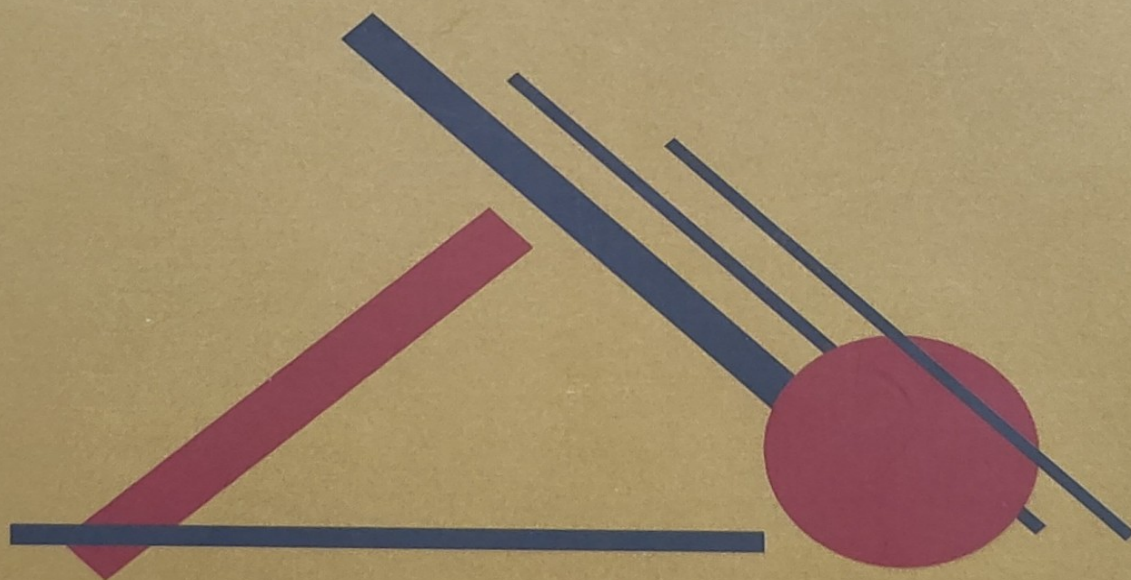


On the Question of Fascism and 'Popular Front'

Response to the Comrade of
CPI (ML) Mass Line

A Debate

Abhinav Sinha



**On the Question of Fascism and 'Popular
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Foreword

We are pleased to bring before the readers compilation of this extremely important debate on the question of fascism and 'popular front' which took place with the comrades of CPI (ML) Mass Line in 2025. The present rise of fascism in India has necessitated a revisiting as well as rethinking on the question of fascism and the question of strategy of resistance against it especially amongst the revolutionary communists. These questions, in particular, include understanding the nature of present fascist rise and its difference from historical fascism of the 1920s and 1930s in Europe, the reasons behind these changes and finally the question of anti-fascist united front. The following debate also holds significance given the fact that the tradition of fruitful and constructive dialog and discussion appears to be on the wane in the revolutionary communist movement itself for a while now. We sincerely hope that this debate will prove useful and engaging to all those who are trying to develop a consistent understanding around these cardinal and living questions of the present times.

Once Again on the Question of Fascism and ‘Popular Front’: A Response to Comrades of *CPI (ML) Mass Line*

This article was written in response to Comrade Pradip Singh Thakur, who had critiqued our position on the question of Fascism and Popular Front in the February-March and June-July, 2025 issue of *Mass Line*, organ of CPI (ML) *Mass Line*.

The present rise of fascism in India has raised several cardinal questions before the revolutionary communists. These include understanding the nature of present fascist rise and its difference from the fascism of the 1920s and 1930s in Europe, the reason behind these changes, namely, the change in the very nature of capitalist crisis and finally, the question of anti-fascist united front. On these questions, we have written in detail in our work *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders*. This work is directed against a particularly inane trend within the left, the Lalkaar-Pratibaddh group of Punjab. We have elaborated the same positions in the key paper of the seminar that we organized on the question of fascism in Hyderabad in December 2024-January 2025. However, our position on the policy of anti-fascist united front has invited criticism from another organization: CPI (ML) Mass Line. In the February-March 2025 issue and June-July 2025 issue of their organ *Mass Line*, Com. Pradip Singha Thakur has written two articles dealing with our position on the same question. We would like to respond to the criticism put forth by Com. Thakur here.

Before embarking upon a discussion on the particular points of Com. Thakur's criticism, we would like to repeat some basic arguments

that we presented in our above-mentioned book as well as the key paper of our seminar:

1. The policy of the united front of the working class as put forth by Lenin in 1921 in the Third Congress of the Comintern had two elements: one, 'united front from below' as *the general policy* which meant organizing the masses of workers in all kinds of mass organizations, including the bourgeois and social-democratic mass organizations; two, 'united front from above' as *the particular policy* of issue-based alliances with the social-democratic and workers' parties. Lenin's slogan of 'to the masses' pertained to this very policy of the 'united front of the working class'. We are for the articulation of a new version of this policy in the new historical conditions and new political situation, as we have pointed out in *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders* and our key paper from the Hyderabad seminar on fascism.
2. From 1922-23 itself, the parties of the Comintern instead of implementing the correct Leninist line, implemented a right-deviationist version of the line or a "left"-deviationist version of the line. From 1924 onwards, the pathological reaction of the revolutionary communists to the sins of social-democracy in various European countries led to the "left"-deviationist line becoming dominant which assumed an extreme-"left" form by the Sixth Congress in 1928. *On paper, the Leninist line was still proclaimed* but in practice, social-democracy was erroneously identified as 'the main/principal enemy'. As a consequence, the proletarian parties failed to implement a revolutionary massline and fell into the pit of "left"-deviation.
3. In a pathological reaction to this "left"-deviation, the pendulum shifted to the other extreme after the complete defeat of working-class movement in Germany and Italy and some other countries. As a consequence, the French communist party (PCF) began to implement the right-deviationist line of 'popular front' or 'people's front' from 1933-34 itself. It was precisely this

line put forth by a right-wing French communist leader Doriot which was accepted by Dimitrov and Manuilsky in a meeting with French communists in Moscow in 1934. Dimitrov fine-tuned this line and presented it in the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935.

4. The disastrous results of this line became clear and apparent by the autumn of 1938 and from November 1938, the Comintern leaders including Dimitrov and Manuilsky slowly started shifting from this line and abandoned it completely by 1939. They called for a 'return to the line of united front from below' and 'the united front of the working class'.
5. Mao and Kang Sheng clearly refuted this line of 'popular front' against fascism when they discussed the case of Spain and pointed to its capitulationist character in the 1960s. Chou En-Lai, too, critiqued this line in his work on the Comintern and the CPC.

Com. Thakur in his two above-mentioned articles has missed all these points which were elaborated in our book *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders*. In the process, he has selectively quoted from our book, misunderstood these quotes and sometimes unintentionally and inadvertently misinterpreted them, as we shall see later in this essay. He assumes that we adhere to the extreme "left" deviation of the Sixth Congress and reject the policy of the 'popular front' from a "left" position. As we shall see in this essay, Com. Thakur has misunderstood our position, which is bit of a surprise for us, because we have presented our position in a fairly detailed fashion, with copious quotes from the documents of the Comintern in our book, *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders* and the comrades of CPI (ML) Mass Line were present in all the discussions of our seminar on fascism in Hyderabad, where we clarified and elaborated all our positions in our key paper and the papers on historiography of fascism. We will again present copious quotes from our book and from the documents of the Comintern to set the record straight.

We will present our arguments thematically in order to avoid any confusion, rather than presenting them in chronological fashion.

Stalin and the ‘Popular Front’

In one of his articles titled ‘On Popular Front’, Com. Thakur quotes a scholar Bikash Ranjan Deb, who has originally been quoted by us:

“Before entering into main discussion, to keep the record straight, we want to clear a point, raised by certain revolutionary forces. The point is, we are quoting: “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...” (author’s emphasis).

“We do not know the source of “some scholars” as referred by the said organization in their document titled “Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders”. But any serious reader who have attentively gone through the book “The United Front: Struggle Against Fascism and War” by George Dimitrov, General Secretary, Communist International, published by Laurence & Wishart, London, 1939, she or he will see there are innumerable references of Stalin separately and along with Lenin.” (Thakur, Pradip Singha. 2025. ‘On Popular Front’, *Mass Line*, February-March 2025)

There are two problems here. First, Com. Thakur did not read the book in a comprehensive and consistent fashion, as we shall see. Second, it is true that in the portion of Dimitrov’s Report that particularly deals with ‘people’s front’, there is no reference to Stalin. The references to Stalin are there in the part that leads to the concluding part where Dimitrov clearly puts forth the line of ‘popular front’. Third, it is not us who say that there is no reference of Stalin in the entire report, but another scholar that we quote for a different purpose, and we make our position clear in the book as well. We will see that in a while.

First of all, we should clarify the first point, namely, why we say that Com. Thakur has not read our book completely and has cherry-picked certain portions and then misunderstood them. Had he read it, he would have known that what *our* position was, instead of attacking us on the basis of the excerpt from the essay of Deb. Immediately after quoting three scholars, namely, Bikash Ranjan Deb, Monty Johnstone, and Jonathan Haslam, who have argued in quite different ways and with different sets of evidence that Stalin had no direct role in the formulation of the line of ‘popular front’, and also the Chinese communist leader Chou En-Lai who makes the same assertion, we write the following, which Com. Thakur has totally missed:

“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.” (Sinha, Abhinav. 2025. *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders*, Rahul Foundation, Lucknow, p. 200, emphasis ours)

What Com. Thakur has quoted are the words of Bikash Ranjan Deb. The above is our own take on Deb, Johnstone and Haslam. Instead of dealing with what we have written, Com. Thakur has bombarded us with the mentions of Stalin from those portions of the Report, where Dimitrov is not directly discussing his line of the ‘popular front’. We should pause here and see where Dimitrov has referred to Stalin and where he does not mention Stalin’s name even once.

The first reference of Stalin is on p. 4 where Stalin talks about the responsibility of social-democracy for the rise of fascism and defeat of working class (Dimitrov. 2020. *The Fascist Offensive: Unity of the*

Working Class, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 4). The second reference is on p. 12, where Dimitrov simply mentions Stalin along with Lenin, in the context of the desirability of following these two great teachers of the proletariat. The other references are on p. 12 regarding failure of European working class to consummate proletarian revolution in 1918-19 in certain countries. The next reference is on p. 49 where Stalin talks about the failure of communist parties to develop links with workers' mass organizations (not the social-democratic party but the mass organizations!). Next is on p. 66 regarding Stalin's teachings on national question and against what Dimitrov correctly terms as "national nihilism". Again, on p. 68, Stalin is mentioned in the context of development of a socialist culture which has national roots, thus, national in form and socialist in content. On p. 75, Stalin is quoted to emphasize the desirability of developing mass contacts but with principles in command. On p. 78, Stalin is mentioned in context of desirability of the application of the organizational principle of democratic centralism in order to develop a mass political party, that is, a party with mass roots. On p. 81, Stalin is mentioned along with the preceding three great teachers of the proletariat to emphasize their teaching of concrete analysis of concrete conditions. On p. 83, there is mention of Stalin as the pilot leader of proletariat in the struggle to wipe out fascism and capitalism from the face of the earth. On p. 86, Stalin is mentioned with Lenin in respect of making the decisions of the party 'the decisions of the masses'.

All of these references to Stalin have nothing whatsoever to do with the formulation of the line of the 'popular front'; instead, they are general references to some general teachings or ceremonial references to the great leadership of Stalin and Lenin. What about the portion of the report where Dimitrov positively puts forth his line of the 'people's front' or what came to be known as the 'popular front'?

The proper discussion on the 'popular front' begins from page number 90 in the above-mentioned edition and lasts till page number 100. It is precisely in this part that Dimitrov has explained what the

new tactical line of the 'popular front' or 'people's front' actually is. *In these pages, there is not a single reference to Stalin.* The next reference to Stalin comes at page number 101. This reference talks about the necessity of not simply formulating a correct line, but implementing a correct line. The next reference is on p. 105 which talks about the necessity of the communists to speak and write in simple popular language. The same page also mentions Stalin in reference of the need for the cadre to implement a revolutionary massline. Next mentions of Stalin on p. 112-14 talk about the necessity of concrete action and practice. The last two mentions on p. 117 are ceremonial, talking about the great and tested leadership of Stalin.

In short, the 10 pages from p. 90 to p. 100 in the above-mentioned edition, which actually develop and clarify the new tactical line of 'popular front' do not mention Stalin even once. The argument of Com. Thakur that Stalin is indeed mentioned by Dimitrov in his report on 'popular front' is factually correct. We did not say that the report does not mention Stalin; it is a quote from another scholar, not our words. What we wrote after quotations from these 3 scholars and Chou En-Lai is not even mentioned by Com. Thakur. What we said, has been quoted above. We think Com. Thakur flipped over that page, just like, by mistake, he has flipped over many pages, as we shall see.

Secondly, it is true that the particular portion of the report which tells us what the line of 'popular front' is, does not mention Stalin. Also, Com. Thakur did not go to the sources of the authors that we have quoted. Had he gone to the sources, he would have seen that the actual history of formulation of the line of 'popular front' had least participation from Stalin. That is why, Com. Thakur is silent on the following quote of Chou En-Lai that we have presented in the book:

"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." (quoted in Sinha, A. 2025. op.cit.)

Com. Thakur is totally silent on this quotation of Chou En-Lai which argues that Stalin had least part in the articulation of the policy of the 'popular front'. Moreover, as is clear from the above quote, the anti-fascist 'popular front' as proposed by Dimitrov and the anti-Japanese national anti-imperialist 'popular front' formed in China are not the same thing, as Com. Thakur thinks. Com. Thakur wrote in another article:

"Here it is also very relevant to quote again Dimitrov: "The tactics of united People's Front are fully applicable, even now in China and colonial and dependent countries..."

"So, due to changed situation, there was complete 'volte-face by Dimitrov' for some countries and for "China and also in colonial and dependent countries, continuation of 'tactics of united people's front'. Here 'complete absence of volte-face by Dimitrov!" (Thakur, P. S. 2025. 'More on Fascism', *Mass Line*, June-July 2025)

Well, sorry to say, it was still a complete volte-face by Dimitrov! We shall see later in the essay that the "changed situation" that Dimitrov referred to and which Com. Thakur is repeating is the beginning of the World War in September 1939. However, the 'popular front' had collapsed in Spain and France even before the beginning of the war, in 1938 itself. It is noteworthy that war or the preparation of war was not the principal reason for the collapse; rather, it was the internal contradictions of the 'popular front' itself, in which the question of war

was only one, whereas the main questions involved the treachery of the social-democrats, socialists and petty-bourgeois radical parties in the fight against fascism, the brutal repression of the communists and free-hand given to the fascists. In fact, even before the beginning of the war, the Comintern documents show that the Comintern leadership abandoned the policy of the 'popular front'. Later, in the essay, we will show this with adequate quotations from the documents of the Comintern from 1938 to 1940. These quotations were there in our book *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders* which Com. Thakur also quotes. *We wonder how he missed that entire part of the book!* Anyway, we will present those excerpts again in the present essay for the sake of clarity.

Moreover, in China and other colonial and semi-colonial countries, the 'popular' character of the anti-imperialist anti-feudal national united front was something which was in practice long before Dimitrov put forth his theses in the Seventh Congress of the Comintern and it is obvious why in such countries, maintaining the 'popular' character of the national united front was entirely correct. These countries were in the stage of national democratic revolution where the fourth class, besides the working class, peasantry and middle class, namely, the national bourgeoisie was still a strategic ally, albeit a vacillating one, against the enemy, that is, imperialism, feudalism and the big bureaucrat comprador bourgeoisie. *This front had nothing whatsoever to do with anti-fascist united front policy*, even though CPC documents and leaders often erroneously talk about "feudal fascism" since there was a tendency at that time to characterize all forms of dictatorial and militaristic rule as fascist. In fact, Mao's line of a national people's front against imperialism, feudalism and big comprador bourgeoisie was articulated much before the Dimitrov theses, as the strategic class alliance against imperialism and feudalism. Dimitrov mentions the "full applicability of united people's front" in an attempt to rescue his theory of 'popular front' against fascism immediately after the disastrous failure of the two most representative examples of 'popular front' in Spain and France. Here is the entire quote of Dimitrov where he clearly

mentions that this people's front (in China) is for national liberation, not against fascism:

“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.*” (Degras, Jane. *The Communist International, 1919-1943, Documents, Vol. 2*)

As one can see, despite the apologetic attempt to save the line of 'popular front' (later the Comintern leadership abandoned even this practice of trying to save this theory, as we shall see later in the essay), *Dimitrov is careful enough to distinguish the anti-fascist 'popular front' from the national anti-imperialist anti-feudal people's front for national liberation.* He was well aware that in this case the national united front represented the *strategic class alliance of the national democratic revolution*, rather than a *tactical alliance with entire bourgeoisie except the “most reactionary, most chauvinistic, most imperialistic elements of big monopoly finance capital”*, a line which was incorrect anyway. Com. Thakur takes Dimitrov at face value and fails to notice this distinction in his attempt to prove continuing relevance of Dimitrov's line of 'popular front'.

Moreover, I would humbly urge Com. Thakur to read these two articles, since he has asked about the sources of “certain scholars”, because Haslam and Johnstone have given the sources of their claim that Stalin had no direct role to play in the formulation of the policy of 'popular front' (as Chou En-Lai also pointed out in the already presented quotation, about which Com. Thakur is silent):

- Johnstone, M. 1985. 'Trotsky and the People's Front' in Jim Fyrth (ed.) *Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front*, Lawrence and Wishart, London

- Haslam, J. 1979. 'The Comintern and the Origins of the Popular Front, 1934-35' in *Historical Journal*, 22:3

The reason is simple: without going through these “certain scholars”, Com. Thakur can never be sure about his “refutation” of these “certain scholars”! One does not have to agree to every political judgement or evaluation of the above scholars. However, facts are stubborn things and they have to be accepted. Also, it is noteworthy that there is not even a single reference to the policy of ‘people’s front’ or ‘popular front’ in the *History of the CPSU (B)*, published in 1939, even where there is discussion of fascism and the struggle against fascism. At one place there is reference to the international alliance of the “democratic” states (read imperialist states) which could not be formed in a proper fashion due to the attitude of the powers like Britain, France and the US, who saw fascism as a counter-weight to the working class:

“The one-sided character of the developing world war is due to the absence of a united front of the “democratic” states against the fascist powers. The so-called democratic states, of course, do not approve of the “excesses” of the fascist states and fear any accession of strength to the latter. But they fear even more the working-class movement in Europe, and the movement of national emancipation in Asia, and regard fascism as an “excellent antidote” to these “dangerous” movements.” (*History of the CPSU (B)*. 2023. Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 422)

It is clear from the excerpt above that if anything the *History* is slightly critical of the line of popular front. Moreover, it does not mention the Seventh Congress of the Comintern and the Dimitrov line of the ‘popular front’, or even of Dimitrov himself, even once. It mentions up till the Fifth Congress but not later congresses of the Comintern. If the line of ‘popular front’ was such an epochal line responsible for the collapse of international fascism, as Com. Thakur argues, the absence of even the mention of the Seventh Congress and the line of the ‘popular front’ is conspicuous.

The Problem of the Social-Democracy and the 'Popular Front'

Com. Thakur points out that between the Sixth Congress and the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, that is, between 1928 and 1935, the concrete study of the revolutionary communists showed that social-democracy was no longer the principal bulwark of the bourgeoisie and its reaction. This is true. In fact, the mistake of considering social-democracy as the principal enemy was a "left"-wing mistake which originated from the Fifth Congress itself, though in an embryonic form. This mistake assumed an extreme "left" form since the Sixth Congress. Do we adhere to this "left" and extreme "left" line as Com. Thakur suggests? Had he read *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders* from cover to cover and the key paper of our seminar on fascism, he would not have rebuked us for this position, because we do not have any such position! When we talk about the line of 'united front of the working class', formally proclaimed as correct in the Sixth Congress, we are not referring to its extreme "left" version which became dominant in the Sixth Congress; instead, we are referring to the line of united front of the working class as propounded by Lenin in the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921. Let us see what we have written in our above-mentioned book. We write:

"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.” (Sinha, A. 2025. *op.cit.*, p. 368)

Further we write:

“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.”” (ibid, p. 369)

More:

“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.” (*ibid*, p. 370)

Further:

“Till the Fifth Congress and the Fifth Plenum of the Comintern (1925), the Comintern clearly says that while the main task of the communists is to form united front from below, which means forming united fronts at the level of mass organizations and trade unions (including those of social-democrats) as well as particular alliances with social-democratic parties too, that is, united front from above.

“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. 371-72)

We write further:

“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...” (*ibid*, p. 372-73)

It is precisely this mistake that is committed by Com. Thakur as well. He takes 1928 as the beginning point and 1935 as the end point of his discussion, whereas the story of the evolution of Comintern’s line on united front against fascism is so much more. We have quoted at length in our book the directives issued by the Third Congress and the directives issued by the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) after the Third Congress in December 1921 to show that the Leninist policy of united front of the working class meant a general united front from below (that is, unity of the masses

of workers of all trade unions including the social-democratic ones) and a particular united front from above (that is, based on political exigencies, issue-based alliance with the social-democratic parties of the Second International). We have written in the above-mentioned book:

“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’.” (ibid, p. 379)

Further:

“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).” (ibid, p. 382)

The readers can see that our line is not outright rejection of the united front with social-democrats (and also other non-fascist bourgeois parties), as Com. Thakur assumes. Borrowing terminology from Dimitrov, Com. Thakur accuses us of “self-satisfied sectarianism” and “sectarian self-isolation” and maybe he also accuses us of “calling entire non-communist camp as fascist” (it is

possible Com. Thakur is referring to some other organization) [Thakur, P. S. 2025. 'More on Fascism', *Mass Line*, June-July 2025, p. 5], because we do not harbour any such illusion. In our book *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders* as well as our key paper on fascism from the Hyderabad Seminar, we severely criticize the tendency of not making a distinction between fascist reaction and other forms of bourgeois politics. Com. Thakur also criticizes the argument that "today, in anti-fascist struggle, these degenerate sections have become unworthy for even a tactical alliance" and then says that the same forces that give this argument give "revolutionary congratulations to all those who participated in the strike and supported it and made it success" (*ibid*, p. 6). As far as we can remember we are not guilty of such political somersaults but since there is no source given by Com. Thakur, we do not know whether he is referring to us or someone else. It is possible that Com. Thakur is referring to some other organization because we have not made such preposterous claims anywhere.

However, here, too, Com. Thakur commits a mistake and asks "Are CITU and AITUC are in these referred trade unions?! Parties are "social fascists". Parties controlled trade unions: "revolutionary congratulations!" (*ibid*, p. 6)

Com. Thakur misses the basic point here: *it is possible to have trade unions which are controlled by social-democrats and yet it is not only possible but essentially desirable that the communists must work among the masses of workers in these trade unions, despite their social-democratic leadership, they also must support all workers' struggles if and when they are waged by such trade unions.* Therefore, if some organization which considers CPI, CPM as social-fascists, gives congratulations to some trade union controlled by social-democrats on any particular struggle, there is no contradiction or paradox in this. Of course, the "success" of the recent "general one-day strike" is something which can evoke burst of ironic laughter among any group or organization of communist revolutionaries. However, the contradiction that Com. Thakur is alluding to is non-existent. He fails to make a distinction between the masses of

workers in trade unions controlled by the social-democrats on the one hand and the social-democratic party and leadership on the other. *This failure to confuse class with party leads to several problems in the arguments of Com. Thakur as we shall see later.*

For now, we would like to return to the question of our line of anti-fascist united front.

