

Danger from Left Opportunism in Running a United Front Government

Social democracy is the main danger to organizing revolutionary struggle against capitalism and its political agents, the main enemy. The devious, opportunist and treacherous role of the CPI(M) and its cohorts to disrupt the broad-based United Front and its two governments in West Bengal in 1967-69, in pursuit of its election-oriented politics, goes to illustrate this living historical lesson better perhaps than any of its parallels in the past. This Comrade Shibdas Ghosh shows in his invaluable, historic speech of 1970.

Comrade President, Friends and Comrades,

Many requests have come to me for discussion of a variety of topics at today's massive gathering, but I do not think it possible to discuss adequately all matters of important political issues in one meeting. So I shall deal principally with that most important political question which is agitating the mind of every democratic person.

Sustained struggle against the twenty years of uninterrupted misrule, tyranny, repression and exploitation by the Congress led to a slashing verdict of the people of West Bengal against Congress that brought the United Front to power twice in 1967 and 1969. Particularly the stupendous majority with which the UF was brought to power this time (1969) was previously unthinkable. Still that very United Front eventually broke down, the UF government fell. Why did this happen? We cannot gloss over this question, cannot give any made-up explanation. On all political parties of the United Front devolves this responsibility. Those who call themselves big left parties, bear the main responsibility to provide the reasons, to explain fully the whole situation. It is not enough to defend themselves; they have to place before the people the political analysis of the situation from the class angularity, from the viewpoint of struggle. They have to show what is that defect inherent in the movement, the defect and weakness that appeared with such deadly power that it could not be resisted. We could not prevent it by any means, neither by the people's consciousness nor by the internal strength of the political parties. Such political

leaders of big parties whose public speeches you applaud, whom you felicitate, whom you consider as stalwart leaders, whose learned utterances you flock to hear, they are so powerful that they could not evince the wisdom and strength to protect that instrument of struggle built by people's sacrifice, which the people had entrusted in their hands. Naturally you would like to get to know clearly why the United Front government did not last in spite of the massive majority. For, the UF government is gone, but you would not want the Congress to come back now, not only you, no democratic minded person would want that. It is your wish that let there be again a united front, let the forces of democratic movement be revived, let them take charge of the government in West Bengal, let them advance the democratic movements, the class struggles, the struggles based on the legitimate demands of the people and the struggles against injustices.

But it would be wrong to hold that if the Congress or any other anti-people, tyrannical ruling group is removed simply through elections, and any combination or united front is placed in governmental power, all problems would be solved; this has become clear through the crises which have confronted you both the times after you had brought the United Front to power. How did these United Front governments come into being? Some parties which could not defeat the Congress in the elections on their own strength joined hands and together formed the United Front government. But their attitude was somewhat like this: whatever be the nature of the politics that we individually follow, let us somehow remove the Congress through joint effort, after that we shall jointly decide what course to follow. In other words, businessmen-like they make petty calculations: let us first occupy positions of power, become ministers and leaders after removing the Congress, and other things can be taken care of later on. But my question to the people is : 'Does the concept of united front mean only this to you? You, the people, did you build up the United Front because of this?' Whatever be the calculations the different leaders might have made, you certainly did not vote United Front because of this. The United Front came to be formed as the inevitable consequence of the concrete situation. What is that concrete political situation?

When the country became independent after the Britishers left and the Congress came to power, establishing single party rule, the people had the expectation that the Congress would solve all the problems. With this hope many people sided with the Congress for quite a long time. Even those who had some understanding had the idea that the Congress would advance the

country quite a bit even if it could not root out all the problems; at least it would solve some of the problems of the people, of the social life. For this they gave the Congress twenty years' time. When the people raised questions on this, the Congress leaders loudly said, "It takes time to get rid of all the ills of so many years of British rule. Give us time, the evils of so many years of colonial rule cannot be removed so easily. We cannot bring about the country's progress all on a sudden, by way of magic." The people heard this, were disgusted, but they went on listening to this day after day, year after year. At last their patience was exhausted. On the one hand, they were listening to such big talks, but side by side the movements were slowly crystallizing within the society to expose the class character of the rulers in the Congress regime, to expose their exploitative nature. The outward manifestation of this we have witnessed in the many mass movements in West Bengal. There have been surges of movements one after another, the people have come out to participate in these; the police have resorted to firing, attempts have been made to suppress these by deploying the military. Whether there were so many struggles, movements, sacrifices even during the independence movement in West Bengal as there were in the post-independence period, those who study history would decide. I do not intend to go into that.

But through these movements one thing was becoming clear — no single revolutionary or democratic party or force, by itself, or a united front constituted of all the parties with different ideologies has as yet emerged as an alternative to the Congress on an all-India plane that could throw a challenge against the Congress; even though the problems were not of West Bengal alone, not of a village or police jurisdictional area or of a district. All the problems of West Bengal in all the fields such as, social life, economics, ideology, morality, industrial activity, etc., are inseparably linked with the problems in India as a whole; our lives are connected in an indivisible manner with the social system, the state structure of the whole of India. In West Bengal the 'united platform' or 'front' that emerged at different times and on different issues, through issue-based unity of different parties, never took a permanent or lasting form nor did the combination of the different parties remain the same, though the left parties always worked as the main force in the combination.

Take for example the instance of this United Front of West Bengal. Within it there are some democratic parties which clearly believe in the democratic system of governance, want to take part in democratic movements, at least talk in broad terms about struggle against oppression,

against the kulaks or big landowners, against repression by the capitalists. I am not sure about how far they would go in this struggle, though people still believe that they are honest, they would fight for democracy; they would do something. Again, there are such parties in the United Front who talk of socialism but do not agree with Marxism. They believe in something like national socialism, or they have an imaginary picture of socialism. They talk of class struggle, of fight against capitalists, they even organize some struggles in factories, trade unions, and in their own way they sometimes take part in some of the peasants' movements. Such "socialistic" parties are there in our United Front also. Amongst them there is a group who call themselves Marxist-Leninist, but not communist. They think that they are not linked with the world communist movement. They do not want to maintain any connection with it. They do not have much faith in the international unity of the working class or in the slogan, 'Workers of all countries, unite.' Perhaps in their thoughts and ideology they feel an affinity with the workers and peasants of the world, but in reality their application of Marxism in the national context is somewhat like that of the nationalist parties. It is redundant to discuss here whether such a party can be called Marxist-Leninist. Some such parties professing Marxism-Leninism in the national arena exist in our United Front. And then there are parties who openly call themselves revolutionaries, Marxist-Leninists, consider themselves to be part of international communist movement, directly project themselves as communists. There are a few such parties, and there are two or three divisions among them. These include us, CPI and CPI(M). The CPI(M) still considers itself as a part of the international communist movement, though I think that not being recognized by either China or Russia, by any camp or authority, they are very subtly stepping onto the path of building something like a national communist party. Though this picture is not quite apparent today, I think that this will get clearly revealed in the near future.¹ They too are in the United Front.

Then, why did this United Front emerge combining all these forces? Is it the very reason that none could contest all elections on its own, that the Congress cannot be challenged and defeated on one's own strength? Is it the reason to anyhow build up a tempo by making a combination of all the forces to use the anti-Congress wave that is existing and to anyhow come to the power by promising a thousand and one sops to the people? Do we think that the common people do not have much understanding, that since their patience is utterly exhausted in the course of twenty years, they will clutch at any straw, and because all the parties have combined they will cast their

votes in their favour? We know that innocent simple-minded common people think like that. They talk in this manner. “Look here, Mashai! (Sir) All of you, so many parties with so many views, are fighting against the Congress. Now you all unite. We do not have time for making a fine analysis of all the squabbles, the ideological battles, the points and counterpoints. We are simple working people, we do not have much use for all these theories. Better you unite and you will see that as soon as you unite we shall ‘easily’ oust the Congress.” And actually this is what happened. We all united, and they ‘easily’ ousted the Congress. We occupied the seat of power. But then, like their action of ‘easily’ ousting the Congress, we ourselves ‘easily’ disintegrated.

