democracy set up in 1919 was not its instrument. *It was rather a special form of state that the workers should support.* The way forward was to reassert the supremacy of the state – now under threat from monarchist reaction – by intervening politically. This could be done by participating in governments alongside non-socialist parties. Coalition was therefore justified in principle." (Fowkes, B. 2003. Dobkowski, M. and I. Walliman. *op.cit.,* p. 252-53, *emphasis ours*)

In the same congress, Hilferding argued that there were two possible objectives of such coalition governments: one, to ward off the dangers of reaction and two, achieving advances for the working class, as Fowkes has shown. For Hilferding, the first objective was the central objective. Such a line stems directly from the ideology and politics of social-democracy. Kautsky, too, presents the same illusions about the class character of the state under capitalism and contends that violent overthrow of the capitalist state was a thing of

the past, when the working class itself was in its infancy, had not attained higher education and culture and was politically-backward (see Kautsky's *Hitlerism and Social-Democracy*, among others). The modern proletariat would not be swayed by the seductions of violence propagated equally by the militaristic bourgeoisie of the imperialist period as well as the Bolsheviks and communists. It would stick to the "humane" and "peaceful" ways to attain socialism through democracy. For Kautsky, too, democracy was a non-class determination which is embedded into socialism itself (just as it is embedded in the politics of the republican democratic bourgeoisie!) and therefore we simply cannot talk about 'bourgeois democracy' and 'proletarian democracy'. Readers can refer to the above-mentioned work of Kautsky written immediately after the rise of Nazis to power. It is available online.

Second point: based on this general characteristic, what *particular role* social-democracy plays in the rise of fascism? Social-democracy strives to maintain certain welfare policies, higher wages, allowances and benefits, and other ameliorative measures for the working class, based on a compromise between labour and capital. It constantly persuades the bourgeoisie to accept these demands precisely as a way to ensure the longevity of the system and to prevent sharpening of the class contradictions. The concrete program that emerges from such politics is that of 'economic democracy', which simply means better share of the workers in the newly-created value; work committees at the work place to ensure a share in the economic decision-making; the admission by the bourgeoisie of the working class as a legitimate negotiating partner in the running of the economy.

Under the general conditions of economic prosperity, often the bourgeoisie or the dominant fraction of the bourgeoisie, accepts these demands to ensure industrial peace and smooth running of the machinery of profit. This was precisely the reason why such labour-capital compromise was maintained during the Weimer Republic at least till the late-1920s, after which the pressure of certain fractions of the bourgeoisie was expressing its unwillingness to continue such

a compromise, which was becoming increasingly costly for them. As soon as, the Great Depression began and the German economy began to take a nosedive, these fractions became more and more militant in their assertions. Faced with such a situation, the working class could either fight to transcend the boundaries of capitalism, which was out of question for the social-democratic leadership, or, to give in to the demands of the bourgeoisie steadily. The social-democracy adopted the latter path. Thus, from ‘advancing the interests of the working class under the Weimer system’ to ‘defense of the Weimer parliamentary system against forces of reaction (monarchist as well as fascist)’, to the policy of ‘the lesser evil’ (which included supporting the less dangerous option to ward off the fascist threat), the social-democracy conceded all the economic victories achieved during the first half of the Weimer period.

What is happening here was this: *social-democracy knew how to deal with a capitalist system in conditions of higher rates of profit and prosperity and better cohesion within the ‘power bloc’; however, it was at complete loss when this period of prosperity came to an abrupt end, because the ruling class was no longer willing to accept the costly labour-capital compromise, faced with the crisis of profitability.* However, the organized workers’ movement under the leadership of the social-democrats was intransigent in surrendering the rights of higher wages and benefits and gave in only slowly. This created a situation of ‘profit squeeze’ for the German bourgeoisie and forced it increasingly to various reactionary options, a search which finally ended with Hitler.

Thus, on the one hand, the social-democracy systematically contained the working-class movement within the ambit of economism, reformism and class-collaborationism, strengthened its faith in the capitalist system and thus disarmed it to deal with the bourgeoisie as a political class, while on the other, preventing it from developing into a political class, a class with a political project. Let us see what Poulantzas has written about the culpability of social-democracy in the rise of fascism.

Poulantzas points out:

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

“But such a policy is a failure in these circumstances. *It does not allow the bourgeoisie to annul the political and economic gains of the working class, still less to carry the exploitation of the masses a decisive degree further.* From this point, and throughout the rise of fascism, only the political representatives of medium capital try to do things in this way. And it is an important fact that these politicians were increasingly isolated both from big capital and from their own class fractions. *Big capital for its part no longer toys with ‘class collaboration’ on the side, supposing it had ever done so, but turns decisively to the fascist solution.* This is clear, so long as one is not blinded by events on the political scene, and takes into account what lies behind them and the split between representatives and those they represent.” (Poulantzas, N. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 154, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas immediately clarifies that he is not presenting a general scheme, but the role of social-democracy in historical cases of rise of fascism has become evident in this way. He points out further:

“*The precise nature of the rise of fascism clearly demonstrates that social democracy, employed by big capital in the preceding periods, is not or is no longer an adequate instrument for carrying out its policies, even though social democracy in Germany and Italy was itself contributing to ‘class collaborationism’ during the rise of fascism.* Its use in these circumstances relates mainly to the forms assumed by the contradictions between big and medium capital.

"*All this does not of course mean that social-democratic policy towards fascism is free of grave responsibility for its success. It bears all the more responsibility, in that its mass influence was considerable.* Apart from the factors already pointed out, *this is because the workers' movement was on the defensive, and this as always signalled an upturn for social democracy.* The capitulation of social democracy is typical of a party of class collaboration, although there was not strictly speaking any direct collusion between social democracy and fascism." (*ibid,* p. 156, *emphasis ours*)

In the specific case of Germany, after revealing the betrayal of the German Social-Democratic Party (p. 177-80), Poulantzas argues that the principal responsibility for the resistible rise of fascists turning into an irresistible rise, lay at the door of the social-democracy due to their counter-revolutionary nature, class-collaborationism, and economism:

"*In conclusion, SPD policy was faithful to its counter-revolutionary nature and function.* There was no actual collusion between social democracy and fascism; throughout the rise of fascism, it still tried in its own way to defend and preserve the 'economic interests' of the working class, which it had to do to keep its representational base in the class. *None the less, it certainly bears the greatest share of responsibility for fascism's coming to power.*" (*ibid,* p. 180, *emphasis ours*)

Similarly, David Abraham in the specific context of the rise of fascism in Germany, has explained the particular role that the social-democracy plays. Abraham writes:

"*Social-democratic power does not alter the core of capitalism.* As we shall see, the Weimer labour movement's search for economic rationality, social justice, and political participation was inevitably and decisively constrained by the privileged status systematically accorded the logic of accumulation. *It seems that the best that can be accomplished is the worst that can be done: paralyzing capitalism without being able to transform it*…Having mistakenly assumed that democracy would overcome capitalism *within* the new system of

capitalist democracy, *they were at complete loss to deal with the system in distress.* Having persuaded most of their members that success was to be measured almost uniquely by wage and social welfare gains, *the SPD and ADGB had virtually no idea what to do once capitalism ceased producing surplus they could skim.*" (Abraham, D. 2003. *op.cit.,* p. 29, emphasis ours)

We have already quoted Gossweiler earlier in this critique, who revealed the despicable treachery and betrayal of the social-democrats, which played the central role in the rise of fascism in Germany. There is no need to quote him again. Geoff Eley points out:

"The idea of *a defensive social-democratic corporatism,* which within the limits of this essay has to remain theoretically underdeveloped, may well be a fruitful one for the discussion of fascism. It lends a formal unity to the political crisis of Weimer, between the foundering of the Grand Coalition in March 1930 on the issue of insurance legislation, and the precipitation of the von Papen-Hitler maneuver in December 1932-January 1933 by General Kurt von Schleicher's renewed corporatist exploration. *Mutatis mutandis,* the arguments also work for the Italian situation in 1918-22, *where the presence of a mass socialist party publicly committed to a revolutionary program (howsoever rhetorically) had effectively thrown the state into paralysis."* (Eley, G. 2003. *op.cit.,* p. 89, *emphasis ours*)

These scholars and many others have shown with their empirical research beyond doubt that *in the structural and objective sense,* it was the social-democracy which disarmed and disabled the working class from resisting the fascist rise by preventing it from becoming a *political class* and assuming the leadership of the working masses, including various sections of the petty-bourgeoisie, through its line of revisionism, reformism, economism, trade-unionism, workerism and class-collaborationism and capitulationism.

The subjective errors of the communists stem from their "left" as well as right *deviations* from the correct line. However, they were revolutionary communists, not revisionists, whose error do not stem

from their *aberration* or *deviation* from the correct line; their line itself represented the bourgeois line within the workers' movement, to use the Leninist characterization for the social-democrats. *The critiques of the revolutionary communists must take place at a different level, a critique which is immanent, endogenous and internal to the revolutionary communist movement itself.* However, Sukhwinder reserves special scorn and rebuke for the communists, whereas his approach towards the social-democracy is one of absolving it of *the chief responsibility and culpability in the rise of fascism.* One of the reasons for this is Sukhwinder's new-found love for all things social-democratic, Bundist and Trostkyite because it allows him to present a program of doing nothing, precisely because this whole group is not in a position to do anything. Another reason is that he has plagiarized from Beetham his entire section on social-democracy and fascism. Now, we shall show to the readers how our substandard plagiarizer, Mr. Sukhwinder, dons the hat of the *kharra*-boy once again.

D. New Adventures of the Kharra-Man in the Realm of Plagiarism

First of all, let us see what Beetham says in the very beginning of the section of his 'Introduction' on social-democracy and fascism:

"The present section will consider analyses by Social Democrats in Germany and Austria. Just as the parties of the Comintern failed, so the parties of Social Democracy in both countries also failed in their strategies to prevent the rise of fascism to power, the one without offering serious resistance, the other after an uprising under unfavourable circumstances." (Beetham, D. 1983. *op.cit.,* p. 40)

At the very outset, the readers can understand the reason why Sukhwinder discusses the cases of Germany and Austria only, while leaving the case of Italy. Because the source from where Sukhwinder is going to plagiarize from, namely Beetham, has done precisely the same. Moreover, readers can also understand why Sukhwinder fails to understand the difference between the Marxist-Leninist criticism of the *principal* responsibility and *structural and*

objective role of the social-democracy in the rise of fascism on the one hand, and the *subjective mistakes* of the revolutionary communists on the other. Beetham does the same, broadly speaking: equating the two in weightage.