We adhere to the Leninist line of general united front of the working class against fascism among revolutionary communist organizations and groups involved in organizing masses of workers in all types of unions and mass organizations and the particular united front from above with all the non-fascist bourgeois parties on particular issues. In fact, in Arvind Trust's seminar on fascism in Hyderabad in December 2024-January 2025, in response to a question by a comrade by CPI (ML) Mass Line, we had pointed out that if, for example, the Congress and the parliamentary left parties give a call for a nationwide agitation against use of EVMs, which is an important issue of political democracy, we should participate in any such agitation while maintaining our political proletarian independence. The same is true for tactical alliance on another question of political democracy, namely, the question of vote-theft by the BJP-RSS and stealing away of elections. I am not sure why and how Com. Thakur assumes that we are against forming particular alliances against fascism with social-democrats and goes on to give examples of countries where social-democratic governments had been in power like Denmark, Sweden, etc. and yet the revolutionary communists were advised to form united front with them by the Comintern (*ibid*, p. 6-7). Our question is not about forming particular issue-based united fronts with the social-democrats against fascism, but on forming a *general* anti-fascist united front, that is, the 'popular front' with the social-democrats in order to "unite with the mass of the workers". We have argued that this is conflating class with the party which assumes that the masses of workers and working people can be won over only through united front with their parties from above. This is surrendering the political independence of the proletariat, which is opposed to the independent political action by the

proletarian forces of forming what Lenin called the 'united front from below', the 'rank-and-file united front', which means organizing the masses of workers in all types of trade unions without *necessary* recourse to alliance with the parties controlling these trade unions, from above.

The question is not about forming united front with the social-democrats. Instead, the question is *what kind of united front* will be formed with them. Whether it will be a *general anti-fascist united front* based on the conviction that the long-term general political struggle against fascism will be carried out by such united front till the final defeat of fascism and restoration of some ideal model of bourgeois democracy (a belief itself based on the necessary false binary of 'bourgeois democracy/fascist dictatorship'), or, a *particular anti-fascist united front* based on the conviction that in order to win over the masses of workers and working people to the side of communists against fascism, in order to inflict damages on the fascist project on the particular questions, in order to expose the real character of social-democracy and other non-fascist bourgeois parties, such united fronts must be formed. On this question, we are totally with Lenin's line of united front of the working class, which includes particular united fronts from above with social-democratic parties and non-fascist bourgeois parties subordinated to the general united front against fascism consisting of communist revolutionary groups and organizations which strives for 'united front from below' or 'rank-and-file united front', which has a general charter against fascism rather than issue-based particular charters. This is the point that Com. Thakur has not understood regarding our position. We will see later that Lenin proposed precisely this line and after November 1938, the Comintern and its leadership, too, reverted to this line and abandoned the line of the 'popular front'.

The mistake of 'popular frontism' promoted by Dimitrov theses was blurring the distinction between the parties and the classes and assuming that the unity of the masses of workers and working people can be formed only through the alliances between the communist party on the one hand and all the non-fascist bourgeois

parties (including social-democrats) on the other. Dimitrov assumes that to approach the masses of workers and working people, they must be approached from the top, through their parties. This was precisely the mistake which confuses parties with classes. We have quoted copiously from the documents of the Comintern to underline this fact. However, ironically, Com. Thakur has missed all of that. After presenting various quotations from the documents of the Comintern, we write in the book about the Leninist policy of united front of the working class:

“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.” (*ibid*, p. 384)

In fact, in April 1922 itself there were attempts to form united front from above with the parties of the Second International and the Amsterdam International, by the revolutionary communist parties of the Comintern, besides the attempts to form united front from below by organizing workers from all trade unions against rising tide of fascism. However, the Second International and Amsterdam International showed little interest in these efforts.

Discussing the right-wing deviation and “left”-wing deviation in the implementation of the Leninist policy of united front of the working class, we write:

“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.” (*ibid*, p. 398-99)

Further:

“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.” (*ibid*, p. 402)

More:

“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.” (*ibid*, p. 405)

Commenting about the extreme-“left” tendency becoming dominant in the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, we have written:

“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...*

“*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.” (*ibid*, p. 407-08)

Summing up the extreme “left” mistake from the Sixth Congress onwards till 1933-34 when, as a pathological reaction, the right deviation became dominant, we write:

“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.” (*ibid*, p. 412-13)

Thus, Com. Thakur has completely misunderstood the Leninist policy of united front of the working class (that is, *general united front from below* + *particular united front from above*) and imputed the incorrect understanding, that is, an ultra-“left” version of the united front policy of the Sixth Congress, upon us, whereas our basic plea is to revive the Leninist policy of united front of the working class as formulated in 1921 and re-emphasized in 1922 despite right and “left” deviations in many parties.

That is why we have quoted our position at length above. *To sum up, our position of united front of the working class does not reject issue-based particular united front against fascism with social-democracy. It argues that the principal aim should be united front from below, that is, the efforts of the revolutionary communists to organize workers in all trade unions (including the social-democratic ones) against fascism and the secondary aim should be forming party-to-party alliances with all non-fascist bourgeois parties (including the social-democratic parties) based on particular issues.* Com. Thakur assumes that we reject particular issue-based alliances against

fascism with the social-democratic parties, whereas in the Hyderabad Seminar on Fascism (in December 2024-January 2025) we had explained this position to comrades from CPI (ML) Mass Line in the public discussions in clearest terms. Had Com. Thakur read our entire position in *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders* and our key paper, he would not have made such claims.

Secondly, Com. Thakur fails to understand our position on *the general united front against fascism*. General front means the front against fascism which is formed, not on particular issues, but as the general unity of revolutionary communist groups, organizations and parties against fascism based on a *general, long-term, political common minimum program*. In every situation, such general front is maintained, irrespective of the pertinent issues of the time.

What Does “Dead Organisms” Mean?

Com. Thakur asks that if we think that the ML camp has disintegrated because its constituents have become “dead organisms”, then how can such a general front be formed? Here he does not understand what we mean by *the disintegration of the ML Camp* and its constituents becoming *dead organisms* (in the second article ‘More on Fascism’ he claims that we have called them “dead organizations”, which is not true at all). Let us explain what it means before moving on to the next issue.

Com. Thakur writes:

“So, according to this standpoint, in India, at present “general anti-fascist front” will take the form of united front of the “political forums, groups, organizations or parties, that are communist revolutionary”. So, it will be united front of “advance detachment of the working class”! Surprisingly, they are also of the firm opinion that the Marxist-Leninist “groups and organizations have become dead organizations.” (Thakur, P. S. 2025. ‘More on Fascism’, *Mass Line*, June-July 2025, p. 7)

Com. Thakur goes on to quote from Sixth Congress document to say that Comintern never proposed the line of united front among revolutionary communist groups and organizations and always advised to win majority in all proletarian mass organizations.

Again, as we can see, Com. Thakur confuses parties with classes. To say that the *general united front against fascism* can only be formed by revolutionary communist organizations and groups today is to underline the composition of the parties of such front. Does that mean that this united front will *not* win over the masses of workers in all types of trade unions? How? Why? Have we said that or written that? No. Com. Thakur fails to make a distinction between two different levels of determination: *class and party*. The parties which should be part of the general anti-fascist united front of the working class must be revolutionary communist parties, organizations and groups because the social-democratic parties and leadership systematically prevent any anti-fascist united front from transcending the boundaries of bourgeois legality, which is a necessary precondition of effective fight against fascism, as the experience of all anti-fascist joint struggles clearly show. *This does not (and cannot!) mean in any way that such a general united front against fascism will not organize the mass of workers and working people in all sorts of mass organizations including the ones led by the social-democrats.* In fact, '*united front from below*' which is the basic prerequisite of formation of a general anti-fascist united front of the working class precisely means that the masses and rank-and-file of workers must be organized against fascism by such united front of the working class.

Why did Com. Thakur fail to understand this? Because he assumes that the masses of workers and working people in the mass organizations and trade unions led by the social-democrats can be mobilized and organized *only if* there is a general party-to-party united front from above with the social-democratic parties. This is precisely what is called confusing the parties with the classes. Have we ever argued that general anti-fascist united front of the working class among the revolutionary communist groups and organizations

precludes and excludes the mobilization and organization of mass of workers in all types of trade unions? No. Let us see. We write:

“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.” (Sinha, A. 2025. *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders*, Rahul Foundation, Lucknow, p. 344-45)

At another place we write:

“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...” (*ibid*, p. 345-46)

Further:

“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.” (*ibid*, p. 348)

We can reproduce many such excerpts from our book. However, the above excerpts suffice to show that Com. Thakur has not read the book from cover to cover and due to this imputes on us the very position that we categorically and firmly reject. Another reason why he fails to understand our position, again, is that he confuses classes with parties. Thus, for him, a general united front against fascism among revolutionary communist groups and organizations would mean that such united front will not mobilize and organize the masses of workers and working people in all kinds of mass organizations, an understanding which has nothing remotely identical to our position and Lenin’s position of ‘united front of the working class’, or ‘united front from below’ (which is organizing masses of workers in all unions without necessary recourse to united front with the parties controlling these unions). Let us come back to the question of “disintegration of the ML Camp” and “dead organizations”!

First of all, we have never ever called the ML groups and organizations, the constituents of the so-called ML Camp, as “dead organizations”! Com. Thakur is misquoting us here, of course, unintentionally and unknowingly. We have said that the ML Camp has, essentially and mainly, disintegrated because its constituents have become “dead organisms”. What do we mean by these terms?

The disintegration of the ML Camp simply means that now the all-India revolutionary communist party will not emerge from the unity talks between the ML groups and organizations. That is to say, the aspect of *party formation* in the emergence of a new revolutionary communist party has become *secondary (not absent, otherwise we would not be having this dialog with the comrades of CPI (ML) Mass Line!)*. Had that been possible, it would have happened in the last 56 years that have lapsed after the formation of CPI (ML) in 1969. In these five-and-a-half decades, we have witnessed, mainly and essentially, the process of fragmentation and dispersal, rather than unity and integration, despite the fact that most of these organization still cling to the same outdated and outmoded program of new democratic revolution and consider India either semi-feudal semi-colonial or neo-colonial. The differences among them are not essential and substantial in nature as far as political line and program are concerned. Still, instead of uniting they are disintegrating further as a general trend. There have been some unities in the past, but they have ended with even more disintegrating splits, generally. Why? Because the constituents of the ML camp have mostly become “dead organisms” which cannot give birth to a new organism, that is, a new all-India revolutionary communist party. Some comrades have been waiting for such an event for past five-and-a-half decades, but, tragically, their wait has become like Estragon and Vladimir waiting for the Godot.

Now let us come to the question what we mean by “dead organism”. Following Lenin and Mao, we argue that the lifelines of a revolutionary organization are *the composition of the leadership, the composition of policies, and the composition of the cadre*. What is the situation of most of the ML groups and organizations on these

yardsticks? The composition of the leadership has been vacillating between the extremes of right and “left” opportunism (which does not mean that they have become “corrupt” in the individual sense; these terms are political terms which allude to particular political and ideological tendencies); the composition of policies based on the program of New Democratic Revolution is outdated and outmoded; and the composition of the cadre is honest but lacks any Bolshevik organizational culture and training and is a victim of either *openism* or *undergroundism*, that is, lack of revolutionary massline and the Leninist organizational line. Since these three essential lifelines of revolutionary communist organization are absent, most of the organizations and groups of the ML Camp have turned into “dead organisms”, *which cannot lead to the **formation** of an all-India revolutionary communist party.*

Does that mean that these organizations have become corrupt in the individual sense? No. If we believed that, again, as we mentioned earlier, we would not be having this dialog. It simply means that now the question of *form* and *formation* have become secondary and the question of *content* and *building* have become principal, that is to say, now *building* a new communist centre with a correct ideological line, a correct political line, a correct organizational line and a correct program has become the dominant factor. *In other words, the aspect of party formation has become secondary and the aspect of party building has become principal.* This is what is meant by the disintegration of the ML Camp (supposedly approaching the formation of an all-India revolutionary communist party through unity talks) and “dead organisms”, due to the absence of a correct ideological, political and organizational line and a correct program. It does not mean that the leaders and members of such ML groups and organizations have become corrupt or renegade in the individual or personal sense. We urge the comrades of CPI (ML) Mass Line to ponder over this question in the spirit of communist reason, rather than taking it sentimentally and getting hurt.

Secondly, even though, due to programmatic dogmatism, right and “left” opportunism, and lack of Bolshevik line, these organizations

and parties cannot lead to the formation of a *new revolutionary communist party*, yet these organizations can indeed form an *anti-fascist united front*. Again, Com. Thakur fails to make a distinction between two different levels of determination: *the problem of building and formation of a new all-India revolutionary communist party* on the one hand and *the formation of an anti-fascist united front on the other*. Formation and building of a party and that of an anti-fascist united front are two different questions and cannot be confused with each other. They have their own different sets of contradictions, factors and forces. Com. Thakur mixes them up and, consequentially, erroneously wonders at our call for formation of a general anti-fascist united front among the revolutionary ML organizations and groups and ironically asks: how can “dead organisms” (which he mistakes for “dead organizations” in the second article ‘More on Fascism’) form a general anti-fascist united front! *Well, they certainly can! Forming a united front and building and forming a new communist party are not the same thing.*

Mao, Anti-Fascist People’s Front and the Anti-Imperialist National United Front

Com. Thakur argues that our claim that Mao did not adhere to the line of the ‘popular front’ is false. He presents this quote of Mao:

“With Chamberlain and Daladier practicing intimidation and bribery, the social-democratic parties affiliated to the Second International are splitting up. One section of the reactionary upper stratum, is following the same old disastrous road as in the First World War and is ready to support the new imperialist war. But another section will join the communist in forming ‘popular front’ against war and fascism.” (quoted by Com. Thakur in ‘On Popular Front’, *Mass Line*, February-March, 2025, p. 12)

We will come to the meaning and implications of the above quote in a while but first we would like to point to another paradox. Com. Thakur is silent on the quote of Mao from a much later period that we have presented in our book:

“Thus, On New Democracy was a complete program. It discussed politics, economics, and culture as well; it failed to discuss only military affairs. (Kang Sheng: *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.) These are the policies of Chen Tu-hsiu! (Kang Sheng: *They say the Communist Party organized an army, and then turned it over to others.*) This is useless. (Kang Sheng: *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.*)” (Mao Tse-Tung. 1994. ‘Talk on Questions of Philosophy’ (August 18, 1964), *Selected Works, Vol. 9*, Shramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad, p. 130-31)

Precisely in this regard, Mao continues:

“Even before the dissolution of the Third International, we did not obey the orders of the Third International.” (*ibid*, p. 131)

The above quote is from the 1960s about which Com. Thakur is silent.

Now coming to the quote presented by Com. Thakur. We think Com. Thakur has confused anti-fascist front within countries with fascism in power or rising tide of fascism, with the international front against fascism. The entire quote will explain things in a better light:

“In Europe, a large-scale imperialist war is imminent between the German-Italian and the Anglo-French imperialist blocs which are contending for domination over the colonial peoples. In this war, each of the belligerents will brazenly declare its own cause to be just and that of its opponents unjust in order to delude people and win the support of public opinion. Actually this is a swindle. The aims of both sides are imperialist, both are fighting for the domination of colonies and semi-colonies and for spheres of influence, and both are waging a predatory war. At present, they are fighting over Poland, the Balkans and the Mediterranean littoral. This war is not at all a just war. The only just wars are non-predatory wars, wars of liberation. Communists will in no circumstances support any predatory war. They will, however, bravely step forward to support every just and non-predatory war for liberation, and they will stand in the forefront of the struggle. With Chamberlain and Daladier practising intimidation and bribery, the social-democratic parties affiliated to the Second International are splitting up. One section, the reactionary upper stratum, is following *the same old disastrous road as in the First World War* and is ready to support the new imperialist war. But another section will join with the Communists in forming a ‘popular front’ *against war and fascism*. Chamberlain and Daladier are following in the footsteps of Germany and Italy and are becoming more and more reactionary, taking advantage of the war mobilization to put the state structure in their countries on a fascist footing and to militarize the economy. In short, the two big imperialist blocs are feverishly preparing for war and millions of people are facing the danger of mass slaughter. Surely all this will arouse movements of resistance among the masses. Whether in Germany or in Italy, Britain or France, or anywhere else in Europe or the world at large, if the people do not want to be used as imperialist cannon-fodder, they will have to rise up and oppose the imperialist war in every possible way.” (Mao Tse-Tung. 1965. ‘Interview with a New China Daily Correspondent on the New International Situation’ (September 1, 1939),

Selected Works, Vol. 2, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, p. 265, emphasis ours)

As the quote itself explains, Mao is talking about *the international united front against fascism and the role different social-democratic parties of the Second International might play in the imperialist war being promoted by the fascist axis powers, and not the united front against fascism within countries with fascism in power or the rising tide of fascism, for example Germany, Italy or Spain, France, etc.* That is why Mao refers to the mistake of the social-democratic parties during the First World War. What was that mistake? Voting the war credits and making the working people tail-end their own bourgeois ruling classes in the imperialist war. *In essence and in the main, Mao is not talking about the 'popular front' against fascism within countries, but the international front against imperialist fascist axis powers.* The 'popular front' at the international level (including the non-fascist bourgeois powers and the communist forces under the Soviet Union) will of course include all powers against the fascist aggressors. Moreover, the national 'popular front' of the four classes, namely, proletariat, peasantry, middle class and national bourgeoisie, too, is the only correct method of anti-feudal anti-imperialist struggle. *However, to confuse the international 'popular front' against fascism and the national anti-colonial anti-feudal 'popular front' on the one hand, with the anti-fascist 'popular front' within various countries with fascism in power or the rising fascist threat would tantamount to muddled thinking and incorrect political conclusions.* Com. Thakur commits precisely this mistake.

The generic use of the term 'popular front' or 'people's front' does not lead us anywhere. We need to specify what we are talking about in particular: the anti-fascist united front in countries with fascism in power or the rising tide of fascism, or, the international anti-fascist front, or, the anti-imperialist anti-feudal popular front. The three are different levels of determination involving different contradictions, different forces, different relations and different sets of enemies and friends. Com. Thakur does not make this distinction and uses the term 'popular front' generically to prove that the CPC and Mao

adhered to the Dimitrov theses. However, in 'Talk on Philosophy', Kang Sheng, with express approval of Mao, correctly criticizes the right-deviationist error of popular-frontism as formulated by Dimitrov in the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in light of the real experiences of Spain. The same is done by Chou En-Lai when he critiques Comintern's policy while writing about the history of the relations between the CPC and the Third International. We have quoted both of these excerpts in the essay.

Regarding the Right-Deviationist 'Popular Frontism' and Its Disastrous Failure

We pointed out in our above-mentioned book that the policy of the 'popular front' actually originated in France under the leadership of a certain section of the PCF, led by Doriot. The account of how Doriot presented the policy of 'popular front', how initially Thorez and others opposed him and how later Thorez was convinced by Dimitrov on the policy of 'popular front' is given under the section 'The Origins of the Policy of Popular Front' in the 14th Chapter of the book. We would urge the comrades of CPI (ML) Mass Line to refer to this section. In this section, we also explain how the policy of Doriot, a right-winger of the PCF, later accepted by Dimitrov and Manuilsky, was actually a pathological reaction to the extreme "left" mistake of the Sixth Congress.

Com. Thakur has argued that history has proven that the policy of the 'popular front' was correct and it was precisely due this policy that German, Italian and French fascism were defeated, the national liberation movements were intensified, British and French imperialism weakened and Soviet Union emerged victorious! Com. Thakur writes:

"Marxist philosophy teaches us that "...man's social practice alone is the criterion of the truth of his knowledge of external world." Same is applicable for the Seventh Congress of

Communist International and its most important part – Dimitrov inaugural speech, reply and closing speech. Fight against fascism and imperialist war by the world communists under the guidance of Dimitrov Thesis and results of those social practices brought the defeat of German-Italy-France fascist forces, weakening of the British and French imperialism, speedy advancement of the national liberation struggles in colonial, semi-colonial and dependent countries and above all victorious emergence of socialist Soviet Union. It proved emphatically the truth and correctness of Dimitrov Thesis.” (Thakur, Pradip Singha. 2025. ‘On Popular Front’, *Mass Line*, February-March, 2025)

In his second article, too, Com. Thakur writes:

“Worldwide development – Crushing defeat of German, Japan and Italian fascist forces, weakening to a great extent of British and French imperialism and awakening of the Nations and People of Asia, Africa and Latin America in their national liberation struggle proved beyond doubt that “new tactical orientation for the Communist International”, as said by Dimitrov in his closing speech, was correct.” (Thakur, P. S. 2025. ‘More on Fascism’ *Mass Line*, June-July 2025)

Regrettably, each and every claim made above is emphatically refuted by history. The defeat of German Nazism and Italian Fascism *was not* the result of the popular front. In these countries, the left in general was not even in a condition to form any meaningful ‘popular front’ or even any united front. In Spain and France, the ‘popular front’ was decisively defeated or collapsed by the autumn of 1938. German Nazism was defeated in particular by the Soviet Red Army, which single-handedly routed the Nazis, when the British, French and US imperialism were following the policy of ‘wait and watch’. It is noteworthy that the western front was opened at Normandy, France, only in June 1944, when the defeat of Nazi army was already almost complete. Italian fascism’s fall was part and parcel of the defeat of Germany, as every serious student of history knows, as Italy had

become a lackey of Germany in the course of the war itself. Had the popular fronts in France, Spain, Germany and Italy been successful in defeating fascism, as Com. Thakur wants us to believe, there would have been no need whatsoever for the military defeat of Nazi Germany at the hands of the Soviet Union and the eventual collapse of its lackeys like Italy.

British and French imperialism certainly were not weakened by the popular front! That would be a preposterous claim given the fact that these countries were, at least formally, part of the international 'popular front' of the allied powers against Germany, Italy and Japan. Finally, the national liberation movements, too, intensified because the two most important colonial powers, namely, Britain and France emerged decimated from the war, whereas the US emerged as the new leader of world imperialism, promoting a new mode of colonial domination, namely, neo-colonialism, and also giving impetus to further decline of the old European colonial powers. The anti-imperialist anti-feudal people's fronts formed in certain countries, especially, China, had nothing to do with the anti-fascist popular front. In fact, the anti-imperialist national united fronts had been formed in China much before Dimitrov presented his theses at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. This claim is made by Com. Thakur because he fails to make a distinction between the anti-fascist 'popular front' as proposed by Dimitrov, and the anti-imperialist anti-feudal united front, and also between the anti-fascist 'popular front' within countries with fascism in power or rising fascism, and the international anti-fascist united front. Due to generic use and understanding of the term 'popular front' or 'people's front', Com. Thakur mixes up these different levels of analysis and determination. The truth is that the 'popular front', wherever formed, collapsed from its internal contradictions, owing to the treachery and betrayal of the social-democrats and socialists. Com. Thakur has given the credit for every positive development since the late-1930s and especially after the end of the war to the 'popular front' policy miraculously and in total disregard of historical facts. On the

contrary, the social practice actually demonstrated the failure of the popular front.