So, what is the lesson? The lesson is that we cannot sidetrack the real issue and bypass truth. Nothing can ever be achieved in this way. “We do not want to delve into politics, we have no need to go deep into the complexities” —you cannot afford to think like that. Because it is you who need real freedom, liberation is your necessity. Secondly, it is also your desire, it is also your dream to abolish capitalism, to build mass movements, to wage class struggle, to end repression and tyranny, to provide jobs to the unemployed, to modernize agriculture, to bring in industrialization of the country. Yet you do not want to think about politics! You want to leave that to the hired political leaders, hired leaders just like your hired servants. You want to depend on the leaders. If leaders ditch you, you will sink, if sometimes they prop you up you will stand. What state of affairs is this? How long can this continue? Just like this, in the independence movement it is the common people who have shed their blood, but in the end they have handed power over to the Congress. In this way the people have been suppressed for twenty years under the boot of the Congress rule. It is in the same way that the people have ousted the Congress without giving any thought, without any discrimination about in whose hands they are vesting the power. When you are told to ponder before you do something you respond, “We do not want to go into so much discussion, we do not need to go into such detailed analysis.” This will not do. You have to get rid of this blindness, you have to fight this blindness. You have to remember that it is not the leaders who face the bullet in the mass movements. We, who are the leaders, we do not bear the brunt, it is you who get beaten up. How many leaders are hit by the police batons? So if you again get to build up movements, and today or tomorrow that you will have to do, you yourselves will have to cultivate politics also. It is you who are carrying forward the movements, it is you who are facing attacks, who are suffering losses, but will you not cultivate that politics which is necessary for understanding the political processes and manoeuvres that

control the course of the movements? I notice that those who are vociferous about united front have no serious concern about understanding the politics that is necessary to deal with such questions as, why the events are happening as they are, which party is following which principle, how a united front is to be built up, what should be the code of conduct in a united front, what should be the mode of working of a united front.

And what is the result? All the parties are claiming: “We want united front; united front is to be built up”; because, no one can do without a united front, no one can go it alone. People want the United Front. That is why we find that those who split the United Front by fighting among themselves, it is they who are again saying, “The United Front has to be safeguarded, the conspiracy to break the United Front has to be foiled.” Our party workers are raising the slogans, ‘Foil the conspiracy against the United Front,’ ‘Who broke the United Front? None else but the CPI(M).’ In the same vein the CPI(M) workers are bringing out processions with the slogans, ‘Foil the conspiracy against the United Front’; ‘Save the United Front’, ‘Who broke the United Front? So and so and so. Who else but them’. You people are caught between these two, looking once this way, then the other way. You are not able to understand who broke the Front. In the end, being fed up, you place your trust on providence. You think, ‘if this is patched up somehow, well and good. If not, it cannot be helped. We, the common people, are always at the receiving end. If another election comes, we shall join this group or that, to make one the winner or the loser through votes’. This is your mental attitude. I firmly stress that you must give up this mentality. The course of events is fast changing. Everything now depends on you, the common people. It is you who have to be approached at the time of elections. Just as electoral battles are fought on the strength of the masses, so also are the democratic movements waged. Be it mass movements or the dream of revolutionary seizure of power, everything depends on you. The leaders do the cerebral work, so does the party, they show the way. Just as we need a light for moving about in darkness, without that torchlight there is every possibility of falling in a ditch, so also the leadership, the party and its politics provide that torch-like knowledge, which helps us to negotiate the dark and devious alleys in the movements.

So what I wanted to say is that everything has to be critically analysed. You know that the strength of the United Front that grew, that we built, developed through the mass movements that grew bit by bit as the people’s patience was slowly getting exhausted under the yoke of

oppression of the Congress rule. And what was the character of these mass movements? It was this that the participating parties of these mass movements whom you are seeing now, most of these parties, whatever be their meticulous analyses of the politics, whatever be their basic ideology and objective, whether these were clear to the people or not, they unitedly carried out the struggles, and a close affinity developed between the people and the united struggle, the United Front.

In West Bengal this Front first grew with a few parties. At first the Communist Party was not in this Front. They joined later. When the Communist Party split into two factions, one was within the Front, the other not. Afterwards the latter also joined. Then, before the 1967 elections, a faction came out of the Congress and formed the Bangla Congress; after the election in spite of opposition of some left parties, particularly in spite of our opposition the Bangla Congress was included in the United Front. Our stand was this: they have come out of the Congress, let them be tested first, let them face the test in mass movements, let them participate in the struggle, let the others decide after having judged all this whether they can move some distance with the Bangla Congress as partners in the democratic movements, and only then does the question of including them in the Front arise. But out of pragmatic consideration of election politics, the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) riding roughshod over this view straightaway included Bangla Congress within the United Front, and invited them to the meeting of the United Front. So, overnight the Bangla Congress became a progressive party. Today the CPI(M) is heaping all sorts of abuses on the Bangla Congress, but it is Promodbabu² and his colleagues who invited Bangla Congress to the United Front, without testing the party in any way after it came out of the Congress. This fact cannot be denied. It is not us who called them in.

But once they have come in, whether we want it or not, whether Promod Babu and others want it or not, whether Jyoti Babu³ and others want it or not, in the West Bengal people's mind they came to be recognized as a party of mass movements.

This is the handiwork of Promod Babu and his colleagues. Even in the last election through 'Dasgupta Formula', they arranged to allot 33 seats to them. This was not our work. In exchange of this, they made businessmen-like petty calculations as to how many more seats they would

get. At that time the CPI(M) leaders did not analyse the politics of Bangla Congress. At that time we did not hear them say, “Bangla Congress is a party of the jotedars”.⁴ I shall go into this later on. My question is, if the Bangla Congress is a party of the jotedars, has it become so only now? It was such a party even when they called it in. Why then did they make an alliance with it? The people should raise such a question. If the CPI(M) is against this alliance for the very reason that the Bangla Congress is a party of the jotedars, if they do not want to have unity with it, and on this if they break the unity, then I ask, has the Bangla Congress become a jotedars’ party overnight after it has become a member of the United Front? It was so even before. Then the CPI(M) did not have any objection to have unity with it. Then these revolutionaries (!) had no qualms to allot a large number of seats to the jotedars’ party with the framing up of the ‘Dasgupta formula’ and make it thereby the ‘second largest party’. Then why are they now raising the issue of ‘jotedars’ party’? They need to place the issue with such critical analysis that the people do not get confused, but have a true understanding. Instead of that what they have done is to confuse the people, to incite the people. A question has been raised and a propaganda has been carried out in such a way that the people act from blind emotion, their logical faculty does not work. Such a politics is not a politics in the interest of the people. This is the way of blindness. The communists, the Marxists do not cultivate blindness. Who does it? It is the fascists who cultivate blindness. The fascists want it. More the blindness, more the fanaticism — it is to this theory that the fascists subscribe. So they want the entire nation to become like blind fanatics. Their objective is to bring in blindness, create a bogey, raise slogans, bring in deceptive, misleading points to hide the main issues and incite the people. And what is the result? The people are incited by the ceaseless propaganda and they madly rush on. And in their rush they pay no heed to where they are going, whether they will fall in a ditch or not. In this way a country like Germany with a rich heritage went down. Germany was not an underdeveloped country like India. In art, literature, science and technology, industry and culture, it was one of the most advanced countries of the world. By whipping up fanatic passion among the citizens of such a country, among its learned people, to what a ruinous situation Hitler brought the country! In consequence, what an abject condition the German nation has sunk into. The country was divided into two parts, it lost its honoured position.

So blindness is not the way of the communists. To inflame, to incite without any ground, to confuse, to subvert one’s reasoning capacity during discussion, to be impatient, to abuse instead

of answering questions — these are the methods which the reactionaries use. Only those whose ideological base is weak take recourse to exciting, to raising empty slogans; they try to smother ideology with slogans. But those whose base is not weak, they answer questions, they do not suppress questions. So my first question is, has the United Front broken down because the Bangla Congress is a party of the jotedars ? If there can be no unity with a party of jotedars, then the question arises has it become a party of jotedars only now?

