

Attitude towards opposition bourgeois parties and bourgeois election alliances

Lessons from the history of the International Communist Movement

The attitude of the Communist Revolutionaries towards opposition section of the ruling classes, towards bourgeois parliamentary institutions and towards bourgeois election alliances have become important contentious issue affecting their unity.

Let us study this question deeply from the experiences of past history of the international communist movement and their lessons for the present.

For this, we must study the lessons from four historical periods :

1. Lenin's teachings, particularly between 1905 and 1912—the Duma period of Tsarist Russia.
2. Dimitrov's Report to the 7th Congress of the Third Communist International in 1935 and its implementation in Western Europe.
3. Experience of the West European Communist Parties in the post Second World War period.
4. The effect of the theory of Peaceful Transition to Socialism peddled by the modern revisionists headed by the CPSU from 1956 onwards.

Before we go into Lenin's teachings, let us recollect the main events of the Duma period of Russia.

The Russian Revolution of 1905—bourgeois democratic revolution—was a product of the defeat of Tsarist Russia in its war against Japan.

Commenting on the surrender of Port Arthur to Japan, Lenin said :

“Port Arthur has surrendered.....The moral power of the mighty empire is crumbling.....Sentence has been passed upon the entire political system.....Advancing Progressive Air has dealt backward and rea-

ctionary Europe an irreparable blow it signifies the collapse of our political system.....”(Lenin, Vol. 8)

In the background of these events, the Russian Revolution started with the events of January 9, 1905. Subsequently the workers and other sections of the people took to political strikes ; peasant struggles broke out against the feudal landlords. It led to revolts in the Army and Navy, showing the readiness of the people for an uprising.

It was during this period that the Tsar announced the Bulygin Duma. The Bolsheviks boycotted it. Bulygin Duma never came into existence. It was swept away by the advance of the revolutionary tide.

Again in October 17, 1905, the Tsar was forced to announce another Duma, promising to extend the voting rights to broader sections of the people, to divert the people from the path to Revolution. But the Bolsheviks again called for the boycott of the elections and to continue the revolutionary struggle.

In the background of the defeat the December Uprising in Moscow in 1905, the first Duma was convened. But finding that the First Duma was not sufficiently submissive to the Tsar, and being afraid of the growing discontent of the people, the Tsar abolished the First Duma in the summer of 1906 and decided to call the Second Duma. The Bolsheviks did participate officially in the Second Duma in 1906, the Third Duma in 1907 and the fourth Duma in 1912.

This shows that the Bolsheviks boycotted the Duma in 1905 and part of 1906. They participated in the Duma from the Second Duma onwards.

Lenin's teachings of this period 1905-1912 the Duma period, were when the revolutionary forces—the workers, peasants and the army—were advancing towards an armed uprising. At that time Lenin correctly called for the boycott of the Bulygin Duma.

Lenin said that Bulygin Duma 'is in fact Tsarism's deal with the landlords and the big bourgeoisie', that the Constitutional Democratic Party is ready to run away from the revolution and make a deal with the Tsar to 'preserve the monarchy'. He further said :

“The only question is when and how this deal will take place. The task confronting the party of the proletariat is to delay conclusion of this deal for as long as possible, to split up the bourgeoisie as much as possible, to derive from the bourgeoisie's temporary appeals to the people the greater advantage for the revolution, and meanwhile prepare the forces of the revolutionary people (the proletariat and the peasantry) for the forcible overthrow of the autocracy and for the alienation, the neutralisation of the treacherous bourgeoisie.” (p. 180, Vol. 9) (Emphasis ours)

About the character of the Bulygin Duma, Lenin said :

“A consultative assembly of representatives of the landlords and the big bourgeoisie, elected under the supervision and with the assistance of autocratic government’s servants on the basis of an electoral system so indirect, so blatantly based on property and social estate qualifications, that it is sheer mockery of the idea of popular representation.” (Vol. 9, p. 179)

Lenin called for an active boycott, but not for a passive one. He declared :

“We must exert every effort to make the real use of boycott in extending and intensifying agitation, so that it shall not be reduced to mere passive abstention from voting. If we are not mistaken, this idea is already fairly widespread among the comrades working in Russia, who express it in the words : active boycott. As distinct from passive abstention, active boycott should imply increasing agitation ten-fold, organising meetings everywhere, taking advantage of election meetings, even if we have to force our way into them, holding demonstrations, political strikes and so on and so forth. It goes without saying that to further agitation and struggle in this connection, temporary agreements with various groups of revolutionary bourgeois democrats, generally permitted by a number of our Party resolutions, are especially expedient. But here we must, on the one hand, steadfastly preserve the class individuality of the Party of the proletariat, and must not for a single moment, abandon our Social-Democratic criticism of our bourgeois allies ; on the other hand, we should be failing in our duty as the party of the advanced class if in our agitation we failed to produce an advanced revolutionary slogan at the present stage of the democratic revolution.” (Vol. 9, p. 182)

What were the alternative slogans that Lenin gave along with the boycott of the Bulygin Duma ?

An “armed uprising”, setting up the provisional revolutionary government to call for a genuine Constituent Assembly based on universal franchise.

Lenin said :

“1. convocation of a popular constituent assembly 2. arming of the people 3. political freedom—immediate repeal of all laws that contradict it 4. complete cultural and political freedom for all oppressed and disfranchised nationalities 5. an eight hour working day 6. the establishment of peasant committees for the support and implementation of all democratic reforms, among them agrarian reforms upto, including the confiscation of the landlords’ land.” (Vol 9, p. 183)

What is the mood, consciousness and preparedness required for the success of the slogan of boycott of elections ?

Lenin declared :

“Boycott is a declaration of open war against the old regime, a direct attack upon it, Unless there is a board revolutionary upswing, unless there is mass unrest which overflows, as it were, the bounds of the old legality, there can be no question of boycott succeeding”. (Vol. 13, p. 25)

He explained that the boycott of 1905 succeeded because there was “a sweeping, powerful and rapid upswing of the revolution”.

(Vol 13, p 24)

With such a conception the Bolsheviks of Russia stubbornly worked to advance the revolutionary struggle and as a result of their struggle, there were many workers political strikes, peasant uprisings, revolts in the army and navy, finally leading to armed uprising in December 1905.

But the Revolution of 1905 did not succeed and the revolutionary upswing began to recede after the summer of 1906.

After the defeat of December Uprising in 1905, the First Duma met. At first the Bolsheviks called for the boycott of this Duma also. But because of the weakness of the revolutionary movement, this boycott was not successful and as per the decision of the Union Congress of the Social Democratic Labour Party (the than Communist Party), the Party formed a workers, group in the First, Duma.

On this, Lenin says :

“In the State Duma there is a workers’ group of fifteen. How did these deputies get into the Duma ? They were not nominated by the workers, organisations. The Party did not authorise them to represent its interests in the Duma. Not a single local organisation of R. S. D. L. P. adopted a resolution (although in might have done) to nominate its members for the State Duma”.