However, it is true that social practice is the final arbiter of truth. That is why the Comintern leadership including Dimitrov and Manuilsky shifted away from the policy of the 'popular front' from November 1938 and completely gave it up by 1939, as we shall see in the next section. They even called for a reversion to the policy of the Leninist united front of the working class (which does not exclude the particular issue-based alliance with social-democrats). They started talking about the social-democracy in the same damning words which were used before the Seventh Congress and even before the Sixth Congress. We have explained this shift in detail in our book. However, Com. Thakur does not discuss these evidence anywhere in his criticism. Therefore, we find ourselves obliged to repeat that explanation with evidence.

Comintern Gives Up the Policy of 'Popular Front'

Com. Thakur has accepted in the second article ('More on Fascism') that Dimitrov did indeed accept that the policy of the 'popular front' is not appropriate anymore in capitalist countries due to "changed situation". This is only reproducing Dimitrov's argument which he had presented as a pretext for abandonment of the policy of the 'popular front' from November 1938, a way to avoid an open and above-board self-criticism and to rescue the policy of the 'popular front' from embarrassment, as it was launched with much fanfare in 1935 openly, even though its implementation had started in France in 1933-34 itself.

What was this "changed situation"? According to Dimitrov, it was the war which started in September 1939. However, the popular fronts, especially its most publicized representative versions, the French and the Spanish popular fronts had collapsed in the autumn of 1938 itself! Thus, of course, Dimitrov was changing the line *post festum* by

citing war as a reason for something which had happened much before the beginning of the war. Then, he presents the treacherous behaviour of the social-democrats with a bit of a surprise and is aghast at the fact that the social-democratic and petty-bourgeois radical elements within the French and Spanish popular fronts are repressing or obstructing the revolutionary communists, even arresting and killing them, whereas, at the same time, giving free hand to the fascists! Was this behaviour really surprising? Didn't they behave precisely like this from the time of the assassinations of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht itself who were murdered by quasi-fascist gangs of *Frei Corps* at the behest of the social-democrats themselves? Didn't they suppress, arrest and kill revolutionary communists during their participation in German governments throughout the 1920s? What was really surprising? In reality, they behaved precisely in the way in which one can expect them to behave. The revolutionary communists can certainly form particular united fronts with the social-democrats against fascists based on common issues, but they must retain their political independence in such alliances and must not rely on social-democrats for general anti-fascist united front. That is what the history teaches us, contrary to what Com. Thakur thinks. Let us delve into this history with the documents of the Comintern, for the sake of clarity.

From the very beginning the problems of 'popular front' were clearly apparent for the communists in France and Spain. Jane Degras, the editor of the documents of Comintern, 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*)

Regarding the above extract, we wrote in our book:

“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.” (Sinha, A. 2025. *op.cit.*, p. 441)

Degras comments on the slow shift which starts with the collapse of popular fronts in France and Spain in the autumn of 1938:

“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.'" (Degras. op.cit., p. 427-28)

Citing Manuilsky's criticism of 'popular front' from the mid-1939, who was one of the architects of the policy of the 'popular front' along with Dimitrov, Degras writes:

"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)

Thus, Manuilsky calls the social-democrats as 'the agents of fascism' in the working-class movement and capitulators. If that was *the character of the social-democrats, then, the whole policy of the 'popular front', its entire foundation, was accepted as incorrect by Manuilsky.* 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. The documents of Comintern from the end of 1938 again and again accept this failure. For instance:

“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 (General Confederation of Labour in France, a trade union federation – author).’* 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)

It is noteworthy that the author is not simply talking about the international front against fascism, but the break-down of popular fronts in France and Spain due to the treachery of the social-democrats, much before the Second World War began.

Now, let us see some of the other 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”! It 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’. Com. Thakur thinks that the ‘volte-face’ of Dimitrov was due to “changed situation”! However, we shall see that the volte-face had

occurred even before the situation had changed, the popular fronts had collapsed even before the beginning of the war.

In fact, in the colonial world, it is quite natural to form alliance with the anti-imperialist national bourgeoisie and in this regard, the 'anti-fascist 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. Com. Thakur, too, uncritically follows this apologetic logic of Dimitrov. 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', an article on 'The Tasks of the Working Class in the War', written in November 1939:

"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' flunkies 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. 456)

It is noteworthy that Dimitrov refers to the "changed situation" due to the war. However, as we have already mentioned, the popular fronts in France and Spain had collapsed months before beginning of the war. They failed by the mid-1938 itself, whereas the war started in

the late-1939. Thus, Dimitrov's attempt to put the reason of the shift on the event of war is futile. We wrote in our book:

"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 behavior 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 behavior 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." (Sinha, A. 2025. op.cit., p. 448)

However, despite attempts of Dimitrov to put the blame on the "changed situation due to war", his tone becomes increasingly clearer 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.” (Degras, op.cit., p. 456)

We wrote on this volte-face:

“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, a “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.” (Sinha, A. 2025. op.cit., p. 449)

In the same article Dimitrov writes further:

“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.*” (Degras, *op.cit.*, p. 457)

In 1940, 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)

The May Day Manifesto of ECCI from 1940 repeats the call of reversion to Lenin’s ‘united front from below’:

“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.*” (Degras, *op.cit.*, p. 470)

The same manifesto says 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.” (ibid, p. 470)

Regarding the above quote, we wrote:

“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.” (Sinha, A. 2025. *op.cit.*, p. 455)

Com. Thakur argues that it was the “changed situation” emerging from the war due to which Dimitrov changed his position regarding the ‘popular front’. However, almost a year before the outbreak of war, the ECCI Manifesto issued on the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution wrote:

“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.” (Degras, *op.cit.*, p. 432-33)

The same manifesto writes about the unwillingness of the social-democrats to form a ‘popular front’ and the treachery of the social-democrats in the struggle against fascism:

“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.” (Degras, *op.cit.*, p. 433)

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 in 1939, we find these words:

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

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

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

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

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

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

peasants who are thirsting for peace? With the stranglers and butchers of liberty, or with those who are self-sacrificingly defending it?” (Degras, *op.cit.*, p. 447)

It is not as if the revolutionary communists had not been well-acquainted with the imperialist character of the European social-democracy! From the days of Kautsky itself, all Marxist-Leninists had been well-aware of this character of the European social-democracy. In the context of above representative quotations from the documents of the Comintern which clearly reveal the reversion to the policy of ‘united front of the working class’, we wrote:

“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 now 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." (Sinha, A. 2025. *op.cit.*, p. 459-60)

We also explained that the root cause of formulation of the policy of 'popular front' was an incorrect political economy which explained fascism as the naked and barbaric dictatorship of "the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, most imperialistic elements of the big monopoly finance capital". Such a characterization would lead to the political conclusion that rest of the bourgeoisie would be an ally in the struggle against fascism, including the rest of the big monopoly finance capital! This would naturally entail capitulationism and collaborationism and this was precisely what the policy of the 'popular front' did. Thus, in the words of Kang Sheng with manifest approval from Mao, the communists in Spain under the policy of 'popular front' systematically refused to take the power even when the political situation allowed for it, prepared an army and handed it over to the bourgeoisie! In France, the Blums spearheaded the 'popular front' and its short-lived government and acted more ferociously against the revolutionary communists than the fascists! Due to the internal and immanent weakness of these popular fronts, they collapsed by the autumn of 1938, much before the beginning of the war. Thus, the popular fronts did not collapse, as Dimitrov tried to argue, because of the treachery of the social-democrats in conditions of war. The treachery was there already and had led to the collapse of the popular fronts everywhere much before the war.

Com. Thakur is unaware of this history of popular fronts from 1935 onwards. He says:

"If any organization want to stay at 1927-28, that is their liberty. But whole world communist movement under the leadership of Communist International moved forward to the Seventh Congress, which was held in 1935." (Thakur, P. S. 2025. *op.cit.*, p. 11)

Regrettably, it is not us who are stuck in 1927-28, but Com. Thakur instead, who is stuck in 1935, whereas much water had flowed in

Seine, Ebro, Rhine, Po River, Volga, Thames and Ganges from 1935 up till 1940-41. We urge him to look at the Comintern documents from November 1938 onwards, where the tone of the Comintern documents gradually changes from apologetic rejection of the 'popular front' policy with some kind of pretext, to one of outright rejection of the policy of the 'popular front' with the condemnation of the social-democrats in severest terms and repeated calls for return to the policy of the united front of the working class as formulated by Lenin. We have presented some of the most representative quotes above. However, there are so many quotations rejecting the policy of the 'popular front' that it is not possible to reproduce them all here.

Conclusion

In fact, had Com. Thakur read our latest position on the policy of 'popular front' in *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders* completely from cover to cover and our key paper of the seminar on fascism, he would have refrained from making such a claim. He would have known that we regard 1927-28 positions, especially the Sixth Congress positions, as an extreme "left" distortion of the Leninist policy of united front of the working class, even though on paper the name 'united front of the working class' and references to Lenin remained; he would have known that we do not start our analysis from 1927-28 but from 1921 Third Congress of the Comintern itself; he would have known that we traced the alternating currents of "left" and right-opportunist deviations in the implementation of the Leninist policy of united front of the working class from 1923 itself; he would have known that we trace the origin of manifest "left" deviation from the Fifth Congress of the Comintern itself which developed further into an extreme "left" deviation in the Sixth Congress; he would have known that we documented in the above-mentioned book how this extreme "left" deviation led to a disaster ; he would have known that we demonstrated in this work the way in which the Comintern reacted pathologically to this disaster and went over to the right-

deviationist extreme of the policy of the 'popular front'; he would have known that we have also presented the tragic history of the experiments of 'popular front' in France and Spain and shown that they failed utterly due to their own internal contradictions, not because of war; and he would have also known that we have presented a detailed account of how the Comintern reverted gradually since November 1938 itself, to the Leninist line of united front of the working class first with shame-faced apologia and then openly and trenchantly.

Therefore, Com. Thakur missed many things:

first, our position on united front against fascism which does not reject particular issue-based alliances with all non-fascist bourgeois parties including social-democratic parties while maintaining the proletarian political independence;

second, the actual history of the evolution of the united front policy of the Comintern from the Third Congress in 1921 itself up till the rejection of the 'popular front' policy from 1938 onwards and consequently he takes Sixth Congress in 1928 as a starting-point and Seventh Congress in 1935 as the culmination-point, which would obviously lead to very incorrect political conclusions;

third, the actual history of what happened to the two most representative experiments of 'popular front' in France and Spain, which collapsed much before the beginning of the war under the weight of its own immanent contradictions rooted in a flawed political economy of 'most reactionary, chauvinist elements of big monopoly finance capital vs. all the rest', which can lead to nothing else but right-opportunism;

fourth, the position of the CPC and Mao regarding the anti-fascist popular front, which is revealed by his talk on philosophy and Chou En-Lai's article on Comintern and the CPC, which we have quoted above;

fifth, the meaning of our position that ML camp has in the main disintegrated, that a new revolutionary communist party cannot

emerge from the process of party-formation (unity talks among ML groups and organizations), that party-building now is the main contradiction, that ML groups and organizations have become “dead organisms” due to incorrect ideological and programmatic positions leading to an incorrect political line; Com. Thakur unintentionally and erroneously misquotes us in his second article and claims that we have called these ML groups and organizations as “dead organizations”, which is not true at all; what we mean by “dead organisms” has been explained above;

sixth, he mistakes the level of formation of anti-fascist front with the level of building and formation of the new revolutionary communist party in India, two totally different levels of determination;

seventh, he again confuses several different levels of determination when he equates the anti-imperialist anti-feudal national united front, the anti-fascist front within countries with fascism in power or rising fascism, the international anti-fascist front between states; the three are completely different and belong to three different types of contradictions, three different sets of forces, three different sets of enemies and friends; the generic term ‘popular front’ has been taken at face-value.

Finally, we would urge Com. Thakur to go through *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders* and our key paper from the Arvind Memorial Trust’s Seventh International Seminar on fascism. This would allow us to continue this fruitful and productive dialog even further and at a much more advanced and higher level.

Yet Again on the Question of Fascism and 'Popular Front'

Response to the Comrade of CPI (ML) Mass Line

This article was written after Comrade Pradip Singha Thakur published a response to our [article 1](#) in the September-October, 2025 issue of *Mass Line*, organ of CPI (ML) *Mass Line*

Com. Pradip Singha Thakur has responded to our criticism of their position on the 'popular front' and their critique of our position. It is a welcome development in so far as the tradition of healthy debate and discussion is on the wane in the revolutionary communist movement of India. However, at the same time, we are disappointed that Com. PST has failed to address the central questions of the ongoing debate and also made some assertions regarding history and theory which betray ignorance of the basic and elementary things, as we shall see in this essay. Com. Thakur has responded issue-wise and therefore it would be advisable to answer his critique issue-wise for the sake of clarity.

On the "Issue Number One"

In his first critique, Com. Thakur had claimed that we asserted that Stalin was not mentioned in Dimitrov's report to the Seventh Congress even once. We had responded that Com. Thakur had missed that it was not we who argued that, but Bikash Ranjan Deb, a scholar whom we had quoted, with the caveat that the evidence produced by Deb and other two scholars that we had quoted is circumstantial and we cannot conclude on the basis of these

arguments that Stalin had not supported the policy of the 'popular front'. Then we argued that even though it is factually true that Dimitrov mentions Stalin's name at many places in his report ceremonially and in general, *yet it is true that he does not mention Stalin's name even once in the section on the proposal for 'Popular Front'*. We wrote:

The proper discussion on the 'popular front' begins from page number 90 in the above-mentioned edition and lasts till page number 100. It is precisely in this part that Dimitrov has explained what the new tactical line of the 'popular front' or 'people's front' actually is. *In these pages, there is not a single reference to Stalin*. The next reference to Stalin comes at page number 101.

(<https://anvilmag.in/archives/722>)

The question that we *had raised* in the previous rebuttal was whether Stalin was referred to in Dimitrov's proposition of the policy of the 'popular front', only to underline the basic argument that we have been putting forth all along: Stalin had no role in the *formulation of the policy of the 'popular front'*. We showed in our previous rebuttal that Dimitrov did not mention Stalin even once in this proposition. All the references to Stalin in the rest of the report, mostly ceremonial and general, are *before* and *after* the section on the 'popular front'. We talked about every single reference to Stalin made in Dimitrov's report in our previous rebuttal. Rather than responding to what we wrote in the previous rebuttal, Com. Thakur has gone on to harp the old tune, instead of dealing with the central question that we raised: did Stalin play any role in the formulation of the policy of the 'popular front'? The two sources that he presents to prove that Stalin did, do not prove any such thing, as we will shortly see.

However, Com. Thakur is stupefied and asks us that when he already showed that, contrary to the claim of Deb, there was mention of Stalin in the report, why do not we accept that we were wrong and end the debate on this point?! Because, we already wrote in our book *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders* (AMDB from here on) itself

that “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’” and we pointed out in our last critical response in this debate as well that *our central point* was not whether Stalin’s name was mentioned in the report elsewhere or not, but the fact that Stalin *did not play any role in the formulation of the line of ‘popular front’*. Com. Thakur claims that still the responsibility of error lies with us because we quoted this particular scholar Deb *without reservation*. Is that true? No. In fact, we wrote that the evidence are circumstantial and we cannot rely on them uncritically, as we mentioned above. We quoted this and other two scholars *with reservation*, as we pointed out in our previous response as well. Com. Thakur does not say anything about the other two scholars, namely, Monty Johnstone and Jonathan Haslam, that we had quoted. He focuses only on Deb and there, too, he is off the mark.

Then, instead of responding to the central question mentioned above, namely, the role of Stalin in the formulation of the policy of the ‘popular front’, Com. Thakur gets stuck on another factual detail, even though it has no consequence for the central question of the debate, nor was it our central assertion. Com. Thakur comes to the other claim that Bikash Ranjan Deb makes, regarding the absence of Stalin from the sessions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. Even though this fact in itself has no bearing on the basic question regarding Stalin’s role in the formulation of the policy of the ‘popular front’, we shall see that Com. Thakur is incorrect on this peripheral fact, too. Com. Thakur argues that Stalin was present in the sessions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. Is that true? NO! Stalin was not present at the sessions of the Seventh Congress. *He was present only at the inauguration of the Seventh Congress*. As the documents of the Seventh Congress as well as most of serious historical studies show, he was absent from the sessions of the Congress that followed. At the inauguration, he was ceremonially elected as one of the members of the presidium. So was Ernst Thälmann, who was not even present in the Seventh Congress. He

was imprisoned in a Nazi jail. Thälmann was even elected the honorary chairman of the Congress! Stalin was present during the inauguration of the Congress, unlike Thälmann. However, he was not present in the sessions of the Congress that followed. He appears to have left after the election of the presidium and presentation of greetings and pledges during the inauguration. Because, the Seventh Congress, at the proposal of Ercoli (Togliatti) **decided to “SEND” greetings to Stalin.** This proposal is present in the same collection of documents that Com. Thakur has quoted, and only a few pages away from the excerpt that he has quoted. However, Com. Thakur has missed that section, even though he quotes from this statement of greetings, proposed by Togliatti, to be *sent* to Stalin! Com. Had he read the entire section leading to the statement of greetings, he would have found out that it was a message to be *sent* from the Congress to Stalin, which is an indication that Stalin had left. Here is that section:

Ercoli, speaking on behalf of all the delegates, moves that the following greetings **be sent** by the Congress to Comrade Stalin... (Comintern. 1939. *Seventh Congress of the Communist International, Abridged Stenographic Record of Proceedings*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, p. 12)

This is followed by the text of the statement of greetings to be *sent* to Stalin. Com. Thakur quotes precisely from this statement to show that Stalin was present! Clearly enough, Com. Thakur still does not read things from “cover to cover”! Apparently, Stalin was not present during the sessions of the Congress. **That is the reason why, and this is the most important fact, in the entire stenographic records of the Seventh Congress we do not find even a single statement, utterance or speech by Stalin, though almost all speakers refer to Stalin or his writings in their speeches.** Com. Thakur has missed reading the rest of the document and consequently makes an erroneous claim. Now, we will quote a couple of scholars who testify to the fact of the absence of Stalin from the sessions of the Seventh Congress, one of whom is a

follower of Stalin. Let us begin with a scholar who presented a paper regarding Stalin and Comintern at a conference of the 'Stalin Society' in London:

For some time, a relevant and leading role in Comintern affairs was also played by Joseph Stalin, elected in 1922 as secretary general of the RCP (B), later CPSU (B). His active involvement began at the Fifth Comintern Congress in 1924, when he was elected to the Executive Committee and its Presidium. But a striking feature of Stalin's relationship with the Comintern lies in the fact that, after a few years of intensive participation and engagement (his "Works" are filled with speeches on Comintern and international affairs during 1924-25-26-27-28), Stalin ceased to participate in it from the late-twenties onwards. *He remained absent during its last two congresses in 1928 and 1935, and his official "Works" contain no contribution to Comintern affairs after 1928.* (Steinmayr, N. 2000. 'Stalin and the Comintern', paper delivered to 'The Stalin Society' in London, September 2000, *emphasis ours*)

One does not need to agree with all the political positions of Steinmayr, of course. However, the historical facts which are corroborated by multiple sources, are a different thing. Similarly, a scholar who is not a Marxist, but an empiricist historian critical of Stalin, namely, E. H. Carr, writes:

The seventh congress of Comintern opened on the evening of July 25, 1935, almost exactly seven years since its predecessor, in the Pillar Hall of the trade union building in Moscow. Comintern at this time recognized 76 member parties, including 19 "sympathizing" parties which had not accepted the formal conditions of membership; 65 parties claiming a membership of over three million (almost double the figure announced at the sixth congress in 1928) were represented at the congress by 513 delegates, of whom 371 were delegates with full voting rights, and 53 per cent were classified as workers. *Stalin's absence from the congress followed*

precedent and was unremarkable. (Carr, E. H. 1982. *Twilight of the Comintern*, Pantheon Books, NY, p. 403)

There are many scholars who have worked on the history of the Comintern and especially the Seventh Congress who have pointed out this fact. We can go on quoting such scholars. **However, that would be unnecessary as this was not the cardinal issue of the debate and it seems that Com. Thakur has forgotten what the basic points of controversy were!**

The whole point in this debate was not whether Stalin was present in the sessions of the Seventh Congress or not. We did not even write this ourselves, but it was written by a scholar quoted by us. **We had not emphasized on this particular fact because in and by itself it has no *theoretical value* and there is no point continuing quibbling about this.** There *is* evidence to show that Stalin did not attend the sessions of the Congress as certain scholars quoted by us in the present essay as well as in the previous interventions in the ongoing debate have argued. **Yet, this was not the basic point that we had been making! These are peripheral questions which have no theoretical consequence.** However, Com. Thakur has kept prating about these peripheral factual details instead of dealing with the basic questions of the debate.

Our basic point was that in the formulation of the policy of the 'popular front', Stalin did not play any role. We showed in our book *AMDB* as well as the previous intervention in this debate that this policy originated in the French Communist Party, that Stalin was skeptic about this policy, that it was Dimitrov and Manuilsky who strove to convince Stalin on this policy, that Stalin was immersed in the internal class struggle of the Soviet Union after the assassination of Kirov, that he handed over the responsibility of leading the Seventh Congress to Dimitrov and assured him support of the Bolshevik Party as Chou En-Lai shows, that the Comintern abandoned the line of the 'popular front' since 1938, that Stalin does not mention the 'popular front' or the Seventh Congress of the Comintern even once in the *History of the CPSU (B)*, and we

substantiated these claims with copious quotations from a variety of Marxist and academic sources. **Com. Thakur does not utter a single word on these central issues of the debate in any meaningful way.** He is harping on certain assertions of certain scholars whom we have quoted and there, too, he is wrong!

In fact, he forgets that in his first article he had claimed that the German Nazism and Italian Fascism had been defeated due to the 'popular front'. In his present article he totally changes his position and says that the defeat of the 'popular front' in France and Spain are well-documented facts! If that is so, then what about your older claim that the 'popular front' defeated fascism? Com. Thakur's latest response does not answer even a single cardinal question of the debate and manages to circumvent all the consequential issues somehow! For example, regarding Stalin's negligible role in the Seventh Congress and the formulation of the line of the 'popular front', we had presented this quote of Chou En-Lai as well:

*"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."* (quoted in <https://anvilmag.in/archives/722> and in *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders*)

Com. Thakur is silent on this and does not utter a single word. He only talks about the scholars that we have quoted and says:

After quoting one after another from various 'scholars', in the end comrade AS concludes: "We cannot conclude on the basis of above facts that Stalin necessarily and definitely did not subscribe to the policy of the 'popular front'. If that is so, then what is the purpose of these 'circumstantial evidences'?" (Thakur, P. S. 2025. *Mass Line*, Sept-Oct 2025)

Kindly ignore the grammatical and syntactical errors in the above excerpt, which make it almost incomprehensible. However, since we get what Com. Thakur is saying, we will proceed and answer. We would like to point out to Com. Thakur that we never made any such claim! We did not say that Stalin did not subscribe to the policy of the 'popular front'. We argued that *he had no role in formulating the policy of the 'popular front'* and also pointed out that even then *the responsibility of the adoption of this line in the Seventh Congress also lies with Stalin*, besides Dimitrov, as he was the leader of the international communist movement. Com. Thakur's essay abounds in such inaccurate and incorrect claims regarding our position and it appears that it is a general habit that he suffers from. In our previous response, too, we had pointed out that Com. Thakur has either failed to read our entire position or he has failed to comprehend it. On the above issue, what was our point in the previous rebuttal?