Secondly, the Bangla Congress has left the United Front not on any ideological ground. The conflict between the CPI(M) and the Bangla Congress has not been on ideological issues. Rather on many ideological points the CPI(M) and the Bangla Congress have jointly opposed us; for example, on the question of enhancing the allocation for police in the budget. On the question of enhancing the budget allocation for police our stand has always been that we cannot ever support enhancement of allocation for police, which we all know as a protector, a sentry of the capitalist state. What have been the arguments of the Congress party for continuously increasing the budget allocation for police during Congress regime? The justifications given were, to maintain law and order, to crack down on anti-socials, to curb the criminal activities and so on and so forth, the justifications that the despots, the scoundrels give. In the reactionary regimes of all capitalist states it is on such excuses that the budget allocation for police is increased. The Congress has all along increased the police budget allocation on the excuse of maintaining law and order and suppressing the criminals in order to make the police more powerful. The truth is that the Congress lost its faith in the people, so to suppress the mass movements, to safeguard their position of power, they had no other option but to increase the budgetary allocation for police. So with the real motive of suppressing the mass movements the Congress has increased the allocation in police budget, using the argument that the criminals and anti-socials have to be kept in check. But this is the politics of despots, the politics of scoundrels, the politics of reactionaries. The revolutionaries who, after having come to occupy governmental power through elections in a capitalist state, want to work in such a manner that the governmental power is used as a lever for uninterrupted growth and development of democratic movements — do they increase the budgetary allocation to make the police stronger? But Jyoti Babu recommended enhancement of budgetary allocation for the police to make it stronger, using the same argument that criminals and anti-socials have to be suppressed! Only he gave it a twist to say that it is not they or their party who are responsible for the rise in the number of anti-socials.

That is, he wanted to say that it is the Congress who is responsible, because for twenty years the Congress have spawned anti-socials, have promoted them. So the whole onus came to lie with the Congress. In other words, making the Congress a scapegoat, Jyoti Babu diverted the main question of increasing the police budget allocation. The question was not to increase such allocation, but he expounded that the number of anti-socials have increased because of Congress. What a bizarre politics! What a deceptive way of reasoning! It is true that the Congress has brought the country to ruin. Still, against the moral degradation, the criminal activities, if we could uphold the consciousness of democratic movements, the ideals of democratic movements and morality in democratic movements, the honesty of character of political workers, not to take recourse to falsehood, etc., this would have left its impact on society. But by this chicanery of which the people of the country had a taste through the utterance of Jyoti Babu, by bringing in all such duplicity, all such villainy, all such falsehood, have we not vitiated the atmosphere. The Congress has certainly done all these, but we also cannot deny our responsibility. We have not done what we should have done. We have not been able to uphold morality in the democratic movements. Those who have to carry out this task must first bring about a change in their own character. They must have the moral courage to vanquish all weaknesses. But it would be wrong to expect this from people like Jyoti Babu. On this count I have no expectation.

I have said many times that they are crying hoarse about corruption, but I made some observations on this matter in a speech in 1966. You may please go through it. At that time we had not yet come to power. I said that according to them the Congress is responsible for corruption, because it is they who have brought in corruption. All this is true, but this is not all; this is not the whole truth. I said that corruption has become the national characteristic. However, the Congress has become corrupt after coming to power, not at the time of freedom movement. But even before coming to power the leftists have caused such a vitiated atmosphere within the left movement through moral and ethical degradation of cadres and political leaders that corruption has made deep inroads amongst us. Just hold a mirror before you. Why are you putting the blame on a scapegoat. But let us leave this issue. What I was saying is that Jyoti Babu, in the same manner as the Congress, in the same manner as the despots, pronounced that the allocation for the police budget will have to be enhanced, giving the excuse of curbing the anti-socials. At that time we protested; it is we who opposed it. On the other hand, it is the Bangla Congress who lent support to them.

We said that the United Front draws its sustenance from mass movement. Hence it does not have to suppress mass movements with police action. The United Front is not standing on the police prop. If the constituent parties of the United Front do not bring in their own downfall, then the Front is resting on such a support of the people's power, that even the Almighty⁵ cannot dislodge it. So the United Front does not have to depend on the police. Hence the increased police strength that the Congress brought in to suppress the mass movements needed to be halved as soon as the United Front came to power. Was it really necessary to further increase the police strength for curbing anti-social activities? Did Jyoti Babu and his colleagues consider this issue from all angles? This they did not. Instead, following the same logic of the tyrants, despots and villains they enhanced the budgetary allocation for police. We opposed it. The Bangla Congress went along with the CPI(M). A CPI(M) minister wantonly issued license to more than 120 new liquor shops in Calcutta. Our party opposed this, not the Bangla Congress. We and a few other left parties proposed a reduction of land ceiling from 75 bighas⁶. Both the CPI(M) and the Bangla Congress were against it. Then where is the ideological difference between the CPI(M) and the Bangla Congress? Is there any incident, any example of the CPI(M) wanting to implement a policy and the Bangla Congress opposing it? Or a CPI(M) going to introduce an agricultural bill, and the Bangla Congress opposing it? Now they may concoct a hundred stories, but let them specifically name which bill, which policy, which measure they wanted to introduce that the Bangla Congress opposed. On the contrary, keeping the United Front in the dark the CPI(M) came to an understanding with the house of the Birlas, tried to enter into a pact, a secret pact, with them. The CPI(M) struck a blow on the heritage of the struggle, the morality on which we wanted to build the United Front and the people wanted. What else has it done? It has increased the allocation in police budget. To widen their support base among the government employees, to keep them happy they have granted them a few more rupees. Isn't that all they have done? Their budget does not reflect any concern about the country, about the unemployed, about the development of agriculture, about the poor peasants, or any such matter.

So, is it that the Bangla Congress left the United Front on any ideological issue? No, the Bangla Congress has left on being harassed and tormented. The CPI(M) is raising highly opportunistic and misleading issues regarding Bangla Congress leaving the Front. When Ajoy Babu⁷ left, they went along with the propaganda, "He did same thing in 1967, and now again he has resigned, etc., etc." There are some people who are confused by such misleading propaganda

and at once affirm, “Yes, Ajoy Babu did not do this right. It was not proper at all, rather it was an unjust act.” My submission to the left-minded people is this: yes it was not proper on Ajoy Babu’s part to act this way. It was ill-conceived, it was wrong. We do not support it. But in such discussions, if you do not discuss the politics of those within the United Front whose disruptive activities actually harassed the Bangla Congress and made them leave the Front, if you do not discuss their criminal acts, their devious politics, if you cannot take them to task and mount tremendous pressure on them in order to check them, then if at any time unity again develops, unity is forged with them, even then you will not be able to eradicate the real reason for the break in unity of the United Front ; the politics of disruption, its strength would remain as before; you would not be able to eradicate it.

What state of affairs is this that in many localities some people are causing disturbances, are acting like hooligans, at times are entering homes, threatening and even beating up the inmates, are ransacking the homes, but the person whose home is attacked, if he seeks help from the police, no help is coming, or only a minimal help, or in the name of helping nothing effective is done? Aren’t such incidents happening? They are happening everywhere. Let us suppose that in such a situation, the person attacked becomes terribly frustrated, loses all will to fight, and goes away leaving his home. And if those of you who are looking at it from outside go on discussing it and put the blame on that person saying, ‘Why did he go away’, then, aren’t you endorsing those who were the hoodlums, because of whose hooliganism he left, and aren’t you rewarding their hooliganism ? And thereby isn’t the real truth suppressed?

Thirdly, in this connection I want to raise another question. That is, what is the main political thesis of CPI(M) ? At the drop of a hat Jyoti Babu sermonizes that theirs is a responsible party. Well and good. But an important question comes to my mind. It is this : Do the party leaders read the political thesis of their own party? Or is it that their political thesis is written by a group of learned people, the leaders do not ever read it? When they talk, give speeches, give lectures, the way they conduct themselves, they do not pause to think what their main political thesis is.