“The worker deputies got into the Duma through non-party channels. Nearly all, or even all, got in by direct or indirect, tacit or avowed agreements with the Cadets. Many of them got into the Duma in such a way that it is difficult to tell whether they were elected as Constitutional Democrats or as Social Democrats. This is a fact, and a fact of enormous political importance. To hush it up, as many Social Democrats are doing today, is unpardonable and useless. Unpardonable, because it means keeping in the dark the electorate generally and the workers’ party in particular. Useless because the act is bound to come out in the course of events”.

“In declaring that the formation of a social democratic parliamentary group was desirable, the Unity Congress of the R. S. D. L. P. made a mistake by not taking this fact into account”. (Vol. 10, p. 402)

Principles guiding the participation in the Duma elections

In the Second Duma, the Bolsheviks did participate with definite political aims as laid down by Lenin :

“The principal objects of the Social-Democratic elections and Duma campaigns are : *firstly* to explain to the people the uselessness of the Duma as a means of satisfying the demands of the proletariat and the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie, especially the peasantry. *Secondly*, to explain to the people the impossibility of achieving political liberty by parliamentary methods *as long as the real power remains in the hands of the Tsar’s government*, and to explain the necessity of an armed uprising, of a provisional govt. and of a constituent assembly elected by universal, direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot. *Thirdly*, to criticise the First Duma and reveal the bankruptcy of Russian liberalism, and especially to show how dangerous and fatal it would be for the cause of the revolution if the liberal-monarchist Cadet Party were to play the predominant and leading role in the liberation movement.” (Vol 11, p. 300) (Emphasis ours)

“As the class party of the proletariat, the Social Democratic Party must remain absolutely independent throughout the election and Duma campaigns, and here too, must under no circumstances, merge its slogans or tactics with those of any other opposition or revolutionary party.

Therefore, at the first stage of the election campaign, i.e., before the masses, it must, as a general rule, come out absolutely independently and put forward only its own Party candidates.

Exceptions to this rule are permissible only in cases of extreme necessity and only in relation to parties that fully accept the main slogans of our immediate political struggle, i.e., those which recognise the necessity of an armed uprising and are fighting for a democratic republic. Such agreements, however, may only extend to the nomination of a joint list of candidates, without in any way restricting the independence of the political agitation carried on by the Social-Democrats.

In the workers’ curia, the Social Democratic Party must come out absolutely and refrain from entering into agreements with any other party”. (Vol 11, p. 300)

These were the guiding principles concerning the participation of Bolsheviks in all the subsequent Dumas.

Lenin further said :

“The attitude of the workers’ Party towards the masses is exactly the reverse. The important thing for us is not to get seats in the Duma by means of compromises; on the contrary, those seats are important only because and insofar as they can serve to develop the *political consciousness*

of the masses, to *raise* them to a higher political level, to *organise* them, **not** for the sake of philistine happiness, not for the sake of 'tranquility', or 'order' and 'peaceful (bourgeois) bliss', but for the *struggle*, the struggle for the complete emancipation of labour from all exploitation and all oppression. Only for this purpose, and only to the extent that they help as to achieve it, are seats in the Duma and the *whole* election campaign important for us". (Vol 11, p. 416)

According to Lenin, boycott or participation in elections, the aim is the same : to develop the political and revolutionary consciousness of the exploited masses and advance the revolutionary struggle depending on the consciousness of the people.

Describing the repressive conditions in which the Duma elections were being held in Russia at that time, Lenin said :

"The Duma election results demonstrate the physiognomy and strength of the various classes."

"The Franchise in Russia is neither direct not equal. In the first place, the peasants elect one delegate for ten households, elect a peasant delegate from among their number; the delegates so elected then elect a peasant elector, and the latter together with electors from other social estates, elect the deputies to the Duma. The system is the same for the land owner, urban and worker curias being fixed by law in the interests and the advantage of the upper classes, the landowners and the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, not only the revolutionary parties, but the opposition parties as well are subjected to the most barbarous, the most illegal police repression; then there is the complete absence of freedom of the press and assembly, arbitrary arrests and banishment, as well as the military courts operating in the greater part of Russia and the state of emergency connected with them". (Vol 12, p. 196)

Class approach towards political parties in the Duma

One of the striking features of the teachings of Lenin during this period is the class approach towards political parties in the Duma. Lenin says :

"No, gentlemen, the principal of class struggle is the very foundation of all Social-Democratic teachings and of all Social-Democratic policy. The proletarians, the peasants and the towns people are not such babes in arms that the ideas of representations can be dimmed in their minds by bitter disputes, or by the acute struggle between the classes. Our job is not to be sugary to them, but on the contrary, to teach them, from the Duma platform, to distinguish clearly between the parties and *understand their class roots which the sly bourgeoisie keep buried deep underground*". (p. 167, Vol. 12) (Emphasis ours)

With this approach, Lenin analysed the class character of the various political parties working in the Duma at that period. He divided all other parties into three sections—"Octobrists, the Cadets and the revolutionary or peasant democrats".

"We cannot of course expect the full and final consolidation of the parties of each type: the open entry of the various classes in Russian society into anything like a free political arena is too recent for that".

(Vol. 10, p. 455)

About the character of the Octobrists, Lenin said :

"The Octobrists are real class organisation of the landlords and the big capitalists. The counter-revolutionary (anti-revolutionary) character of this section of the bourgeoisie is perfectly obvious. It stands on the side of the government, although still haggling with it over the division of power. The Haydens and Co. sometimes even merge with the Cadets in opposition to the old authorities, but this does not make even the most credulous people, who are taken in by all sorts of 'opposition' forget the real nature of the Octobrist Party". (Vol. 10, p. 455)

About the character of the Cadets, Lenin said :

"The Cadets are the chief party of the second type. This party is not exclusively connected with any particular class in bourgeois society, but it is thoroughly bourgeois, none the less. Its ideal is a well-ordered bourgeois society, purged of feudal survivals and protected from the encroachments of the proletariat by institutions such as an Upper Chamber, a standing army, non-elected bureaucracy, draconian press laws, etc. The Cadets are a semi-landlord party. They want to ransom themselves from revolution. They long for a deal with the old authorities. They are afraid of independent revolutionary activity by the people. The more this party develops its public political activities, particularly in the Duma, the more marked become the inconsistency and instability. That is why the voices of shortsighted people, who are dazzled by momentary successes, in favour of supporting the Cadets, will never find wide support among the working class". (Vol. 10, pp. 455-456)

About the character of the Trudoviks, Lenin said :

"The third type of bourgeois party is the Trudoviks, i.e., the peasant deputies to the Duma, who issued their programme the other day. Revolutionary Social-Democrats have long been watching the rise of this type of political party in Russia. The Peasant Union was a nucleus of such a party. The radical unions of propertyless intellectuals gravitated towards it to some extent. The Socialist Revolutionaries developed in the same direction, growing out of the narrow shell that encased them as a group of intellectuals. The variety of types and shades of this trend fully corresponds to the variety of types and vast numbers of the 'toiling' petty

bourgeoisie in Russia. The main bulwark of this trend, of these parties, is the peasantry. Objective conditions compel the peasantry to wage a determined struggle against landlordism, against the power of the landlords and the whole of the old political system that is closely connected with it. These bourgeois democrats are *compelled* to become revolutionary, whereas the liberals, the Cadets and so forth, represent the bourgeoisie, whose conditions of existence *compel* it to seek a deal with the old authorities. It is natural also that the peasantry should clothe its aspirations in the mantle of utopias, i.e., unrealisable hopes, such as equalised land tenure under capitalism." (Vol. 10 p. 456.)