The purpose was to show that even if Stalin did eventually subscribe to the policy of the 'popular front', he was certainly not the one to formulate it. We will show that this is certain that Stalin did not agree to the policy of the 'popular front' in the beginning and from the end of 1934, Dimitrov and Manuisky persuaded him to agree to this line. The purpose of the circumstantial evidence is to show that the policy of 'popular front' had already been formulated by Dimitrov and Manuisky, under the impact of the French party's line. The purpose is to show, as Chou En-Lai pointed out in the above-quoted excerpt, that Stalin played nominal role in its formulation and he had left it completely to Dimitrov, being busy in the domestic issues of the USSR. To show more "credible" evidence of Stalin's role in the formulation of the policy of 'popular front',

Com. Thakur quotes two sources: W. Z. Foster from the CPUSA who was part of the Seventh Congress and immediately after the death of Stalin, became a supporter of Khrushchev and a critic of Stalin, and, a book published by revisionists in the Soviet Union, 'Communist International: A Historical Outline'! *It surprises us that Com. Thakur relies on such sources.* Foster says that Stalin took active part in 'the preparation and work of the Seventh Congress'. This is natural as the Congress was held in Moscow and Stalin did oversee the preparation of the Congress indirectly. However, by the time Foster wrote the above book on the history of Comintern, he had been seriously plagued by the revisionist ideas being projected from the Soviet Union under Khrushchev. So, in the same book, Foster writes:

The working class is the great peace force in the world and always tries to accomplish the advance to socialism by the most peaceful means.... The Communist Party of the United States also 'advocates a peaceful path to socialism in the U.S.' . . . The wholesale persecution of Communists in the United States upon the allegation that the Communist Party advocates the forceful overthrow of the U.S. government is a lie and a frame-up. . . (Foster, W. Z. 1955. *History of the Three Internationals*, p. 559-560, *emphasis ours*)

Foster also says about the Seventh Congress:

Experience was to show that the people's front policy, clearly worked out at the seventh congress, was, a decade later, to result in the development of new forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat (People's Democracies). Also, with capitalism greatly weakened, and world socialism and the organizations of the working class vastly strengthened, there was now the possibility, in given cases, of a relatively peaceful establishment of socialism. This possibility was based on the ability of the powerful democratic forces of the people to beat back every effort of the bourgeoisie at counter-revolution. (*ibid.*, p. 406, *emphasis ours*)

Thus, Foster says that the line of peaceful transition to socialism was the contribution of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern! I am perplexed what Com. Thakur would think about that if Foster is his credible source about the Seventh Congress, the policy of the 'popular front' and the role of Stalin in its formulation! If he agrees then Stalin becomes the formulator not only of the 'popular front' but also that of 'peaceful transition to socialism'! Here is what Foster writes in the above-quoted book:

Nevertheless, **especially since the famous seventh congress of the Comintern in 1935, the Communist parties in many countries have recognized the increased possibility of their establishing socialism in a peaceful way. This is in line with the seventh congress' "new tactical orientation (see Chapter 44), the policy of the people's front. (*ibid.*, p. 559, *emphasis ours*)**

Further:

In the industrialized capitalist countries, where there prevails bourgeois democracy, the Communist parties have programs based upon this conception (*of peaceful transition to socialism – author*). **Thus, the Italian Communist Party seeks to achieve "through the medium of the election of a government" measures "which we unhesitatingly recognize as the road to socialism." The French Communist Party fights for a popular front that will begin to march to socialism, the first step being the election of a broad people's government. The British Communist Party declares "that the people of Britain can transform capitalist democracy into a real People's Democracy, transforming parliament, the product of Britain's historic struggle for democracy, into the democratic instrument of the will of the vast majority of her people." The Canadian Labor-Progressive Party has a similar program, and likewise the party in Australia. It is the general Communist political line in the major capitalist countries.**

The Communist Party of the United States also “advocates a peaceful path to socialism in the U.S.... (*ibid.*, p. 560, *emphasis ours*)

This is the source of Com. Thakur on which he relies to prove his ignorance correct! Wonderful! *We would urge the comrades of CPI (ML) Mass Line to seriously think on this.* If that is the type of sources that Com. Thakur uses to justify his ignorant claims, then you have the shining highway to revisionism open in front of you! Com. Thakur despite his claims of now having cultivated the habit of reading books “cover-to-cover”, seems to have misinterpreted it as reading “cover-and-cover”! Because certainly he has not been reading what is in-between cover-and-cover! With a “twinkle of an eye”, Com. Thakur fails to understand his own sources theoretically as well as historically and lands in the “darkness of utter confusion”, due to no fault of mine!

William Z. Foster at one time fought against Browderist revisionism in the CPUSA. However, his fight was theoretically never very consistent. His contribution was to prevent the victory of Browderist line at one time. But he himself suffered from strong right-wing deviations and after the 20th Congress of the Soviet Party under the leadership of Khrushchev, he saw in Khrushchev a brilliant Marxist-Leninist theoretician and vehemently attacked Stalin. However, we can see that the seeds of such revisionist malady had been present in Foster’s thinking from earlier times. Had Dimitrov read Foster’s assessment of the Seventh Congress policy of the ‘popular front’ as the source of the theory of the peaceful transition to socialism, he would have vehemently attacked Foster, because despite all the right-wing deviations, Dimitrov was still a revolutionary communist.

We do not need to discuss the second source of Com. Thakur in detail, namely, the revisionist book published on the history of Comintern in Soviet Union in 1971. The book says that the C.C. and the Polit Bureau of the Soviet Party approved the Dimitrov report before the Seventh Congress. That is true because Stalin had left the responsibility wholly to Manuilsky, who represented the C.C. of

the Soviet Party in the Comintern and who along with Dimitrov had persuaded Stalin to accept the policy of the 'popular front'. We have already mentioned the fact that Dimitrov and Manuilsky played the central role in convincing a reluctant Stalin on the line of the 'popular front' and in a short while we will show with primary sources that Stalin did not accept the line of the 'popular front' in the beginning. The quote presented by Com. Thakur does not show anything of consequence. However, we would present some other excerpts from the same book to reveal the character of this source. It would suffice to ponder over a few excerpts from the book, which has become a leading light for Com. Thakur. This book reiterates the idea that 'popular front' could be the way to transition into socialism in a peaceful manner. At one place, it says:

The government of the popular front could become a special transitional form to proletarian rule in imperialist countries where oppression by the monopolies made the struggle for democratic demands a matter of growing urgency. "Fifteen years ago," said Dimitrov, "Lenin called upon us to focus all our attention on 'searching out forms of transition or approach to the proletarian revolution'. It may be that in a number of **countries the united front government will prove to be one of the most important transitional forms,**" and **will pave the way to the dictatorship of the proletariat.** (*Outline History of the Communist International*. 1971. Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 386, *emphasis ours*)

Misappropriating Lenin in a revisionist fashion, the book argues:

The working out of a policy of the popular front, and especially the problems of a government of the popular front as a possible transitional form to the dictatorship of the proletariat, was a further creative elaboration of Lenin's teaching about the paths of the socialist revolution, about combining the struggle for democracy with the struggle for socialism, about the alliance of the working class with other strata of the working people. (*ibid.*, p. 387, *emphasis ours*)

The book is enamoured by the idea of peaceful transition to socialism and in words of appreciation for the infamous Twentieth Congress of the Soviet party, it says:

The development by the (Twentieth) Congress of Lenin's theses concerning **the diversity of the forms of transition from capitalism to socialism, the combining of peaceful and non-peaceful ways of the revolution...** (*ibid.*, p. 533, *emphasis ours*)

Since it is a revisionist book, it also does not attempt to hide the class-collaborationist and capitulationist nature of the policy of the 'popular front' and openly cites the instance where the Comintern under this policy prevented the French communists from struggling against the anti-people policies of the 'popular front' governments of Blum and then Chautemps, even though these socialists, social-democrats and radicals had already begun to openly show their treachery to the working class and working people. The book says:

When the Blum government began to vacillate in carrying out the programme of the popular front, the Executive of the Comintern supported the F.C.P. in its striving not to force a government crisis, since resignation of this government, under the prevailing conditions, would signify a political shift to the right.

After the resignation of the Blum government in the middle of 1937 and the accession to power of a government of the Radical Chautemps, the Executive of the Comintern rendered the F.C.P. assistance in its strenuous efforts to preserve the popular front against attempts to weaken it from within. (*ibid.*, p. 414-15)

This was not an aberration but the natural outcome of the practice of policy of the 'popular front'. In fact, it was the capitulation of the communists in France that paved the way for the "political shift to right" as the actual course of events demonstrated.

This highly revered source of Com. Thakur has some priceless words of wisdom about Stalin as well! We can just hope that Com. Thakur refuses to be enlightened from these words! The book says:

A number of difficulties arose during this period in the communist movement in connection with **the cult of Stalin's personality** and its attendant adverse effects both within the U.S.S.R. and the Comintern.

Stalin had great services to his credit for his part in the struggle for socialism and in the strengthening of the unity of the communist movement. **The cult of Stalin's personality, however, leading as it did to the violation of Lenin's principles of collective leadership and of socialist legality,** and to repressions against people who were dedicated to the cause of the Party and the people, caused damage to Soviet society. (*ibid.*, p. 447, *emphasis ours*)

Such are the sources of Com. Thakur! The whole book, especially from the chapter on the Seventh Congress onwards, is an enterprise to justify the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet party, especially on the question of 'peaceful transition' to socialism, in variety of cunning and complex ways. We are surprised to find that Com. Thakur relies on such sources. As activists of revolutionary communist movement, we have always been trained to look at the revisionist sources with utmost suspicion and particular disdain and not purely for ideological and political reasons, but for reasons of historical accuracy. These sources are specifically dangerous as they pretend to be Marxist sources, pay lip-service to Marxism and the great teachers of the proletariat. We would humbly urge the comrades of CPI (ML) Mass Line to reconsider this methodology of historical research and study which relies upon revisionist sources uncritically.

Even purely academic sources are more reliable, even though the Marxist deconstruction of sources must be undertaken in that case, too. Academic sources are in general hostile to Stalin and Mao, if not Marx, Engels and Lenin. Their ideology stems from the bourgeois academia itself, which is *bourgeois liberalism*. However, among

academic researchers, too, we find two types: *one*, who are conscious part of imperialist and bourgeois propaganda apparatus and, as such, cannot truly be regarded as genuine academics; *two*, the academics who are unsuspecting victims of bourgeois propaganda and due to their liberal ideas find the question of Stalin and Mao inconvenient, but stay true to their empirical research. That latter type of academics have always been used by Marxist-Leninists in their works. However, revisionist sources are the worst in this regard. They are percolated throughout with conscious ideological-political propaganda against the basic principles of revolutionary communism, and that too, in the name of communism!

However, we would move beyond academic sources and go to the primary sources to resolve one of the basic questions of debate, which Com. Thakur has not even touched.

Let us come back to that original question once again, now, that we have seen the “credibility” of the sources of Com. Thakur.

The question was whether Stalin played any role in the formulation of the policy of the ‘popular front’. That is the question that we have raised in *AMDB* as well as our previous intervention in the debate. In *AMDB*, we ourselves pointed out that even though Stalin did not play any role in the formulation of the policy of the ‘popular front’, responsibility of adoption of this line also lies with him as he was the principal leader of the international communist movement. However, regarding his role in the formulation of this policy, we showed with copious quotes from a variety of references that not only Stalin did not formulate the policy of the ‘popular front’, *he had to be persuaded by Dimitrov and Manuilsky to accept this policy.* Com. Thakur misses all of that and presents some sources which are out-and-out revisionist or betray serious and incorrigible social-democratic deviations.

Therefore, we will try to settle this question by going to the *primary source* and show that Stalin *was not only not the one* who formulated or played any role in the formulation of the policy of the ‘popular front’, he also *did not accept* the policy of the ‘popular front’ in the

beginning. Here, we can refer to the correspondence between Dimitrov and Stalin in the run-up to the Seventh Congress, as it will clear up this question most conclusively.

Regarding the change in front-policy, Dimitrov wrote a letter to Stalin in July 1934, as he had already come under the strong influence of the French party's line of the 'popular front'. This was the period when Dimitrov had become convinced that the policy of the 'popular front' followed by the French party in France was the correct policy and the Comintern needed a shift from the policy of the united front of the working class (the extreme "left" erroneous version of which had become dominant in the Comintern especially since the Sixth Congress). In a pathological reaction to the extreme "left" deviation, Dimitrov and Manuisky had been proposing a complete departure from the Leninist policy of united front of the working class. In this letter, Dimitrov is persuading Stalin to rethink the policy of the united front of the working class and move towards the 'popular front' with main focus on the alliance with social-democracy, ceasing the criticism of social-democracy and forming mainly the leadership-to-leadership 'united front from above' with the social-democrats. *In response, Stalin reasserted the basic elements of policy of the united front of the working class and raised serious questions regarding the shift to 'popular front'.*

In the following excerpts, we quote Dimitrov's letter to Stalin and also add Stalin's response to Dimitrov in the parentheses. This letter is from July 1934. The Seventh Congress was supposed to happen before July-August 1935. However, establishing a unity on the proposal on united front to be presented in the Congress, along with other reasons prevented the Comintern to hold the Congress in time. So, it was postponed to July 1935. It was precisely during this time that Dimitrov and Manuisky had persuaded Stalin to give nod to the new proposed policy of the 'popular front'. This process starts with this letter of July 1934. Dimitrov wrote:

The enclosed draft outline of (my) speech shows how I see the essence of the speech regarding the 2nd point of the agenda of the

congress, in addition, I would like to raise in our forthcoming conversation the following questions:

I. On Social Democracy

1. Whether it is correct to refer to social democracy indiscriminately as social fascism. By taking such a position, we have frequently blocked our way to social democratic workers. **(Stalin's note: "As to the leadership – YES; but not "indiscriminate."")**
2. Whether it is correct to consider social democracy everywhere and at all times the main social base of the bourgeoisie. **(Stalin's note: "OF COURSE, not in Persia.")**
3. Whether it is correct to consider all leftist s[ocial] d[emocratic] groups as the major threat under any conditions. **(Stalin's note: "In the major cap[italist] countries – YES.")**
4. Whether it is correct to treat all the leading cadres of the s[ocial] d[emocratic] parties and of the reformist trade unions indiscriminately **(Stalin's note: "Objectively – YES; consciously – some [of them].")** as conscious traitors of the working class. One can expect, after all, that in the course of struggle quite a few **(Stalin's note: "'Quite a few' – not; some – yes.")** of today's leading functionaries of the s[ocial] d[emocratic] parties and of the reformist trade unions will choose the path of revolution along with the s[ocial] d[emocratic] workers. It is in our interest to facilitate this transition for them and thus accelerate the transition of the s[ocial] d[emocratic] workers to our side.
5. Whether it is time to abandon useless discussion about the possibility or the impossibility of winning over the reformist trade unions instead of clearly formulating the task for its members to transform these trade unions into an instrument of the proletarian class struggle. **(Stalin's note: "It is time")**
6. The question of unifying the revolutionary and reformist trade unions *without making the recognition of the hegemony of the Communist Party a necessary condition*. **(Stalin's note: "Conditions are necessary.")** (Dallin, A. and F. I. Firsov.

2000. Dimitrov and Stalin, 1934-43: Letters From the Soviet Archive, Yale University Press, p. 13-14, *emphasis ours*)

Stalin's notes are self-explanatory and his answers are unequivocal. However, since Com. Thakur has misunderstood and misinterpreted so many quotes and excerpts from classics as well as from our writings that he has attempted to criticise, we feel obliged to give a brief explanation.

Stalin still saw social-democracy as the "major threat" to organizing the working class against fascism in all major capitalist countries. Stalin also unequivocally says that regarding the social-democratic leadership they must be characterized as "social-fascists" and it was completely justified, though we need to make a distinction between the leaders and the masses of workers in such trade unions, precisely as Lenin had pointed out in his policy. Finally, Stalin clearly answers that in unifying the revolutionary and reformist trade unions the question of hegemony of the communist party in such endeavor is essential and necessary, a necessity clearly abandoned by the policy of the 'popular front'. *It is surprising that Dimitrov even asks this question and it is clear that he was ready to give up the position of leadership of the proletariat to the social-democrats in the 'popular front'*. This is precisely the class-capitulationism and collaborationism implicit in the policy of the 'popular front'. It is clear that he was ready to abandon the leading role of the communist party and the leading role of the proletariat in the proposed 'popular front' with social-democrats and it was precisely this which happened in the practical experiments of the 'popular front'. Mao and Kang Sheng, too, had pointed precisely to this error of the policy of the 'popular front'.

It is clear that in July 1934 Stalin clearly upheld the line of the 'united front of the working class' as formulated by Lenin and raised substantial questions regarding any shift to the policy of the 'popular front', as proposed by Dimitrov. It is noteworthy that in this letter Dimitrov is persuading Stalin to accept his line of 'popular front'.

Then Dimitrov asks a rhetorical question whether it is essential part of trade union strategy to *only* expose social-democracy. Stalin

wonders “against whom is this thesis directed”, because the Leninist line of united front of the working class, including ‘the united front from below’ and ‘the united front from above’, made no such assumptions! Dimitrov asks:

The necessity to modify our united-front tactics in response to the changed conditions. Rather than using them exclusively **(Stalin’s note: “Against whom is this thesis [directed]?”)** as a maneuver to expose social democracy without seriously attempting to forge a real workers’ unity through struggle, we must turn them into an effective factor in developing the mass struggle against the offensive of fascism. **(Stalin’s note: “we must”)** (*ibid.*, p. 14)

Thus, Stalin agrees on uniting the masses of workers, however, he is not supporting the line of giving up the question of communist leadership and the policy of united front of the working class for the policy of the ‘popular front’ which was a proposal for abandoning the political independence of the communists. Preparing the ground for the line of ‘popular front’, Dimitrov asks:

The necessity to reject the idea that the united front can only? be built from below, and to stop regarding any? simultaneous appeal to the leadership of a s[ocial] d[emocratic] party as opportunism. **(Stalin’s note: “Nevertheless, the United Front from below is the foundation”)**

To this letter of Dimitrov, Stalin responded in posing the above counter-questions and making some clear comments revealing his refusal to depart from the Leninist line of united front from below. It is clear that Stalin had serious doubts about departure from the policy of ‘united front of the working class’ to any policy resembling the ‘popular front’. During the period of preparation for the Seventh Congress, this letter of Dimitrov was the last to talk about the front policy in written form. During the rest of the time up to the inauguration of the Seventh Congress, Dimitrov and Manuisky continued to persuade Stalin to shift to the policy of the ‘popular front’. It was only after the initial electoral success of the ‘popular

front' in France that Stalin gave his nod to this policy. That is why, Johnstone writes:

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)

We have already quoted various other sources in *AMDB* and the previous intervention in this debate which demonstrate the origins of the theory of the 'popular front'. We will request the comrades to refer to those references again as Com. Thakur has nothing to say about them.

On the "issue number one", Com. Thakur has circumvented the central question: whether Stalin was the one who formulated the policy of the 'popular front'? Instead, he has clung to non-consequential issues of presence/absence of Stalin, mention/ommission of his name from report. It is noteworthy that he is wrong on these questions as well. However, that is not important for us. For us, the central question was the role of Stalin in formulation of the policy of the 'popular front'. We have seen above that not only Stalin was not the one who formulated this policy, originally, he was opposed to this policy.

On the "Issue Number Two"

Then Com. Thakur comes to "issue number two". He argues that he had given a quote of Mao to prove that Mao was indeed a supporter of the policy of the 'popular front'. In response we had quoted the entire section of Mao, from which Com. Thakur had quoted, to show that Mao is here talking about *the international front against fascism and imperialism and not about 'popular front' against fascism within countries nor about the anti-imperialist national united front*. Before

quoting what we wrote in our previous intervention, here is the entire quote of Mao again with emphases added, to clarify the matter:

In Europe, a large-scale imperialist war is imminent between the German-Italian and the Anglo-French imperialist blocs which are contending for domination over the colonial peoples. In this war, each of the belligerents will brazenly declare its own cause to be just and that of its opponents unjust in order to delude people and win the support of public opinion. Actually, this is a swindle. The aims of both sides are imperialist, both are fighting for the domination of colonies and semi-colonies and for spheres of influence, and both are waging a predatory war. At present, they are fighting over Poland, the Balkans and the Mediterranean littoral. This war is not at all a just war. The only just wars are non-predatory wars, wars of liberation. Communists will in no circumstances support any predatory war. They will, however, bravely step forward to support every just and non-predatory war for liberation, and they will stand in the forefront of the struggle. With Chamberlain and Daladier practising intimidation and bribery, *the social-democratic parties affiliated to the Second International are splitting up. One section, the reactionary upper stratum, is following the same old disastrous road as in the First World War and is ready to support the new imperialist war. But another section will join with the Communists in forming a 'popular front' against war and fascism.* Chamberlain and Daladier are following in the footsteps of Germany and Italy and are becoming more and more reactionary, taking advantage of the war mobilization to put the state structure in their countries on a fascist footing and to militarize the economy. In short, the two big imperialist blocs are feverishly preparing for war and millions of people are facing the danger of mass slaughter. Surely all this will arouse movements of resistance among the masses. Whether in Germany or in Italy, Britain or France, or anywhere else in Europe or the world at large, if the people do not want to be used as imperialist cannon-fodder, they will have

to rise up and oppose the imperialist war in every possible way. (Mao Tse-Tung. 1965. 'Interview with a New China Daily Correspondent on the New International Situation' (September 1, 1939), *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, p. 265, *emphasis ours*)

We wrote in explanation:

As the quote itself explains, **Mao is talking about the international united front against fascism and the role different social-democratic parties of the Second International might play in the imperialist war being promoted by the fascist axis powers, and not the united front against fascism within countries with fascism in power or the rising tide of fascism, for example Germany, Italy or Spain, France, etc.** That is why Mao refers to the mistake of the social-democratic parties during the First World War. What was that mistake? Voting the war credits and making the working people tail-end their own bourgeois ruling classes in the imperialist war. **In essence and in the main, Mao is not talking about the 'popular front' against fascism within countries, but the international front against imperialist fascist axis powers.** The 'popular front' at the international level (including the non-fascist bourgeois powers and the communist forces under the Soviet Union) will of course include all powers against the fascist aggressors. **Moreover, the national 'popular front' of the four classes, namely, proletariat, peasantry, middle class and national bourgeoisie, too, is the only correct method of anti-feudal anti-imperialist struggle. However, to confuse the international 'popular front' against fascism and the national anti-colonial anti-feudal 'popular front' on the one hand, with the anti-fascist 'popular front' within various countries with fascism in power or the rising fascist threat would tantamount to muddled thinking and incorrect political conclusions.** Com. Thakur commits precisely this mistake.