In the main political thesis adopted at their party congress, the stage of revolution in India is designated as people’s democratic revolution; they profess that they are committed to bring about this revolution. They are saying revolution against imperialism, against big monopolists

and feudalism is people's democratic revolution. My question is, 'Who would be the allies in this revolution against imperialism, big monopolists and feudalism?' Speaking about the correlation of forces in the revolution it is said that, workers, peasants, the national bourgeoisie along with the lower middle class and the rich peasants are the allies for this revolution. Here, whom are they calling rich peasants? In the villages it is the rich peasants who are called jotedars. So who are the jotedars in West Bengal? They are none but the rich peasants. Hence, according to CPI(M)'s political thesis, these rich peasants or jotedars are the allies in the revolution. Thus, according to their theory of people's democratic revolution even if the Bangla Congress be a national bourgeois party, that is, a party of the national bourgeoisie and of the jotedars, in their fight for seizure of power, for a long period these rich peasants, in other words, the jotedars, would remain their allies. This is what they themselves have stated in their political thesis. So we, who talk of socialist revolution, may have objection to the jotedars' party, but it appears strange to me why CPI(M) should have objection to such a party.

The second important point on this issue is that the democratic front that is being thought about at this moment, at this stage of democratic movement, is not the same as the front that comes into being just at the moment preceding what the CPI(M) calls people's democratic revolution; these two fronts are not identical. When the country is advancing in the preparation for revolution through democratic movements, the democratic front at that stage has a certain form. But when the democratic movements, in course of their progress, have taken an organized united shape, when through a succession of movements the revolutionary organization has crystallized and the revolutionary leadership has emerged, at that stage, what is the concrete form of the front? That front is a front just before the culmination of revolution, and is made up of all the classes constituting the people's democratic front! In other words, it is to be understood that the hegemony of the communist party is established over the working class, the peasants, the lower middle class, the national bourgeoisie and the rich peasants. Only after such a situation develops is the necessity of a democratic front exhausted. That is, the necessity of the democratic front is exhausted only after all the fake-revolutionary parties, those anti-people parties posing themselves as democratic or socialist parties — whose position is in between the reactionary forces, who are to be ousted, on the one hand, and the communist party or the working class party on the other — who have some influence over sections of people, are isolated from the people and any illusion about them in the people's mind is dispelled, and it has become possible

to bring the huge mass of people under the sole leadership of the communist party. In other words, there is then no need of a front like a united front, it is then a fight for direct seizure of power. Hence, till the situation for a direct seizure of power arrives, till the task of isolating the fake, anti-people parties from the people and thereby establishing the revolutionary party leadership on the workers, peasants, lower middle class people is completed, till that time, according to CPI(M)'s own political thesis, the democratic front that has emerged in the present stage of democratic movements, that is, in the present stage of united front politics, is purposeful, is a necessity. If this is the situation think about the matter. If any cadre, leader or supporter of that party is present in this gathering, my request to them is, whatever animosity you harbour against us, whatever you think us to be, fascists, a party of the landowners, an agent of the capitalists or whatever, please ponder once that in the correlation of forces that is enunciated in your own political thesis of people's democratic revolution, the manner in which classes are designated as allies in the movements, in the proposal that you have made of building up the 'people's democratic front' or 'class-based front' with these allies, in that 'class-based front' even the national bourgeoisie can be a constituent, so also can the jotedars.

Else, you have to admit that you have changed your political thesis. Because everybody knows that in a class-divided society every front has a class character — be it a united front, or a national front or a proletarian united front. Just as in socialist revolution, the proletarian united front that emerges from the class alliance of workers and peasants under proletarian leadership is a class-based front, so also is the national front against imperialism, encompassing the whole country a class-based front. This is the Marxist connotation of class-based front. This is the only Marxist interpretation of class-based front. Now the revolution the CPI(M) is talking about is people's democratic revolution. So if from the point of view of theory their revolution is people's democratic revolution, then the national bourgeoisie and the jotedars may be included in their class-based front. If the CPI(M) leaders really mean what they talk about in the party congress, if their political thesis is not so many words on paper only, if it is to be implemented in reality, if there is truth in it, then the CPI(M) leaders should have no objection to making alliance with the jotedars. Rather it is we who may object, because we believe in socialist revolution. So for them it is purposeless to say, "It is a party of jotedars. It is reactionary." In the present stage of their revolution the jotedars are not reactionary. The national bourgeoisie and the rich peasants are allies in their revolution, may be vacillating allies; but till the culmination of revolution they are

allies of revolution. Then how is it that they were fighting against jotedars, the very allies in their revolution, and now in the course of movements they are talking of building class-based front against the jotedars?

See, what contradictory statements! And you see, their cadres are blindly accepting it. You know that the distinguishing feature of fascism is that there is no place whatsoever for rational analysis. In support of CPI(M)'s assault on constituent parties in the United Front, Promod Babu put forward the thesis that they have been fighting against the jotedars, and such and such parties are jotedars' parties, hence there are clashes with them ; that is why these parties are opposing the CPI(M). And it is for this reason that there is no necessity of a united front today. Now the task is to build up a class-based front. This is the new thesis of Promod Babu. And the cadres and supporters of their party are blindly accepting it. Our question is, when did they accept this new thesis discarding their old political thesis of people's democratic revolution? We do not know. They have not brought it to the knowledge of the people either of this country. If we knew this we could have understood their present analysis and would have judged it from a different viewpoint. We would have asked them, 'What is really this class-based front?' I have mentioned earlier that in this class-divided society, all fronts cannot but be class-based fronts. But according to Promod Babu it is possible that in a class-divided society there may be fronts which are not class-based. What he is now calling class-based front can really mean politically only the proletarian united front. And if this is their conclusion then theirs is no more a people's democratic revolution. In this context I am putting to you another point. In their own language they are telling that the necessity of united front is exhausted, now is the time for building class-based front. From their talks about class-based front it would follow, that as a result of building up the correct revolutionary movements under the leadership of their party all the fake, anti-people parties got isolated from the people, and the revolutionary forces are marshalled under their leadership. If this be so, time has come to fight for direct seizure of power; people's illusion about parliamentary politics is dispelled. Then why are they clamouring for election within six weeks?

I am discussing these points at some length because, whatever the others may think, I personally and our party, too, believe that such a big party has a very important role to play even today, at least in the democratic movements in West Bengal. We believe that if we cannot unite

again in joint movements, if we fight with one another, either because of their wrong politics or of ours, the result would be disastrous. There would be division in the mass movements. The people's unity and strength would be disrupted, the people would become frustrated. And seizing this opportunity, the followers of Golwalkar who are now crouching like a tiger in the wings would appear in a big way in the arena of West Bengal politics, and extremist politics would raise its ugly head in this state.⁸ So we have to save West Bengal from this calamity. But how? That is why I am discussing all these.

We too have many grievances, we too have been victims of attack. We do not support the CPI(M) politics one whit. Still I am of the view that they are even today a force in the democratic movements, whose utility still exists. But the politics that the CPI(M) is practising is a politics of disruption in the democratic movements. It is a dangerous politics which, instead of protecting, is destroying democratic movements from within. Whether they are doing this consciously, intentionally or unknowingly, such questions are of less import. We are noticing that their politics is such that they cannot but act in this way. This is how Promod Babu and others are letting down the people. See, how strange is the contradiction in their politics. 'Marxist' Promod Babu taunts us as 'Agmark Communists', that is, branded as 'pure'. Yes, we do call ourselves true communists. We hear his ridicule, "Theirs is an 'Agmark' party." Let them talk like that, let them ridicule us to their heart's content, it does not matter to us. For many years we have been hearing from many that we have appeared overnight just like a mushroom. But amidst all these years, on our own strength, on the strength of our ideology and dedication, we have made our place in West Bengal politics, in the national politics. Taunting remarks from others do not matter to us. By ridicules and false propaganda the people may be deluded for some time, but not for ever. In Germany the politics of Goebbels could deceive the people for at least ten to twelve years, thereby bringing disaster to the country. But it could not deceive the German people, the people of the world for all time. That is why such ridicules do not matter to us.