Beetham writes:

“A central theme of Social Democratic analysis in the post-war period was the idea of *‘organised capitalism’*, a concept given definitive formulation by Rudolf Hilferding at the SPD Congress in *1927* … Social Democracy’s conception of ‘organised capitalism’ offered a very different interpretation of capitalism’s monopoly stage and its post-war development in Germany. It emphasised, first, the *rational planning* of production within the monopolistic firm and its capacity for *technical innovation* even without the immediate pressure of market competition. It was the application of this *superior ‘socialist’ principle of planning* that had enabled capitalism to regenerate and *stabilise itself* in the post-war period.” (*ibid,* p. 40-41, *emphasis ours*)

Now look at what Sukhwinder has written:

“In 1927, Hilferding brought forth the revisionist theory of organised capitalism. He stated that a monopoly firm could *rationally plan* production and free of any competition in the market, could achieve *technical innovation*. *The superior socialist principle of planning* made it possible for the same to stand on its own feet and *stabilize itself.*” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 46, *emphasis ours*)

Please note the italicized parts of both the quotes. Pure paraphrasing and plagiarism, without mentioning the source. Well-done, Sukhwinder!

Further.

Now, see this excerpt from Beetham:

“…the Social Democratic theory of ‘organised capitalism’ led it to view *fascism as an aberration, an abnormal interruption in the onward march of technical progress and political democracy.* Such a view is *particularly evident in Kautsky’s work. For Kautsky the use of*

political violence constituted a historical deviation in an industrialised world where social power was determined by indispensability of economic function, and bourgeois democracy was the appropriate political form for a technically advanced society. Just as violence on the part of the Bolsheviks and putchism by the KPD were a futile attempt to force the pace of history, so the violence of fascism was a historical throwback, an attempt to hold back economic development and solve its problems by force…Fascism as a movement drew its support from 'reckless and short-sighted capitalist elements' and confused middle strata displaced by economic change. Fascism as a regime was 'economically illiterate' and could only intensify the problems of economic dislocation, not resolve them. *Two practical conclusions followed from this analysis for the strategy of the SPD (and later the Austrian SOAP), when the fascist threat unexpectedly moved from backward Italy to Germany. First, the Social Democrats should seek a coalition with the more 'far-sighted' capitalist elements in defence of parliamentary democracy. But, secondly, if this alliance proved inadequate because of the increasing popular support for fascism, the only strategy was to wait, either for the storm to 'blow over', or for the fascists to prove their economic incompetence in power.* Not the strategy of 'overthrow' but the 'war of attrition' was the order of the day.

"Kautsky's analysis embodied misconceptions frequently to be found in Social Democratic thinking about fascism: *that fascist violence was the counterpart of Bolshevik or Communist violence… Such assumptions were used to justify a policy of quiescence and the search for allies among the bourgeoisie rather than the Communists.*" (Beetham, D. 1983. *op.cit.,* p. 41-42, *emphasis ours*)

Now compare this with Sukhwinder's following words and focus on the italicized portions:

"These illusions of social democrats regarding the imperialist stage of capitalism became the basis for their illusions regarding fascism. *According to them, fascism is an uncommon obstacle, an aberration in the path of technological progress and political democracy.*

Kautsky, particularly was the supporter and originator of such ideas. According to him political violence is a historical deviation in an industrialised world. Like the violence of Bolsheviks and communist party of Germany are futile attempts to hasten the motion of history, similarly fascist violence is an attempt to pull history back, stop economic development and an attempt to solve problems with force. As a movement fascism is supported by 'short sighted capitalists' and the middle class which is a victim of confusion and ruination due to economic change.

"From this understanding of fascism, the social democratic party of Germany and social democratic party of Austria gleaned the following practical tasks -:

"*i) For the protection of parliamentary democracy an alliance should be forged with far sighted elements of capitalist class*

"ii) If the alliance proves inadequate due to increasing popular support for fascism, then one should wait for the storm to pass or for the fascists to prove their economic incapability in power.

"*Kautsky held that fascist violence is the other side of Bolshevik violence. Due to this thought process he preferred the creation of united front with far sighted elements of capitalist class rather than with communists.*" (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 46, *emphasis ours*)

Thus, again, complete and shameless paraphrasing and plagiarizing! The only changes in words at some places is due to the fact that Sukhwinder had, while plagiarizing from Beetham, first translated from English to Punjabi and then the translator appointed to translate the pile of crap written by Sukhwinder into English, translated the Punjabi text into English again. So, again, we have a case of 'lost in the translation'. Despite two layers of translation from and to English, via Punjabi, even a layman can see that our editor sa'ab is at it again! Plagiarizing!

Sukhwinder plagiarizes about Hilferding with equal audacity and shamelessness. Here is what Beetham has written:

“Hilferding himself was well aware that support for the *Nazis was not merely a matter of ‘reckless and short-sighted’ capitalists, but part of a much broader attack on the social legislation of the Weimar Republic*, and *on the parliamentary system that was responsible for it.* Yet he opposed any determined struggle against the dismantling of social welfare, especially after the Nazi gains in the elections of September 1930, on the grounds that *nothing should be done that would alarm the bourgeois parliamentary centre, and encourage it to take the Nazis into the government. Such a move would rapidly lead to outright dictatorship* through the Nazi insistence on controlling internal security. *It was this calculation as much as inveterate hostility that ruled out any joint programme of extra-parliamentary action with the Communists.*” (Beetham, D. 1983. *op.cit.*, p. 42, *emphasis ours*)

Now compare this with what Sukhwinder writes, paying special attention to the italicized portions:

“Hilferding held that support for *Nazism isn’t just the matter of ‘near-sighted elements of capitalism” but rather it is a much wider attack on the social legislation of Weimar Republic.* This attack is also *on the parliamentary system which is responsible for this system. But he strongly opposed any kind of struggle against Nazism. He said that the result of any struggle against Nazism would be naked dictatorship.* From such *calculations he strictly opposed any program of non-parliamentary action in alliance with communists.*” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 47, *emphasis ours*)

Again, as the readers can see, dishonest and shameless paraphrasing and plagiarizing!

Sukhwinder lacks even that amount of intellectual honesty that even a student researcher in a bourgeois academia has! Even a research student submitting his/her thesis, has to go through a process called ‘plagiarism check’ by the university department responsible for thesis submission. Had Sukhwinder submitted his thesis on fascism to a plagiarism check, the employees of the university department would have committed suicide!

Now let us come to the case of Austria. Since Beetham discusses Austria, Sukhwinder has no other options but to discuss Austria, though he does not talk about the Austrian case anywhere else in his bundle of plagiarizings. The reason is that this particular portion has been plagiarized by Sukhwinder from Beetham. See what Beetham has written:

"The *Austrian political situation was complicated by the presence of two competing fascisms, a weak home-grown movement of clerico-fascism* (the *Heimwebr*) and an imported Nazi movement which grew rapidly in strength during 1932. In the context of a parliamentary stalemate the following year, and fearing the further growth of the Nazis in the wake of their electoral success in Germany in March 1933, the right-wing Christian-Social premier, *Dollfuss, decided on an anti-parliamentary coup which would enable him to govern by means of emergency powers.* The ostensible aim of his dictatorship was to suppress the Nazis, which he did; at the same time, he started a drive against: the Social Democrats, using the forces of the *Heimwebr* as an auxiliary to the police. *The SOAP did not immediately resist the coup, but engaged in a series of attempted negotiations with Dollfuss through 'sympathetic intermediaries'. Otto Bauer, the Party leader, calculated that a general strike would degenerate into civil war, and bring about an alliance between the two strands of fascism, the black and brown, and the armed forces of the state.* So 'we offered greater and greater concessions with a view to making a peaceful solution possible . . . all in vain – Dollfuss refused to enter into any negotiations'. Instead, he proved adept at dismantling the workers' rights piecemeal, without ever providing the occasion for a decisive confrontation. When an armed rising did eventually break out, in a spontaneous and uncoordinated manner in Linz in February 1934, the Party had become too weakened to give it effective support." (Beetham, D. 1983. *op.cit.,* p. 45, *emphasis ours*)

Now compare this with Sukhwinder's version:

"In Austria, *two "kinds" of fascism were at loggerheads with each other. One was the domestic fascist party (Celerio).* Second was the

imported Nazi movement which quickly expanded in 1932. *In 1933 rightist prime minister Dolfuss decided for an antiparliamentary coup. The aim of this coup along with crushing the Nazis was to also crush the social democrats, which it did. The social democratic party of Austria did not immediately oppose this coup rather it tried to hold talks with Dolfuss. The assessment of Otto Bauer, the leader of the party was that the result of general strike against the coup would be a civil war which would unite both the varieties of fascism.* That is why *more and more concessions were made for the peaceful solution of the situation.* But there was no beneficial effect of this. *Dolfuss rejected any type of discussion. He continuously stripped the rights of workers.* Due to the capitulationist policies of social democracy, the working class of Austria lost all its rights one by one." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 47, *emphasis ours*)

As the readers can see, Sukhwinder has once again proven his mettle as a shameless, crude and vulgar plagiarizer and paraphraser. We have demonstrated this in the past (regarding his position on the national question, language question, federalism, etc.) and we have demonstrated this several times, in the course of the ongoing critique of his "understanding" of fascism.

What explanation can Sukhwinder give about such notorious intellectual forgery? Can anyone take such a person seriously in the political or intellectual sense? Can such a person lead a political group? What could be the repercussions of the pitiable personal degeneration of the chieftain of the Trot-Bundists on the cadre of 'Lalkaar-Pratibaddh' group is becoming increasingly apparent now. The recent disturbing incidents in this group are not an anomaly, nor are they aberrations or deviations of certain individuals. When the leadership itself becomes politically and ideologically dishonest and bankrupt, emergence of personal degeneration of members of the leadership is a natural outcome. This is precisely what is happening. The intellectual dishonesty evident from the relentless plagiarizing and paraphrasing is not a metaphysically segregated reality from these incidents. *There is a coherent and intrinsic causal link.*

Finally, if the plagiarizer understands what he/she is plagiarizing, it might still help the readers to understand a certain viewpoint or position, even if that is incorrect and even if the question of intellectual dishonesty still remains. However, the curious case of the *kharra*-man of Punjab is different! Sukhwinder does not understand what he is plagiarizing. This leads him to write loads of crap around the plagiarized and paraphrased positions. As a consequence, the limited value that a plagiarized piece could have for the readers vanishes in the fog of stupidity created by the editor of ‘Pratibaddh’ in almost all of his articles or speeches.

We raise a simple question to the remaining honest youth still with ‘Lalkaar-Pratibaddh’ group: *where would such intellectually dishonest leadership lead to? What will be the consequences of the political degeneration of the leadership for you? What will be the repercussions of such ideological departure from Marxism? Just think about it.*

PART 7

Sukhwinder's Account of Fascism in India: A Menace to the Development of Any Understanding of Fascism in India

A. "Bare-naked" Vacuity of Sukhwinder's Very, Very Brief Account of Fascism in India

From page number 47 to 49 in his booklet on fascism, Sukhwinder presents a *very, very brief account* of fascist rise in India. He warns the readers that they should consult "other books". Well, to say the least, after systematic dumbing down of the minds of the readers with this *very, very brief account*, even reading the best of the research works on fascism in India, would not be able to play the role of an antidote. We will explain why we are saying this.

First of all, any person has the right to present a brief account of any historical process. However, the usefulness of such account depends on one basic pre-requisite that it must fulfil: it must capture at least the nodal points or defining moments of that process. Sukhwinder's account completely fails to capture the milestones or the turning points in the rise of fascism in India. It is a very poor factual account with inaccuracies. Secondly, if a Marxist presents even a very brief account of a socio-economic and political phenomenon, it must have two basic elements: one, *causal analysis* and two, the identification of *the phases of the process*. Both these elements are missing. Allow us to demonstrate this fact.