(<https://anvilmag.in/archives/722>)

As is clear, we have explained in the previous rebuttal itself why Mao in the above excerpt is talking about the international front against fascism, rather than the popular front against fascism within countries. However, Com. Thakur falls, not due to mistake of ours, into the “darkness of utter confusion”! We would humbly argue that it is not now that Com. Thakur has fallen into the “darkness of utter confusion”; instead, he has been residing in the “darkness of utter confusion” all along! We would also humbly request the comrades to read the excerpt of Mao carefully and see what he is talking about: the international anti-fascist front, not the anti-fascist ‘popular front’ within the countries, regarding which the position of Mao and the CPC will become clear from what follows. However, from the above excerpt of Mao, Com. Thakur, still wandering in the “darkness of utter confusion”, concludes:

In essence and in the main, Mao said: “Whether in Germany or in Italy, Britain or France, or anywhere else in Europe or the world at large, if the people do not want to be used as imperialist cannon-fodder, they will have to rise up and oppose the imperialist war in every possible way.”

With a twinkle of an eye, it is crystal clear that call was not against “imperialist fascist axis powers” only. Call was against imperialist bloc, German-Italy blocs and Anglo-French imperialist blocs. Because “the aims of both sides are imperialist, both are fighting for the domination of colonies and semi-colonies and for spheres of influence, and both are waging a predatory war.”

So, we are confident that any sensible reader, after going through the entire discussion, will instantly come to the conclusion that criticism of confusing the whole issue lies with comrade AS. (Thakur, P. S. *op.cit.*)

Strangely enough, Com. Thakur “with a twinkle of an eye” has forgotten as to what was the point of debate regarding this excerpt of Mao! So, we will politely remind the learned comrade: *the*

point of controversy was whether Mao is talking about anti-fascist popular front within countries or the international anti-fascist front? Because, originally Com. Thakur had presented this excerpt as a proof that Mao upheld the line of the anti-fascist 'popular front' uncritically. We had contended in response that Mao here is not talking about the anti-fascist popular front within the countries! He is talking about the international front against fascism and war. **However, Com. Thakur, forgetting the context of discussion here, argues that Mao is talking about the imperialist character of both the axes of the imperialist powers! Of course, he is, especially because Mao is talking about the Munich Conspiracy here! This did not prevent the USSR to form an international anti-fascist front with the Anglo-French axis, did it?** It is a general habit of Com. PST to fail to see the context of any discussion. Anyhow, Mao moves on to discuss the international united front against fascism and in this context discusses the treachery of the right-wing of social-democrats who, in the countries of the imperialist Allied Powers, betrayed the cause of the proletariat by voting war credits. Whereas, the left-wing of the social-democracy was likely to take an anti-war position and this faction might join the international united front against war and fascism (since the aggressors were the fascist axis powers). In this interview with foreign correspondent of a newspaper, Mao is specifically discussing the international situation and its implications for China, in its war of liberation against Japan.

Thus, Com. Thakur, "with a twinkle of an eye", is missing the whole point and forgetting the whole context of the discussion. Now let us once again come to the position of the Chinese party and Mao on the question of the 'popular front' against fascism within countries.

Regarding the approach of Mao and the Chinese Communist Party towards the anti-fascist popular front within countries, we quoted Mao from the ninth volume of his *Selected Works*. We had assumed that given the experience and seniority, Com. PST would understand that Mao is indeed talking about the policy of the 'popular front' in

this excerpt, because *he is talking about the failure of the 'popular front' in Spain!* However, strangely enough, Com. Thakur asks:

We are asking comrade AS very politely — Is there a single word relating to Popular Front? Single mentioning about Popular Front? About rejection of Popular Front? This quotation was on a totally different issue. (Thakur, P. S. *op.cit.*)

What is that “different issue”, Com. PST? You did not tell us! Let us see the quote again:

Thus, On New Democracy was a complete program. It discussed politics, economics, and culture as well; it failed to discuss only military affairs. (Kang Sheng: *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.) These are the policies of Chen Tu-hsiu! (Kang Sheng: ***They say the Communist Party organized an army, and then turned it over to others.***) **This is useless.** (Kang Sheng: *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.*) (Mao Tse-Tung. 1994. ‘Talk on Questions of Philosophy’ (August 18, 1964), *Selected Works*, Vol. 9, Shramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad, p. 130-31)

The footnote from this section of Mao’s discussion on Spanish Civil War says “*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.***” Any person who had read the

above quoted work of Mao, would know that Mao and Kang Sheng are talking about the failure of the 'popular front' in Spain due to right-wing deviation implicit in the very policy of the 'popular front' which surrenders the proletarian independence to the bourgeois, social-democratic and socialist parties and their leaderships in the front against fascism. We are really surprised that Com. PST asks 'where is the word popular front mentioned?' We do not expect such level of naivete from such senior comrades. Had Com. PST even read the footnote in the end of this talk on philosophy by Mao, he would have known what Mao and Kang Sheng were discussing.

However, even if he missed the footnote, we are totally at sea as to what Com. PST did not understand. Please see the bold section in the above excerpt. Now, since despite our sincere efforts, Com. PST has not understood the historical context of the above conversation of Mao, we are obliged to elaborate this.

First of all, Mao disagreed with the policy of the Spanish communists, namely, the policy of the 'popular front' which led them to refuse to take power. Why? Because the policy of the 'popular front' incorrectly presented the false necessary binary of 'fascist dictatorship vs. bourgeois democracy' obliging every communist party to *strategically* aim *necessarily* for bourgeois democracy against fascism, as part of the 'popular front'. Mao's position was that the communist party must maintain its independence and therefore keep its options open. If the alignment of class forces allows the communists to take power and establish a people's democracy or a new democracy, the party should not shy away from it under the pretext of the general policy of 'popular front' prescribing a necessary binary of 'fascist dictatorship or bourgeois democracy'.

Secondly, the class situation might not allow the communist party to seize the power, especially where there is an excess of weakness of communist forces relative to that of the bourgeois forces. In that situation, the party might first aim, as an intermediary stage, for bourgeois democracy. *However, all of this depended on the concrete balance of class forces.* In sum, the essence of the critique of Mao

and Kang Sheng was that the policy of the 'popular front' surrenders the proletarian political independence of the communist parties in the united front against fascism. Thus, Com. Thakur fails to understand Mao's criticism of the policy of the 'popular front' against fascism in a country and asks 'where has Mao mentioned the word 'popular front' in this excerpt?' What can we say except the humble suggestion that Com. Thakur should see the context of the discussion quoted which was precisely the policy of the 'popular front' and its application in Spain. Had Com. Thakur read the footnote to this excerpt of Mao's conversation with Kang Sheng, he would have understood the context because the footnote clearly mentions the historical context of the discussion, namely, 'popular front' and its mistakes in Spain. However, "with a twinkle of an eye", he completely missed it.

Com Thakur also ignores this quote of Chou En-Lai that we have presented:

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.*

Here Chou En-Lai, too, critiques the line of the 'popular front' and also makes a distinction between the Anti-fascist united front and the formation of the anti-Japanese National United Front in China "which *coincided* with the formation" of the former. Com. Thakur remains silent on this particular quote, as we have pointed out above. In

short, on the “issue number two”, Com. Thakur has remained and continues to remain in “darkness of utter confusion”.

In passing, we shall also clarify that the Anti-Japanese National Front against Japanese aggression, formed by the Communist Party of China was not a ‘popular front’, because this, too, has confused a lot of comrades. Therefore, a couple of quotes from Mao would be useful here. In 1937, Mao wrote:

Our united front is a national one. That is to say, it includes all parties and factions and all classes within the nation, excluding only the Chinese traitors. **Some say that the Communist party advocates a popular front, but this is not true.** What the communist party advocates is a national front. (Mao Tse-tung. 1999. ‘Talk on the Sino-Japanese Problem and the Xi’an Incident’, March 1, 1937, *Mao’s Road to Power*, Vol. 5, (ed. by Stuart Schram), M.E. Sharpe, p. 611)

After March, 1937 again in May, 1937, Mao clarified this idea:

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, and as a result they and their political parties have been gradually undergoing a change in their political attitude. This has placed before the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people the task of establishing an anti-Japanese national united front ***different from the French Popular Front*** and pointed out the possibility of accomplishing such a task and the necessity of accomplishing it. (May 3, 1937, *ibid.*, p. 638)

It is also noteworthy here that the critical approach of Mao and the Chinese party towards the policy of the ‘popular front’ gradually developed in a manifest fashion only later, as evident from the conversation of Mao and Kang Sheng in 1964. However, this much is clear that Mao and the Chinese party did not see their united front

as formed after the model of the 'popular front'. We have clarified this point previously, too, in the ongoing debate.

On the "Issue Number Three"

Com. Thakur argues that our identification of the mistake of the 'popular front' policy with the presentation of a false necessary binary of 'bourgeois democracy/fascist dictatorship' is incorrect. Com. Thakur contends that there is indeed a *necessary binary of bourgeois democracy/fascist dictatorship* and those who do not agree with this are anarchists who oppose the line of fighting for every inch of bourgeois democratic rights and fail to make a distinction between various forms of bourgeois dictatorship! He presents this quote of Dimitrov:

"The Polish Party is, of course, not the only one in which such fear of formulating positive democratic demands exists in one way or another.

"Where does that fear come from, comrades? It comes from an incorrect, non-dialectical conception of our attitude toward bourgeois democracy. We Communists are unswerving upholders of Soviet democracy, the great example of which is the proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union,

"But today the millions of toilers living under capitalism are faced with the necessity of deciding their attitude to those forms in which the rule of the bourgeoisie is clad in the various countries. We are not Anarchists and it is not at all a matter of indifference to us what kind of political regime exists in any given country: whether a bourgeois dictatorship in the form of bourgeois democracy, even with democratic rights and liberties greatly curtailed, or a bourgeois dictatorship in its open, fascist form." (Thakur, P. S. 2025. *Mass Line*, Sept-Oct 2025, p. 16)

Com. Thakur concludes from this that our position is not to fight for all bourgeois democratic rights and directly fight only for the socialist

revolution because we reject the *necessary* binary of bourgeois democracy/fascist dictatorship. *Is that true? Not at all.*

First of all, we have pointed out in all our writings that under a fascist regime, the communists must fight for every single democratic right, which is not equal to accepting *the necessary strategic aim* of restoring bourgeois democracy. It is general tactics to fight for all the democratic and civil rights inch-by-inch faced with a fascist regime and its onslaught. Under all forms of capitalist dictatorship, whether of a bourgeois democratic type or of a fascist type, communists always fight for all democratic rights. *This act is not tantamount to saying that the only possible aim for communists under fascist dictatorship is bourgeois democracy.* The excerpt of the conversation between Mao and Kang Sheng shows the erroneousness of this capitulationist line only, where the Spanish popular frontists refused to seize power even when they had the opportunity to, because under the 'popular front' policy, the only allowed strategic aim was restoration of bourgeois democracy. That is why Kang Sheng asks: "why not New Democracy"? This is precisely the mistake that we have pointed out in the policy of the 'popular front'.

In today's situation where fascism does not give up the shell of bourgeois democracy but the content of bourgeois democracy undergoes a perpetual decay, the restoration of bourgeois democracy becomes even more meaningless slogan: that would mean that the communists should *strategically* fight for a Congress government or a Third Front government through electoral strategy alone! This is the mistake that a number of ML organizations and groups are committing right now. This would be pure capitulation, failing to make a distinction between *strategic aim* and a *particular tactical aim*. Under a particular tactical aim, the revolutionary communists should try to ensure that the BJP loses *governmental power*, even though it would not mean the defeat of fascism. Moreover, as a *particular tactical aim*, the communists should also support the movement against electoral fraud, with their own political independence, their own political slogans and banners. **Com. Thakur knows that we have this position.** However, still, he

distorts our position to claim that our call is to fight directly for socialist revolution only, with no intermediate tactical aims and objectives. It appears to us that it is a general habit of Com. Thakur to misunderstand, then produce a crude and vulgar version of whatever he reads and then launch an attack that is totally off-the-mark! It also appears that the *distinction between strategy and tactics (general as well as particular)* is not clear to Com. Thakur.

What we argued was simply this: whether the communists strategically fight for restoration of *bourgeois democracy* or *people's/new democracy* is not a foregone conclusion for them and assuming this precisely was the mistake of the policy of the 'popular front' as pointed out by Mao and Kang Sheng. What did we write in *AMDB*, the book which Com. Thakur attempted to critique? Do we say that we should not fight for democratic rights or democracy and must only fight for socialist democracy directly, when faced with fascism? NO! We equally oppose the *necessary binary of fascism/socialist democracy*. Our whole point was that this cannot be determined beforehand and objective conditions decide what aim is achievable in a particular class situation. We wrote:

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. (Sinha, A. 2025. *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders*, Rahul Foundation, Lucknow, p. 555)

As evident from the above quotation, Com. Thakur has missed everything substantial and nuanced about our position “with a twinkle of an eye”. Our position is not distantly comparable with anarchism, as Com. Thakur claims. Nor does the excerpt of Dimitrov that Com. Thakur presents has anything relevant for our position. However, Com. Thakur has tried to link the most disparate things “in the darkness of utter confusion.” Moreover, is our position one of rejection of fighting for every democratic right that is being snatched away by fascists? No! Had Com. Thakur read our positions properly “cover-to-cover” without falling “in the darkness of utter confusion”, he would not have made such ignorant claims. We wrote:

Building a Mass Movement for Civil and Democratic Rights: This is a very important task of the anti-fascist proletarian strategy. We have seen how fascist leadership is established as the sole spokesperson of the majority community (racial, communal, or otherwise) with the construction of a false enemy out of a sizeable minority community, and that of a ‘purely ideological community’ like ‘German Aryan Nation’ or ‘*Hindu Rashtra*’. We have also seen how with the establishment of the fascist führer as the sole spokesperson and the ‘emperor of hearts’ for the ‘purely ideological community’, anyone and everyone standing in opposition to the führer is included in the figure of the enemy and thus the enemy figure is rapidly expanded. **This naturally includes vicious attacks against the civil and democratic rights of the people in general. As a consequence, the militant defense of the democratic and civil rights against the fascists, based on a mass**

movement, assumes particular importance in the anti-fascist strategy of the revolutionary proletariat.

...

On the basis of the above understanding, the concrete conclusion that we can draw is that **without transforming the civil and democratic rights movement into a *genuinely mass movement* we cannot revive it and consequently we cannot fight against the fascist onslaught on the civil and democratic rights of the masses...** (Sinha, A. 2024. 'Fascism in the Twenty-First Century: Elements of Continuity and Change', presented in Arvind Memorial Seminar in Hyderabad in December 2024-January 2025, published in *The Anvil*-8, November 2025, *emphasis ours*)

It is noteworthy that comrades from CPI (ML) Mass Line had attended the seminar in which the above-quoted paper was presented. It puzzles us how Com. Thakur can make such a baseless claim about our position that we oppose fighting for each and every democratic right against the fascist onslaught. *As evident, Com. Thakur has totally misunderstood every essential element of our understanding, has erected a strawman of our position and rained it with his blunt and crude palaeolithic arrows!* We have noticed this earlier too. Com. Thakur vulgarizes the position of the opponent in his own language and then makes totally irrelevant off-beam remarks *which often do not make any sense*. Here, too, he has done the same thing without understanding what our critique of *necessary binary of fascist dictatorship/bourgeois democracy* means and has assumed that we are stubbornly asking for fighting directly for socialist revolution *necessarily*, without any possibility of intermediate tactical aims, objective and stages in the fight against fascism and reject the struggle for democratic rights in the fight against fascism. *To understand the question of strategy, general tactics and particular tactics and make a distinction between these different levels of determination is one of the hallmarks of Leninism.* However, Com. Thakur fails to fulfil this basic Leninist task in the critique and muddles up all these different and relatively autonomous

levels. We quoted ourselves at length to show that Com. Thakur is on his own trip and has failed to understand anything substantial regarding our line.

Another example of an off-the-mark comment by Com. Thakur is this:

But if we take the position of that “FALSE necessary binary”, then the struggle for defending every inch of the democratic gains” for “resolutely fight to extend these gains” will be seriously and severely weakened, more correctly to say, destroyed.

But if we take the position of that “FALSE necessary binary”, then our position will be similar to the position of Anarchists.

According to Dimitrov, those who ignore the crucial difference between the “state form of class domination of the bourgeoisie — bourgeois democracy, by another form — open terrorist dictatorship”, that would be “serious mistake to ignore this distinction”.

This “false necessary binary” is creating added problems, because certain revolutionary organization is of the opinion that “... only a shell or envelope of bourgeois democracy and its institutions remain before us. The example of India completely verifies this fact”.

From this assessment of bourgeois democracy, the task of Indian working class and its advance detachment, is not to fight for defending the “shell or envelope” of bourgeois democracy! (Thakur, P. S. *op.cit.*)

The first and the second paragraph repeats the same false claim that we refuse to fight for every democratic right because we refuse the *necessary binary of bourgeois democracy/fascism*. We already quoted ourselves above to show that Com. Thakur has utterly misunderstood the basic elements of our understanding and how Mao and the CPC, too, rejected this necessary binary presented by the policy of the ‘popular front’. Subsequently, Com. Thakur imposes upon us the incorrect position that we do not accept the difference

between bourgeois democratic state-form and the fascist regime. Is that true? Again, it shows that Com. Thakur *has not read our position carefully* as presented in *AMDB* or our seminar paper on fascism in the twenty-first century presented in the Hyderabad seminar, attended by the comrades of CPI (ML) Mass Line. We would again emphasize that Com. Thakur has not read our positions “cover-to-cover” but only “cover-and-cover” and missed everything in-between, that too, “with a twinkle of an eye”! So let us set the record straight.

Have we refused to make a distinction between fascist regime and bourgeois democratic state-form of the rule of the bourgeoisie? No.

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). (Sinha, A. 2025. *op.cit.*, p. 549-50)

We wrote further:

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 Tamás, 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. (ibid., p. 551-52)*

Thus, what is our argument? One, there is a difference among various different forms of state that the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie assumes, from multi-party parliamentary bourgeois democracy to fascism, bonapartism, and military *junta*; two, there is a difference between the content of a particular state-form and its form; three, the parliamentary system is merely *the form* assumed by bourgeois democratic state-form; four, it is not only possible but desirable for fascism in the neoliberal phase and authoritarian statism to *retain* the form of parliamentary system (i.e., the form of bourgeois democratic state) and yet impose a fascist rule by destroying *the bourgeois democratic content* of this *form* in a

perpetual fashion; five, therefore, fascism in the twenty-first century is characterized not by a cataclysmic event that abandons the parliamentary system, legislative assemblies, elections, etc., that is, the bourgeois democratic form, but a perpetual process of internal take-over of the state-apparatus and systematic destruction of its bourgeois democratic content; six, as a consequence, *the shell of the bourgeois democratic state, namely, parliament, legislative assemblies and elections, etc. remain, but they increasingly become empty containers.* Any serious observer of the Indian bourgeois politics today would immediately recognize that it is precisely the above things that have been happening to Indian bourgeois state in the previous two to three decades. However, Com. Thakur is stuck in the early-Twentieth century and still waiting for the exceptional laws to be introduced, the parliamentary system and elections to be formally abolished, before he could exclaim “with a twinkle of an eye” that “fascism has arrived”! Well, good luck with that! Even in the 1970s, intelligent Marxist observers had been witnessing the changes in capitalist system in the neoliberal phase. We quoted one such scholar, Nicos Poulantzas in our seminar paper:

“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.*" (Sinha, A. 2024. 'Fascism in the Twenty-first Century: Elements of Continuity and Change', key paper presented in the Hyderabad Seminar on Fascism, *emphasis ours*)

Poulantzas was one of the first Marxists to capture some of the central characteristic features of this new phase and what it meant for the content and form of the bourgeois democratic state. We wrote assessing the above excerpt of Poulantzas:

This is a very important observation of Poulantzas. The point that in the period of neoliberalism, and as a result of the consequent changes in the bourgeois democratic state-form, the exceptional regimes like fascism will not emerge in the same process in which they emerged in the early-Twentieth century, is an essential point if we hope to understand the present incarnations of fascism. The new forms which fascist rise will assume, would consist in the internal take-over of the state and infiltration into the state-apparatus from within, rather than 'outside' infiltration, as happened in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. (*ibid.*)

Further, we presented this significant observation of Poulantzas:

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.)

Whether one agrees with everything that Poulantzas says or not is immaterial here. The above observation of Poulantzas is more-or-less accurate and prophetic and is today being confirmed by most of the progressive and left fascism scholars. We have presented the observations of dozens of Marxists, Marxist-Leninists, and Maoists in this regard in the *AMDB* as well as our seminar paper. In fact, Dimitrov himself had alluded to the possibility of retention of the form of bourgeois democracy by fascism. We quoted Dimitrov in our seminar paper where he points to such possibility:

“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.*” (*ibid.*)

Of course, at that time, this possibility was not the dominant trend. Today, this possibility has assumed the form of a dominant trend, the reasons for which have been explained above. Com. Thakur has missed this part of Dimitrov’s position, too. Thus, even Dimitrov has not be read by him “cover-to-cover”.

Com. Thakur has missed all of this in our writings on fascism and popular front, that he surprisingly cites! Of course, the claim of now having developed the habit of reading “cover-to-cover” holds no water! First of all, he does not read the entire text and whatever he reads sporadically, it is clear, that he fails to understand the text as well as the context and then makes claims which make no sense at all! He argues that from the above analysis of ours we argue that we do not need to fight for saving the ‘shell’ of the bourgeois democracy! Really? Com. Thakur knows that our organization is running a campaign against EVMs; he also knows that at present it is our organization which is running a campaign against electoral fraud in general; we already showed above that our seminar paper clearly mentions the need to fight for every political democratic right in the present conjuncture of fascism. However, still, somehow, he manages to make, “in a twinkling of an eye”, totally baseless claims, being as he is in the “utter darkness of confusion”! We are really stupefied.

Still residing in the deep caverns of “utter darkness of confusion”, Com. Thakur comes to the question of the defeat of the ‘popular fronts’ in Spain and France. He argues:

Now we want to proceed towards “practical disaster of France and Spain”, as stated by com. AS. If not sole, primary and principle responsibility lies with the “Popular Front”, according to com. AS.

But the defeat of popular front in France and Spain is well documented by the Communist International. (Thakur, P. S. *op.cit.*)

Then he goes on to quote ECCI on the defeat of the ‘popular fronts’ and claims that it was not the fault of the ‘popular front’ itself but the treachery of the social-democracy which led to the collapse of the ‘popular fronts’ in Europe. This is a gem and a spectacular turn-around, rather *volte-face*, by Com. Thakur. First of all, let us deal with Com. Thakur’s completely changed stand on the ‘popular front’.

Now Com. Thakur is accepting that the 'popular front' actually failed in Europe, notwithstanding what factors were responsible for the failure; we will discuss those factors in a little while. He argues that it was solely the role of the social-democracy which led to the failure of the 'popular fronts'. We will show that this argument itself is superficial because this character of social-democracy was not revealed to communists only during the failures of the 'popular fronts'! They knew about this character well-enough for decades that followed the First World War. Once the 'popular fronts' fell due to the understandable treachery of the social-democracy, first Dimitrov and Manuisky began to present a futile defence of the 'popular front' policy by saying that the policy itself was correct, but it fell due to the betrayal of the social-democrats! Com. Thakur is repeating the same apologia. We would ask, what did you expect?! Anyhow, we will come to this issue in a while, but first, instead of the *volte-face* of Dimitrov, let us talk about the *volte-face* of Com. Thakur. What did Com. Thakur say about the 'popular front' in his first intervention in the ongoing debate? Let us see.