However, I would like to place one point before Promod Babu, his party cadres and the people for their consideration. I have already said that if they dislike discussion on politics, theoretical discussions, that will not do. Promod Babu and others are telling that the necessity of the front is exhausted, that is, the United Front that we built up has lost its utility. Then my question is, 'What was the historical necessity of building a democratic front, that grew out of

the unity of the 'pure' Marxist' party CPI(M) with different democratic forces, the pseudo-socialists, the pseudo-Marxists?' The necessity was this that till the leadership of the revolutionary party will have been established on the major section of the people, that is till the revolutionary leadership is established in reality over the people, the functional role of parliamentary politics exists; the Naxalites do not believe this. The Naxalites do not believe that in our country Parliament has any real existence, that parliamentary politics and parliamentary institutions have a place. But the reality is that parliamentary politics exists in this country. What is the limitation of this parliamentary democracy is a different matter. But the parliamentary illusion, what we call illusion about election politics, has pervaded the people's psyche.

The self styled revolutionaries, the Marxists, all are found to be saying that elections will yield nothing. We also say this. We, who call ourselves Marxists, never say that we believe in election politics, or that we do not want revolution. None of us tell these things. Because if we talk like this we would be immediately isolated from the democratic-minded, revolutionary-minded people of West Bengal. If any of us happen to tread in the blind alley of election politics, in the open even he has to swear by revolution. There is no other way. But let this be. Now let us see what the Marxist-Leninist theory says on this issue. Marxist-Leninist theory says that Marxists go in the Parliament, because parliamentary illusion exists among the people. What do the words, parliamentary illusion mean? They mean that the fake democrats, the fake socialists, the fake revolutionaries still exert considerable influence on the democratic forces, the workers-peasants-middle class, that is, the classes who constitute allies of revolution, and it is they who spread the parliamentary illusion. It means that conditions have not ripened for the people to bring about revolution, or for a front to be built up having that character which comes into existence immediately prior to direct seizure of power under the leadership of a revolutionary party. In other words we still exist in that stage of democratic movement in which we have to take part in the elections in order to free people from the illusion of parliamentary politics; we have to form the government if we attain electoral majority, and use that government, to the extent possible, for building up revolutionary movements. We have to restrain the police and use the front as a weapon for mass movements. It is for this that we participate in the elections and put up candidates for election. So the Marxist-Leninist theory says that till the pseudo-democrats, pseudo-socialists, pseudo-revolutionaries are isolated from the workers-peasants-middle class, i.e., the classes who constitute the allies of revolution, and the conditions can be created for the

seizure of power under the leadership of the revolutionary party, till then the Marxist-Leninists take part in the election by building up democratic fronts.

Yet Promod Babu and others are telling on the one hand that the necessity of united front, in other words democratic front, is exhausted. We have crossed that stage of democratic movement in which the United Front was built up. And those parties positioned in the middle — in the language of CPI(M), that means us and the other left parties — have sided with the Bangla Congress and are thereby isolated from the mass movements. This means that we are isolated from the revolutionary masses. That is we are those compromising forces existing between the ruling exploiting class and the revolutionary Marxist party who is to oust the former. All of us, who were compromising between revolution and reaction and were spreading parliamentary illusion by deluding the people, all of these parties, that means us, according to their theory have become exposed. Our dispute with them is that according to them it is not the very CPI(M) that is isolated from the other parties nor from the mass movements, it is we who are all isolated from mass movements. The leadership of CPI(M) over the people is established, and the people are rallying under that revolutionary front formed just prior to seizure of power. And, on the other hand, the CPI(M) is raising the slogan for election to be held within six weeks.

This means that they are themselves saying that the people's minds are not freed of electoral illusion. And because this illusion is not yet dispelled they have to take part in the election and expose its true nature and unmask the face of parliamentary politics. But by announcing that electoral illusion is not dispelled, they are acknowledging that those parties, unity with which they have broken, still exert influence over the people. For it is precisely because these parties have influence over the people that parliamentary illusion exists among the people. It follows from this that they and us are still at that stage of democratic movements in which the united front or the democratic front has its utility. So which of their pronouncements is true? Is this their theory of people's democratic revolution? Or are they saying whatever comes to their mind? And you see such people happen to be the leaders of revolutionary movements! Can you tell me how the politics of the country would follow the right course if this type of people occupy the responsible position of leadership of such a big party on which so much depends. So we see that the job of the cadres of this party is to be yes-men, to be ready to do anything their leaders say. Regretfully, I would say that they would better join a band of religious hymn-singers, join a

chorus singing *kirtans* (devotional songs), let them chant the Lord's name day and night. Please do not dabble in political discussions or political analysis, especially revolutionary politics.

And there is another point. What is the concrete form of the united front, that is, the democratic front in the stage of democratic movements? When electoral battles go on, in which stage are the democratic movements supposed to be? When they are going to fight the elections, in what stage of democratic movements do they find themselves? If in that stage they have isolated such democratic parties, pseudo-socialists, or in their words pseudo-revolutionary parties like ours, and have succeeded in rallying behind them the entire people, so much so that people's power is overwhelmingly behind them, then may I ask who really constitute that 'people's power'? As you see, for one there is the Workers' Party who would be nowhere if they did not get the votes through the courtesy of CPI(M), or the Marxist Forward Block, or Sudhin Kumar's party⁹ — parties which flounder even if propped up — such parties are their allies ! And those who are really forces of democratic movements remained out of their front. They are raising many misleading questions about SUCI. They are telling, "SUCI has changed. It was quite OK earlier; it was once a Marxist Party, but then it went against us." That is, when the SUCI went against them it is no longer a Marxist party. But why has SUCI gone against them? A party like SUCI — which at the time of the Sino-Indian border conflict stood by their side braving all adversity, which remained steadfast, though being a small party, while it is they who were rather shaky — why has this party moved away from them? They practise such politics that they do not know how to hold on to friends. They themselves spoil the friendship. Knowingly or unknowingly, through their wrong politics and blind conduct and actions of their comrades they wreck the united movements from within.

Think over another point. The CPI(M) claims to be a big party, calls itself Marxist. If their claim is true, let them tell adhering to Marxist outlook whether it is possible in the present stage of democratic movements for any party to conduct and lead the mass movements solely on its own strength, by isolating the other parties from the masses and by rallying the overwhelming majority of people behind them. So at this stage if the united front breaks down because of the wrong politics of any party, the biggest loser would be the true revolutionary party, the party which dreams of bringing about revolution. Because the methodology with which revolutionary movement would be built up, the process in which it would grow in the society is this, that in the

course of prolonged united struggle of the democratic forces, treading together along this path of struggle, judged in the light of the experience of these struggles, the fake and anti-people parties would become isolated from the people. They can be isolated one day if the struggle for their isolation is conducted unitedly on the basis of that very objective understanding of politics that will lead to their isolation. Only then a sentiment in favour of revolution would grow among a large section of people, the overwhelming mass of people would rush to gather under the revolutionary party's leadership. No compromising force or fake democrats could delude the people by spreading electoral illusion or misleading exhortation. This is the utility of the united front for a revolutionary party. Now, is the influence over the mass movements of all those parties, which the CPI(M) leaders consider to be pseudo-Marxists or pseudo-leftists exhausted ? Is their role exhausted? If indeed they consider it to be so, then we have to understand that the stage of democratic movements has been crossed and the time has come for direct seizure of power. So there can be no question of going for elections.