The account of Sukhwinder is a thoroughly impoverished selection of facts from a variety of sources. A reader can get a better view of things by reading Wikipedia articles on the subject, if not scholarly research works! For instance, he does not even mention the core of the ideology of Hindutva fascism, as it originated and evolved through Savarkar to Golwalkar and later. The essence of fascist ideology itself is lost in his account. Secondly, he does not discuss the basic phases of evolution of fascist ideology and organization from 1925 to 1947 (foundations of fascist ideology, origins of the

cadre structure and development of a limited support base among the urban petty-bourgeoisie and upper-caste landlordist reaction), from 1948 to 1962 (period of relative downturn and sidelining of the RSS due to the assassination of Gandhi, even though the ban on the RSS was lifted very soon and the development of cadre organization and infiltration into state apparatus continued), from India's China War (1962) to the mid-1980s (the re-emergence of the RSS in the mainstream bourgeois politics, continued growth of cadre organization, continued infiltration into the state apparatus, and beginnings of the rise of fascist social movement), the mid-1980s to 1996 (the period of *first paroxysm* with the demolition of the Babri Masjid when Indian fascism moved from a long 'war of positions' to a period of 'war of movement', formation of BJP or BJP-led governments in some states, increasing electoral might of the BJP at the centre), 1996 to 2002 (the period of three Vajpayee governments, interspersed with short-lived non-BJP coalition governments, which saw a much more systematic process of the internal takeover the state apparatus reaching a new stage, fascization of the *formal* ideological state apparatuses from education to culture, unprecedented impetus to neoliberal policies), 2002 to 2004 (the *second paroxysm* with the Gujarat Genocide, beginning of rise of the cult of Modi, intensification of fascization of state apparatus, molecular permeation into the pores of the society, communalization of public opinion at an unprecedented level), 2004 to 2011 (electoral defeat of the BJP at the central level due to unprecedented economic discontent, a period of what certain scholars have termed as 'the Indian *Weimerism'* between 2004 and 2011, the onset of economic crisis globally in 2007-08 and spiraling down of the Indian economy since 2010-11, reflection of the general economic condition into politics in the shape of large-scale corruption, fractional interests of the bourgeoisie assuming prominence and development of a political crisis), 2012 to 2014 (rising tide of communal frenzy, the right-wing populist anti-corruption movement feeding into the fascist consolidation, rise of Modi as the preferred candidate of the Indian bourgeoisie in the conjuncture of economic and political crisis and finally the thumping electoral victory

of Modi), the period from 2014 to present which has many sub-phases (first tenure of Modi government, the *third paroxysm* of fascism, qualitatively higher level of the internal takeover and molecular permeation, development of the communal consensus, a qualitatively higher level of systematic fascization of state within the shell of bourgeois parliamentary system).

Of course, Sukhwinder could have presented his own different periodization which were marked by nodal events/processes marking qualitatively distinct levels of the fascist rise. However, the readers find no such periodization into qualitatively different phases separated by certain nodal events/processes. What we get is certain dates, certain numbers, certain data about electoral performances, but no logical and rigorous understanding of the dialectic of development.

Secondly, any account of the rise of fascism in India would be incomplete without, at least a brief, discussion of the Gujarat Riots of 2002, the systematic state-sponsored genocide of the Muslim masses, in a certain sense, the *first fascist communal holocaust* in India. Why is this event a turning point in the history of the rise of fascism in India? Because it reveals, as Sartre had rightly remarked, the fact that fascism is distinguished not by how many people it kills, but by how it kills them. The fascistic preparation, the complicity of the state, the systematic building of the mass fascist frenzy and the conjuring of wide mass support for or indifference and callousness to the fascist “reaction to the action” in almost all parts of India (even South India), the consequent rise of Modi as the “Hindu Hridaya Samrat” and the führer-figure and various other processes that Gujarat-2002 initiated are constituent elements of fascism in all cases.

Even while describing the original social props of the RSS, when it was formed, Sukhwinder talks in the way of journalists and bourgeois psephologists. He says that the original social support base came from among the *Brahmins-Baniyas*. A Marxist would first of all point out the class character of the social basis of fascism. The

class character in the initial decades was shaped mainly on the basis of those petty-bourgeois sections who had been conventionally attracted to the reactionary, romanticist and revivalist Hindu nationalism, the principal figures of which had been Dayanand Saraswati and Arya Samaj, Bankim Chandra, Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya, etc. These were precisely the sections, which gravitated towards the reactionary ideological and political tendency represented by the All India Hindu Mahasabha and later the RSS, especially after Gandhi became hegemonic inside the Congress, representing a fusion of elements of the Tilak tendency as well as the Gokhale tendency.

The second important section which lent its support to the RSS in the first years was the feudal and semi-feudal landlordist reactionary classes. Very soon, the bourgeoisie, too, found out the extreme usefulness of the RSS for its own political expediencies and many sections of the rising Indian industrial bourgeoisie, too, began to give financial support to the RSS. However, the petty-bourgeois support base, which is most instrumental for the fascist ideology and organization to evolve into a reactionary social movement, was not sufficient before the independence, for obvious reasons. The bulk of petty-bourgeoisie participated in the national movement and its intelligentsia supplied its intellectual and political leadership. As a consequence, in terms of social base, the RSS remained at the reactionary revivalist margins of the petty-bourgeoisie, because the fundamental historical and political factors that drive larger sections of the petty-bourgeoisie into the camp of far-right and fascist reactions were not present as such and the right-wing elements of this class were absorbed in the mainstream of the national movement itself.

Sukhwinder's *very, very brief account* misses all the cardinal elements of the historical development of fascism in India. It tells us vacuous details, bereft of any historical and political content and ends up being a very poor and inaccurate fact-sheet. The poverty of this factsheet can be gauged by Sukhwinder's comment that Golwalkar's *Bunch of Thoughts* was published after some time of the

publication of *We, Our Nationhood Defined.* The fact is that the former was published in 1938, whereas the latter was published almost three decades later, in 1966, seven years before the death of Golwalkar in 1973. Sukhwinder has been too hasty in writing this section and copied certain facts from here and there.

Similarly, Sukhwinder's claim that when capitalist development gathered momentum after the independence, the petty-bourgeoisie expanded as well as got proletarianized! In fact, the proletarianization of the lower echelons of the urban petty-bourgeoisie picked up pace only when the first major economic crisis hit the Indian economy in the late-1960s and in particular in the 1970s and the 1980s. Certain parts of petty-bourgeoisie always witness the process of dispossession, especially the rural parts. However, as a significant social process having far-reaching political consequences, the proletarianization of the petty-bourgeoisie, in general, accelerated since the late-1960s and especially (in the context of the urban petty-bourgeoisie) since the 1970s, assuming particularly alarming proportions in the 1980s.

It is not without reason that despite attempts to move to a 'war of movement' from a long period of 'war of positions' in the late-1960s and early-1970s, the Sangh Parivar failed to arouse a fascist communal frenzy. One such attempt was the anti-cow-slaughter riots in Delhi in 1966, which fizzled out after some time, without giving the Sangh Parivar much political mileage. A few more attempts like that were made in the 1970s, too. However, they, too, failed to gain any traction. The reason was clear: the fundamental pre-requisites of the emergence of broad-based reactionary social movement of the petty-bourgeoisie were still not sufficiently fulfilled. There are so many inaccuracies in the *very, very brief* historical account of Sukhwinder that we can only suggest the readers to refrain from reading it. Even non-Marxist and journalistic accounts of the rise of RSS's fascism in India, like that of A. G. Noorani, D. R. Goyal, Dhirendra K. Jha, give a much better insight into the mechanisms of fascism in India.

Now let us come to the factors that Sukhwinder sees as ‘obstacles’ in the rise of fascism in India, especially, its rise to power. Here, in particular, he commits the most idiotic mistakes, as we shall see.

B. “Unevenness” of Development of Fascism in India and the Remarkable Evenness of the Development of Sukhwinder’s Idiocy

Immediately before the subhead on ‘obstacles’ to the rise of fascism, Sukhwinder opines:

“*Presently, in India, there exist a strong fascist movement in the leadership of RSS. But its development is quite uneven. In some states RSS/Sangh Parivar is in a strong position while in others, it is quite weak. In Kashmir, Punjab, some states of South India, many states of North East RSS/Sangh Parivar is in a weak position.* But where it is weak, it is trying its utmost to gain a foothold. To what extent it succeeds in this, only the future can tell. *It is important to keep in mind the uneven development of fascist forces in India.* So that an effective strategy for its resistance may be formed.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.*, p. 50, *emphasis ours*)

Sukhwinder is trying to build a foundation for the extremely inane, asinine and ignorant arguments that he presents in the next section. Let us elaborate.

First of all, the rise of fascism in the historical cases, namely, Germany and Italy, too, was not even. There is no novelty in claiming that in India, too, as one can expect, the rise of fascism is not even. In fact, it cannot be even in any country. Moreover, it does not need to be even in order to rise to power. Sukhwinder’s point is that it is bound to be weaker in multi-national countries, in those territories, where the oppressed nations and nationalities live! The assumption is simple: the multi-nationality of a country presents a hurdle before the rise of fascism. Is that true? No. Why does Sukhwinder fail to understand this? Because he assumes two things: one, fascism is really nationalist whose nationalism, as it were, is historically-rooted, and not a purely ideological construct; two, he does not understand

that essentially *pragmatism* is a constituent element of fascism. Fascism does not need particular variables in each case. It has what scholars like Geoff Eley have termed as the *promiscuous adaptability* of fascism and its propaganda (Eley, G. 2003. *op.cit.,* p. 85). It can co-opt a number of disparate trends, tendencies and elements within its overall political framework.

Thus, in India, Hindutva fascism can co-opt the reactionary Christian groups within its fold *vis-à-vis* the Islamic fundamentalists in Kerala, it can promote beef-eating and even promise increasing its supply in Kerala, Goa and certain North-Eastern states; it can co-opt dalits as well as tribals within its own narrative, without even rejecting their own communitarian/religious traditions, rather by co-opting these very traditions within the architectonic of the narrative of Hindutva. We must first recognize that Savarkar was smart enough to weave the narrative of Hindutva in such a way that has the potential to co-opt a variety of elements, in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, etc. ‘Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan’ has a certain limited propaganda value, however, to see the superficial reality as the essential reality in the case of the fascist project in India would be suicidal. Before the BJP had conquered the state of Karnataka, certain naïve observers used to say this about Karnataka, too, that the RSS cannot develop stronghold in this state due to the problem of nationality and language. The same could become true about Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in near future, whereas in Kerala and Tamil Nadu in a little more distant future.

Thus, Sukhwinder has completely taken things at face-value, whereas fascism in general and Hindutva fascism in particular shows threatening flexibility and in Eley’s words, ‘promiscuous adaptability’. Sukhwinder is searching for ways to counter “centralization” by fascists, their “attack on federalism” and “transformation of India into one nation” (how could that happen, anyway!), whereas the fascists are bothered about none of these, any more than any other political representative of the bourgeoisie in India, which itself has a multinational character with stakeholders from all the bourgeoisies of the nations, which are not oppressed, that is to say, Kashmir and

certain North-Eastern states. Just like Don Quixote, Sukhwinder is tilting at the windmills!