In the ongoing debate, Com. Thakur had claimed that fascism and Nazism in Europe were defeated because of the 'popular front'. Now he is saying the the failure of the 'popular front' (due solely to the treachery of social-democracy according to him!) is a 'well-documented fact'! If that is so, it is clear that Com. Thakur had not read these documents that had 'well-documented' the fact of the defeat of the 'popular front' in the beginning and came to know about them only in the process of debate with us! Because, earlier his claim was that it was the 'popular front' which defeated fascism and Nazism. Com. Thakur had written:

Fight against fascism and imperialist war by the world communist **under the guidance of Dimitrov Thesis and results of those social practices brought the Defeat of the German-Italy-France fascist** forces, weakening of the British and French imperialism, speedy advancement of the national liberation struggles in colonial, semi-colonial and dependent countries and above all victorious emergence of socialist Soviet

Union. **It proved emphatically the truth and correctness of Dimitrov Thesis.** (Thakur, P. S. 2025. 'On Popular Front', *Mass Line*, Feb.-Mar. 2025, p. 11, *emphasis ours*)

Now he writes:

But the defeat of popular front in France and Spain is well documented by the Communist International. (Thakur, P. S. 2025. *Mass Line*, Sep.-Oct. 2025, p. 16)

Now, only one of these could be the truth! As evident, Com. Thakur came to know about the defeat of the 'popular front' only later! Because in the first critical essay, Com. Thakur does not even mention once the fact that the 'popular front' had failed. It was only in the second critical essay that Com. Thakur wrote in the June-July 2025 issue of *Mass Line* where he mentioned that the conditions of war in 1939 forced the Comintern to abandon the policy of the 'popular front' and quoted Dimitrov where the latter makes the same argument! However, we showed in our rebuttal that the 'popular fronts' in Spain and France had collapsed almost a year before the commencement of the war. Com. Thakur was either unaware of the historical facts or forgot about them! Anyhow, the *volte-face* of Com. Thakur is clear.

Now let us come to the question as to what caused the collapse of the 'popular fronts' in Spain and France, mainly, but also in several other countries in Europe, including the 'popular front' committee of Germany. Dimitrov as well as other supporters of the 'popular front' had begun to defend the concept of 'popular front' by blaming the treachery of the social-democracy and the war. Com. Thakur writes:

These are the basic reasons for the "practical disaster in France". Betrayal of petti-bourgeois parties — socialists and radical socialists, their alliance with internal reactionary forces and externally with the "magnates of finance capital", these are primary and main reasons for the defeat of the popular front in France. If anybody want to put sole and main responsibility with the popular front concept and its practice, that will be against

the objective history and will consciously or unconsciously belittle the treacherous role of the petti-bourgeois parties and their total surrender to finance capital and reaction. (Thakur, P. S. 2025. *Mass Line*, Sept-Oct. 2025, p. 17)

Then Com. Thakur quotes Diaz from the Spanish communist party. Diaz argues that it was only in the process of the 'popular front' strategy that they came to know about the real character of the social-democracy! Wonderful! Similarly, Com. Thakur quotes Dimitrov who blames the 'Blums' for the failure of the 'popular front' in France! Com. Thakur has presented a quote of Dimitrov that we had quoted in 2024 itself to show how Dimitrov tried to circumvent the responsibility for the erroneous line of the 'popular front'. Let us see the entire quote of Dimitrov first:

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. (Sinha, A. 2025. *AMDB*, p. 447)

It is precisely this ineffectual defence of the policy of the 'popular front' despite its practical failure and collapse, about which we had asked and we ask the same question to Com. Thakur:

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 behavior 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 behavior 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. (*ibid.*, p. 448)

In fact, even before the beginning of the war, an ECCI manifesto in November 1938 had abandoned the policy of 'popular front':

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. (Sinha, A. 2025. AMDB, p. 456-57, emphasis ours)

Dimitrov himself accepts that the 'popular front' had broken even before the outbreak of the war:

The attempts by Communists to organize common action with social democracy were disrupted before the European war started. They were disrupted by the refusal of social democracy to struggle for the basic rights and liberties of workers, for the improvement of their living conditions under capitalism; they were disrupted by Blum's "non-intervention" policy and by support of the Munich deal by French social democracy; they were disrupted by the capitulationist betrayal of Prieto by Caballero; they were disrupted by the systematic rejection of the Comintern's proposals to organize common action against the reaction and war by the Executive Committee of the Second International and, primarily, by the English Labourites; they were disrupted by the participation of social democracy in the preparation and unleashing of the current war; they were disrupted by its policy of inciting the war against the Soviet country, by its present role as vigilante of the Anglo-French bourgeoisie, which has seized the bankrupt banner of the anti-Soviet struggle and the anti-Comintern pact. Communists can have no united front with a party that has created a united front with its national bourgeoisie, including its most chauvinistic, most imperialist, most reactionary elements. (Dallin, A., F. I. Firsov. 2000. Dimitrov and Stalin, 1934-43, Letters from the Soviet Archives, Yale University Press, p. 161, emphasis ours)

So, the pretext of war by Dimitrov for abandoning the policy of the 'popular front' was an empty claim in order to circumvent the necessity of self-criticism on the policy of the 'popular front'. And when did Dimitrov and Manuilsky realize that the very nature of social-democracy was treacherous? In the course of the implementation of the policy of the 'popular front'? No! In fact, Dimitrov himself refers to the treachery of social-democracy in the First World War itself:

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.

...

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. (Sinha, A. *AMDB*, p. 451)

Thus, the treacherous nature of the social-democracy was known to the likes of Dimitrov and the leaders of the world communist movement from the very beginning. If that was so, then the very policy of the 'popular front' was erroneous from the very beginning, namely, the policy of forming *general front against fascism with the social-democrats!* The very premise of the formation of the 'popular front' falls to the ground theoretically because it was in the very nature of the social-democrats to betray the working class in such conjunctures and therefore *there was no question of general strategic united front against fascism with them*. As the readers can see, the excuse given by Dimitrov for the abandoning of the policy of the 'popular front' in the name of war was baseless and secondly, the character of the social-democracy was not revealed to Dimitrov and others only in the process of the implementation of the line of 'popular front'. And Com. Thakur is presenting the same apologia

almost 8 decades after. We would only say: “you are a bit late, comrade!”

In summation of the above episode, we had written:

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. (ibid., p. 459-60, emphasis ours)

Com. Thakur has certainly not read *AMDB* “cover-to-cover” before embarking upon a critique. Had he read the book he would have realized that it contains the reply to all his “criticisms” in advance! However, he makes the same stale arguments in defence of ‘popular front’ that have been abandoned by all serious Maoists around the world, though in an unprecedentedly poor form. He also changes his positions from ‘victory of popular front over fascism’ to ‘failure of popular front is well-documented’. In all honesty, a self-criticism was in place here, for Com. Thakur. However, he forgot what he wrote in Feb-March issue of *Mass Line* and makes a diametrically opposite claim in the Sept-Oct issue of *Mass Line*, a spectacular *volte-face*!

Subsequently, he quotes Mao where Mao presumably puts the blame for the failure of the ‘popular front’ on war. Here is the quote:

Aided and abetted by the “non-intervention” policy of the British and French governments, fascist Germany and Italy committed a series of acts of aggression and achieved their purpose. ... In July 1936 Germany and Italy started their joint armed intervention in the internal affairs of Spain and supported the fascist Franco in his rebellion against the Popular Front Government. After a prolonged war with the German and Italian interventionists and Franco’s rebel troops, the Popular Front Government was defeated in March 1939.

Com. Thakur has failed to understand what is Mao saying here. Mao is only referring to a particular episode in the Spanish Civil War where the defence of Madrid by Popular Front government was defeated. In fact, the defence of Madrid to the end itself was criticized by Mao and Kang Sheng. Mao is not saying that the ‘popular front’ collapsed *because* of this war and fascist intervention by Germany and Italy! In fact, Mao pointed out that *the ‘popular front’ had already collapsed due to the internal divisions* within the front. Let us see:

The defense 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**. The point of this criticism is obviously not that the Spanish republicans fought to the end, but that they failed to grasp the axiom that territorial strong points are not in themselves decisive. (Mao Tse-tung. . ‘Talk on Questions of Philosophy’, *Selected Works*, Vol. 9, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 119, footnote)

In the same work, it is written:

[Kang Sheng: “Also, when they [the Spanish] 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.”]

Even before the dissolution of the Third International, we did not obey the orders of the Third International. (*ibid.*, p. 119)

In fact, in the same volume, that is volume 2 of the selected works of Mao, from which Com. Thakur quotes, it is written:

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. . ‘Mobilization of All the Nations Forces’, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, p. 29, endnote)

It seems to us that Com. Thakur has the general habit of not reading the texts in totality. This often leads to serious problems, as is

evident. Mao is very clear that the fascist aggression was only an aiding external factor and the real reasons for the failure of the 'popular front' policy was the internal divisions which naturally arose within the front. We have demonstrated this above from a variety of sources. Com. Thakur has not responded to any question on the policy of the 'popular front' that we have raised. He has not even referred to all the references to the policy of 'popular front' in the Comintern documents after November 1938, except one quote of Dimitrov, which we ourselves had presented in 2024. However, he has misunderstood even that quote and had refrained from addressing numerous quotes from Comintern documents that we have presented regarding the abandoning of the policy of the 'popular front'. That is why we were obliged to present some of them again in this rebuttal.

On the "Issue Number Four"

On this issue, what Com. Thakur has written is in particular a demonstration of this comrade's inability to understand any particular text or its context, any particular discussion and debate in its context. He has completely misunderstood the text as well as the context of the quotes from the documents of the Third Congress of the Comintern and Lenin's interventions in the same. We will demonstrate this assertion with facts of the history as well as from the documentary evidence.

First, Com. Thakur has quoted the following lines that we have written:

"The policy of the united front of the working class as put forth by Lenin in 1921 in the Third Congress of the Comintern had two elements: one, 'united front from below' as the general policy (*Italics in original*) which meant organizing the masses of workers in all kinds of mass organizations, including the bourgeois and social-democratic mass organizations; two,

‘united front from above’ as the particular policy (*Italics in original*) of issue-based alliances with the social-democratic and workers’ parties.”

Then first Com. Thakur makes this comment:

Here we want to discuss mainly two points. Point number one: Differentiation of general policy (united front from below) and particular policy (united front from above) is in conformity with Leninist principle generally and with Lenin’s speech in Third Congress of Comintern particularly. (Thakur, P. S. 2025. *Mass Line* Sept-Oct 2025, p. 17)

And then interprets us like this:

Point number two: United front from below will be of only mass organizations, and united front from above will be only of parties — is this type of ‘cut and dried schemes’ in conformity with the Leninist principle generally and with Lenin’s speech in Third Congress in particular? (*ibid.*, p. 17)

First of all, earlier, Com. Thakur had not expressed his agreement on making a distinction between a general united front from below and the particular united front from above. In the Feb-March issue of *Mass Line* he termed this distinction as a tragedy:

But, real tragedy of those comrades who have declared that they will go by Comintern (Communist International) proposed “general anti-fascist front can be formed as united front of the working class.” (Thakur, P. S. 2025. *Mass Line* Feb-Mar 2025, p. 12)

Once again, Com. Thakur has performed a *volte-face*. It is clear that he read the documents of the Third Congress after a considerable time of plunging himself into the abyss of this debate! *In the ongoing debate, one of the main areas of disagreements was the distinction made between general front and particular front because this very distinction is relevant precisely in the context of the policy of the united front of the working class and not in that of the policy of the*

'popular front'. Anyhow, now let us come to the interpretation of our distinction that Com. Thakur has presented.

He argues that we are contending that the general united front from below will only be among mass organizations and the particular united front from above will only be among parties. Is that true? Are we really saying that? Again, Com. Thakur shows that either he has not read our position seriously or has failed utterly to understand it, that too, "with a twinkle of an eye". Let us see what our arguments are.

First of all, the united front from below to organize the masses in all mass organizations (including the ones led by social-democratic and other bourgeois parties) *does not simply mean a united front among mass organizations for us or for Lenin!* We have never written such non-sense. **It means organizing the masses in all mass organizations and unorganized masses into anti-fascist mass fronts without necessary recourse to the leadership of non-communist parties and mass organizations.** However, Com. Thakur thinks in a childish fashion and argues that for us 'united front from below' means united front among mass organizations and 'united front from above' means united front among parties! This is an old disease among various dogmatists and infantile "leftists" to see united fronts only among organizational bodies, and not among classes under the leadership of the communist party. In order to clear the "utter darkness of confusion" into which Com. Thakur has fallen "with the twinkle of an eye", let us quote from *AMDB*:

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. (Sinha, A. 2025. *AMDB*, p. 232, *emphasis ours*)

United front from below is not a united fronts among mass organizations! That is still 'united front from above' based on particular issues! The 'united front from below' means organizing the masses of workers and working masses in or out of the mass organizations, including the ones led by social-democrats, radicals, socialists, etc. Class and their various organizations are two different levels of determination for Marxists and Lenin's basic plea was that we do not necessarily have to go through the organizations of masses or classes to organize them in anti-fascist united fronts. *We must also approach them directly as far as the task of forming 'united fronts from below' is concerned.* The point was to organize the rank-and-file workers and working masses in the social-democratic and other non-communist mass organizations into anti-fascist fronts and organizations. We wrote in our seminar paper:

This practically meant the conscious attempt on the part of the revolutionary proletariat to win over, **not only the masses of the working class, but also lower and middle peasantry and urban lower and middle classes, that is, in general, the masses of the petty-bourgeoisie.** The concrete policy that was prescribed was that of 'united front of the working class'. This policy did not preclude the possibility of the forming particular issue-based alliances 'from above' with the social-democratic parties and other workers parties, and even other progressive democratic bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties. However, this was the secondary task. **The first and principal task was to win over the masses of workers in all trade unions and mass organizations,** led by other bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties, and, win over the masses of working peasantry and urban petty-bourgeoisie. In other words, the

principal task was to form united front against fascism ‘from below’, while the secondary task, subordinate to the first task, was to form united front ‘from above’, which meant forming particular issue-based alliances against fascism with social-democratic, other workers and other bourgeois parties. (Sinha, A. 2024. *‘Fascism in the Twenty-first Century: Elements of Continuity and Change’*, key paper presented in the Hyderabad Seminar on Fascism, *emphasis ours*)

In the seminar paper, this was clarified further by pointing out that ‘united front from below’ meant precisely going to the masses directly without any necessary recourse to their mass organizations or parties:

Others in the Comintern clearly accepted that the revolutionary communists must revert to the Leninist policy of the united front of the working class, which primarily and principally meant united front from below (to the masses)... (*ibid.*)

This was elaborated further in the seminar paper itself that the task was to win over the masses in all kinds of mass organizations (not simply forming top-to-top alliances among the mass organizations!):

The first and principal task was to win over the masses of workers in all trade unions and mass organizations, led by other bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties, and, win over the masses of working peasantry and urban petty-bourgeoisie. In other words, the principal task was to form united front against fascism ‘from below’... (*ibid.*)

In our book *AMDB*, too, we clarified this point time and again:

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.** (Sinha, A. 2025. *AMDB*, p. 220)

While explaining Gramsci's concept of united front from below, we explained in the book:

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. (*ibid.*, p. 270)

Gramsci proposed the participation of an anti-fascist front *Arditi Del Popolo* consisting of variety of elements from anarchists as well as socialists, precisely based on this idea. We pointed out:

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. (*ibid.*, p. 277)

Finally, in the above-quoted work itself, we summed up the meaning of a united front from below (which for Lenin included the issue-based particular united fronts from above with non-fascist parties):

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. (*ibid.*, p. 345)

Com. Thakur had attempted to critique this work, so we have all right to assume that he had indeed read the book “cover-to-cover”. **If that is so, how on earth did he take such a leap and conclude that for us ‘united front from below’ means united front among mass organizations and ‘united front from above’ means united front among parties!** As the readers can see, we could not be clearer that ‘united front from below’ means winning over of workers and working masses from all kinds of organizations without any necessary recourse to their leadership or top-to-top organizational alliance. It has NOTHING WHATSOEVER to do with united fronts among mass organizations! **If such alliances are formed through leadership-to-leadership talks, they are STILL united fronts from above.** It is apparent that Com. Thakur has not only not understood our position regarding the united front from below and the united front from above, he is in “darkness of utter confusion” even regarding what Lenin said and wrote about such fronts!

After having failed miserably to understand our position and its foundation, that is, Lenin’s position on united front against fascism, he goes on a stale and excruciatingly tedious discussion about a quote of Lenin from the Third Congress, which again, “with a twinkle of an eye”, he has failed to understand! Let us come to that now.

Let us first see the quote of Lenin:

The Third Congress of the Communist International is setting out to review questions of tactics under conditions when in a whole number of countries, the objective situation has become aggravated in a revolutionary sense, and when a whole number of communist mass parties have been organised, which, incidentally, in their actual revolutionary struggle have nowhere

taken into their hands the virtual leadership of the majority of the working class.

Com. Thakur argues that certain delegates demanded amendment that the term “majority” be removed to which Lenin responded: “I and all of us and the Russian delegation must insist that not a single letter in the theses is altered.” Com. Thakur argues that explaining the meaning of the term “majority”, Lenin said:

... what is essential to win and retain power is not only the majority of the working class—I use the term “working class” in its West-European sense, i.e., in the sense of the industrial proletariat—but also the majority of the working and exploited rural population.

Com. Thakur points out that similarly an amendment was proposed to delete the ‘Open Letter’ sent by the Central Committee of the United Communist Party of Germany to the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, Communist Workers Party of Germany, the Socialist Party of Germany and all their trade unions which:

called on all workers, trade unions and socialist organizations to unite their forces in combating reaction and the capitalists’ offensive against the working people’s vital rights. Their programme of joint action included demands for higher pensions for disabled war veterans; elimination of unemployment; improvement of the country’s finances at the expense of the monopolies, introduction of factory and plant committee control over all stocks of food, raw materials and fuel restarting of all closed enterprises; control over sowing, harvesting and marketing of farm produce by the Peasants’ Councils together with the agricultural labourers’ organizations; immediate disarming and dissolution of all bourgeois militarized organizations; establishment of workers’ self-defence; amnesty of all political prisoners; immediate reestablishment of trade and diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia.

Com. Thakur then points out that about this 'open letter' Lenin said:

The "Open Letter" is a model political step. ... It is a model because it is the first act of a practical method of winning over the majority of the working class.

And finally, from all this hulabaloo, readers would be surprised to find, that Com. Thakur reaches this conclusion:

We have quoted at length the "open letter", with the idea that there was no artificial difference between "from below for mass organizations" and from above for parties. Open letter was addressed to parties and trade unions. Secondly, character of demands raised in the 'open letter' was of such nature which were not immediate and momentary, but of basic nature. Nobody can differentiate as "particular policy". So, through 'open letter', there was a call 'from above' to parties and mass organizations, and it was to be implemented below, at the grass-root level. (Thakur, P. S. 2025. *Mass Line*, Sept-Oct 2025, p. 18)

Now in a little space, Com. Thakur has conjured up such a pile of confusion and misunderstanding about 'united front from below' and 'united front from above' that it will take us a while to clear it up. But we have no other option.

First, about the proposal by Terracini to remove the word "majority" and Lenin's opposition to this amendment. What is Lenin talking about here? Lenin refers to the "left" trend represented by Terracini which opposed the term "majority"; Lenin responded to this objection by pointing out that even the best organized communist party in Europe, the German party, cannot claim that it has already won the majority of the German working class and the position of other parties is worse. Lenin points out:

And so, they want the word "majority" deleted. If we cannot agree on such simple things, then I do not understand how we can work together and lead the proletariat to victory. Then it is not at all surprising that we cannot reach agreement on the

question of principles either. Show me a party which has already won the majority of the working class. Terracini did not even think of adducing any example. Indeed, there is no such example.

And so, the word “aims” is to be put instead of “principles”, and the word “majority” is to be deleted. No, thank you! We shall not do it. Even the German party—one of the best—does not have the majority of the working class behind it. That is a fact. We, who face a most severe struggle, are not afraid to utter this truth, but here you have three delegations who wish to begin with an untruth, for if the Congress deletes the word “majority” it will show that it wants an untruth. That is quite clear. (Lenin, V. I. . ‘Speech in Defence of the Tactics of the Communist International’, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 469-70)

What is Lenin referring to? Lenin is criticizing the “left” tendency of vanguardism personified by Terracini, which argued for moving to an offensive without winning the masses of workers, only on the basis of a strong party with sizeable membership. In Italy, and in most of the countries of Europe, the situation was still not in favour of the communist parties because the parties had not won over the majority of the working class and the majority of the masses. That is why, Lenin argues:

Terracini says that we were victorious in Russia although the Party was very small. He is dissatisfied with what is said in the theses about Czechoslovakia. Here there are 27 amendments, and if I had a mind to criticise them I should, like some orators, have to speak for not less than three hours.... We have heard here that in Czechoslovakia the Communist Party has 300,000-400,000 members, and that it is essential to win over the majority, to create an invincible force and continue enlisting fresh masses of workers. Terracini is already prepared to attack. He says: if there are already 400,000 workers in the party, why should we want more? Delete! (Laughter.) He is afraid of the word “masses” and wants to eradicate it. Comrade

Terracini has understood very little of the Russian revolution. In Russia, we were a small party, but we had with us in addition the majority of the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country. (Cries: "Quite true!") Do you have anything of the sort? We had with us almost half the army, which then numbered at least ten million men. Do you really have the majority of the army behind you? Show me such a country! If these views of Comrade Terracini are shared by three other delegations, then something is wrong in the International! (*ibid.*, p. 470-71)

Lenin sums up his views regarding the "left" deviation of vanguardism represented by Terracini:

I would not altogether deny that a revolution can be started by a very small party and brought to a victorious conclusion. But one must have a knowledge of the methods by which the masses can be won over. For this thoroughgoing preparation of revolution is essential. But here you have comrades coming forward with the assertion that we should immediately give up the demand for "big" masses. They must be challenged. Without thoroughgoing preparation you will not achieve victory in any country. Quite a small party is sufficient to lead the masses. At certain times there is no necessity for big organisations. (*ibid.*, p. 476)

It is precisely in this context that Lenin rebukes the Italian comrades and points out that they had not even won over the majority of the working class masses, leave alone the question of winning over the majority of the masses, which include not simply the masses of the workers but also of all exploited and oppressed in the urban and rural areas, that is, poor peasants, small commodity producers, semi-proletariat, etc. This speech of Lenin has nothing in particular to do with the united front policy against fascism proposed in the Comintern, except it is part of Lenin's slogan of 'to the masses', based on the realization that after the retreat of the first waves of attempted seizure of power in Europe between 1918 and 1920, a

period of new preparation had set in and this required the communists to win over the majority of the masses, accumulate their forces, before mounting the next offensive and it is precisely because of this that Lenin opposed Terracini's proposal of removing the word "majority" because the latter's whole idea was of immediate offensive by the communists, based simply on a strong party. The Third Congress was happening in the context of the recent defeats of the revolutionary movements in Germany and Italy. Lenin's argument was that in order to mount the next revolutionary offensive, the communists in Europe must win over the majority of the masses, even if the party itself is very big, or even if the party is not very big. Winning over of the masses would determine the real balance of class forces in the favour of revolution.