So we see that their analysis is faulty. In reality, they are saying these things because they are put in a tight corner before the cadres. For example, it is being said that the Bangla Congress is a party of the jotedars. Not a single cadre of their party puts this question to Promod Babu or Jyoti Babu that even if it is a party of the jotedars, going by the CPI(M)'s political thesis, what is the difficulty of forming a united front with it ? Because the Bangla Congress can remain as a vacillating ally of the people's democratic revolution till the battle for seizure of power. And this United Front is merely a front for democratic movements. Isn't it true that only after crossing this stage we can reach the stage of seizure of power? And if at the stage of direct seizure of power, the rich peasants and national bourgeoisie are considered as allies then why this incitement against Bangla Congress as a 'jotedar's party'? And has the Bangla Congress become a jotedars' party only now? If it is one, it was so even before. Then why did you form unity with them at that time?

So I am again making this appeal to the CPI(M) leaders to ponder over and to realize that the United Front is a concrete outcome of mass movements ; it is an instrument of struggle in mass movements. If this united front cannot be built up, it is not possible to lift the democratic movements to the stage of the fight for direct seizure of power. In this situation, the party which talks of revolution, be it socialist revolution or people's democratic revolution, who wants to free

the people from the influence of other fake and anti-people parties, thereby directing the people under its leadership to change the character of the united front — what should be the nature of the programme and politics of that party within the united front? It has to carry out two tasks simultaneously. On the one hand, it has to direct the mass movements, and, on the other hand, while conducting the united movements it has to isolate the fake, anti-people parties from the people through political-ideological struggles. Promod Babu and his colleagues are not able to carry out these tasks simultaneously, and they have not understood the mutual relation between these tasks, that is, they have neither comprehended the true significance of the principle of unity of opposites, nor have they been able to apply it in practice. If one is not a true Marxist one cannot comprehend it, nor implement it in practice. I shall try to explain this.

There may be differences among the constituents of the United Front ; this is but natural. However, in the preamble of the proposal that we placed before the Front broke down, we said that we do not agree with and do not believe in the view that the Front broke down because of mutual bickerings, clique-coterie and conflicts and clashes between the constituent parties. Because, in the political movement there have been many conflicts between the parties. This happened many times in the history of the freedom movement. Anushilan and Jugantar or various other parties fought between themselves. But in the struggle against British imperialism they fought shoulder to shoulder. Then their unity did not break down. In spite of the clashes between the parties the unity did not break down nor did it crack even because of ideological differences.

What happened in reality is that using the police and administration as a shield directly or indirectly, the CPI(M) carried out assaults in the other parties' organized strongholds. Whenever they face this point the CPI(M) leaders at once argue that if they indeed control the police, use it in their party interest, then how is it that in such and such areas their party workers are killed in police firing. By raising such misleading points they want to confuse and cover up the main issue. They being in overall control of the police and the administration, the police would not enter into any conflict with them anywhere, would not have any encounters with them ever – what type of argument is it? So the real happenings cannot be bypassed by raising such crooked arguments. The real situation today which all people and all parties can perceive from all the

incidents that are happening every day without leaving any direct evidence or clue is that the CPI(M) is using the police and the administration for petty party interest.

I shall come later to the issue of the police. First, let me tell about the school committees. What has happened there? What has happened in the education department? Is it not true that they have dismissed all the school committees, and in a most undemocratic manner have set up their own people in these? Has CPI(M) not established party control in every wing of the education department? Haven't all these activities brought conflicts within the United Front? The pertinent point that I would like to raise before the CPI(M) leaders is this — they have built up the United Front ; theirs is a big party; it is their responsibility to maintain the unity of the United Front at this phase of democratic movements. But, from the seat of the government, they started to use the power in such a way, they started to take privileges in such a manner, that this brought in conflicts within the United Front, that helped to instigate any force which might have wanted to disrupt the front from within. If this be so, can it be said that their politics is right and that the other parties caused the breakdown of the Front? Or isn't it true that their politics alone led to the breakdown of the United Front?

Theirs is a big party. It is they who need the United Front, the main responsibility of safeguarding the Front also lies with them. In such a situation what ought to be the nature of the CPI(M)'s politics? How should their party act when the other parties, whom they do not consider to be true revolutionaries, might raise different questions, might misuse the administration, might try in many ways to break the unity when the United Front is moving under their influence? Their party is supposed to foil such moves. Instead, what did they do? Being a big party, the 'premier revolutionary party'(!), they did not work to maintain the unity of the United Front, which was of utmost necessity in the interest of revolution, did not do what was necessary to expose through movements the characters of those parties and reach the stage of battle for seizure of power. But after coming to power they could not wait any more. Immediately they wanted to swallow up those parties. And to that end they started using the police and administration wherever they could, in whichever way they could. You would notice that in many places a saying goes round among the public — the local CPI(M) leaders or workers, each one is himself a home minister. The police, the District Magistrate, the sub-divisional officer meekly follow their dictates.

During the Congress regime a certain subject became a common topic of conversation. What is that? It is that, when a Congress bigwig of the local committee asks the police to do something, requests the sub-divisional officer for something they cannot refuse. They used to do what they were asked to. Because, they took it for granted that the Congress could never be removed from power. This mentality to serve the master is a legacy of the British rule, a legacy of the colonial administration. The Congress maintained it in its own interest. Why? Because the Congress got isolated from the people. It has lost its faith in the people. Through politics, political ideology, political movements they could not rally the people in their support. The Congress tried to spread its organization by using the administrative machinery. But a party that relies on its politics, on mass movements, does not need to use the administrative machinery. In a democratic system, in a parliamentary political system, a revolutionary party does not need to utilize the opportunity of spreading its organization through use or backing of administrative machinery, provided it does not merely pay lip service to revolution, or has not lost its political ability to ensure people's unstinted support in favour of them. If a party is a revolutionary party it would not have recourse to such a method.

From what the Congress went on doing, the police officers and bureaucrats took it that they would have to continue conducting themselves in this way. Many of you would remember that after the United Front government was formed I said in the mass meeting of 24th April, 1967, and also told the United Front Ministry, that I do not know whether they could bring manna from heaven, but if they could do at least one thing, that itself would be great. It is this that if they act in the right way, the administration and the police personnel would at least realize that they have to give up the practice of securing benefits by serving the masters. They have to get rid of this colonial mentality, a mentality they acquired as a legacy from the British rulers. When the United Front came at first, the police and administration were apprehensive. But as soon as the Front occupied the seat of power, from the attitude of the big party they realized that this party is also like the Congress. Feeling assured they followed the same line as before. Rather they had an additional advantage. When they set out to please the Congress, they were cursed by the people, now if they serve the CPI(M), they can earn the badge of 'progressive police', 'servants of the people'. It is as if the class character of the police changed as soon as the United Front came to power and the hegemony of the CPI(M) over the government was established. As if, after their coming to power the police is transformed into 'an instrument of serving the people'. I do not

know wherefrom such Marxism comes, which Marxist theory says this. How does the class character of the police change immediately after the CPI(M) takes up the charge of the police department? If tomorrow after winning in the election, they form the central government, then would the character of the military and the bureaucracy change to that of ‘servants of the people’? Then what is the necessity of revolution? Then why are they deceiving the people by raising slogans of revolution and why are they stirring up the cadres? Why don’t they let the cat out of the bag? The truth is, that keeping in view the general atmosphere in West Bengal, the mental make-up of the people, they are raising all these slogans of revolution just to agitate their cadres, to expand their party. They do not want revolution, if they did, they would not have taken the route of crushing the organization of others by using the police and the administration. As for us, we talk of revolution because we truly want revolution. So I was saying that if a Marxist party, a revolutionary party comes to power as a principal constituent of the united front, its task would be to prevent the other parties from misusing the administration and in this way, having ensured administrative neutrality, imbibe people with correct politics, so that the front of so many parties does not break down.

Hence what is that particular aspect which CPI(M) ought to realize? It has to realize that when several parties together take part in united democratic movements they do so with each having their own ideology and politics. Each has some political differences from others and each has some measure of influence on the people. And each will try to proceed, on the basis of their own strength, to expand their sphere of influence; as a result there is bound to be mutual ideological struggles. Therefore, while ideological struggle should be continued, physical clashes have to be avoided in the interest of the unity of the front. If some such clashes do ever occur somewhere, still then side by side with ideological struggle, democratic movements have to be continued to implement the programme against the main class enemy, on the basis of which we have all become united, keeping the administration neutral. So we have to carry out both the tasks simultaneously — to maintain the unity of the front, and at the same time to carry out the political battle for expansion of the party through ideological struggle.