C. 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 a 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 a 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. Let us give you a concrete instance.

Eric Hobsbawm writes about the interesting case of a Protestant professor in Germany, who suddenly came to know that he was a Jew, because according to the new definitions of the Jew, imposed by the Nazis, he was to be considered a Jew and had to emigrate to London! Thousands of such Protestants met the same fate. Hobsbawm points out:

“Or, consider the case of the Protestant German classical scholar, Pater, a professor of Classics in London, who suddenly discovered, after Hitler, that he had to emigrate, because, by Nazi standards, he was actually Jewish—a fact of which until that moment, he was unaware. However he had defined himself previously, he now had to find a different identity.” (Hobsbawm, E. 1996. ‘Identity Politics and the Left’, Lecture delivered at *Institute of Education,* London, 2 May, 1996)

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, Suhwinder 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.

Those who do not understand this, look at the electoral results in states like Karnataka, Telangana, Gujarat, Odisha, Rajasthan, etc. with bamboozlement and bewilderment. Sukhwinder’s eyes must be particularly wide-open and his jaws must be dropped the lowest, as, how can a fascist project based on a unitary monolithic nationalist identity develop such organic support base in “the oppressed nations” like Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, West Bengal, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and has now even begun to develop in-roads into the seemingly impregnable fortress of Kerala!

One thing that keeps coming back to your mind again and again while reading Sukhwinder is this: *this guy seriously needs to read, travel across India and also involve in some direct political practice,*

instead of giving idiotic and inane sermons from his "Kremlin" in Raikot.

Moving further.

D. '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:

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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*)

In a letter to Shahumyan in 1913 itself, Lenin wrote:

"You are opposed to autonomy. You are in favour only of regional self-government. *I disagree entirely.* Recall Engels's explanation that centralization does not in the least preclude local "liberties". Why should Poland have autonomy and not the Caucasus, the South, or the Urals? Does not the central parliament determine the limits of autonomy? *We are certainly in favour of democratic centralism. We are opposed to federation.* We support the Jacobins as against the Girondists. But to be afraid of autonomy in Russia of all places—that is simply ridiculous! It is reactionary. Give me an example, imagine a case in which autonomy can be harmful. You cannot. But in Russia (and in Prussia), this narrow interpretation— only local self-government—plays into the hands of the rotten police regime.

""The right to self-determination does not imply only the right to secede. It also implies the right to federal association, the right to autonomy," you write. *I disagree entirely. It does not imply the right to federation. Federation means the association of equals, an association that demands common agreement. How can one side have a right to demand that the other side should agree with it?* That is absurd. *We are opposed to federation in principle, it loosens economic ties, and is unsuitable for a single state. You want to secede? All right, go to the devil, if you can break economic bonds, or rather, if the oppression and friction of "coexistence" disrupt and ruin economic bonds. You don't want to secede? In that case, excuse me, but don't decide for me; don't think that you have a "right" to federation.*

""Right to autonomy?" Wrong again. We are in favour of autonomy for all parts; we are in favour of the right to secession (and not in favour of everyone's seceding!). Autonomy is our plan for organizing a democratic state. Secession is not what we plan at all. We do not advocate secession. In general, we are opposed to secession. But we stand for the right to secede owing to reactionary, Great Russian

nationalism, which has so besmirched the idea of national coexistence that sometimes closer ties will be established after free secession!" (Lenin, V. I. 1977. *Collected Works, Volume 19,* Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 500-01, *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 uninational 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 infantiles 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.

E. 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. Maybe 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 have 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 degress, 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.

F. 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. Lenin points out:

“To speak of *forms of government* in this connection is trebly stupid, for every schoolboy knows that monarchy and republic are two different *forms of government*. It must be explained to Mr. Kautsky that *both these forms of government,* like all transitional “forms of government” under capitalism, *are but varieties of the bourgeois state*, that is, of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

“Lastly, *to speak of forms of government is not only a stupid but also a very crude falsification of Marx*, who was very clearly speaking here of this or that *form or type of state, and not of forms of government.*” (Lenin. V.I. 2021. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 11, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas even makes a difference between forms of state, which themselves are determined by the relative weight of the parts of the state apparatus (for instance, the relative weight of the executive and the legislative, the relation between the repressive state apparatus and ideological state apparatus, etc.) within the limits posed by the class character of the state, on the one hand, and the forms of regime, on the other, that represent a certain form of state. (see Poulantzas. 1979. *op.cit.,* p. 310-12). For Poulantzas, the question of the form of the state refers to the particular political conjuncture, that is, the conjuncture of the political class struggle, whereas the form of regime refers to the concrete methods of class struggle in that conjuncture. For us, there is no need to dwell on this distinction here, as every form of regime corresponds to a particular form of state itself. The point here is that Sukhwinder is unaware of the difference between *the government* and *the state-form,* which engender

particular forms of regime. 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, Palheta 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.

G. Once Again on the Pre-conditions of Rise of Fascism: Sukhwinder Repeats His Balderdash

Sukhwinder claims since the Indian bourgeoisie, especially monopoly capitalist class is not faced with economic crisis, because Modiji has informed him that the GDP growth rate is over 7 percent, the fundamental cause for the fascist rise is absent! We have shown above that Sukhwinder is behaving like a true Modi-bhakt here. We have quoted various researches by even non-Marxist economists who have revealed that the GDP data released by the Modi government is fake and the actual real GDP growth rate has never been above 3 to 3.7 percent after 2016 and even before that it was never above 5 percent. Secondly, Sukhwinder does not know that GDP must be converted into the Marxist terms of *value-product* by deducting the non-production sectors from the calculation, in order to calculate the Marxian rate of profit. He takes GDP as the rate of profit. We have exposed the bankruptcy of Sukhwinder on this issue above, including the other issues of political economy in general.

Moreover, the very nature of the long, chronic crisis is that it assumes the form of a long mild recession, collapsing periodically into serious long depressions. It is not a pre-condition for the rise of the fascist forces to power that there must be something of the sorts of the ‘Great Depression’. Even in Italy, fascism seized power much before the ‘Great Depression’ and due to a domestic economic slow-down. Finally, a political crisis might brew even under conditions of a chronic, instead of acute, crisis, as the case of Italy demonstrates. Sukhwinder’s formula is like this: ‘acute economic crisis = political crisis = rise of exceptional form of state like fascism’. However, the economic crisis and political crisis have a much more complicated relation than that. Sukhwinder also thinks that in the rich capitalist countries, the bourgeoisie can prevent the economic crisis from developing into political crisis! We have demonstrated above that Sukhwinder fails to understand the general relation between the political and the economic, namely, the relation of relative autonomy.

The third assertion of the Sukhwinder is equally inane. He argues that since there is no threat of revolutionary working class in India, fascism cannot come into power! He assumes that fascism comes into power only when the bourgeoisie is threatened by a revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat! Therefore, if there is no united communist party in India, if the working class is not in position to mount a political offensive, if it is scattered, then there is no question of fascist rise to power. Again, we have shown above in detail that fascist rise to power is not a response to the threat of the revolutionary working class or the political offensive of the proletariat. On the contrary, it is the *absence* of the political offensive of the proletariat, which leads to fascist rise to power. We have shown by referring to the studies of Clara Zetkin, Antonio Gramsci, Nicos Poulantzas, David Abraham, Kurt Gossweiler, and others and even from the tacit admission of this fact by Dimitrov in the Seventh Congress, that fascism begins its offensive only when it is not faced by a rising political offensive of the proletariat. In the words of Gramsci, it begins to maneuver only when the offensive of the proletariat has already fallen dormant, silent and has subsided.

In the case of the Twenty-first century rise of fascism, in most of the countries where fascism's 'hurricane from below' has seized power, or has started to move in that direction, the working class movement is already in disarray. With the collapse of socialist experiment in China, one historical round of proletarian revolutions came to an end, inaugurating a protracted era of defeat and reversal. We are still far from the point where the rising tide of proletarian revolutions will take the centre-stage of history. We are still in the period of a correct evaluation of the positives and negatives of the socialist experiments of the Twentieth century, of a Marxist assessment of the changes in the *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi* of capitalism in the period following the Second World War, in general, and in the period of the neoliberal globalization, in particular, the development of the new forms and strategies of working-class movement, envisaging the building and formation of the communist party along the Bolshevik lines in this new conjuncture and the recommencement of the

accumulation of the forces of the proletariat under the instrumentalized leadership of the vanguard party in order to enable it to break the hegemony of the bourgeois political line among the masses and establish its own political leadership of the masses.

Can someone claim that, since in this period, there is not going to be an imminent threat of the proletarian revolution, there can be no fascist rise? There can be nothing more preposterous, and more importantly, dangerous and suicidal than that. Despite the absence of the threat of proletarian political offensive the world has become witness to the rise to power of a variety of far-right forces from reactionary neo-Bonapartists like Putin, to quasi-fascist and authoritarian Erdoğan, from fascist Modi to the quasi-fascist Duterte, from authoritarian right-wing populists like Bolsonaro to military dictators who retained the parliamentary form.

Sukhwinder forgot one basic teaching of Marx, which he articulated when he was polemicizing against Proudhon: all abstractions, including economic and political categories emerge from history; history does not engender from such categories, as if these categories were the Hegelian *demi urgos* which engendered the real concrete human history; moreover, economic or political abstractions express the essence of the infinitely rich social and political phenomena, but the essence itself does not exist in the phenomena *as such,* because that essence is the result of the abstraction, generalization and summation of the rich phenomena. Marx wrote:

“*Economic categories are only the theoretical expressions, the abstractions of the social relations of production.* M. Proudhon, holding things upside down like a true philosopher, sees in actual relations nothing but the incarnation of these principles, of these categories, which were slumbering—so M. Proudhon the philosopher tells us—in the bosom of the “impersonal reason of humanity.”” (Marx, K. 2021. *Poverty of Philosophy,* Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 101)

In a uniquely poor parallel, Sukhwinder wants to see the reincarnation of the abstraction of a very poor the idea of fascism

that he has conjured up in his mind from a complete misreading of and ignorance about the historical experience of fascism in the early-Twentieth century, in the contemporary world. However, history walks two steps ahead of even the greatest of the abstractions, and the less we talk about the quality of Sukhwinder's abstraction (!), the better it will be. Anyway, we have already dealt in detail with Sukhwinder's false and foolish assertion that fascism emerges as a response to the revolutionary onslaught of the working class. We have shown in detail that in every case, the very process of fascist rise began as the result of the absence of any revolutionary offensive of the proletariat.