However, Com. Thakur, without understanding the historical context of the discussion, plunges himself into the abyss of worst kind of misunderstandings and makes the readers confused with his senseless quotation-mongering, because the quote of Lenin regarding the amendment proposed by Terracini has a very different issue at its centre, as we just saw, and has nothing in particular to do with the question of 'united front from above' or 'united front from below'. It was a general argument in favour of massline and against the impetuosity of certain revolutionary communists in Europe to engage in a disastrous adventure of mounting immediate attack.

Now let us come to the question of 'open letter'. What was the issue involved? The open letter sent by the VKPD (Unified Communist Party of Germany) to SPD and USPD and their trade unions, proposed a united front on certain particular issues. **It was a proposal for a united front from above** (because it included united fronts among parties as well as among mass organizations, something Com. Thakur has failed to understand) and it was designed to allow the communists the opportunity to win over the masses of the working class in the social-democratic trade unions. Moreover, it was a proposal for a front *from above* in order to win over a section of workers, which had been alienated due to the split at Halle Congress, where the majority of the USPD joined the KPD

to form VKPD. Radek, the drafter of the 'open letter', argued that to win over the alienated workers to the VKPD, a proposal to form issue-based fronts with SPD and USPD would be beneficial. **The fact that this united front proposed by the 'open letter' was actually nothing but a united front from above, which could allow the VKPD to win over the alienated workers,** becomes clear when we see what Jane Degras, the editor of the documents of the Comintern, says:

The 'open letter' referred to in section 3 was sent by the VKPD to the SPD, USPD, and the trade unions, *proposing joint action on wages, workers' control, trade with Russia, etc.* In an article published in Inprekorr on the last day of 1921, Radek explained that the split at Halle had alienated a number of German workers, who could be reconciled **if they saw that the KPD was prepared to join with the other parties in the practical daily struggle;** in the course of that struggle they would learn that reformism could not give them what they wanted. The 'open letter' was drafted by Radek, in agreement with Paul Levi, apparently to counter the 'putschism' of a section of the German party favoured by Zinoviev. (Degras, J. 1955. *The Communist International, 1919-43, Documents, Vol. 1, 1919-1922*, p. 242, *emphasis ours*)

Now let us see from the 'Theses on Tactics' passed at Comintern to understand the real meaning of the 'open letter' and the support given to it by Lenin as a tactics of forming 'united front from above' with non-communist parties, only in order to expose the real character of their leadership and policies among the masses of workers and working people who were still under their influence. This particular element, too, distinguishes the Leninist policy of united front of the working class from the policy of the 'popular front'. Com. Thakur would have done good to read the 'Theses' itself instead of a footnote from Lenin's *Collected Works* without understanding the entire context of the discussion regarding the 'open letter'. The 'Theses' states:

Wherever the position of the working masses becomes more and more intolerable, the communist parties must do their utmost to get them to fight for their interests. Since, in western Europe and America, where the working masses are organized in political parties and trade unions, spontaneous movements are for the time being unlikely except in very rare cases, the communist parties must try, by exerting their influence in the unions, by increasing their pressure on other parties supported by the working masses, to get joint action in the struggle for the **immediate interests** of the proletariat; **should the non-communist parties be forced into the struggle, the communists must warn the working masses from the outset of the possibility of treachery by the non-communist parties at a subsequent stage of the struggle, must do their utmost to make the situation more acute and push it further, in order to be able if necessary to continue the struggle independently (e.g. the open letter of the VKPD, which can serve as a model starting-point for action on these lines).** (Degras. 1955. 'Theses on Tactics' Adopted by the Third Congress of the Comintern, *op.cit.*, p. 250-51)

As evident, Com. Thakur is in the "darkness of utter confusion" 'from below' and 'from above' regarding the relation between the policy of 'united front from above' and 'united front from below'. This was the context in which Lenin had endorsed the 'open letter'. As usual, Com. Thakur has missed the historical context of the whole issue and consequently, has totally misunderstood every single excerpt that he has quoted. Moreover, as evident, Com. Thakur has failed to understand the very meaning of the terms like 'the united front from above' and 'the united front from below' and argues that since the 'open letter' talks about the front between the parties as well as the front among the mass organizations, there is no 'cut-and-dried scheme' of difference between the two! We have already demonstrated above what 'united front from below' meant. *It meant the organization of the mass of workers by communists without necessary recourse to the leadership of their social-democratic*

party/mass organizations. Moreover, even when there is 'united front from above', that is, the front among mass or party organization of the social-democrats, the communists would undoubtedly work with political independence among the worker members of such organizations. This is ABC of Leninist tactics. However, Com. Thakur, being ignorant of the historical context of any text, continues to reside in the "darkness of utter confusion" without realizing in the least where he is stationed. It would do good to quote a few passages from the 'Directives on the United Front of Workers' adopted by the ECCI in December 1921 based on the line formulated by the Third Congress. The document says:

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.**

...

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.**

...

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 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.**

...

During the fifteen years (1903-1917) which elapsed between the birth of bolshevism and its triumph over the bourgeoisie, it did not cease to wage a tireless struggle against reformism or, what is the same thing, menshevism. **But at the same time the Bolsheviks often came to an understanding with the mensheviks during those fifteen years. The formal break with the mensheviks took place in the spring of 1905, but at the end of 1905, influenced by the stormy developments in the workers' movement, the Bolsheviks formed a common front with the mensheviks . . . and these unifications and semi-unifications happened not only in accordance with changes in the fractional struggle, but also under the direct pressure of the working masses who were awakening to active political life and demanded the opportunity of testing by their own experience whether the menshevik path really deviated in fundamentals from the road of revolution. . . . The Russian Bolsheviks did not reply to the desire of the workers for unity with a renunciation of the united front. On the contrary. As a counterweight to the diplomatic game of the menshevik leaders the Russian Bolsheviks put forward the slogan of 'unity from below', that is, unity of the working masses in the practical struggle for the revolutionary demands of the workers against the capitalists.** Events showed that this was the only correct answer.

...

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.

...

The united front of the workers means the united front of all workers who want to fight against capitalism, which includes those who still follow the anarchists, syndicalists, etc. In many countries such workers can help in the revolutionary struggle. From the first days of its existence the Communist International has taken a friendly line to these workers, who are gradually overcoming their prejudices and drawing nearer to communism. Communists must pay even greater attention to them now, when the united front of the workers against the capitalists is becoming a reality." (Degras. 1955. op.cit., p. 310-19, emphasis ours)

Another document of Comintern, 'ECCI Statement on the Results of the Berlin Conference', states:

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.** (*ibid.*, p. 341, *emphasis ours*)

The same document argues, explaining the meaning of the united front of the working class:

Build the united front locally too, without waiting for the permission of the leaders of the Second International, who

have been spiritually at one with the bourgeois world too long for them to be able to break quickly with it. In every factory, in every mine, in every district, in every town, the communist workers should arm together with the socialist and non-party workers for the common fight against the bourgeoisie. The communist party remains an independent party; it is convinced that in a short time all honest proletarians will come into its ranks; but everywhere the communist party is ready to fight shoulder to shoulder with any worker against the capitalists. (*ibid.*, p. 342, *emphasis ours*)

The 'Theses on Tactics' adopted by the Fourth Congress of the Comintern clearly states:

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....**

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.** (*ibid.*, p. 425, *emphasis ours*)

The above passages clearly explain the relation between 'united front from below' and the 'united front from above'. Com. Thakur has either not read the Comintern documents from the First Congress onwards, or he has forgotten all that he had read "with a twinkle of

an eye". It goes without saying that the aim of both is formation of a solid unity of the masses of the working class and working people against fascism and capitalism, irrespective of the membership of various workers to this or that social-democratic or bourgeois mass organization, or the workers who are not members of any organization. In the case of the 'united front from above', particular alliances are to be formed with social-democratic, socialist and reformist parties and unions (Com. Thakur does not understand that the 'united front from above' includes both the alliance among parties as well as alliance among mass organizations, as we pointed out above), but only with the aim of exposing their treacherous character before the masses of workers who are their members, through concrete struggle. In the case of the 'united front from below' the communists must *directly* approach the masses of workers, whether party members or non-party workers, whether members of non-communist trade unions or unorganized workers, ***without any necessary recourse to the leadership of the non-communist parties and mass organizations***. This is elementary understanding. However, ironically, Com. Thakur is in "darkness of utter confusion" regarding these basics. We hope, at least now, this difference is clear to Com. Thakur.

On the "Issue Number Five"

On this issue, Com. Thakur breaks all his previous records of not understanding the essence and crux of the matter and being utterly ignorant of any context. Com. Thakur challenges our argument that the policy of the 'popular front' passed by the Seventh Congress was a pathological reaction to the extreme-"left" deviation which became dominant from the Sixth Congress and the disastrous results of which were clear to everyone. Thus, the pendulum had shifted from extreme-"left" to the right capitulationism. Why did we argue that? *Com. Thakur has no clue*. He presents some quotes to justify his claim that the 'popular front' policy was not a pathological reaction

leading to right-deviationism because the Dimitrov report says so and nowhere mentions ‘pathological reaction’ or ‘pendulum movement’! Let us first see these quotes and subsequently we will demonstrate what Com. Thakur has forgotten “with a twinkle of an eye”.

First Com. Thakur asks a few “pertinent” questions to us:

Dimitrov theses was not pendulum shift from one extreme — ‘left deviation to right deviation, not from class verses class to class collaboration and class capitulation. We want to know from them — what are the manifestations of dominant right deviations and class collaboration and class capitulation. In all the so-called ‘pathological reaction’ and ‘pendulum shift’, was the Seventh Congress shifted to the extreme position on social democracy as a communist organization, or alliance with them, with no struggle? Or in the so-called ‘pendulum shift’ from one extreme to other extreme, was Dimitrov theses came to the position of unity with social democracy, forsaking their own political independence? or total reliance on social democracy, giving up the tested policy of ‘unity-struggle-unity’? (Thakur, P. S. 2025. *Mass Line, Sept-Oct 2025*, p. 19)

How can someone take such a leap and miss so *much*? Does the right-deviationism of the ‘popular front’ mean declaring social-democratic party as communist organization? Of course not! Does that mean alliance with them with no struggle? Of course not, even in cases of right-deviationist compromises and capitulation, there will be struggle on a number of tactical issues within the front. As far as the question of forsaking the political independence is concerned, it is true that the policy of the ‘popular front’ gave up revolutionary communist political independence, as we will demonstrate with evidence in what follows.

First of all, we would ask the readers to re-read a quotation from the Comintern documents that we presented above, from the period of the Third Congress:

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.

It was precisely this political independence that was given up by the policy of the 'popular front'. In fact, when Dimitrov sent his essential thoughts to Stalin regarding the shift in the policy of the Comintern on united front in a letter in 1934, he clearly raised questions regarding critiquing the social-democrats, arguing that the social-democracy's role has changed. Here is what Dimitrov wrote:

Whether it is correct to refer to social democracy indiscriminately as social fascism. By taking such a position, we have frequently blocked our way to social democratic workers. **(Stalin's note: "As to the leadership – yes; but not "indiscriminate.")**

Kindly note the answer of Stalin. Then Dimitrov asks further:

Whether it is correct to consider social democracy everywhere and at all times the main social base of the bourgeoisie. **(Stalin's note: "Of course, not in Persia.")**

Again, note Stalin's answer. Not satisfied, Dimitrov frames the same question in other terms:

Whether it is correct to consider all leftist s[ocial] d[emocratic] groups as the major threat under any conditions. (**Stalin's note: "In the major cap[italist] countries – yes."**)

Yet again, note Stalin's reply. Dimitrov asks further:

Whether it is correct to treat all the leading cadres of the s[ocial] d[emocratic] parties and of the reformist trade unions indiscriminately (**Stalin's note: "Objectively – yes; consciously – some [of them]."**) as conscious traitors of the working class. One can expect, after all, that in the course of struggle quite a few (**Stalin's note: "'Quite a few' – not; some – yes."**) of today's leading functionaries of the s[ocial] d[emocratic] parties and of the reformist trade unions will choose the path of revolution along with the s[ocial] d[emocratic] workers.

Dimitrov, under the influence of the French communist party and its transition to 'people's front' even before the Seventh Congress, was convinced that top-to-top alliances with social-democracy must be formed; that the criticism of social-democracy during such united fronts must be suspended; that the particular and independent aims of communist parties, too, must be suspended and all energies must be oriented towards a joint general front of all non-fascist parties and organizations against fascism. The idea in the foundation of such front was that fascism was not the dictatorship of the entire bourgeoisie under the leadership of the big monopoly finance capital, but it was the 'naked, barbaric dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, most imperialistic elements of the big monopoly finance capital'. Such incorrect characterization of fascism was bound to lead to the idea of the 'popular front' because then all other elements of the bourgeoisie become an ally against fascism in general. That is why, Dimitrov drops the term "social fascism" altogether from the report. The discussion on social-democracy in the context of the rise of fascism in the report is a qualitative

departure from the classical Leninist position. It talks about the “revolutionary” elements of social-democracy and “reactionary” elements of social-democracy and demands a distinction between the two. It also claims that with the rise of fascism, social-democracy is no more the bulwark of the bourgeoisie. This applies in general everywhere and in particular to countries where fascists have seized power and along with all bourgeois parties, social-democracy, too, has been delegatized. Dimitrov argues in the Seventh Congress:

A process of differentiation is taking place in all the Social-Democratic parties. Within their ranks *two principal camps are forming*: side by side with the existing camp of reactionary elements, who are trying in every way to preserve the bloc between the Social-Democrats and the bourgeoisie, and who furiously reject a united front with the Communists, **there is beginning to form a camp of revolutionary elements who entertain doubts as to the correctness of the policy of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie, who are in favor of the creation of a united front with the Communists and who are increasingly coming to adopt the position of the revolutionary class struggle.** (Dimitrov, G. . *The Fascist Offensive and the Unity of the Working Class*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, p. 22)

It is noteworthy that Dimitrov is making no distinction between the social-democratic workers and the social-democratic leadership. He is talking in general about the emergence of a bloc of social-democracy that constitutes a revolutionary camp, who has serious doubts about the general social-democratic policy of class collaborationism. What happened to this “revolutionary social democracy” after 1937, Dimitrov and Manuisky, never told us! Dimitrov makes this argument repeatedly in the report:

On the other hand, we emphasise the necessity of seeing the difference between the two different camps of Social-Democracy. As I have already pointed out, there is a reactionary camp of Social-Democracy, but alongside of it there

exists and is growing **the camp of the Left Social-Democrats (without quotation marks), of workers who are becoming revolutionary.** (ibid., p. 61, emphasis ours)

Again, this camp suddenly evaporated since late-1937! Dimitrov continues:

We must even reckon with the possibility that, **in passing from the position of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie to the position of class struggle against the bourgeoisie, some Social-Democratic Parties and organizations will continue to exist for a time as independent organizations or parties. In such event there can, of course, be no thought of such Social-Democratic organizations or parties being regarded as a bulwark of the bourgeoisie.**

...

We shall do all in our power to make it easier, not only for the Social-Democratic **workers but also for those leading members of the Social-Democratic Parties and organizations who sincerely desire to adopt the revolutionary class position, to work and fight with us against the class enemy.**

...

The attitude to the united front marks the dividing line between the reactionary sections of Social-Democracy **and the sections that are becoming revolutionary.** Our assistance to the latter will be the more effective the more we intensify our fight against the reactionary camp of Social-Democracy that takes part in a bloc with the bourgeoisie. **And within the Left camp the self-determination of its various elements will take place the sooner, the more determinedly the Communists fight for a united front with the Social-Democratic Parties.** (ibid., p. 95-96, emphasis ours)

And finally:

The combined effect of all these things has been to make it increasingly difficult, and in some countries actually impossible,

for Social-Democracy to preserve its former role of bulwark of the bourgeoisie. (*ibid.*, p. 94, *emphasis ours*)

Then what was the class character of social-democracy? Whose bulwark was it? Certainly, the bourgeoisie chooses its main political representatives in different ways in different times and it depends upon the conjuncture of the capitalist system as a whole. In times of economic and political crisis, it tends to swing increasingly towards right, whereas at others, it swings towards left and at still others it might take a centrist-liberal force as its principal functionary. However, in any case, social-democracy is certainly a bulwark of the bourgeoisie; its class character is precisely like that. **To negate that is to fall in the pit of social-democratism and revisionism and we can clearly see the seeds of such line in the above-quoted report. The strong right-wing deviation is clearly present.**

Formally, Dimitrov does talk about maintaining the “political independence” of the communists. *But what does this political independence mean for Dimitrov?* **Doing propaganda against social-democracy, not in general, but only when they break the agreements of the united front.** For instance, if a general united front with CPI, CPM and CPI (ML) Liberation against fascism is formed, we will undertake propaganda against social-democracy only when they break the “agreements” of the front! Dimitrov writes:

Communists of course cannot and must not for a moment abandon their own independent work of Communist education, organisation and mobilisation of the masses. **However**, for the purpose of ensuring that the workers find the road to unity of action, it is necessary to strive at the same time both for short-term and for long-term agreements providing for joint action with Social-Democratic Parties, reformist trade unions and other organisations of the toilers against the class enemies of the proletariat. The chief stress in all this must be laid on developing mass action locally, to be carried out by the local organisations through local agreements.

While loyally carrying out the conditions of all agreements made with them, we shall mercilessly expose all sabotage of joint action on the part of persons and organisations participating in the united front. To any attempt to wreck the agreements—and such attempts may possibly be made—we shall reply by appealing to the masses while continuing untiringly to struggle for the restoration of the broken unity of action. (ibid., p. 28-29, emphasis ours)

That is why Dimitrov does not talk about *the political role (that is, active and subjective role)* of the social-democracy in the rise of fascism, as demonstrated by the likes of Noske and Schiedemanns, but only about *the historical role (that is, passive, due to their policy of class collaborationism, and objective role)* of the social-democracy in the rise of fascism. Social-democracy has been criticized at several places in the report by Dimitrov. However, either the criticism refers to the period of past where social-democracy is indicted for its objective role in the rise of fascism, or it refers only to the historical-objective role, and not political-subjective role, and for the contemporary period with fascism victorious in Germany and Italy, it talks about bifurcation of social-democracy in “revolutionary” and “reactionary” camps. After the description of the historical-objective role of social-democracy in the rise of fascism, Dimitrov writes:

*Comrades, it is not simply because we want to dig up **the past** that we speak of the causes of the victory of fascism, that we point to the historical responsibility of the Social-Democrats for the defeat of the working class, and that we also point out our own mistakes in the fight against fascism. (ibid., p. 17, emphasis ours)*

The attitude was clear from the report: *the formation of fronts through the leadership talks only; the ceasing of active ideological and political propaganda against social-democracy among the masses during the existence of ‘popular front’; looking for a ‘good social-democracy’ among the social-democratic parties. However, what happened with the collapse of the ‘popular fronts’ in Europe?*

*Where did this 'good' and 'revolutionary social-democracy' go? Why after November 1938 everyone from Dimitrov to Manuilsky was calling for the exposure of social-democracy as the main and principal task of communists? Had all the 'good social democrats' already joined the communist parties? Even though some of them retained the word 'popular front' but said that *now the 'popular front' can be formed only from below, circumventing the social-democratic parties and their leadership*. Actually, the call was for return to the policy of the united front of the working class against fascism.*

Now, let us understand how the 'popular front' policy practically meant class-collaboration and capitulation and it was precisely because of these contradictions of the policy that the Comintern abandoned this policy. Jane Degras, editor of the collection of Comintern documents, has made some very pertinent observations in this regard. Degras argues:

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)

Degras points out further:

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.**' (ibid., p. 427, emphasis ours)

By late-1938, the open criticisms of 'popular front' in Comintern were becoming increasingly visible. Degras writes:

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*)

We wrote about this blunt admission of Manuilsky:

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.* (Sinha, A. 2025. *AMDB*, p. 445, *emphasis ours*)

Degras points out that in 1938 itself, the comments about the betrayal of the social-democracy, which only exacerbated and became more apparent after the beginning of the war, had been becoming more and more acerbic and aggressive. Degras writes:

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. (Degras, op.cit., p. 442-43)

It is noteworthy, there is no talk about the "reactionary social-democracy" and "revolutionary social-democracy" here! **The reason is clear: the social-democracy as a whole had shown its true colors by the end of 1937 in France as well as Spain.** By 1940, Manuilsky had become even more vocal:

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. (quoted in AMDB, p. 453, emphasis ours)

The ECCI Manifesto on the 22nd Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, clearly calls for abandoning the policy of the 'popular front', as it systematically says that any front against fascism would exclude the social-democracy:

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... (quoted in AMDB, p. 458-59, emphasis ours)

Degras points out that the practical outcome of the 'popular front' was precisely the abandoning of political criticism of social-democracy. Regarding the attempts to form 'popular fronts' in Germany and Italy, Degras points out:

In Germany, Ulbricht wrote, the KPD still maintained its sectarian attitude, and failed to understand the new situation. 'What is required is bold initiative for the creation of a German people's front.' Fascist demagoguery was having its effect, and the masses remained passive, but Hitler could be overthrown by the struggle 'to establish a democratic regime of peace, liberty, and progress'. This struggle was still being hampered by the SPD's refusal to form a united front, as well as by Nazi terror. **In July 1937 the Italian socialist and communist parties agreed on joint action, during which each party would refrain from criticizing or interfering in the affairs of the other.** (Degras, J. *op.cit.* p. 413, *emphasis ours*)

Dimitrov himself had been realizing this fact and in 1937 itself he argued for the need to fight against social-democracy, ideologically and politically, which was met with strong protests. Degras writes:

Dimitrov's statement that it was necessary to put an end to social-democracy provoked a strong protest from the French socialists, and the committee that was examining the possibility of SFIO-CPF amalgamation adjourned sine die. (*ibid.*, p. 413)

Now let us also see what Nicos Poulantzas, whose work on fascism and the Comintern has attained the status of a Marxist classic, says. His arguments sum up the problems with the policy of the 'popular front' in a succinct way. It will also make Com. Thakur comprehend **why** the policy of the 'popular front' led to the line of class

collaboration and capitulation. *The germs were inherent in the very understanding of what fascism was.* **If fascism is defined as the dictatorship of a specific faction of the bourgeoisie, rather than the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dominance of one particular faction, the strategic conclusion emanating from such characterization will naturally lead to class collaborationism.** This is precisely the crux of the matter that comrades like Com. Thakur do not understand. Let us see what Poulantzas writes in this regard.

First of all, Poulantzas points to the root of the problem:

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 anti-fascist 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, N. 1979. *Fascism and Dictatorship*, Verso, London, p. 97, emphasis ours)

Poulantzas points out that rise of fascism definitely represents a restructuring of the relationship among various factions of the bourgeoisie within the ruling bloc, whereby, the big monopoly finance capital gains decisive ascendancy over the other factions. **However, this does not mean that this particular faction of bourgeoisie exercises dictatorship over other factions of the bourgeoisie!** Instead, it mitigates and suppresses the contradictions among the various factions with the absolute dominance of the big monopoly finance capital, through exceptional means. Poulantzas correctly points out:

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, emphasis ours)

Then, Poulantzas summarizes how and why the policy stipulated on an incorrect theoretical understanding led to what it finally led to:

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)

We have discussed all these things in greater detail in our work *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders*, which Com. Thakur has attempted to critique. However, it is clear from his couple of interventions in the ongoing debate that instead of reading the book "cover-to-cover", he focused all his energies in defending the erroneous and practically failed line of the 'popular front' by scavenging through books and documents for quotes that supposedly support his position. It is a

different matter altogether that he has failed “with a twinkle of an eye” even in that because he ended up collecting all the quotes that go against his position! The result? “Darkness of utter confusion”! Because the quotations he has selected to prove the correctness of his position actually disprove him or are completely irrelevant to the ongoing discussion. Let us see how Com. Thakur has achieved this brilliant feat.