To carry out one task the CPI(M) has wrecked another. To enhance the influence of the politics of their party, they stepped into the politics of destroying the unity. They paid no heed to such an important political issue even as maintaining the unity and tried to wantonly use the

administration, and resorted to such stunts as saying whatever is necessary to mislead and confuse the people. In this situation will the Front survive? For example, I read in the newspapers that Jyoti Babu has said that no one can cite a single example or demonstrate the veracity of a single incident where the CPI(M) has used the police and the home department in the interest of expanding the party influence. He said that not a single party has given any example or could prove the veracity of any incident, that they have only hurled empty abuses against the CPI(M).

What Jyoti Babu has said is not true. I personally know this, I can quote umpteen incidents from the records of our party. I do not want to say harsh words, nor should I say them. We have informed him personally through a letter of the incident at Valeya village within the Canning police station. We have also written to him personally about the Kulpi incident, about the burning of people to death, which you have read in the newspapers. And then there is the incident at Kultali where, taking shelter behind a cover of 200 armed police personnel, lined up as *shikhandi* (surely you have read the tale of *shikhandi* in the *Mahabharat* ; putting *shikhandi* as a shield Arjun killed the great warrior Bhisma) 500 CPI(M) men launched attacks on an assembly of 7000 of our peasants and got away after murdering and injuring so many of them. We have informed him about all these incidents through personal letters. We asked Jyoti Babu to institute enquiries into all these incidents. We raised this issue at the ministerial level and there have been discussions also. But suppressing all these Jyoti Babu non-chalantly said that nobody could cite even one example or show the veracity of a single incident. But what does natural justice demand? Natural justice demands that if I complain against somebody, then the person with whom the complaint is lodged would not enquire about the incident only with the accused, would not stop with getting a report from him alone or would not decide that the incident happened as the accused said, merely on the basis of the latter's report. To arrive at the truth he would collect the information from all concerned from all angles. Instead of doing this, what did Jyoti Babu do? Whereas the complaint is against his own party and the police, that is, against the local police authority and the district police authority, to get at the truth Jyoti Babu called for a report from the same police authority and from his own party. It turned out that what is given in the report from their own party is said in different words in the police report also. The CPI(M)'s report is absolutely identical with the police report. And it is on seeing these reports that he said, "Look here! The reports say things contrary to what you said." Is it natural justice that he would

get the report only from the accused and accept this as true? The charge is against some district authority of his party, and he accepts as sole truth the report from that very authority. If CPI(M) lodges a complaint against some district authority of our party, I may enquire with that district authority to get information about the matter. But if it turns out that I simply read out verbatim the report given by the district authority of our party without critically judging things and tell that this is the truth about the incident and what the CPI(M) says is not true, then would they get fair justice from me? Can they expect it? But this is what Jyoti Babu does. Police reports were objects hated by the people, but on every occasion Jyoti Babu started to accord the same police reports the status of one representing the truth.

In this way, Jyoti Babu notched up the status of police reports. Didn't they know how the police prepare their reports, right from the time of the British rule? Didn't Jyoti Babu know how the police rig up cases? Were they not themselves the sufferers? Has the character of the police changed overnight? And the most important point is that our complaint is precisely against the police itself. Our charge is against the nexus between the police and their party. And Jyoti Babu trashes our charges on the basis of reports from their party and the police. He ought to have included one of us with them to carry out an unbiased enquiry in the locality for refuting our charge. Has he carried out any such enquiry? We have informed him about Valeya, Kultali, Kulpi and many other incidents. We have informed him about other smaller incidents. I do not know what the other parties have done, but we have informed him. But has he gone to any locality and tried to ascertain the truth in an unbiased way? Not to speak of doing it; on the contrary he has simply shelved our complaints basing himself on the reports from police and their party, against whom we brought the charges. Not only that, he did not even show the courtesy of replying to our many letters, many reports and many complaints. On top of this, he is telling the reporters that the others have not cited any incident. Is this any politics? They have surpassed even Goebbels. What they tell has no relation to truth.

This is not the proper way. This politics of stunt has to be discarded if the unity of the Front is to be maintained. Else, unity will be disrupted. Let them carry out polemical fights, let them defeat the politics of others by ideological struggles. As we are saying that we shall fight their attacks by counterattacks if we can, if we cannot we shall suffer their assaults, but we shall conduct our struggle in the course of conducting our ideological campaign. We have not left the

United Front because their cadres have launched attacks on us with the help of the police. In the United Front regime the CPI(M) have taken the lives of at least nineteen of our comrades. Have we gone out of the United Front because of that? Even today we want to preserve the United Front. We want to preserve it keeping the CPI(M) within, and for that we are also putting pressure now on the Bangla Congress. If the Bangla Congress does not come into the Front, that is a different matter. But let the CPI(M) respond, let them say that they would change their politics, would mend their ways. My appeal to the CPI(M) cadres is this, they should discard the disruptive unity-destroying politics which their leaders have brought in. Let them reform their leadership, or else remove them. We are again asking the CPI(M) leadership to openly declare whether they want the United Front or not. Do you feel the necessity of a united front? But please do not resort to blatant lies or contradictory statements. Do not confuse people by saying any odd thing. If you do not want a united front or united movement well and good, then you fight single-handedly. The CPI(M) leaders claim that the whole strength of democratic movements is wholly behind them. Then all these people who have assembled in this vast gathering at the call of our party, or all the people who gather at the meetings of other parties here and there, are they all illusory, like Sankaracharya's *maya*? Do they not exist? Just as the world is an illusion, *maya*, according to Shankaracharya, so also are we seeing this vast mass of people in this meeting in a fit of delusion, or are all our forces in the different localities, that we talk about, all illusory? Under the spell of the jotedars we are seeing all these; they have no existence in reality? If they think so, that is O.K. Let them fight alone.

But at the same time they are saying that it is necessary to forge unity. But how is this to be done? In their view it would be class-based unity. What is the real meaning of their word 'class-based'? The answer is that by propping up people like Sukumar Roy¹⁰ of Biplabi Bangla Congress, and by putting up a few other people and putting some party labels on them, they would put a name to a front with them and would announce that in the light of class struggle and on that yardstick it is proved that these are the allies in the revolutionary movement, and the combined front of all these parties is the class-based front. I say, why do they need to deceive the people in this way? Let them come to a straight fight. Let them declare that on one side they stand alone, and on the other side stands the United Front of West Bengal; let us see in whose favour the people of West Bengal give their verdict. Then we would know that they have the courage of conviction. Instead of doing that why are they talking in a round-about fashion, why

are they deceiving the people by confusing statements? Let them talk in a straightforward manner so that people can understand them, understand their politics. Some may agree with their politics, others may not, but let them talk in such a manner that everybody can understand, — we, the people and also their party cadre. What are they afraid of? If their politics is proved to be wrong, then the party workers, if they are not blind, will be able to rectify them and bring them on to the right track. But they are not acting in this way. On the contrary, they do not speak the way they act and do not act the way they speak. What I do intend to say is this, why are they misleading people through such contradictory, confusing statements? So our submission is — please discard the politics that disrupts the unity of the United Front, the unity of the democratic front. At the same time we would ask the Bangla Congress leaders to get rid of their obstinacy.