Let us deal with another important point here. Even the presence of a powerful organized working-class movement under the leadership of the social-democrats, which is imprisoned within the limits of economism and trade-unionism *is not a pre-requisite for the rise of fascism.* In the early-Twentieth century historical cases of rise of fascism in Germany and Italy, the objective economic impact of the economism and trade-unionism of the organized working-class movement was "profit-squeeze" for the bourgeoisie already reeling under the impact of economic crisis and the consequent dissolution of the labour-capital compromise. However, today, there is no existence of such a large organized working class. In fact, 93 percent of the working class is engaged in the unorganized/informal sector. As a consequence, there is no question of the rise of that kind of organized workers' movement in the conditions of neoliberal globalization, that is, in the new regime of accumulation and the new mode of regulation that emerged since the 1970s itself. Does that mean there can be no fascist rise anymore? Of course, nothing can be more foolish and self-destructive than that. However, even without the presence of such organized working-class movement, the social-democracy does play its political role in the systematic depoliticization of the working-class by preventing it from becoming the political leader of the working masses and sticking to whatever economic rights it has, rather than going beyond that and thinking politically.

Moreover, we must understand that today, in the structural sense, the capitalist class in most of the capitalist countries is much more fragile and vulnerable than the early-Twentieth century. The economic vulnerability of the world capitalist system today, notwithstanding the unprecedented increase in its military might, is qualitatively much greater than that in the early-Twentieth century. It is continuously bogged down in the mire of a long recession which collapses into serious depressions at the drop of a hat, from the speculative maneuvers of a single capitalist, or bank or speculator.

This crisis is not cataclysmic like the crises before the Second World War and we have already discussed this change in the nature of capitalist crises, as predicted by Engels more than a century ago and later others as well. However, the nature of the industrial cycles has undergone a change and this is reflected in the shorter periods of boom and much longer periods of crisis and stagnation. As a consequence, the bourgeoisie is economically much more fragile and much more vulnerable. It does not need the additional "profit squeeze" induced by an intransigent organized workers' movement that stubbornly clings to its economic benefits and at the same time systematically refuses to beyond the ambit of the system, due to the reformist illusions inculcated in this class by the revisionists. In other words, today, the economic registers of the impact of the social-democrats on the working-class movement are much weaker, whereas, at the same time, its political registers are as strong as before.

H. How Much Multinationality is Sufficient to Pose an Obstruction to Fascism? Sukhwinder's "Innovative" Measuring Tape

Sukhwinder presents his persistent idiocy regarding the multinational character of India as an obstacle to the rise of fascism:

"Second cause of this is the multinational character of India and very uneven development of fascist movement. Though in the past, naked dictatorships of the capitalist class have been established in multinational countries, like the Franco dictatorship of Spain which

was primarily a military dictatorship. This is common in both military and fascist dictatorship that both throw away the mask of parliamentary democracy and enforce naked dictatorship of the capitalist class. But the condition of India is different than that of countries like Spain. Firstly, the national diversity here is much greater and secondly, there does not exist the clear domination of any one nation. But still the possibility of the setting up of naked dictatorship by the capitalist class in the future cannot be rejected outright. This possibility depends primarily on the nature of crisis facing the ruling classes here." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 51-52)

We have already shown the vacuity of this argument. However, few more words about this idiocy is in order here.

Sukhwinder presents two reasons why *in India,* the multinationality of the country would indeed be a hindrance to the rise of fascism. First, that its multinationality is quantitatively greater than that of Spain, where a military dictatorship did come into being in the 1930s. Secondly, unlike Germany, Italy or Spain in India there is no *clear domination of one nation.* Both these arguments lack one thing: basic reason! Let us demonstrate this.

First of all, the first logic is purely quantitative. It does not in itself make a difference that in Spain, the multinationality was quantitatively less than that in India. For such comparison, in order to determine, how much of something is less or more, there must be a benchmark, a standard. How much multinationality, in quantitative terms, is sufficient to pose an obstacle before the rise of fascism or other forms of exceptional state, for Sukhwinder? How much multinationality quantitatively speaking would not be consequential for the rise of fascism? There must be a standard, a benchmark to determine the excess or lack of this multinationality. One can also argue that Spain's geographical expanse, too, is much smaller than that of India! Shouldn't one counterweigh all other indicators, while keeping this difference in mind? Spain, in proportion to its geographical expanse has many nations and nationalities: the Spanish, the Catalans, the Basques, the Galicians, the Andalusians,

the Valencians, the Balearics, the Aragonese, etc. Some of these nations are demographically speaking, considerably large, like the Catalans, the Basques, the Galicians, etc. Therefore, the quantitative logic of Sukhwinder would not work. One cannot say that variable ‘A’ is too much and variable ‘B’ is too less, unless and until, a benchmark or standard for the appropriate range of quantity is determined beforehand, otherwise, the whole determination would become purely relativistic and subjective. Thus, the basic question is the multinationality of a country, not the particular quantity of multinationality. The example of Spain, too, proves that such multinationality is no obstacle at all to the emergence of an exceptional state, in the case of Spain, a quasi-fascist military dictatorship like that of Franco.

Since Sukhwinder has decided beforehand, acting in the capacity of the self-proclaimed personalization of the ‘Supreme Idea’, that fascism will not rise to power, he will not have to form the ‘popular front’ with the Congress, the AAP and the Akalis (a quite embarrassing exercise, that would be!), therefore, the only task is to work for socialist revolution in India! One might interject: *“what about the national oppression of Punjab? Wouldn’t Punjab first resolve the national-democratic question, since it is nationally-oppressed by Indian anational bourgeoisie?”* Sukhwinder responds: *“That question would be solved with the socialist revolution in India itself!”* This is the crux of the Trot-Bundist line on the national question. The oppressed nations do not have the national-democratic stage of revolution; they must fight for socialist revolution in the oppressor country and till that revolution is accomplished, they should demand federal rights from the central state of the oppressor country! To peddle such a bankrupt line and at the same time claim to be a Leninist is preposterous. Thus, for Sukhwinder, the oppressed nations of Russian empire like the Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Tajiks, Uzbeks, etc. should not have fought for national liberation but for socialist revolution in the country of the oppressor nation, that is, Russia in this case, or the oppressed

nations like Palestine, should fight for socialist revolution in Israel! What could be more outrageous and preposterous?

Coming to the second reason given by Sukhwinder as to why fascism cannot rise to power due to the multinationality of India: the lack of a clear domination of one nation. What does he mean? There is only vague/unclear domination of one or a host of nations? Or does he want to say that the oppressive entity, the Indian state, has no national character, that is, the ruling class which is in possession of the state-power, has neither a multinational character, nor a uninational character? From the uniquely poor intellectual record of the editor sa'ab of 'Pratibaddh', it seems that he is saying that the ruling class in India is *anational*. It is a big monopoly bourgeoisie which has no national character (in the generic sense, not in the political anti-imperialist sense), it has no roots, and it exists in Sukhwinder's mind, as ether once existed in the imagination of medieval alchemists! We have shown that this argument is baseless. Then what is the character of the Indian bourgeoisie, *vis-à-vis* its national character in the generic sense.

It is, indeed, *a multinational bourgeoisie*, what historians and political economists have termed as a *'composite ruling class'* in terms of national character. The bourgeoisie of various non-oppressed nations of India, have a share in the economic and political power. It goes without saying that just like all other multinational states and multinational bourgeoisie, the shares of different national fractions of the ruling multinational bourgeoisie are not and cannot be equal and also that these shares change historically.

Moreover, if an *anational bourgeoisie* is the dominant class in possession of the state-power, how and why is it an obstacle in the path of fascism's rise to power? If a single nation's bourgeoisie is in power, according to Sukhwinder, it will have no problem in imposing one of its exceptional political choices, that is, fascism, because, according to Sukhwinder, it would be able to rely upon nationalism. Again, Sukhwinder assumes that fascism relies upon nation and nationalism, as historical categories. However, that was not the case

with the German Nazism, which relied upon, *not the German nation which did include the German Jews, too,* but on a purely ideological construction of what a nation was and what its 'nationalism' would be. That was also not the case with Italian fascism, which glorified the ancient Roman Empire as the millenarian place of return for Italy, which dates to a period when the very category of nation had not come into being. The Nazi idea of "German Aryan Nation" included even those, who were not part of German nation originally, but whom the Germans did consider the part of German Aryan identity due to their particular racial identity. However, it excluded those parts of the German nation, which were racially "impure" from the Nazi standards of "Aryan-ness".

If fascism has to rely upon a pathological version of "nationalism" based, not on the historical category of nation, but on a purely ideological community, a construct conjured up on the basis of a chauvinistic ideology, then domination of a single-nation's bourgeoisie, or that of a multinational bourgeoisie, or Sukhwinder's "anational" bourgeoisie does not make any difference at all, because the fascists' "nation" is a fetishistic construct fabricated on the basis of a chauvinistic ideology like communalism, racism, xenophobia, etc. Based on such chauvinistic ideology, the fascist politics can construct the purely ideological idea of 'nationhood', based on racial, religious, ethnic, linguistic, or regional identity and it would not matter, therefore, whether this idea can be supported by the historical nationalism of a historical nation or not, because, from the very outset, the fascist ideology and politics is not based on those historical categories. It is not without reason that Golwalkar had to strive to *define the nationhood ('We, our nationhood defined).* Would Sukhwinder contend that the Nazi idea of German Aryan nation, was based on the historical German nation? If he does, then it is obvious that he is in the need of basic school-level tutoring on the theory and history of Nazism in Germany.

The fascists construct a purely ideological community and name it as 'nation'. Just like the German Aryan Nation had nothing *national* about it, the 'Hindu Rashtra', too, has nothing *national* about it, and it

does not need to have! Secondly, this identity is based on a chauvinistic ideology. Third, it is *extremely adaptive and flexible*, and has a promiscuous quality about it. It can easily co-opt the Odiya Hindu identity as well as the Malayalam Hindu identity; it can adjust the Assamese idea of Hindu-ness as well as the deities of various tribals within the fold of a *Hindutva* identity, which is, not so strangely, syncretic as well as semitized. It will use “go-rakhsha” where it works, and it would use the promises to supply “more beef” where it works; it will burn Christians alive in Odisha, while, at the same time, ally with the Christian fundamentalists in Kerala against Muslims; it can ally even with Sikh fundamentalists, even while, at times, prosecuting the Sikhs by branding them collectively as khalistanis! This is precisely because of the fact that the *basest and vilest kind of pragmatism* is a component and constituent element of fascist ideology and politics. Its only principle is that *in the pursuit of the will to power for the monopoly big capital, there is and should be no principle. The will of power itself is the only principle and it justifies all means.*

It will use any cleavage in the society, any contradiction in the society to misarticulate in the reactionary far-right manner. It only needs one ‘big other’, the principal imagined enemy. In Hitler’s case, it were the Jews; in Hindutva fascism’s case, it is the Muslims. In general, it is only this polar opposite of the ‘imagined nation’ of the fascists and the imagined enemy, whereby the false enemy cannot and must not be adjusted within the Hindutva identity, because the very identity of the false enemy is also constitutive of the Hindutva identity. All others can somehow be co-opted. Except this *axial other*, all the rest can be co-opted and adjusted *in differential situations in differential ways,* from dalits and tribals to women, from Malayali to Odiya, from Assamese to Lingayats and from Christians to Jains, Buddhists and even Sikhs. This quality or trait is precisely what the revolutionaries need to understand regarding fascist ideology and politics if they hope to resist and dismantle it. And this is precisely what Sukhwinder is totally dense and oblivious about. He takes fascist propaganda on its face-value and hypothecates that since

nationalism is an essential component of fascism, fascism cannot rise to power or will find it extremely difficult to rise to power in a country that is multinational. Nothing can be further from the truth. Such a claim only betrays the particular crude and vulgar dogmatism, ignorance and inanity of Sukhwinder.