Com. Thakur quotes Dimitrov for proving that shift to the policy of ‘popular front’ was not a pathological reaction to the extreme “left” deviation which set in from the Fifth Congress and became dominant in the Sixth Congress. Com. Thakur writes:

“Dimitrov said: “The complete unanimity displayed at the Congress indicates that the necessity of revising our policy and tactics in accordance with the changed conditions and on the basis of the extremely abundant and instructive experience of the past few years, has come to be fully recognized in our ranks” and “It is the great service of French Communist Party and the French proletariat that by their fighting against fascism in a united proletarian front, they helped to prepare the decisions of our Congress, which are of such tremendous importance for the workers of all countries. But what has been done in France constitutes only initial steps. Our Congress is mapping out the tactical line for the years immediately ahead, could not confine itself to merely recording this experience. It went further.”

“So, it is crystal clear that “complete unanimity” was not a “pathological reaction”, not a pendulum movement from one extreme to another extreme, from ‘left’ dominance to right dominance, but revision of “policy and tactics in accordance with the changed conditions and on the basis of the extremely abundant and instructive experience of the past few years”, particularly from “the great service of French Communist Party and the French proletariat.”” (Thakur, P. S. 2025. Mass Line, Sept-Oct 2025, p. 19)

What? How? How does the above quote prove that the shift of the Seventh Congress to the policy of the 'popular front' in "complete unanimity" was not a pathological reaction to the extreme "left" deviation that prevailed in the preceding period? Did Com. Thakur expect that Dimitrov would say this in his report? Or did he expect that Manuisky would admit that in his interventions during the Seventh Congress? **It is clear that Com. Thakur does not have a clue what pathological reaction means.**

Let us show from a few quotes from the Comintern documents from the period since the Sixth Congress that the policy shift to the 'popular front' was indeed the pendulum swinging from extreme "left" to the right. Let us see an excerpt from an article 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)

Now compare this with the line of the 'popular front'. Again, in April 1931, from the Eleventh ECCI Plenum, we see these words:

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)

The Twelfth ECCI Plenum says:

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)

We would invite comrades from CPI (ML) Mass Line to consider these excerpts mainly written between 1929 and 1932, the period of extreme "left" deviation in Comintern. The calls for united resistance against fascism by the Second International as well as the Comintern parties began again only from 1933 with the complete defeat of the left in Germany due to the ultra-"left" mistakes of the period after the Sixth Congress. From late-1933 and 1934, the practical experiments of the 'popular front' began in France, which later became the basis of the policy shift introduced by Dimitrov. This is what we call a 'pendulum shift from extreme "left" to right deviationism", a pathological reaction. How did Com. Thakur even expect Dimitrov to express this fact, who was the one who formulated the line characterized by right-deviationism?!

One can evaluate this history not on the basis of what was spoken or written in Dimitrov's report! This is common-sense! However, Com. Thakur, "with a twinkle of an eye", prefers to remain on his own trip! Subsequently, Com. Thakur presents a few more quotes from Dimitrov's report to prove that there was no pendulum shift, there was no pathological reaction. We do not know how a scientific Marxist can rely on such methodology! Whether there was a pathological reaction can be determined only *post festum* and through objective analysis of the history of the Comintern. However, Com. Thakur did not care to read the documents of the Comintern before or after 1935 Seventh Congress. As a consequence, he

naively takes every word of Dimitrov report literally. Marx once said that the objective activity of a man cannot be evaluated by the subjective notions that he has about it. Dimitrov's report and proposed policy shift cannot be judged based on what *he* said or wrote in the report! It has to be judged on the basis of actual history, the objective facts.

Then Com. Thakur gives an excerpt from the 1940 May Day Manifesto of the ECCI to prove that the Comintern never gave up the policy of the 'popular front' because the term 'popular front' is used in this excerpt! Here is the quote:

In the May Day Manifesto, 1940, Comintern clearly said: "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."

This is ridiculous! The quote itself explains that except the word 'popular front', nothing of the policy of the 'popular front' proposed by the Comintern in the Seventh Congress remains in this excerpt. This manifesto itself makes it abundantly clear later, but Com. Thakur thought that since he has found the word 'popular front', he can now prove that the Comintern never abandoned the policy of the 'popular front'! Let us see what is written in the same manifesto:

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.

Even before that in November 1939, Dimitrov wrote:

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**.

So, what remained of the policy of the ‘popular front’ since 1938? Nothing except the term! Because the policy was fundamentally based on making a distinction between the ‘revolutionary’ and ‘reactionary’ camps of social-democracy and the emphatic calls to form a general ‘united front from above’ with the former, without any political independence. The policy was based on approaching the masses of working class in social-democratic trade unions through the leadership of their parties and mass organizations. As we saw above, the ‘popular fronts’ had been formed on the basis of suspending all criticism of the social-democrats except when they openly broke the agreements of the front. *In practice, the communists did not expose the social-democracy even when the social-democrats had been sending communist trade union leaders and activists to jail at the behest of the bourgeoisie, as we saw above.* Such was the actual outcome of this class collaborationist policy!

It was precisely due to the collapse of the ‘popular front’ experiments in Spain, France, Germany (where the experiment never really took off) and other countries that the process of reconsidering this policy began in the Comintern. However, instead of an open and above-board self-criticism, Dimitrov and Manuilsky resorted to the pretext of “war and treachery of social-democracy” and talked about “real popular front” of the “working class”! Didn’t communists have sufficient experience of this treachery already? Didn’t they witness their betrayal since the first imperialist war itself or during the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany itself? What changed in the essential nature of the social-democracy? Dimitrov marked a change in his report that a certain section of social-democracy (including the leadership!) is becoming revolutionary! However, he does not mention even once this “revolutionary” camp of social-democracy after November 1938! **Why? Where did it go?** Because the real and concrete turn of events had demonstrated beyond doubt that the policy of the ‘popular front’ itself was erroneous. Manuilsky went on to claim in 1940 that the task of exposing the social-democracy in the communist movement had never been as important and as

urgent! However, here and there, the Dimitrov-Manuilsky leadership continued to drop the term “popular front” along with the term ‘united front from below’ and adjectives like “real”, to circumvent a clear and open self-criticism. And who took the mantle of defending the theory of ‘popular front’ after the Comintern stopped talking about it, after the *History of the CPSU (B)* not mentioning about it even once? Everywhere in the world, mostly, it was the social-democrats or those with serious social-democratic deviations! We have seen the example of Foster as well as the soviet revisionists above. Such examples abound in our country as well.

Com. Thakur once again fails to see the context and resonates Hamlet’s answer to Polonius’ question (*‘What do you read, my lord?’*): “words, words, words!” The only difference being that Com. Thakur excavates only those words that he wants to read, through the tool of book-index. The result? His claim on the basis of the above excerpt that the Comintern did not abandon the policy of the ‘popular front’! What can we say?

Com. Thakur says:

So, it is crystal clear that Comintern never gave up the policy of Popular Front. Earlier what was both from above and from below, now because of ‘principal leaders of social democratic parties had crossed over wholly and completely into the camp of imperialists or like French radicals were directly in charge of war, it will be only from below. Task remained same — “establishing a fighting alliance between the proletariat, on the one hand, and the toiling peasantry and basic mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie”. (Thakur, P. S. 2025. *Mass Line*, Sept-Oct 2025, p. 20)

If the task of “establishing a fighting alliance between the proletariat, on the one hand, and the toiling peasantry and basic mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie”, was the identifying and determining feature of the policy of the ‘popular front’, **then what was the difference between the policy of the ‘popular front’ and the policy of the ‘united front of the working class’?! Com. Thakur naively takes**

words on their face-value and fails to understand the text as well as the context! The aim of the policy of the 'united front of the working class' was exactly the same! In general, the policy of united front is precisely this. The question was how to achieve this aim: whether relying mainly on the 'united front from below' (that is, approaching the masses of working class and working people directly without necessary recourse to the leadership of various non-communist parties and mass organizations) as the general policy (as Stalin said: this is the foundation) and forming particular issue-based alliance with all non-fascist bourgeois parties and their mass organizations including the social-democrats, socialists, radicals, reformists, etc. as the particular policy? OR, relying mainly on the general fronts with social-democrats, socialists, etc. and subordinate the policy of the 'united front from below' to it? That was the question!

Dimitrov formally said that the 'popular front' will be based on 'proletarian united front'; however, his own policy prescriptions in the report called upon the communist parties to do the opposite. Any serious reader of the report will immediately see that. This is precisely the point of Poulantzas. And this was precisely the point of Mao and Kang Sheng who criticized the Spanish comrades for surrendering the proletarian political independence. We have already cited the cases where the 'popular fronts' had been formed on the basis of suspension of ideological or political criticism. Dimitrov himself restricts, in his report, the political independence of criticism of social-democracy to those events when the social-democrats violate the agreements of the front!

Then Com. Thakur makes a totally off-target accusation against us. He says:

Strangely and curiously comrade AS asked a question: "Dimitrov fails to explain why this become possible only after the war. This become possible means "it is possible to win over the democratic, radical and left leaning masses of the people directly". So now, the position is clear. Even if situation is conducive for a agreement with social democratic parties, com.

AS is opposed to that. This is the crux of the matter. In the Third Congress of Comintern, that was the debate on 'open letter'. Actually to some revolutionary forces, forces of joint activities, forces of united front will be pure. (Thakur, P. S. *op.cit.*, p. 20)

Can Com. Thakur quote where have we made such a proposal? Have we ever said that in no condition a front shall be formed with social-democrats? In fact, Com. Thakur *knows* that we (our organization) are already part of several issue-based anti-fascist fronts with different sorts of organizations, including the social-democrats, socialists, etc. First of all, when we ask why organizing the masses of working people including the working class became possible for Dimitrov only after the war, we are not saying that formation of particular united fronts from above with social-democrats is prohibited! **Again, how Com. Thakur took that leap “with a twinkle of an eye”, is a mystery to us!** This question was posed to reveal the reverting, by Dimitrov, to the policy of the 'united front of the working class' and abandoning of the policy of the 'popular front' where he argues that the masses of working people *now* have to be mobilized in an anti-fascist united front, without and in spite of the social-democratic parties and organizations and their leaderships. **We asked why it became possible only after 1938! Why not before that? Why not since 1935 itself?** However, just look, how Com. Thakur has interpreted it! It stupefies us how can the comrade misunderstand simple words like that!

Moreover, have we ever said that there can be no particular united fronts with social-democrats? No! But Com. Thakur harks back to the example of 'open letter', which, we already showed, Com. Thakur did not understand in text or in context! What have we written on the question of fronts with social-democrats? Let us see:

Due to the above structural factors, today the policy of the 'popular front' cannot even have any temporally and spatially-specific particular and limited applicability. What we need today is a revisualizing of the Leninist policy of united front of the

working class from below, in general, **and the policy of particular united front of the working class from above, that is, forming of particular tactical issue-based alliances with social-democrats and other non-fascist bourgeois parties/organizations, while maintaining complete political independence of the proletariat.** (Sinha, A. 2024. *Fascism in the Twenty-first Century: Elements of Continuity and Change*, key paper presented at the Hyderabad Seminar on Fascism in December 2024-January 2025, *emphasis ours*)

Explaining the origins of the policy of the ‘united front of the working class’ in the Third Congress, under the leadership of Lenin, we wrote in the same seminar paper:

Against the rising tide of reaction, Lenin gave the slogan of ‘to the masses’. This practically meant the conscious attempt on the part of the revolutionary proletariat to win over, not only the masses of the working class, but also lower and middle peasantry and urban lower and middle classes, that is, in general, the masses of the petty-bourgeoisie. The concrete policy that was prescribed was that of ‘united front of the working class’. **This policy did not preclude the possibility of the forming particular issue-based alliances ‘from above’ with the social-democratic parties and other workers parties, and even other progressive democratic bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties.** However, this was the secondary task. The first and principal task was to win over the masses of workers in all trade unions and mass organizations, led by other bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties, and, win over the masses of working peasantry and urban petty-bourgeoisie. In other words, the principal task was to form united front against fascism ‘from below’, while the secondary task, subordinate to the first task, **was to form united front ‘from above’, which meant forming particular issue-based alliances against fascism with social-democratic, other workers and other bourgeois parties.** (*ibid.*, *emphasis ours*)

We would earnestly like to know the source of this leap on part of Com. Thakur. Further, *Com. Thakur, failing miserably to make a distinction between general united front from below and particular united front from above, between the nature of alliance with the social-democrats under the policy of the 'united front of the working class' on the one hand and the nature of alliance with the social-democrats under the policy of the 'popular front' on the other, writes this completely non-sense paragraph:*

The speciality of comrade AS and other comrades is that they have no problem to unite with social democratic forces and parties for issue based alliance, though they supported imperialist wars ever since 1914 itself, no problem of alliance with murderers of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, no problem of alliance with betrayers of working class between 1924 to 1929 and then complete capitulation and no problem of alliance with such forces, who were supporters of such governments, who suppressed German communists. But com. AS and others have serious opposition for a Popular Front with such forces. (Thakur, P. S. *op.cit.*, p. 20)

Well, the specialty of Com. Thakur is that he recreates a vulgar and crude version of everything that he reads! He asks us if we have no problem with forming issue-based alliance with the renegades of the working-class movement, namely the social-democrats, (he blabbers about a lot of things in the process!), then why do we have problem with the 'popular front'?! **Well, because the nature of fronts with social-democrats under the policy of the 'popular front' is qualitatively different from the nature of fronts with social-democrats under the policy of the 'united front'!** And precisely due to this nature of the social-democrats, only issue-based particular tactical alliances can be formed with the social-democrats! In the case of the 'popular front', the nature of the front is that of a *general and strategic front* which naturally compromises the political independence of the communists in such fronts; on the contrary, in the case of the 'united front of the working class', the *issue-based particular tactical fronts* are formed which work on

particular issues or particular set of issues; they are not the general strategy to defeat fascism and restore bourgeois democracy, which is the necessary dialectical other of fascism for the policy of the 'popular front'. This is elementary. This is basic. This is ABC of the history of the united front policy of the communists in the context of fighting against fascism. However, Com. Thakur is blind to these differences and asks an out-an-out senseless question: **if we are not opposed to forming issue-based particular united front from above with the social-democrats, why are we opposed to the general anti-fascist popular front with them?!**

This is tiring, to say the least. In the course of this whole exchange, this point has been iterated and re-iterated, emphasized and re-emphasized, stated and restated, underlined and re-underlined so many times that this banal question reminds us of an old saying popular in Hindi: *'The entire Ramayana is finished, and you ask: whose father was Sitaji!'*

Com. Thakur in Defence of Dimitrov: A Risky Proposal for Com. Dimitrov

In this last subhead, Com. Thakur criticizes us for having suspicions on Dimitrov's communist character because on the question of the 'popular front' we criticized him for dodging the responsibility and circumventing the necessity of an honest self-criticism. However, only a communist completely untrained in the political culture of revolutionary communism would say that criticizing a comrade on circumventing self-criticism is doubting his communist character! This is a very common criticism that we make of each other in our day-to-day revolutionary practice. In fact, Com. Thakur himself has tried to make this criticism against us on the question of Stalin's absence from the sessions of the Seventh Congress and we, too, on our part, have criticized Com. Thakur in the same way on the question of his shifting positions from 'popular front defeated

fascism' to 'defeat of the popular fronts is a well-documented fact'. **Are we questioning each other's communist character?** On our part, we can assure Com. Thakur that we are not doing any such thing. We do consider Dimitrov a communist revolutionary. However, his line of the 'popular front' was certainly an example of serious right-deviation which required an open and above-board self-criticism after its practical failure everywhere, instead of blaming the failure on the contingent factors like war or obvious factors like the treachery of the social-democrats, which is in-built in their very political and ideological nature.

Moreover, we made this criticism of Dimitrov not on the basis of our whims and fancies. We quoted from a variety of communist sources, including the documents of the Comintern, copiously to show that even though in practice, Dimitrov-led Comintern shifted its policy back to the united front of the working class after the collapse of 'popular fronts' everywhere by the end of 1938, it did not undertake any real critical re-evaluation of what went wrong with the policy of the 'popular front'. Instead, we find clear instances of avoiding this self-criticism, which, if undertaken earnestly, would have enlightened the world communist movement, in general. Absence of this self-criticism also led varieties of social-democrats to misuse this policy as the beginning point of the theory of 'peaceful transition' to socialism, as we saw in this essay. Even today, it is the social-democrats and revisionists who embrace the policy of the 'popular front' (though they even distort this policy and reduce it to electoral alliances, something opposed systematically by Dimitrov!) most enthusiastically because it bodes well for their politics today.

Com. Thakur does not need to be over-sensitive about our criticism of Dimitrov for circumventing self-criticism over the failure of the 'popular front' policy! Let us see what Stalin said to Dimitrov as a criticism, implying that one of his statements in a press conference facilitated Anglo-American imperialism:

We consider it our duty to bring to your attention the fact that the part of your statement at the press conference in Romania

(in Sofia) concerning the federation or confederation of people's democracies, including Greece, Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc., is viewed by the Moscow friends as **harmful, causing detriment to the countries of the new democracy and facilitating the struggle of the Anglo-Americans against these countries.**

We consider your statement about a customs union between allied countries—i.e., between countries having treaties of mutual assistance—**equally careless and harmful.** It might be interpreted to mean that you include the Soviet Union, which has or will have in the near future treaties of mutual assistance with these countries.

It is hard to figure out what could have made you make such rash and injudicious statements at the press conference." (Dimitrov, G. 2003. 'Stalin to Dimitrov, 24 January 1948', The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933-49. (ed. by Ivo Banac), Yale University Press, p. 435, emphasis ours)

Is Stalin doubting the communist character of Dimitrov, as his statement facilitates the imperialists according to Stalin!? No! We can cite many other examples where revolutionary leaders have criticized their comrades in equally damning words.

Similarly, let us see in what words Stalin criticizes Manuilsky in front of Dimitrov and others regarding an article that Manuilsky wrote about Stalin:

—Did you know about this article?

D[imitrov]: I knew about it. He wanted to include a polemical passage against Kuusinen's article in Pravda on the twentieth anniversary of the CI, to which I objected, and he threw that part out. He believed that Kuusinen's article had been incorrect politically, because it pointed up D[imitrov]'s role at the Seventh Congress (setting new tasks).

J. V. [Stalin]: Which D[imitrov] did at the Seventh Congress—why not write about it?—And so whoever writes about

D[imitrov] is an opportunist, and whoever keeps mum about him isn't an opportunist? That's a fine how-do-you-do!

Kuusinen is so much more honest than Manuilsky. —We know Manuilsky! He is a man of moods: goes from one extreme to the other. Strictly a lightweight!

—He's kept you "under his thumb," hasn't he?

D[imitrov]: It's not that he's kept me "under his thumb," but he takes advantage of my illness, of the fact that I am in no condition to be at my post the way I should be.

J. V. [Stalin]: He certainly knows how **to dodge and intrigue.**

D[imitrov]: He always leaves the impression that he is acting with CC clearance.

J. V. [Stalin]: What CC clearance! You should be keeping a tight rein on him! **Don't leave him to his own devices! He could ruin things!** After May Day we shall consider sending a different comrade of ours as well into the CI." (ibid., p. 105, emphasis ours)

Was Manuilsky ever expelled from the party during Stalin's time? No. Till 1952, he was the member of the Central Committee. After that, he served as Ukrainian ambassador to the UN. If Com. Thakur reads the criticisms that Lenin, Mao and other revolutionary teachers made of their comrades during debates and ponders over the terminology used by them, he would be scandalized, being such an over-sensitive comrade! This over-sensitivity will only hurt you, comrade! Our humble advice would be to get rid of it.

In the end, Com. Thakur quotes from the obituary issued by Russian comrades including Stalin at the death of Dimitrov. What can we say about it? Obituaries are not meant for political criticism, Com. Thakur! If you want to understand our or anyone's criticism of Dimitrov and the policy of the 'popular front', it would be better to stick to the documents of the Comintern, history of the experiment of the 'popular front' and the writings of the leaders of the Comintern and its constituent parties. Obituaries are not the best source for that purpose.

In Lieu of Conclusion...

From the latest response of Com. Thakur, a couple of things became clear to us:

first, he ***has not read*** the two of our writings on fascism (and popular front) “cover-to-cover” that he attempts to critique;

second, whatever fragmentary readings he has done of the two writings, ***he has not understood or grossly misunderstood most of them***;

third, consequently, he has not answered the basic questions of the debate, rather, he has clung on refuting certain facts of certain scholars; ***there, too, he is wrong***;

fourth, due to not reading our writings in totality, ***he makes a number of off-the-mark comments and remarks which do not apply on us***, for instance, we do not want to fight for democratic and civil rights but only for socialist revolution directly, or, we reject any kind of alliance with social-democrats and other non-fascist bourgeois parties, etc. ***These are childish and juvenile kind of remarks to which we can only respond with a smile and humble request that ‘please read before you write!’***

fifth, Com. Thakur tries to quote from classics from Marx, Lenin to Stalin; however, most of the times, ***he fails to understand what he is quoting, in text as well as in context***, as we saw above in the context of Lenin’s quote regarding Terracini’s proposal and the ‘open letter’;

sixth, Com. Thakur ***shifts his positions constantly in the process of debate itself***. We showed that in the beginning he did not recognize the distinction and relation between the ‘united front from above’ and the ‘united front from below’; this time, he said that this distinction is well-recognized! Similarly, in his first intervention, he claimed that ‘popular front’ defeated fascism and Nazism, and now

he says that the defeat of the popular front is a “well-documented fact”;

seventh, he does not answer the central questions of the debate and remains stuck on peripheral facts and issues and there, too, his position is comprehensively incorrect.

Finally, we would urge the comrades of CPI (ML) Mass Line to read the ongoing debate carefully from the beginning till now; please also read our basic writings on fascism and popular front, that is, the key paper on fascism presented in the Hyderabad Seminar and *A Menagerie of Dogmatic Blunders* in order to understand the off-the-mark and irrelevant remarks that Com. Thakur has made; once Com. Thakur has really read our position in totality, this debate would be more fruitful for all of us, because till now, most of our energies have been spent on demonstrating that the criticism of Com. Thakur is based on misunderstanding and misappropriation of our position because Com. Thakur has not read our position in totality; irrelevant comments and off-the-mark remarks that he makes precisely due to ignorance about our positions abound in his critiques; moreover, one repeatedly sees gross misunderstanding by him of the quotes that he himself presents as he fails to understand the very meaning and context of those quotations. If the critique is made from a position of proper understanding of the position of the opponent and a proper understanding of the theory and history of the question involved (here, the question of the ‘popular front’), then the debate will be quite enriching and a learning experience for all of us. Right now, it is none of that as most of the time is being spent on clarifying the elementary and basic things.