In this context I should like to pass to another point. As a small party we have become victims of many more attacks compared to the CPI(M). We are very much small compared to them, but we had to bear many more casualties. Compared to 20 years of Congress rule, our casualties during this brief spell of United Front rule have not been less. You know that as far as peasant movements are concerned in the whole of Sundarban area, in Birbhum and in other districts, our SUCI party has a reputation of being the poor people's party, poor peasants' party. The influence of our peasants' wing Krishak O Khetmajur Federation¹¹ as a poor people's organization extends over wide areas in the whole district of 24 Parganas. Even the middle class opposes us for the reason that we fight for the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. A reactionary like Humayun Kabir, a Congressite like Siddhartha Ray, the jotedar class and Congress leaders — they are in unison in saying that in wide areas of 24 Parganas, fighting for the poor peasants and agricultural labourers we have endangered the life and property of the jotedars. Whether we have done that or not is a different matter. The point is that such talks arise because we are engaged in struggle. It is said that in those areas the rule of poor peasants is enforced; we have allegedly established our own rule. Just the other day they said that there the poor peasants are organized under our leadership. In spite of these struggles for the poor people against the rural jotedars and rich peasants, the CPI(M) has launched attacks in our organized peasant areas in a planned way with the help of the police and the administration, and because of these we suffered many casualties; these attacks and casualties CPI(M) alleges are their class struggle.

And for Bardhaman district, where the CPI(M) claims to have the biggest organizational strength, which is the biggest stronghold of jotedars in West Bengal, the citadel of big and powerful jotedars, what tales of class-struggle there can the CPI(M) leaders narrate? Except for one or two stray, isolated incidents of struggle, has there been any class struggle in the real sense in that district? Are there no jotedars there? If so, then are they coexisting with the jotedars there? Or is it that the whole band of jotedars have become allies of revolution, and party members? Which of these has happened? But they started their class struggle in 24 Parganas, where the agricultural labourers are already organized under the leadership of our party. It is not difficult to fathom the significance of such things. It signifies that the jotedars who were earlier patronized by the Congress, at first veered towards Bangla Congress driven by communist hatred. When they found that the Bangla Congress could not protect them they went over to the CPI(M). Around these jotedars there were a few poor peasants who were still unorganized — because when there is a strong peasants' organization that does not mean that a few poor peasants may not be under the influence of the jotedars — along with these poor people they tried to reoccupy the *benam*¹² lands which the peasants had earlier occupied; and this fight for reoccupation, the CPI(M) started to pass off as 'fight against jotedars'. So I said, yes Promod Babu and others could well call it class-struggle. Because just as the fight of peasants against the jotedars is class struggle, so also is the fight of the jotedars against the peasants class struggle from the point of view of jotedars. Promod Babu and his colleagues are doing that type of class struggle. When they are fighting along with the jotedars against peasants, of course that is no less a class struggle! Easy to understand that from their point of view, they have done the right thing. This class struggle they carried out in South 24 Parganas — the class struggle accompanied by a blood bath — the centre of class struggle is that area, where we have the organization. And in Bardhaman district, where they have their own organization, we see no surging waves of class struggle, except a few stray incidents. So is this class struggle, or is this wrecking the organization of others in the name of class struggle? Subodh Babu¹³ is sitting here. Please ask him. In village after village, using the police as a shield, and after getting our comrades arrested, the CPI(M) has organized the jotedars and anti-social thugs against the poor peasants and landless labourers in our fold and launched attacks against them. At places there have been direct police onslaughts on the peasants. Once Subodh Babu became furious and told Jyoti Babu, "We are a small party. If you want to break us, to attack us and wipe us out, then come on. Only

declare that you would not send the police. Declare that unlike the Congress regime, locally the party executive would not become the boss of the police.”

Lastly, I like to tell a few things to those who are in the administration. I want to tell them that they are committing a mistake. People will not forgive you if you think that just as you served the Congress in line with colonial politics, so you would serve the CPI(M) also to have a better time even. The people want that you would act impartially with pro-people, patriotic attitude within a democratic administration and that you would not act as the agent of any political party. If you don't act in this way, today or tomorrow, the people's wrath is sure to come down on you. Then nobody would be able to shield you from the people's hatred that you are now earning. It will not go away with the propaganda of some CPI(M) workers, just as it is not going away now. The people of West Bengal never looked at the police with respect, right from the days of the freedom movement. But you could have avoided this wrath if, instead of kowtowing to the ruling party's politics, you had impartially behaved in administration, neutrally behaved, had not made the above mistake. And the CPI(M) also will not be always in the position of power. Fighting the election by itself the CPI(M) will never win the majority to come to occupy governmental power.

If the CPI(M) leaders dream of this, it is a false dream. I am telling that let them declare that they are the leader of the overwhelming mass of people, that they will by themselves win the majority and form the government. No, so confronted they will surely go to form an alignment. They would have to do it. With whom would they align? The answer would be: with Workers' Party, Marxist Forward Bloc, the Sudhin Kumar Group of the RCPI (that is, one of several factions of the RCPI) – this sort of parties. Apart from these there is Sukumar Roy, who came out of the Congress to be a member of the Bangla Congress and then left the Bangla Congress; a Biplabi (Revolutionary) Bangla Congress is to be created by using him. Then a front would have to be formed with the parties I just mentioned, along with the Biplabi (Revolutionary) Bangla Congress, and they would have to show that they are conducting the struggle forming a class-based front for democratic movements. I say, if that is what they want, let them fight in that way, let them face the people of West Bengal, then we shall see. If the people of West Bengal accept them, we shall abide by their decision.

But I say to them: 'Do not go on that road. We do not want you to be discredited by following the way of breaking the unity of democratic movements.' We want them to reject the path of their wrong politics and come back to the main current of democratic movements. Others may be interested to see how much we could drub them and how much they could drub us. Others may like this politics, but not we. Our party still wants that today, when the necessity of the united front is not exhausted, when the stage of democratic movements still exists, and when as a result they have to participate in the election just as we have to — let them accept the reality. To keep with the necessity of democratic movements please do not make false prestige an issue and help the revival of the United Front, discarding your dangerous politics of disrupting unity, which is inconsistent even with your main political thesis. Please help us in our endeavour in this matter. If even after this the Bangla Congress obstinately sticks to the stand that they would not join the United Front if the CPI(M) is included, then all of us, the remaining parties, would combine without the Bangla Congress and revive democratic mass movements in West Bengal. But for now we should try to include the Bangla Congress. If from the very beginning Bangla Congress were kept out of the United Front, as we had suggested then, that would have been a different matter. But it is the CPI(M) leaders who brought the Bangla Congress, labeling it as a democratic force, into the United Front. The Bangla Congress did not leave the United Front over any question of principle.

So, please come first to the real issue. I personally think and our party thinks that even now the United Front in West Bengal can be revived. All efforts should be undertaken to do that. For this, the CPI(M) has first to abandon its politics of disrupting the unity of the democratic front. They have to get rid of the politics of spreading slanders against their allies in the United Front, their comrades-in-arm in the democratic movements. They were vitiating the atmosphere within by inciting their party workers against the allied parties — they have to discard this politics. The CPI(M) must be pressurized to adopt this path by creating a strong wave of public opinion. Otherwise, the troubles that will ensue, the harm that will be caused to mass movements, would bring tremendous losses to the vast number of exploited people of the country. With this I conclude my talk here.

Long Live Revolution!

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Notes

1. The analysis has now clearly turned out to be true.
2. Promod Dasgupta, Politbureau member CPI(M) and State Secretary, West Bengal.
3. Jyoti Basu, CPI(M) Politbureau member, later Chief Minister
4. Rich farmers owning huge land, the rural bourgeoisie.
5. This is a mode of expression in Bengali signifying something that is impossible.
6. About 25 acres.
7. Ajoy Mukherjee of Bangla Congress, Chief Minister of both the United Front governments.
8. This historic forewarning about the rise of RSS-Jana Sangh-BJP has turned out to be true in every bit.
9. Leader representing a faction of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI).
10. He left the Bangla Congress and formed the Biplabi (Revolutionary) Bangla Congress and supported the CPI(M).
11. Later renamed All India Krishak O Khet Mazur Sanghatan.
12. Land held illegally above ceiling under fictitious name.
13. Comrade Subodh Banerjee, member of the Politbureau of our party and the then PWD Minister of West Bengal UF Government.