Further.

I. Can Fascism Come to Power Only in an Imperialist, Militarist, Expansionist Country? Sukhwinder's Vacuousness Exposed Again

The following excerpt of Sukhwinder reveals that he does not understand even those basic characteristic features of fascism which even school kids reading the old NCERT textbooks would understand; it is so childish and immature that even a common reader not acquainted with the nuances of the history of fascism in the early-Twentieth century Europe would not be able to miss its particularly asinine character. Sukhwinder writes:

"While discussing about fascism is India, we must bear in mind that India is not an imperialist country like Germany or Italy. India is a backward capitalist country which is economically dependent on imperialism. National chauvinism, militarism which is an important characteristic of fascism is not to be found in fascism of India. Though RSS/Sangh Parivar continue to create an anti-Pakistan "national" chauvinistic atmosphere but this does not receive an impassioned response from the entire country. This anti-Pakistan, "national" chauvinist jingoism provoked by Sangh Parivar remains restricted to the so-called Hindi belt. In Punjab the atmosphere exactly opposite to this.

"The limited "national" chauvinist jingoism provoked by Indian fascists fail to serve any end because Pakistan too has nuclear weapons. Second country which is presented as an enemy by fascists of Sangh is China. Waging war against China is beyond the realm of capabilities of rulers of India. The fascism of India, unlike

the fascism of Germany and Italy, is not in a position to wage wars and occupy other countries." (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 52)

How do we even begin? The load of crap zipped in just two small paragraphs! The compressing ability of editor of 'Pratibaddh' is unique! Let us try to dismantle this heap of idiocy.

Fascism is an arch-reactionary political trend of the bourgeoisie reeling under economic and political crisis, which emerges *in the imperialist stage*, which refers to the general stage of world capitalism. Does it mean that fascism can rise to power only in those countries, which themselves are imperialist, and therefore militaristic, war-monger, etc.? No. Fascism as a political trend emerges *in the imperialist stage* because it is precisely in this stage that the bourgeoisie, in general, loses its republican and democratic character and becomes increasingly reactionary and chauvinistic. It becomes increasingly bereft of its democratic potential, which have been exhausted once the anti-feudal tasks, and in the case of colonial world, the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal tasks have been fulfilled.

The bourgeoisie in the imperialist countries becomes increasingly reactionary and chauvinistic because with the accomplishment of the anti-feudal tasks, with the reaching of the saturation-point of the 'laissez faire' capitalism, with the reaching of the concentration and centralization of capital to a qualitatively new stage, namely, the monopoly stage, the ruling bourgeoisie is obliged to shed the democratic and republican pretenses, assume an open offensive against the forces of labour, scramble for the limited opportunities of profitable investment at the national and international level, attack the basic civil and democratic rights of the masses.

On the other hand, the bourgeoisie in the colonial world, which came into existence in the imperialist stage itself, which lacked the radical democratic spirit of the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, the Scientific Revolution and classical bourgeois democratic revolutions, which began fighting against imperialism, but in a capitulationist and collaborationist manner (we are talking about the

national bourgeoisie here), which has a tendency to become scared of the revolutionary upsurge of the masses and therefore regulate the mass national movement to keep it within the ambit of its own interests, which has a tendency to veer towards compromising with the imperialists whenever it is threatened with the revolutionary movement of the working masses; this bourgeoisie never truly had any radical democratic potential, in general, except in certain mass moments of the national movement, and whenever it did show some radical or militant element it was mostly due to the mass pressure from below, or due to the peasant component of this class, which was inclined to fight more militantly than the nascent industrial bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie, therefore, which came into power in the so-called 'Third World' countries between the 1940s and 1990s, did not have any democratic or republican character from the very beginning, but was opportunist, reactionary, anti-people and chauvinistic. *That is the reason why the bourgeoisie in the imperialist countries as well as the other post-colonial relatively backward capitalist countries, have hardly any progressive democratic character in the Stage of Imperialism.*

That is the reason why, fascism as a reactionary tendency of the bourgeoisie faced with the crisis of capitalism in the monopoly stage (which is not a negation of competition, but intensification and condensation of competition), emerges in the stage of imperialism. It does not in any way mean that fascism will emerge only in those countries that are imperialist, and therefore war-monger and militarist. To deduce such conclusions from the basic Marxist proposition that fascism emerges in the stage of imperialism, would not only be historically incorrect but also theoretically bankrupt. *Thus, Sukhwinder has confused the question of the imperialist stage as a world-historic stage of the development of world capitalism as the general context in which fascism rises, with the notion that fascism rises only in the imperialist, militarist and expansionist countries.* Nothing can be more inane.

Sukhwinder claims that national chauvinism and militarism is an important characteristic of fascism which is absent from the fascism

of India. Regarding the national chauvinism, we have discussed earlier in this critique in detail. Now let us come the question of militarism.

First of all, this assumption itself, that fascism must be militaristic is incorrect. In Germany and Italy, the fascist regimes were bound to be militaristic. Had a non-fascist bourgeois regime come to power in the conditions created after the First World War and the end of the period of labour-capital compromise (Weimer period in Germany and Giolitti's period in Italy), they, too, would have been militaristic. Why? This is due to the position in which Germany and Italy found themselves after the First World War in *the chain of imperialism.* Germany was the defeated side and had to pay excessive reparations and face the political humiliation under the terms of the Versailles Treaty. On the other hand, Italy felt cheated and deceived despite being on the side of the winning coalition for a variety of economic and political reasons.

Both these latecomers in the industrial capitalist world, which entered the industrial capitalist world in the monopoly stage of capitalism led by the finance capital and the state, had also been vying for a greater share in the colonial loot and plunder of the world. In a very short span of time, they had emerged among the leading industrial powers of the world. However, despite increasing economic might and political clout, their share in the booty at the international level was disproportionately low. These countries were bound to become militaristic and expansionist, whether under fascist regime or under some other reactionary regime. The reasons of this militarism and expansionism were not implicit in the conjunctural factor of the rise of fascist regimes in these countries but in the structural factor of their late entry into the club of advanced industrial capitalist powers having strong imperial ambitions. That is why, on this particular point, Ignazio Silone is correct, when he says: "This is not to deny that there is also a militarist element in fascism, *but it is not its basic one.*" (Beetham, D. 1983. *op.cit.,* p. 239, *emphasis ours*)

Sukhwinder's claim that the anti-Pakistan militaristic rhetoric fuelled by the Sangh Parivar does not find resonance in India, except in the Hindi belt. Can you believe these bullshit claims? First of all, this rhetoric not only finds resonance in all parts of India, they are particularly strong in certain states, which Sukhwinder considers to be "oppressed nations", for instance, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and even Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Moreover, Punjab, too, is not immune from this jingoistic frenzy. Why Sukhwinder is making such a baseless claim? It is an effort to demonize the so-called Hindi-belt, as if it is the harbinger of fascism in India and its population constitutes one homogeneous reactionary mass. This tendency of Sukhwinder also stems from his Punjabi chauvinist nationalist position, which drives him against, not simply the "imposition of Hindi" (he never talks about imposition of English, which happens over the so-called 'Hindi-belt' too!) but against Hindi itself and the people who speak Hindi.

Sukhwidner's position often degenerates to the level of the reactionary Tamil national chauvinists who talk about "Hindians" destroying the great Tamil land. Needless to say, these people who are being called "Hindians" in a derogatory manner are actually the hundreds of millions of toilers who do back-breaking work in Tamil Nadu and also in the fields and factories of Punjab. In fact, 'Lalkaar' and 'Pratibaddh' social media handles and those of their members used to share such anti-North Indian social media posts of reactionary nationalists from Tamil Nadu who called the North-Indians as "Hindians". Every well-read observer knows how such pejorative epithets merely try to hide the deep-rooted anti-working class prejudices of the petty-bourgeoisie of these nations. The working class of these nations does not and cannot harbor such notions, except the sections that are under the strong influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology and politics. The truth is that Sukhwinder harbors the same chauvinistic notions. That is the true sentiment of Sukhwinder which finds its way across the filters of political correctness and expresses itself in this way, as the fact of sharing of such posts of the most reactionary elements of Tamil

nationalists through the social media handles of ‘Lalkaar’ and ‘Pratibaddh’ demonstrates.

Sukhwinder’s childish logic that India’s militaristic rhetoric against Pakistan does not work because Pakistan has nuclear weapons, too, is appropriate for schoolboys or for some bourgeois television debate. India and Pakistan have engaged in the Kargil War, *after* both the countries had already become nuclear powers. Pakistan successfully developed nuclear weapons in 1984 whereas India had already become a nuclear power in 1974. To assume that nuclear powers cannot engage in military conflicts without the use of nuclear weapons is an assumption, which again shows the utter ignorance of Sukhwinder regarding international politics. Such statements suit the street and platitudinarian understanding of Sukhwinder, which, too, he copies from this or that website or ‘prefaces’ or ‘introductions’ of some pulp history or college reference book on international relations.

In the end of this subhead Sukhwinder claims that unlike Germany and Italy, India is not in a position to wage wars, show militarism, or occupy other countries. So? Are these necessary characteristic features of fascism? If yes, then Sukhwinder must develop this line of argumentation and claim that fascism cannot rise to power in all the post-colonial relatively backward capitalist countries (needless to say, China cannot be counted among these) because they are not going to wage wars and occupy countries. The readers can see the empty-headedness of the editor of ‘Pratibaddh’. He has just written anything!

Moreover, militarism is a political tendency which is not necessarily expressed in waging wars against other countries and occupying them. Franco’s Spain, too, was militaristic. However, on its own, it did not wage wars against any country or occupy it. It did help the fascist axis, that is, Germany and Italy, in their war endeavors. However, it did not, itself wage wars or annex regions of other countries or other countries. However, it was militaristic inside Spain, against its oppressed nations and nationalities, prosecuted minorities

and political opposition. Similarly, militarism exists in most of the capitalist states in one or the other form. It is not simply about an external “enemy” propped up by jingoistic propaganda. In fact, even a comprador bourgeoisie can be militaristic, which essentially has nothing whatsoever to do with nationalism! The general trend of militarism in the imperialist epoch in all capitalist countries, whether expansionist or not, has been recognized by Marxists for more than a hundred years. Karl Liebknecht writing in 1907 pointed out:

“Militarism is not only a means of defense against the external enemy; *it has a second task which comes more and more to the fore as class contradictions become more marked and as proletarian class-consciousness keeps growing.* Thus the outer form of militarism and its inner character take a more definite shape: its task is to uphold the prevailing order of society, to prop up capitalism and all reaction against the struggle of the working class for freedom. *Militarism manifests itself here as a mere tool in the class struggle, as a tool in the hands of the ruling class.* It is destined to retard the development of class-consciousness by working together with the police and the courts of justice, the school, and the Church. *The task of militarism is, above all, to secure for a minority, at whatever cost, even against the enlightened will of the majority of the people, domination in the state and freedom to exploit.*

“Thus we are confronted by modern militarism which wants neither more nor less than the squaring of the circle, which arms the people against the people itself, which dares to force the workers (by artificially introducing by every means the distinction of class according to age into our social organization) to become oppressors and enemies, murderers of their own comrades and friends, of their parents, brothers and sisters and children, and which compels them to blight their own past and future. Modern militarism wants to be democratic and despotic, enlightened and machine-like, nationalist and antagonistic to the nation at the same time.