Lenin further explained :

"Next come the 'Trudoviks'. The parties of this type, namely the petty-bourgeois and predominantly peasant parties, are divided into the non-party 'Trodivik group' (which held a congress recently), the Popular Socialists and the Socialist Revolutionaries (the Polish Socialist Party etc., correspond more or less to the Socialist Revolutionaries). The only more or less consistent and determined revolutionaries and republicans among them are the S.R.'s. The Popular Socialist are much worse opportunists than our Mensheviks; strictly speaking, they are semi-Cadets. The non-party 'Trudovik group' has, perhaps, more influence among the peasantry than the others; but the strength of its democratic convictions is difficult to determine, although it is undoubtedly far more Left than the Cadets, and evidently belongs to the camp of revolutionary democracy". (Vol. 11, p. 282).

He further said :

"It is clear that *real* party agreement with the Trudoviks is *impossible*. It is clear that we must not under any circumstances help to unite the opportunist popular socialists with the revolutionary S R's; on the contrary we must split them and counterpose one to the other. It is clear that the existence of a non-party Trudovik Group makes it more to our advantage in all respects to preserve complete independence in order to exert a really revolutionary influence upon them, than to tie our hands and blur the distinctions between the monarchists and the republicans etc. It is *absolutely impermissible* for Social Democrats to blur these distinctions; and for this reason alone, it is necessary to reject blocs altogether, once the *present* grouping of parties unites the non-Party Trudoviks, the Popular Socialists and the Socialist Revolutionaries." (Vol. 11, p. 282).

Irreconcilable struggle against the Cadets, the liberal bourgeoisie

Another significant feature of the activities of the Bolsheviks and teachings of Lenin concerning this period is the irreconcilable struggle against the Cadets, the representatives of the liberal bourgeoisie, as the compromising party of the bourgeoisie in the opposition "the Party of the centre", as Lenin has characterised them.

In spite of the Cadets working under '*opposition flag*', Lenin denounced them 'as chafferers, stockjobbers,' dashing from 'one belligerent to the other.'

turning 'to the right' while 'the popular masses turn to the left' 'pursuing a counter revolutionary path', 'deserting to the side of the landlords and Tsarism against the fighting peasants', committing 'unprecedented acts of funkism in the Duma'. He condemned the Cadets as 'a decaying corpse'. He further said:

"Therefore our Duma deputies and all our Party organisations must bear in mind that we cannot make a single serious step forward in Social Democratic propaganda and agitation about the Balkan events without revealing, *from the Duma rostrum*, in leaflets and at meetings—the connection between the reactionary policy of autocracy and the hypocritical opposition of the Cadets. We shall never be able to explain to the people how harmful and reactionary the policy of tsarist government is, unless we explain the Cadet foreign policy is *essentially the same*. We cannot combat chauvinism and the Black Hundred spirit in foreign policy unless we combat the phrase mongering, the posing, the mental reservations and dodges of the Cadets". (Vol. 15, p. 224).

These are enough to show the irreconcilable ideological and political battle that Lenin carried against the counter-revolutionary nature of the Cadets, in spite of their being in the opposition. This only shows that Lenin took their being in the opposition as nothing but fake.

Exposure of the bourgeois deception

Keeping in line with this irreconcilable struggle against the Cadet Party, the Bolsheviks and comrade Lenin sharply exposed the deception of the bourgeois liberals from the platform of the Duma, during this whole period.

—When the first Duma was set up with the Cadets having the majority, they raised the slogan of 'responsible cabinet' representing the majority in the Duma. Lenin stoutly opposed it. He said :

"Such a cabinet will be a Cadet Cabinet and on the very morrow of its appointment it will have to draw up penalties for abuses of freedom. At the present time, such a cabinet, when the Star Chamber* is still in power in the land, *such a cabinet can only serve as a liberal screen for old regime. At the present time such a cabinet will only serve as a clock to conceal these pogrom-mongers for a time. ... But we, the proletariat must not directly or indirectly avowedly or tacitly, assume slightest*

* The "Star Chamber" was the name given to the special high court in England for political and religious matters which was abolished by the English Revolution of the 17th century.

In the period 1905-1907 in Russia the name "Star Chamber" was applied to the Court clique of reactionary dignitaries representing the upper ranks of the feudal landlords and bureaucrats.

responsibility for this attempt to disguise the old regime whatever our intentions, owing to objective conditions of the present political situation, such a slogan will have to bear part of the responsibility for this disguise, for this deal between the bourgeoisie and the old regime. Such a slogan will indirectly imply approval of the 'Cadet bills'. (Vol. 11, p. 22) (Emphasis ours)

—Immediately after the dissolution of the First Duma, both the Mensheviks and the Cadets raised the slogan of "fight for the resumption of Duma sessions". Opposing this, Lenin said :

"The absurdity of this slogan is too obvious. It is not even opportunism. It is sheer non-sense". (Vol 11, p. 16)

The Central Committee of the Social Democratic Labour Party came forward with slogan "fight against the government in defence of the Duma for the purpose of convening the Constituent Assembly." While welcoming it as a step forward, still Lenin said :

"In short, this formula gives rise to a number of incorrect and harmful 'retrograde' ideas. What is correct in it is wholly and entirely embodied in the reasons for our decision to fight, in the explanation of why the dissolution of the Duma is considered a sufficiently important ground for fighting". (Vol. 11 p. 116).

He further said,

"No Duma is of any use *if the people do not have power*. But how to get power? By *overthrowing* the old regime and establishing a new one, popular, free and elected". (p. 117, Vol 11).

"As regards the content of the struggle, we have already shown that after two years of revolution it now centres on the overthrow of the old regime. The complete achievement of this aim is possible only by means of an armed uprising of the whole people". (Vol. 11, p. 118).

These were the alternative slogans given by Lenin in opposition to the demand of the Cadets and Mensheviks for the "resumption of Duma sessions".

—Calling upon the representatives of the party in the Duma not to vote for the Bills of the Cadets, but to move their own Bills independently, Lenin said.

"Legislative work *must inevitably be placed in the hands of the Constitutional Democrats*'. Nothing of the sort. The Cadets, as leaders of the liberal 'Centre' in the Duma, have of a majority over the Black-Hundred-group, without our support. We must therefore table our own Social-Democratic Bills, not liberal and not petty-bourgeois Bills that are written in revolutionary language, not in official jargon, *and must put them to the*

vote. Let the Black Hundreds and the Cadets turn them down. We shall abstain from on the Cadet Bill as a whole, leaving the Cadets to defeat the Black Hundred thereby taking no responsibility on ourselves before the people for the poverty and worthlessness of Cadet pseudo-democracy". (Vol. 12, p. 183).

—Lenin asked the Party representatives not to depend on the Cadets even to put up bills or interpellations but "to count only on the support of the groups to the left of the Cadets". (Vol. 13, p. 132).

—When the Cadets brought a bill for the extension of the "budgetary powers of the (Third) Duma", the Party representative in the Duma declared: "*We support the proposal of the 40 because it tends towards an extension of the budgetary power of popular representative assembly*". (Third Duma).

Opposing this attitude, comrade Lenin declared :

"What was the object of this declaration of support for a proposal that was plainly lacking in principle, that was plainly inadequate, plainly signed by unprincipled people who were incapable of showing the slightest firmness—a proposal that was plainly and for all practical purposes worthless? This was not support for the militant bourgeoisie (a formula which many people like to justify their political spinelessness but support for the *wavering* liberal-*Octobrist* bourgeoisie". (p. 436, Vol 13)

Lenin called upon Party representatives in the Duma to "protect the honour of the socialist workers' Party! Do not allow yourselves to suffer failure by giving support to such liberalism!" (Vol. 13, p. 437)

—On the question of voting the budget, these were Lenin's instructions :

"On the question of the Budget, the Conference considers that in principle it is wrong to vote for the Budget as a whole.

It is also wrong to vote for items of the Budget of the class state which sanctions expenditure on instruments for the oppression of the masses (the armed forces, etc).

In voting for the reforms or for items of expenditure for cultural purposes, point of departure should be the principle of our programme, that Social Democrats reject reforms involving tutelage of the police and the bureaucracy over the working class.

Therefore the general rule should be to vote against the so-called reforms and items of expenditure for so-called cultural purposes introduced in the Duma.

In the special cases, where inspite of the general conditions, some improvement of the conditions of the working people is no more than probable, it is recommended that the deputies should abstain from voting and state their reasons for doing so.

Lastly, in exceptional cases, where there is no doubt that the workers will benefit, it is permissible to vote for a particular item; but it is recommended that the deputies should consult representatives of the Central Committee and the Party and trade union bodies.”
(Vol. 15, p. 329)

Against agreements and blocs with the opposition section of the ruling classes, as a general principle

Another very significant feature of the activities of the Bolsheviks and the teachings of Lenin in the whole period of Duma is refusal to have any agreements or blocs with any opposition section of the ruling classes for the sake of winning seats in the Duma. They followed a consistent stand of contesting the direct elections either in cities or rural areas on the basis of their own strength.

Welcoming the report about the success of Social-Democrats in Tiflis in 1906, comrade Lenin wrote :

“We welcome the successes of our comrades in the Caucasus. After the decision of the Unity Congress of our Party, the participation in the elections became obligatory, *on the condition, however, that the workers' Party did not enter into any blocs, i. e., agreements with other parties.*”
(Vol. 10, p. 424) (Emphasis ours)

On various occasions, Lenin says :

“The Right wing Social Democrats directed all their efforts towards forming an alliance with the Cadets (support of the Duma as a whole, support of the demand for a Duma cabinet). The Revolutionary Social Democrats, on the contrary, directed their tactics towards winning over from the Cadets the revolutionary bourgeois democrats, towards liberating these elements from the yoke of the Cadets and uniting them with the proletariat for militant aims.” (Vol. 11, p. 153)

Throughout the Duma period the Mensheviks advocated support of the Duma as a whole, support of the Cadets (under the guise of supporting the demand for the appointment of a Duma Cabinet). The Bolsheviks did their utmost to split the Trudoviks from the Cadets and supported the idea of forming “an Executive Committee of the Left groups in the Duma”.
(Vol. 11, p. 163)

“The Mensheviks supported a Cadet ministry and Cadet policy in the First Duma, while the Bolsheviks, parallel with propaganda in favour of an “executive committee of the Left”, resolutely exposed constitutional

illusions and Cadet counter-revolutionarism". Further, the Bolsheviks worked for a left block in the Second Duma elections, while the Mensheviks called for a bloc with the Cadets and so on and so forth". (Vol. 13, p. 111)

It is important to note that it was during this period comrade Lenin wrote his famous and historical article on 'Marxism and Revisionism' where he categorically says :

"The experience of alliances, agreements and blocs with the social reform liberals in the West and with the liberal reformists (Cadets) in the Russian Revolution, has convincingly shown that these agreements only blunt the consciousness of the masses, that they do not enhance but weaken the actual significance of their struggle, by linking fighters with elements who are least capable of fighting and the most vacillating and teacherous. Millerandism in France—the biggest experiment in applying revisionist political tactics on a wide, a really national scale—has provided a practical appraisal of revisionism that will never be forgotten by the proletariat all over the world". (Vol. 15, p. 37.)

"Opportunists throughout the world favour the policy of a bloc with the liberals, now openly and outrightly proclaiming and implementing it, now advocating or justifying election agreements with the liberals, support of their slogans etc." (Vol. 16, p. 308.)

Lenin says :

"Remember this, gentlemen; alliances and negotiations with the Cadets are the worst way of exercising pressure on them. In practice, it will mean blunting the independent struggle of the Social-Democrats, and not Social-Democratic pressure on the Cadets. It is those who relentlessly expose every false step of the Cadets that are helping to revolutionise the Duma and are 'exercising pressure' on the Cadets. Refusal to support these false steps exerts far more pressure on the Cadet Duma than any negotiations with the Cadets with a view to supporting them." (Vol. 11, p. 59)

"Therefore, class independence throughout the election and Duma campaigns is our most important general task." (Vol. 11, p. 279)

"Liebknecht teaches us that a Social Democrat must be able to expose the dangerous aspects of every ally in the bourgeois camp and not conceal them. Our Mensheviks, however, cry out that we must fight not the Cadets but the Black Hundred danger! It would be useful for these people to ponder over the following words of Liebknecht: 'The stupid and cruel outrages perpetrated by the police, politicians, the encroachments of the Anti-Socialist Law, the draconian law, the law against parties that advocate revolution, may evoke feelings of contempt and pity; but the enemy who proffers us his hand for an electoral agreement and worms his

way into our ranks as a friend and brother is the enemy, *the only enemy we have to fear*". (Vol. 11, p. 402)

"Bebel has time and again exposed the sheer falsity, the sheer mendacity of this policy, and we can say without exaggeration that every Social-Democrat should know and remember his words.

'If I, as a Social Democrat, enter into an alliance with bourgeois parties, it is a thousand to one that the bourgeois parties will gain by it, not the Social Democrats. We shall be the losers. *It is a political law that wherever the Rights and Lefts enter an alliance, the Lefts lose, the Rights win . . .*'

'If I enter into a political alliance with a party whose principles are hostile to mine, I must, of necessity modify my tactics, i. e., my methods of struggle, in order not to break this alliance. I can no longer criticise ruthlessly. I cannot fight for principles, because this would give offence to my allies; I have to keep quiet, cover up a lot of things, make excuses for inexcusable, gloss over matters that cannot be glossed over'.