“All the same one must not forget that militarism is directed also against the nationalist and even the religious enemy at home—in

Germany, for instance, against the Poles, Alsatians and Danes. It is employed even in conflicts between the non-proletarian classes. One must not forget that it is a changeable phenomenon capable of assuming many forms, and that the Prusso-German militarism has blossomed out into a special flower owing to the peculiar semi-absolutist, feudal-bureaucratic conditions of Germany." (Liebknecht, K. 2021. *Militarism and Anti-Militarism,* Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 29-30, *emphasis ours*)

Liebknecht points out further:

"Generally speaking, militarism at home and all its perniciousness—more felt in normal times—with its many ramifications will have to contend with ever greater difficulties and thus the class-war character of militarism will become more prominent." (*ibid,* p. 163, *emphasis ours*)

Liebknecht categorically points to war as *the secondary manifestation* of militarism. In fact, "militarism at home" is more important manifestation of this *political tendency* which emerges from the domestic class struggle itself. He argues:

"War is a thing which nowhere takes place so regularly, as does the conflict with political militarism at home; it generally presents itself to the consciousness of the masses as a future danger of rather a theoretical kind." (*ibid,* p. 141, *emphasis ours*)

That is why, Liebknecht argues:

"It is taken as a matter of course and is disputed by no one that as a proletarian Party Social Democracy is the unconditional enemy, the enemy sans phrase, the enemy to the knife of *militarism at home;* to tear it out root and branch is one of its most important tasks." (*ibid,* p. 156)

Thus, in and by itself, militarism has nothing to do with foreign expansionism, wars or occupying other countries. It is a political tendency of the reactionary bourgeoisie which becomes particularly pronounced during the periods of exceptional bourgeois regimes like

military dictatorship and fascism, but also in other periods depending upon the political conjuncture of class struggle in a country. In fact, there are many examples of countries ruled by military dictators but having no expansionist ambitions, for example, Thailand under military rule and Park's military dictatorship in South Korea. Similarly, is the Sinhalese chauvinistic regime in Sri Lanka foreign expansionist and war-monger? No. Is it militaristic? Ask any persecuted Sri Lankan Tamil and he/she will tell you the answer.

Is the fascist regime in India today militaristic? Yes, a hundred percent. What they are doing in Chhattisgarh, Kashmir, Manipur today is nothing short of the most heinous forms of militarism. In fact, Kashmir is *the most militarized region of the world.* There have been many scholarly studies of Indian militarism, which has been one of the principal instruments to repress and keep under control not only the oppressed nations, persecuted communities but also the peasant insurgencies as well as revolutionary movements of the proletariat. To confuse militarism exclusively with wars and foreign expansionism is to confuse all mammals with donkeys. Donkey is only one of the mammals, not the only mammal. However, Sukhwinder moves in mysteriously stupid ways!

Therefore, it does not really matter whether the Indian bourgeoisie in general and the Indian fascist regime in particular is able to wage wars of annexation against other countries, or not. It has nothing whatsoever to do with fascist rise to power or the fascist regime in India. Fascism is very much compatible with the absence of foreign occupation, annexation, etc. Militarism in general can be used against oppressed nations, occupying their territories militarily, suppressing all forms of progressive popular dissent and insurgency, as evident especially after Modi's rise to power, but also from the overall post-independence history of India. Sukhwinder is totally oblivious regarding both: the nature of the Modi-Shah regime as well as the contemporary history of India; he is as dense about theory as he is at sea regarding history. What he lacks is precisely this: reading, research and logic to make sense of whatever scanty he reads.

J. Sukhwinder's "Strategy" Against Fascism: A Monstrously Risible Proposal for Indefinite Suspension of the Most Urgent Tasks

Consequently, Sukhwinder moves to the question of 'struggle against fascist threat' under a separate subhead. He accepts that in India, there exists a strong fascist movement, but adds, "with uneven development". Again, is there any other kind of fascist movement, which develops evenly across any country? Was the fascist movement in Italy like that? Was the Nazi movement in Germany like that? Not at all. He only adds this qualifier to allude to the 'obstacles' in the rise of fascism to power in India, because he assumes that only those fascist movements rise to power which develop with even distribution across a country. The assumption as well as the claim are equally stupid and idiotic and reek of ignorance regarding the history of fascism across the world.

Then Sukhwinder commits another intellectual *hara-kiri.* He quotes Dimitrov at length where the latter is discussing the strategies to be employed by the revolutionary communists against a fascist movement which has not yet seized power. However, in the end of this quote Dimitrov refers, as an example to emulate, the efforts of the French proletariat in successfully implementing this strategy. Sukhwinder does not know what Dimitrov is referring to, here. Well, Dimitrov is referring to the implementation of the strategy of the 'popular front' by the French Communist Party since 1934 itself, when Dimitrov shifted the line of the Comintern formally from a "left"-deviationist version of the united front of the working class, to the right-deviationist line of the 'popular front', by accepting the position of Doriot within the French Party and persuading Thorez and the rest of the French Communist Party to accept the line of 'popular front'!

Thus, Dimitrov is arguing that the policy of the 'popular front' has nothing to do with the question whether fascism is in power or not, as we have shown earlier in this critique, too! Even if there is fascist movement in a country, the revolutionary communists must form the

‘popular front’ by taking the initiative. Here is the quote of Dimitrov that Sukhwinder presents:

“Whether the victory of fascism can be prevented depends in the first place on the militant activity displayed by the working class itself, on whether its forces are welded into a single militant army combating the offensive of capitalism and fascism. Having established its fighting unity, the proletariat would paralyse the influence of fascism over the peasantry, the petit bourgeoisie of the towns, the youth and the intelligentsia, and would be able to neutralise one section and win over another section.

“Second, it depends on the existence of a strong revolutionary party, correctly leading the struggle of the toilers against fascism. A party which systematically calls on the workers to retreat in the face of fascism and permits the fascist bourgeoisie to strengthen its positions will inevitably lead the workers to defeat.

“Third, it depends on whether a correct policy is pursued by the working class towards the peasantry and the petit-bourgeois masses of the towns. These masses must be taken as they are, and not as we should like to have them. It is only in the process of the struggle that they will overcome their doubts and vacillations. It is only provided we adopt a patient attitude towards their inevitable vacillations, it is only with the political help of the proletariat, that they will be able to rise to a higher level of revolutionary consciousness and activity.

“Fourth, it depends on whether the revolutionary proletariat exercises vigilance and takes action at the proper time. It must not allow fascism to catch it unawares, it must not surrender the initiative to fascism, it must inflict decisive blows on the latter before it can gather its forces, it must not allow fascism to consolidate its position, it must repel fascism wherever and whenever it manifests itself, it must not allow fascism to gain new positions—*all of which the French proletariat is doing so successfully.* (Applause.)

“These are the main conditions for preventing the growth of fascism and its accession to power.” (Dimitrov, G. 2021. *The Fascist Offensive and the Unity of the Working Class,* Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 17-18, *emphasis ours*)

As far as the strategy of resistance is concerned, Sukhwinder has only this to quote. However, just like a true *kharra*-man, he does not know what he is reproducing! So, he argues that the ‘popular front’ is the proletarian strategy against *fascism in power* only. But, then, goes on to quote where Dimitrov is prescribing the policy of the ‘popular front’ for the political situation in which there is a fascist movement and the question is of preventing its rise to power! Why did Sukhwinder not understand that? Because he missed what Dimitrov says in the end of this excerpt – *“all of which the French proletariat is doing so successfully.”* What is Dimitrov referring to here? Dimitrov is referring to the successful formation of the ‘popular front’ in France in 1934, which for Dimitrov presented the model to emulate for the proletariat in all countries which were faced with a fascist movement, as well as those which were already reeling under the yoke of a fascist regime. Dimitrov referring to the example of France, opined:

“*France, as we know, is a country in which the working class is setting an example to the whole world proletariat of how to fight fascism. The French Communist Party is setting an example to all sections of the Comintern of how the tactics of the united front should be conducted;* the Socialist workers are setting an example of what the Social-Democratic workers of other capitalist countries should now be doing in the fight against fascism… *This is not merely a movement of a united working-class front; it is the beginning of a wide general front of the people against fascism in France.*” (*ibid,* p. 36, *emphasis ours*)

Finally, Dimitrov points out that if the early successes of the ‘popular front’ finally lead to the formation of a ‘popular front’ government, the communists, while maintaining their general antipathy to any bourgeois government, would support such a government, in so far

as, it plays an anti-fascist role. This hope of Dimitrov was dashed when the bourgeoisie and its parties betrayed the ‘popular front’ (which was quite natural, given their class character and their capitulationist attitude towards the fascists, whenever they felt threatened by proletarian mass movement). Dimitrov, however, says in his report:

“And if in France the anti-fascist movement leads to the formation of a government which will carry on a real struggle against French fascism— not in word but in deed—will carry out the programme of demands of *the anti-fascist people’s front,* the Communists, while remaining the irreconcilable foes of every bourgeois government and supporters of a Soviet government, *will nevertheless, in face of the growing fascist danger, be prepared to support such a government.”* (*ibid,* p. 38, *emphasis ours*)

We have already quoted at length from the documents of the Comintern to demonstrate the central role that the PCF played in the formulation of the policy of the ‘popular front’, which Dimitrov himself had acknowledged. However, Sukhwinder is completely unaware about the history of the evolution of the policy of the ‘popular front’, as we have shown above. He has not even read the Dimitrov report comprehensively and has only done quotation-hunting from Dimitrov’s report. As a consequence, as usual, he fails to understand what is being said and the whole context of the discussion.

That is the reason why Sukhwinder fails to understand that even in the countries where there was a fascist movement, but fascists had not yet seized the power, Dimitrov’s strong prescription was to form the ‘popular front’. His assumption that the policy of the ‘popular front’ was prescribed only for the countries where fascism has conquered power is baseless and ignorant. Dimitrov’s policy of the ‘popular front’ was applicable to countries with fascists in power as well as for the countries where there was a fascist movement, which had not yet seized power. We have shown this earlier in the essay clearly, with appropriate quotes, references and evidence. There is no need to repeat all of that here.

Why Sukhwinder limits his espousal of the policy of the ‘popular front’ only to the cases of fascism in power? Because if he accepts that it was proposed by Dimitrov as the anti-fascist front policy also for the countries where there is a fascist movement, then he would be obliged to form a ‘popular front’ against Hindutva fascism from today itself, which would entail sending proposals of anti-fascist unity to all bourgeois parties except the fascist party! This would be such a shameful capitulation that even a shameless person like him would find it difficult to defend it in front of his own group’s members who are still honest, but have been systematically kept under ignorance, by an equally ill-read, politically illiterate and idiotic leadership. Moreover, this would invite unprecedented ridicule from various Marxist-Leninist groups of Punjab as well, before whom, Sukhwinder and this group is presently in complete prostration, in order to avoid complete isolation due to the horrific and disturbing incidents within the group and the role of the leadership in these incidents.