Commenting on this statement of Bebel, comrade Lenin says :

"Opportunism is opportunism for the very reason that it sacrifices the 'fundamental' interests of the movement to momentary advantages or considerations based on the most short-sighted, superficial calculations". (Vol. 16, pp. 308, 390) (Emphasis ours)

While conducting his attack on all the ruling class parties whether in power or in opposition, Lenin at the same time advocated the method of utilising the contradictions of the enemy classes. He says :

"Somewhat greater and better use, perhaps, could be made of possible conflicts between various elements of the second majority between the Cadets, on the one hand, and the Octobrists and the government on the other. But here, too, the position is that, owing to objective conditions no less than to subjective moods and intentions these conflicts, both superficial and transient, are merely a means by which political hucksters will find it easier to make deals on terms outwardly more decorous but in essence opposed to the interests of democracy. Consequently, *while not refraining from utilising even such superficial and infrequent conflicts*, Social Democrats must wage a stubborn struggle for democratic and revolutionary aims not only against the government, the Black Hundreds, and Octobrists, but also against the Cadets". (Vol. 13 p. 128) (Emphasis ours)

On another occasion, Lenin says :

"We revolutionary Social-Democrats favour joint actions by the party of the proletariat and the parties of the democratic petty bourgeoisie against the Black Hundreds and against the Cadets, as the party of treacherous liberalism. The Socialist Revolutionaries are so far from under-

standing this class foundation of the Russian revolution that, on the one hand, they talk about co-ordination of socialist and extreme Left groups in general i.e., about concealing the contradictions between the proletariat and the small producer; and, on the other hand, they talk about co-ordinated action by the revolutionary and socialist section of the Duma with the opposition, against the Black Hundreds.

No, gentlemen, we shall not even discuss permanent agreements, or co-ordinated actions in general. You must first agree with us on the policy of fighting both the Black Hundreds and the Cadets. Agree indeed! This is our ultimatum. You agree to oppose the Cadets? You have abandoned your Cadets? If that is actually so, if that is not a mere paper declaration, but something you prove in action, then and only then, will the Social-Democrats fight together with you in democratic action."

(Vol. 12, pp. 166, 167)

Distortion of Lenin

Some people, in their anxiety to get support from Lenin for their policy of bourgeois election alliances, quote the following passage of Lenin where he says :

"Under a parliamentary system, *it is often necessary, to support a more liberal party against the less liberal one.* But during a revolutionary struggle for a parliamentary system, it is treachery to support liberal turncoats who are 'reconciling' Trepov with the Revolution".

(Vol. 9, p. 383) (Emphasis ours)

It is absurd to suggest that this sentence proposes united front with any section of the bourgeoisie. One should read all the passages of Lenin against election alliances, agreements and blocs with the so-called liberal bourgeoisie.

This denotes Lenin's idea of utilising the contradictions of the enemy classes on certain issues and nothing more.

We must also remember that Lenin has said this when he was giving the call for the boycott of Duma elections in 1905 and 1906, and the Party was organising the masses for armed uprising, when the question of participation in the elections has not yet become a problem for the Russian Bolsheviks.

Another sentence of Lenin which is often mis-quoted is :

"At the higher stage of the election, i.e., at the assemblies of electors in the towns and of delegates and electors in the countryside, *partial agreements* may be entered into *exclusively for the purpose of distributing seats* proportionately to the number of votes for the parties entering the agreement. In this connection, the Social Democratic Party distinguishes the following main types of bourgeois parties according to the

consistency and determination of their democratic views : (a) the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Polish Socialist Party and similar republican parties (b) the Popular Socialists and the Trudoviks of a similar type (c) the Cadets." (Vol. 11, p. 300) (Emphasis ours)

As Lenin himself has clearly stated, this proposal is only for sharing of seats in the indirect elections. It was not unconditional political support to the Cadets. On the other hand it was during this period that the main political struggle has been concentrated to expose the counter revolutionary nature of the Cadets.

How often we hear from some of our critics that we should support the opposition section of the ruling classes and even the CPI-CPM combine in order to defeat Indira's 'autocracy' or 'authoritarianism', forgetting the repressive role of this present opposition while they themselves were in power in the Centre, or in the states administered by them. Refuting the fallacy of lesser or greater danger among the ruling classes, Lenin says :

"The Mensheviks' main argument is the Black Hundred danger. The first and fundamental flaw in this argument is that the Black Hundred danger cannot be combated by the Cadet tactics and a Cadet policy. The essence of this policy lies in *reconciliation* with tsarism *that is*, with the Black Hundred danger. The first Duma sufficiently demonstrated that the Cadets do not combat the Black Hundred danger but make incredibly despicable speeches about the innocence and blamelessness of the monarch, *the known leader of the Black Hundreds*. Therefore, by helping to elect Cadets to the Duma, the Mensheviks are not only failing to combat Black Danger, but are hoodwinking the people, are obscuring the real significance of the Black Hundred danger. Combating the Black danger by helping to elect the Cadets to the Duma is like combating pogroms by means of the speech delivered by the lackey Rodichev : *'It is presumption to hold the monarch responsible for the pogrom.'*" (Vol. 11, P. 313)

Lenin further said :

"In the elections to the Third Duma (if it is convoked after the Second Duma) it will be even more difficult for you to dissolve the bloc with the Cadets, will be still more entangled in unnatural relations with the betrayers of the revolution. *But the real Black-Hundred danger, we repeat, lies not in the Black Hundreds obtaining seats in the Duma, but in pogroms and military courts; and you are making it more difficult for the people to fight this real danger by putting Cadet blinkers on their eyes.*" (Vol. 11, P. 314) (Emphasis ours)

Opposing the Menshevik conception of a national opposition, Lenin says :

"In his concluding remarks Lenin dealt chiefly with the principal mistake of Menshevism—the idea of a 'national opposition'. The Russian

bourgeoisie was never revolutionary in the proper sense of the word, and for a quite understandable reason; owing to the position which the working class occupies in Russia and owing to the role of the working class in the revolution." (Vol. 13, p. 137)

Will our critics who have now become very vociferous in campaigning for the so called 'National Alternative', take any lessons from comrade Lenin's opposition to 'National Opposition' ?

Lenin's teachings in Left-Wing Communism-an infantile disorder

In *Left-Wing Communism-an infantile disorder*, Lenin categorically says :

"The whole history of Bolshevism both before and after the October Revolution is full of instances of manœuvring, temporising and compromising with other parties, bourgeois parties included !"

He further says :

"To refuse before hand to manœuvre, to utilise the conflict of interests (eventhough temporary) among one's enemies, to refuse to temporarise and compromise with possible (eventhough temporary, unstable, vaccillating and conditional) allies, is not this ridiculous in the extreme ?" Explaining the experiences of the Russian Revolution, Lenin says :

"The Russian Revolutionary Social Democrats repeatedly utilised the services of the bourgeois liberals *prior to the downfall of tsardom, that is, they concluded numerous practical compromises with them*; and in 1901-1902, even prior to the appearance of Bolshevism, the old editorial Board of *Iskra* (consisting of Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zaslulich, Martov, Petrewsov and myself) concluded (not for long, it is true) a formal political alliance with Struve, the political leader of bourgeois liberalism, while at the same time it was able to wage an unremitting and most merciless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois liberalism and against the slightest manifestation of its influence in the working class movement. The Bolsheviks have always adhered to this policy. Beginning with 1905, they systematically advocated an alliance between the working class and the peasantry against the liberal bourgeoisie and Tsardom, never however, refusing to support the bourgeoisie against Tsardom (for instance, during the second round of elections, or during second ballot) and never ceasing their relentless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois revolutionary peasant Party, the 'Socialist Revolutionaries', exposing them as petty bourgeois democrats who falsely described themselves as socialists. During the Duma elections in 1907, the the Bolsheviks, for a brief period, entered into a formal political bloc with the 'Socialist Revolutionaries'. Between 1903 and 1911, there were periods of several years in which we were formally united with the Mensheviks in one Social Democratic Party; but we never ceased our ideological and

political struggle against them as opportunists and vehicles of bourgeois influence among the proletariat. During the War we concluded certain compromises with the 'Kautskyites', with the Left Mensheviks (Martov), and with a section of the 'Socialist Revolutionaries', (Chernov, and Natanson); we were together with them at Zimmerwald and Kienthal and issued joint manifestos; but we never ceased and never relapsed our ideological and political struggle against the 'Kautskyites.' (Emphasis ours)

Here we must note two factors.

About the alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie in 1900-1902, the liberal bourgeoisie has not yet been exposed as treacherous and counter-revolutionary. This was done during the course of the 1905 Revolution and from then it was an irreconcilable ideological and political struggle against the counter revolutionary Cadets pretending to be in the opposition.

On Great Britain

On Great Britain, at that time, in *Life-Wing Communism*, Lenin said :

"There is no Communist Part in Great Britain yet, but there is a fresh, broad, powerful and rapidly growing communist movement among the workers which justifies the brightest hopes. There are several political parties and organisations (the British Socialist Party, the Socialist Labour Party, the South Wales Socialist Society, the Workers' Socialist Federation) which desire to form a communist party."

"That the Hendersons, the Clynes, the Macdonalds and the Snowdens are hopelessly reactionary is true. It is equally true that they want to take power in their own hands (though they prefer a coalition with the bourgeoisie, that they want to 'rule' on the old bourgeois lines and that when they do get into power they will unfailingly behave like the Scheidmans and Noskes. All that is true. But it by no means follows that to support them is treachery to the revolution, but rather than that in the interests of the revolution the working class revolutionaries should give the gentlemen a certain amount of parliamentary support."

"I will put it more concretely. In my opinion, the British communists should unite their four (all very weak and some very very weak) parties and groups into a single Communist Party on the basis of the principles of the Third International and of *obligatory* participation in parliament. The Communist Party should propose a 'compromise' to the Hendersons and Snowdens, *an election agreement*: let us together fight the alliance of Lloyd George and the Conservatives, *let us divide the parliamentary seats in proportion to the number of votes cast by the workers for the Labour Party and for the Communist Party (not at the elections, but in a special vote)* and let us retain *complete liberty* of agitation, propoganda and political activity". (emphasis ours)

“If the Hendersons and the Snowdens consent to a bloc on these terms, we shall be the gainers, ... if the Hendersons and Snowdens reject a bloc with the Communists, the Communists will gain immediately as regards winning the sympathy of the masses... ”

“... In all constituencies where we have no candidates, we would urge the electors to vote for the Labour candidates and against the bourgeois candidate.”

Depending on these proposals of Lenin pertaining to Britain at that time some people interpret them to say that we should support the opposition, particularly the CPI and CPM combine in order to defeat Indira's authoritarianism.

Apart from their applicability to the Indian conditions of today, are these instructions of Lenin applicable to the present day conditions in Britain itself ?

—When comrade Lenin made these proposals for Britain, let us remember there was no Communist Party as such, which was only then in formation.

—The then Labour Party of Britain was playing the opposition role towards the Conservatives in Britain, they had not yet come to power and exposed themselves to be as reactionary as the Conservatives. In short, they have not exposed themselves to the masses of the workers as the labour imperialists. The British Labour Party first came to power in Britain only in 1935. The first MacDonalld labour government in practice has exposed itself as the labour imperialist government.

—Even then Lenin had cautioned that the support to the British Labour Party was not unconditional, but conditional on the basis of a common programme.

In spite of the temporary alliance between the liberal bourgeoisie and the Communists in Russia in 1901-1902, for a short period, when the counter revolutionary nature of the Cadets had not been exposed, or their sharing of votes with the Cadets in the second stage i.e., the indirect elections, what stands out most prominently and strikingly is Lenin's irreconcilable ideological and political struggle against the Cadets, the counter-revolutionary liberal bourgeoisie and against all bourgeois election alliances.

For combining legal and illegal activities

The whole Duma period was also a period of intensive people's struggles outside the Duma and the revolutionary movement had to face heavy repression of Tsarist government.

In March 1908, Lenin said :

“More than six months have passed since the reactionary coup of June 3, and beyond doubt this first half year has been marked by a considerable decline and weakening of all revolutionary organisations, including that of the Social Democrats. Wavering, disunity and disintegration—such have been the general features of this half year. Indeed, it could not be otherwise, because of the extreme intensification of reaction and its temporary triumph, coupled with a slowing down in the direct class struggle, were bound to be accompanied by a crisis in the revolutionary Parties”.

(Vol. 15, P. 17) (Emphasis ours)

He further said :

“A year of disintegration, a year of ideological and political disunity, a year of Party driftage lies behind us. The membership of all our party organisations has dropped. Some of them—namely those whose membership was least proletarian—have fallen to pieces. The Party’s semi-legal institutions created by the revolution have been broken up time after time. Things reached a point when some elements within the party, under the impact of general break-up, began to ask whether it was necessary to preserve the old Social Democratic Party; whether it was necessary to continue its work, whether it was necessary to go ‘underground’ once more, and how this was to be done. And the extreme right (the liquidationist trend, so-called) answered this question in the sense that it was necessary to legalise ourselves at all costs, even at the price of an open renunciation of the Party programme, tactics and organisation. This was undoubtedly an ideological and political crisis as well as an organisational one.”

(p. 345, Vol. 15) (Emphasis ours)

In face of this heavy repression, two wrong trends appeared among the ranks of the Social Democratic Labour Party of Russia. The trend of Oztovism among a section of the Bolshevik ranks and the trend of Liquidationism among the Menshevik ranks.

Lenin characterised Oztovism as a “germ of ideological liquidationism on the left”.

During the fag end of Third Duma, these Oztovists again called for the boycott of elections, recall of the Party representatives from the Third Duma and refused to work in the mass organisations. Lenin said :

“Oztovism is not Bolshevism, but the worst political travesty of Bolshevism its worst political enemy could invent. There must be absolute clarity on this point. We think that all Bolsheviks, down to the smallest circle, should be perfectly clear in their minds what Oztovism stands for; should study it thoroughly and ask themselves: Is this not obvious renunciation—under the flag of revolutionariness and ‘Leftism’—of the fine

traditions of the old Bolshevism, as it came into being in the period before the revolution and in the fire of the revolution?" (p. 357-Vol. 15)

Attacking the trend of Liquidationism among the Menshevik ranks, Lenin declared:

"Liquidationism in the narrow sense of the word, the liquidationism of the Mensheviks, consists ideologically in negation of the revolutionary class struggle of the socialist proletariat in general and denial of the hegemony of the proletariat in our bourgeois-democratic revolution in particular", (p. 454 Vol 15) He further said:

"In respect of organisation, liquidationism means denying the necessity for an illegal Social-Democratic Party, and consequently renouncing the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, leaving its ranks. It means fighting the Party in the columns of the legal press, in legal workers, organisations, in the trade unions and co-operative societies, at congresses attended by working class delegates, etc", (p. 454 Vol. 15)

Fighting against both these trends. Bolsheviks persisted in combining both the legal and illegal activities; parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities and struggled to preserve the secret organisation.