Subsequently, Sukhwinder thinks “If I merely quote Dimitrov regarding the strategy against the fascist threat and do not add anything to it, I would become a laughing stock!” So, he adds something and still ends up becoming a laughing stock, as we shall now see.

Sukhwinder writes, immediately after presenting a long excerpt from Dimitrov that we have presented above:

“Besides these general points regarding anti-fascist struggle, these points also have to be kept in mind:

“1) The ideological, political struggle against fascism has to be continued. We have to keep on exposing among the masses the anti-people ideology and politics of fascists, their cowardly past (their aloofness from the freedom struggle of India, playing the role of colonial master’s lackey’s etc.)

“2) 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.

“3) RSS/Sangh Parivar’s program of national oppression, ‘Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan’, should be especially opposed. Due to the centralisation policies of BJP, the contradiction between monopoly capitalists and different nations is sharpening. In this we must stand in favour of the rightful, democratic demands of various nations.

“4) We must stand against the fascist attacks on national minorities especially the Muslims, Christians and Sikhs.

“5) Presently, there exist no conducive conditions for constructing any anti-fascist united front in India. The communist movement of country is in a condition of disintegration. It isn’t in a situation to unite on a countrywide basis and undertake an effective anti-fascist activity. Thus, we should concentrate more on the local, issue-based activities against fascism.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 53-54)

That’s all, folks! But that is not all! The above quote is so full of the most idiotic and even reactionary arguments that we cannot even begin to dismantle this huge mess, this unprecedented farrago.

First of all, look at the second point. A couple of pages before Sukhwinder claimed that caste system is one of the major hindrances to the rise of fascism in India. Now he is arguing that one of the important anti-fascist task is to remove this hindrance by the abolition of the caste system! But why? Why does Sukhwinder want to clear the way for fascism by abolishing the caste system? Would not the absence of caste system tantamount to removal of an obstacle from the path of fascism?

Why does Sukhwinder fall head on into the pit of crap that he himself has created? Because the very assumption that the caste system is an obstacle to fascism is ridiculous and has nothing to do with concrete facts, as we have demonstrated above. Once he starts proceeding from this brainless assumption, he, consequently, embroils himself in imbecilic paradoxes, just like the one we just discussed.

In point 3, Sukhwinder argues that the Sangh Parivar has intensified the national oppression of the oppressed nations (which, for Sukhwinder, includes every nation that lives in India, oppressed by an extra-terrestrial big bourgeosie!), by imposing ‘Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan’. This, according to Sukhwinder has increased the contradiction between the Indian state and the all the nations, due to the centralizing impulse of the former. And what the oppressed nations are supposed to do in order to respond? They should struggle for their rightful and just democratic demands! What are these demands? Federal rights! This is the essence of the Trot-Bundism of Sukhwinder: a complete capitulation to the bourgeoisie on the national question. As we have pointed out above, if all the nations including Punjab are oppressed nations, they should fight for the unconditional right to self-determination including secession, not beg for federal rights. Nothing can be more humiliating for an oppressed nation to demand a little bit of autonomy, a little bit of federalism from their national oppressors.

However, ‘Lalkaar-Pratibaddh’ group’s leadership is uniquely coward in this respect. They do not have the courage to raise the demand for plebiscite to determine the question of national liberation. They also do not raise this demand because they know that even if such a plebiscite takes place, the result will not be to the liking of Sukhwinder, because Punjab (and all the other nations of India, except Kashmir and certain nations that live in the North-Eastern states) is *not an oppressed nation!* In fact, the Punjabi bourgeoisie is one of the main co-sharers in the economic and political power in India and constitutes an important component of the ruling multinational bourgeoisie in India.

Secondly, Sukhwinder, as usual takes things at face-value. He assumes that RSS is really going to impose the old slogan of ‘Hindi’ on non-Hindi speaking states! The fact is that in various Southern states, the RSS hardly uses this slogan anymore and uses the local languages. Recently, Adityanath said that Sanskrit and Tamil are two classical languages that originated from the mouth of Shiva. Similarly, the Sangh Parivar is swiftly adopting English to make in-

roads, especially, in Tamil Nadu. The slogan of Hindi as the national language or the principal national language of ‘Hindustan’ is used mainly in the Hindi-belt itself, as a tool of fascist political agitation. In fact, the RSS was very careful not to call Hindi the national language. The second RSS supremo Golwalkar said in 1957 in an interview:

“I consider all our languages as national languages. They are equally our national heritage. Hindi is one among them which, by virtue of its countrywide usage, has been adopted as the State Language. It will be wrong to describe Hindi alone as the national language and others as provincial languages. That would not be seeing things in the right perspective.” (Golwalkar, M. S. 1957. *The Language Problem,* interview with special correspondent, *The Organizer,* December, 1957)

We know that the RSS can speak in many tongues and can present diametrically opposite positions simultaneously like a many-headed hydra, speaking different things from its many heads. However, what we need to understand here is simply this: *the Sangh Parivar never ties its hands with such rhetorical slogans. It will use them where they are useful and it will abandon them where it is politically expedient.* In fact, the RSS itself did not come into existence in the Hindi-belt. For some years in the beginning, it was a political phenomenon limited to Maharashtra, with support among the high-caste landlordist class and a limited support base among the petty-bourgeoisie and stemmed from a variety of religious revivalist trends within the national movement. We have already discussed this above.

The point is that those who do not understand that fascists are always pragmatists as pragmatism is one of the component parts of fascist ideology (it is notable that Mussolini revered the notable pragmatist thinker William Jones, as we have pointed out above) and the Indian fascists are pragmatists *par excellence.* Their political digestion power is unprecedented and they can mold and remold their narrative according to the changing space and time, within the

ambit of fascist ideology and politics. Its *differentia specifica* is not sticking to a particular language, or regional identity. The common minimum denominator is construction of a false or imagined enemy, a purely ideological community and drive the blind reaction of the threatened petty-bourgeoisie against the false enemy. They follow one principal of pragmatism for this purpose: there is no principal! Whatever works!

To reduce the fascist politics to such commonplaces only reveals complete ignorance of Sukhwinder regarding the essence of fascist ideology and politics, even though he talks about fighting against fascist ideology in point 1, where he reduces it to exposing the pro-British rule, anti-patriotic character of the RSS! Well, with that, my friend, you have not even touched the core of fascist ideology and politics! The core of the fascist ideology and politics have been discussed earlier in this essay and without understanding that crux, we cannot carry out the anti-fascist propaganda at the ideological and political level.

Now, let us come to point 4 of Sukhwinder. This is really shocking. Sukhwinder says that in order to oppose the fascists the communists must resist the attacks on the “national minorities especially the Muslims, the Christians and the Sikhs”. Can any communist with his mind in right place say something as outrageous and as revolting as this? But then we think about the imbecility of this group’s leadership and calm ourselves because such wonders are possible in the world of Sukhwinder. We, then, also understand the source of his national chauvinism, which has been expressed so many times in the past few years on the question of linguistic identitarianism, in their slogans like ‘Punjabi jobs for Punjabis’, ‘make Punjabi the pre-requisite of employment in Punjab’, etc. Leaving Sukhwinder aside, can any revolutionary communist say that Muslims, Christians, Sikhs are national minorities? What Sukhwinder says here is precisely what Savarkar had said. His idea was that Muslims and Christians do not constitute a part of the Hindu nation (Sikhs were different for most of the Hindutva ideologues and so were Buddhists and Jains, who were considered part of the ‘Hindu civilization’ because their

‘holy land’ and their ‘father land’ was in India). He also took Hindu religion and what he considered the ‘protestant sects within the Hindu civilization’ such as Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. to be the basis of nationhood. Thus, his idea of religion, was the basis of the national identity. That is precisely what Sukhwinder is arguing here. According to him, too, the religious identity of a person is the basis of his national identity, and that is why he calls Sikhs, Muslims and Christians as ‘national minorities’ and not as religious minorities. Why Sukhwinder could not understand the national question and why he wrote some unbelievably idiotic pieces on the national question can be understood from the position that he has presented here. What can you expect from a person who considers religious communities as nations?

Finally, Sukhwinder writes the last paragraph of this small essay, packed with so many inane and asinine analyses and propositions, that we had to write more than 200 pages to refute it. Here he reaches his political *nirvana* and proposes a program of *doing nothing* against fascism. He argues that we only have to work for socialist revolution and undertake some “local” actions against fascism. He opines:

“Presently, there exist no conducive conditions for constructing any anti-fascist united front in India. The communist movement of country is in a condition of disintegration. It isn’t in a situation to unite on a countrywide basis and undertake an effective anti-fascist activity. Thus we should concentrate more on the local, issue based activities against fascism.” (Sukhwinder, *op.cit.,* p. 54)

First of all, what are the conditions for the formation of any anti-fascist united front, especially of the ‘popular front’ type in any country, according to the original Dimitrov theses, to which Sukhwinder subscribes without understanding it? It is *precisely* the lack of unity among communist organizations, disintegration of the movement, reversal and pessimism in the working-class movement! If there is a unified revolutionary communist party, or a considerable degree of the unity among the revolutionary communists, and

existence of an offensive of the working class, then the need for the formation of a united front will still be relevant in the general political sense, but not so pertinent. In other words, especially in the times of disunity and disintegration of the communist movement, the need for the formation of a united front against rising fascist tide becomes all the more important, urgent, pressing and pertinent in the immediate sense. However, Sukhwinder will first wait for the communist movement to reemerge and reorganize itself and only then an anti-fascist united front will be formed! What kind of logic is that?

Moreover, when the fascists are organizing their onslaught and their activities on an all-India level, how can a communist propose to limit the anti-fascist activities to mere issue-based local actions? In fact, the approach of the revolutionary communists would be to organize activities on the widest possible and broadest possible basis, which will include not only the anti-fascist actions of a particular group, but also formation of general united front against fascism among the revolutionary communist groups and organizations, and particular issue-based united fronts against fascism among all forces ready to fight against fascism on those particular issues, while at no moment and in no conditions, surrendering its proletarian political independence to carry out its own anti-fascist as well as socialist propaganda and agitation.

Sukhwinder spills these pearls of wisdom because he has no anti-fascist program, whether for fascism in power, or for a fascist movement that threatens the masses by seizing the power. We have seen that even from Sukhwinder's own poor and shamefully ignorant version of 'popular-frontism' of Dimitrov, he should form the 'popular front' from today itself. He must send a *communique* to the Congress, the AAP, and the Akali leaders of Punjab for the formation of a 'popular front'! However, he will first wait for fascist forces to establish what he calls the "bare-naked" dictatorship, completely suppress the working class and whatever exists of its movements, repression of all political opposition, abolition of all democratic and civil rights (again, whatever remains of them!) and then he will come out from his closet in Raikot!

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.