Ideological and political struggle against Menshevism and unity with the Menshevik ranks

One more very significant feature of the activities of the Bolsheviks and Lenin's writings of the Duma period is the uncompromising ideological and political struggle against the Menshevik leadership and positive approach to win the ordinary ranks in the day today struggles and the struggle for Revolution.

On all issues of this period the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks held diametrically opposite views.

While the Bolsheviks were for armed uprising in 1905-1906, the Menshevik leadership was against it. While the Bolsheviks were for the Boycott of the Duma in 1905-1906, the Mensheviks were for participation. While participating in the elections, the Bolsheviks were for participation on their own strength in the direct elections, with no election alliances with any liberal bourgeois opposition, the Menshevik leadership was for such bourgeois election agreements and blocs with the liberal bourgeoisie of various shades.

Thus we could see a running ideological and political struggle against the theories and policies of Menshevik leadership.

While conducting the ideological and political struggle against the Menshevik leadership—the revisionists, the Bolsheviks under Lenin's

leadership consistently worked to draw the Menshevik ranks and their mass organisations in the day-to-day struggles of the people, and in the struggle for Revolution.

It was a very serious and complex struggle which started with the Third Congress of the Party till 1912. When the Mensheviks were finally expelled and the Bolsheviks formed themselves into a separate Party-CPSU (Bolsheviks).

The teachings of Lenin of the whole period from 1905 to 1912 —on the question of boycott and participation in the elections, the principles guiding such participation, rejection of bourgeois election alliances, agreements, blocs with liberal bourgeois opposition, irreconcilable ideological and political struggle against the policies and tactics of the Mensheviks—the revisionists, are all basic lessons of Marxism-Leninism.

Their application will vary from country to country, but they are universal teachings binding on the communist revolutionaries throughout the world.

Dimitrov's Report in 1935

For all class collaborationists and all those who want united front with the opposition section of the ruling classes, and bourgeois election alliances, have been taking shelter under the Dimitrov's Report in 1935 to the 7th Congress of the Third International under the leadership of Stalin.

We are sorry to note that even some of the Communist Revolutionaries have been misusing Dimitrov's report in support of their theories of bourgeois election alliances, because comrade Stalin's name has been associated with this report.

But if one reads Dimitrov's Report carefully there is nothing to support the theories of class collaboration or the theories of those who want bourgeois election alliances.

What does Dimitrov's Report say ?

Class character of Fascism

Comrade Dimitrov says :

“fascism in power is the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital”.

“The accession to power of fascism is not an ordinary succession of one bourgeois government *but a substitution for one state form of class domination of the bourgeoisie — bourgeois democracy—of another form of open, terrorist dictatorship*”.

"Fascist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie is a ferocious power but an unstable one".

"The working class must be able to take advantage of the antagonisms and conflicts within the bourgeois camp, but it must not cherish the illusion that fascism will exhaust itself of its own accord. *Fascism will not collapse automatically.* It is only the revolutionary activity of the working class which can help to take advantage of the conflicts which inevitably arise within the bourgeois camp in order to undermine the fascist dictatorship *and to overthrow it*". (Emphasis ours)

How can fascism be prevented from coming to power and how can fascism be overthrown after it has been victorious ?

To this the Communist International replies : "The first thing that must be done, the thing with which to commence, is to form a united front, to establish unity of the action of the workers in every factory, in every district, in every region, in every country, all over the world. Unity of action of the proletariat on a national and international scale is the mighty weapon which renders the working class capable not only of successful defence but also of successful counter-offensive against fascism, against the class enemy."

"What is and ought to be the basic content of the united front at the present stage ? The defence of the immediate economic and political interests of the working class, the defence of the working class against fascism, must form the starting point, and main content of the united front in *all capitalist countries*".

"In the mobilisation of the toiling masses for the struggle against fascism, the formation of a broad people's anti-fascist front on the basis of the proletarian united front is a particularly important task. The success of the entire struggle of the proletariat is closely connected with the establishment of a fighting alliance and the basic mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie constituting the majority in the population of *even industrially developed countries*."

"Election campaigns must be utilised for the further development and strengthening of the united fighting front of the proletariat. While coming forward independently in the elections and unfolding the programme of the Communist Party before the masses, the communists must seek to establish a united front with the *Social Democratic Parties* and the *Trade Union* (also with the organisations of the toiling peasants, hand-craftsmen etc.) and exert every effort to prevent the election of reactionary and fascist candidates. In the face of fascist danger, the communists *may*, while reserving for themselves freedom of political agitation and criticism, participate in election campaigns on *a common platform and with a common ticket of the anti-fascist front*, depending on the growth and success of the

united front movement, also depending on the electoral system in operation". (Emphasis ours)

When studying Dimitrov's Report, one should remember that it deals with advanced capitalist countries, and for the colonial countries, its call has been *for building the anti-imperialist front*.

The quotations given above from Dimitrov's Report are enough to show the absurdity of the theory of some of our critics that fascism is a society different from the capitalist society.

It also exposes the theory of those who propagate that under fascism the principal contradiction of the society changes.

It also refutes the theory of those who say that during the period of struggle, the struggle must be confined only to the struggle for democratic rights.

It also exposes the theory of those who propagate that we must support any section of the ruling classes without a common platform of struggle and a common ticket based on a concrete struggle against fascism.

Based on the directives of Dimitrov's Report, in some of the advanced capitalist countries, particularly in France and Spain, the communists did unite with the Socialists and certain elements of the radical bourgeoisie in order to fight the forces of fascism in those countries, participated in the elections in a united front with them and when this front got a majority in the parliaments, the communists even joined the Cabinets formed based on this united front election victories.

But historically, both of them could not survive for more than a few months. Some of the very forces with whom the communists united in those elections betrayed the communists, expelled them from the Cabinets, resorted to repression on them and paved the way for fascism.

In Spain, ultimately these events led to the civil war of 1936. In France, Hitler's war intervened and the whole western Europe's political situation changed.

What are the positive and negative experiences of the united front with socialists and radical bourgeois elements both in France and Spain? No communist leader of international stature like Stalin, had politicalised these experiences and gave both positive and negative lessons, perhaps because of the short duration of this exercise.

Here also one must remember this experience also relates to the experience of the advanced capitalist countries, and they do not apply to the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

3. Post Second World War period

During the Second World War, when Hitler's Germany occupied the whole of Europe, the communists of Europe under the inspiring leadership of Stalin, played a heroic role in this National Liberation War. Let us remember that the Communists became the mass force among their people only because of their heroic role in that National Liberation struggle against Hitler's occupation.

When the Second World War ended in 1955, the Communists in countries like France and Italy emerged with a big mass following and thousands of armed guerillas behind them.

After the war, on the demand of the other bourgeois parties, the Communist Parties agreed to disperse their armed forces, submit them to their respective bourgeois governments. They decided to participate in the elections.

In the background of united front struggle against Hitler's occupation, the communists, particularly in France and Italy joined the Cabinets of those countries, formed immediately after the ending of world war.

At that time the communists were a big force among the people, with a big representation in the Parliaments. The bourgeois parties manoeuvred again and again to make changes in the electoral laws to suit the bourgeoisie and reduce the representation of the communists. This happened particularly in France.

What is the content of the activities of the communists in Western Europe upto 1956 ?

The main content is — disbanding their armed forces, submitting their arms to the bourgeois governments, legal activities with Parliament as the main platform of struggle. In this period itself election agreements with other bourgeois parties and the socialists for the sole purpose of increasing their representation in the parliament, became the main feature in the activities of the communists in West Europe.

Is this orientation based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism as taught by Lenin on the question of elections ?

Here again unfortunately no Marxist-Leninist leader of international stature like Stalin, has left us anything on record. Later, when he took up the ideological struggle against modern revisionism of the CPSU leadership, comrade Mao had attacked this whole orientation. He criticised the disbandment of armed forces of the people and the parliamentary illusions.

4. After the theory of Peaceful Transition peddled by the CPSU leadership in 1956.

Even if there were any limitations or checks in the practice of West European Communists in their parliamentary work till 1956, with the theory of Peaceful Transition propagated by the Modern Revisionists led by the CPSU leadership in 1956, all these limitations and checks were swept away and all the gates were opened wide for their policies of class collaboration. The practice of bourgeois election alliances have been systematised. They have declared their confidence in the path of peaceful transition to socialism and that they can achieve it through changes in the capitalist constitutions themselves. Finally the theory of Euro-Communism has evolved out of these theories of peaceful transition.

Thus one can see that the theory of Euro-Communism is nothing but the theory of peaceful transition to Socialism. To call it a 'scientific' experiment, as some international friends call it, is nothing but a distortion of Marxism-Leninism.

It is under theory of bourgeois election alliances, that the practice of path of parliamentarism—the path of peaceful transition to socialism, being practiced by the revisionists and the neo-revisionists in India, has evolved. It is out of this, that their present slogan 'Left and Democratic front' has evolved. Practice has already proved that its main aim is to have bourgeois election alliances with all sorts of opposition sections of the ruling classes and even dissident sections of the ruling Party, the Indira Congress.

Experience of the international communist movement in the past and the basic teachings of Marxism-Leninism have taught us that bourgeois election alliances and the revolutionary struggle are diametrically opposed to each other and there can be no compromise between them.

5. Applicability to India

The teachings of Lenin on the question of elections, parliamentary institutions, bourgeois election alliances, when and why united front with sections of the ruling classes cannot be copied mechanically and applied to the Indian conditions.

We have to concretely study the socio-economic and political conditions in India at present and determine our own tactics of struggle based on the universal teachings of Marxism—Leninism.

One should remember that Lenin's teachings on the attitude of the working class towards the bourgeois parties are based on the experiences of revolution in Tsarist Russia—an imperialist country though economically weak.

India is not a capitalistically developed industrial country, but a semi-colonial and semi feudal country, ruled by the comprador big bourgeois

big landlord classes, subservient to imperialism and social imperialism at present.

The semi-colonial and semi-feudal character of our country shows that imperialism will dominate our country till the New Democratic Revolution under the leadership of the working class finally triumphs.

Because of its semi-colonial and semi-feudal character, our country has become the hunting ground for the imperialist powers to contend for domination, particularly the contention of the two super powers—US imperialism and Soviet social imperialism, as part of their rivalry for world hegemony.

Our ruling classes being comprador, they are tied to the various imperialist powers, USA, Soviet Union, and the second world countries, and therefore the contradictions of the imperialist powers are being reflected in the contradictions of the ruling classes in India.

Whether one likes it or not, bourgeois parliamentary institutions are a fact of life in India. Though imposed by the British, they objectively exist and the majority of the people in India still follow the various ruling class parties and the revisionists and neo-revisionists, showing the strong parliamentary and reformist illusions of our people.

Based on the concrete situation in India, under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, our Party has determined its own tactics of struggle.

Since our country is a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country, the experiences of the Chinese Revolution are more relevant to India than the experiences of the advanced capitalist countries.

Based on this fact, our Party has declared that Agrarian Revolution is the main form of struggle for the complete liberation of our country. Agrarian Revolutionary struggle is the main form of struggle in all phases of our struggle for New Democratic Revolution, combined with the struggle for united front, based on the concrete situation in each phase of the struggle. This demands that all the immediate struggles of the people, economic and political, national and international should be consciously oriented towards advancing the Agrarian revolutionary struggle.

Our country being a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country, there are certain occasions when the working class has to unite with sections of the ruling classes—on occasions like fighting foreign aggression against our country, our country becoming a neo-colony of any of the imperialist powers, and are uniting with sections of the ruling classes for democratic rights under conditions of the Emergency rule.

On all other occasions, there can be no general political united front between the working class and any section of the ruling classes on the basis of any common programme. But we should utilise the contradictions of the ruling classes and their parties on specific immediate issues, economic and political, to advance the revolutionary movement in the country.

Since we take Soviet social imperialism as greater danger to our people today both nationally and internationally, naturally, we take the pro-Soviet lobby, the Indira Congress, the CPI-CPM combine and other pro-Soviet forces in other parties to be a greater danger to our people today.

While we concentrate the peoples struggles on the Indira Congress government both in the Centre and the states, an irreconcilable ideological and political struggle should be conducted against the compromising policies of the CPI-CPM combine, who faithfully serve the interests of the Soviet Union, both in India and abroad.

While we conduct an irreconcilable ideological and political struggle against the compromising policies of the leaderships of the CPI-CPM combine, we pursue a consistent policy of uniting with their ranks and their mass organisations to conduct united struggles on the immediate issues of the people.

Our decision to participate in the elections depending on the level of the revolutionary movement and the consciousness of the people, the aims of our participation, our rejection of election agreements or adjustment of seats with the opposition section of the ruling classes, or the CPI-CPM, our decision to have such electoral agreements or adjustments of seats only with other communist revolutionary organisations or those who are for anti-imperialist struggles and the struggle for democratic rights, are all based on the teachings of Lenin, as quoted above.

Thus one can see that the programme, tactics of struggle and the political line of our Party are based on sound theoretical foundation based on the teachings of comrades Lenin and Mao.

We are sorry to note that the programme, tactics of struggle, and the political line of some of our critics are not based on any theoretical foundation of Marxism-Leninism. They are nothing but blind assertions.

It is because of the sound theoretical foundation based on the concrete situation in our country, the concentration of our comrades to implement this programme, that has helped our Party to advance the revolutionary movement in the country and we have already emerged as the biggest among the revolutionary organisations in the country. It is this fact that gives us confidence in our programme, tactics of struggle and the political line of our Party.

Advance on the path of Agrarian Revolution !

Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought ! 3/9/1982.