

# ON THE THOUGHTS OF CHARU MAJUMDAR

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To begin with, although Charu Majumdar himself was responsible to a great extent in laying emphasis on '*khatam*' or 'annihilation' as the only means to mobilise the peasantry [cf. his speech at the first congress of the CPI(ML) in 1970 : "Only annihilation can solve all our problems"], in his later writings he sought to restore the balance by reiterating that "the fundamental point of class struggle is the seizure of political power. The fundamental point of class struggle is

not annihilation, though annihilation is a higher form of class-struggle” (Unpublished note written towards the end of 1971). During the same period, in another note to his comrades, he wrote: “Today the landless peasant, the poor peasant, must be told about the need to attack the State machinery, about our total politics.....To tell them only about the annihilation of class enemies will be economism.”

Unfortunately, the main aim, of creating base areas and mobilising the peasantry there around harvesting and other economic activities to enable them to taste the sense of power and inspire them to protect and enlarge those base areas, was lost sight of in the craze for getting rid of the immediate objects of reprisal—the notorious landlords and moneylenders. Yet, Charu Majumdar urged his followers on November 18, 1971, to rally all sections of the peasantry in the base areas for harvesting: “The movement is to make even the backward peasants participants in our struggle. Without conducting this mass movement we can in no way realise our objective—the objective of making every peasant a fighter.....”. In a warning against indiscriminate annihilation, he laid down the rules: “This movement will be directed against the class-enemy, i.e. the jotedar class. It will also be conducted against such rich peasants as may be actively cooperating with the police. *All other classes* are our allies in this struggle.”

The other issue which divided Charu Majumdar’s staunch followers from their critics in the movement in 1971-72 was the question of revolutionary authority, the former insisting that everyone would have to accept Charu Majumdar as the revolutionary authority, and refusal to do so would amount to treachery. Charu Majumdar himself had a more sober approach to the question. In a letter to some comrades in Tripura at the end of 1971, he wrote: “It is incorrect to mechanically bring to the forefront the question of authority during any difference of opinions. That pushes the politics back..... We shall never impose authority through methods of commandism. Comprehension of the vast number of

comrades gradually grows only through experience and political discussion.”

Charu Majumdar also stressed the need for uniting with the other revolutionary groups towards the end of his life. In the well-known article, ‘It is people’s interest that is the party’s interest’ (June 9, 1972), excerpts of which were carried by *Frontier* at that time, he reminded his comrades: “Even those who once practised enmity towards us will also in special circumstances come forward to unite with us. We must have such largeness of mind as to be united with all such forces.”

The slogan “China’s Chairman is our Chairman” which created a lot of resentment among revolutionaries here and embarrassment for the Chinese, was, as is fairly well-known among Majumdar’s close comrades, withdrawn by Majumdar towards the end of his life.

Paradoxically enough, during the phase that followed the 1972 setback and Charu Majumdar’s death, his devoted followers courageously rebuilt the party and created bases, but ignored his last warnings and advice and went on stressing the same old divisive features that had split the movement earlier. The second congress of the party, held in December, 1973, insisted on everyone accepting the revolutionary authority of Charu Majumdar, reiterated the slogan “China’s Chairman is our Chairman,” rejected talk of unity with other groups and laid emphasis on annihilation as the main means of achieving the goal.

But in spite of these unfortunate sectarian lapses, the second congress was an important landmark. The leaders of the congress (most of whom have been arrested during the last few months), took up the challenge of rebuilding the party and resuming the movement at a time when the whole situation looked bleak. Charu Majumdar had died, the central committee was in disarray, the cadres were either in jail or killed. From almost scratch, through patient discussions and contacts, the organisation was gradually rebuilt. An

important feature of the new organisation was the large proportion of landless peasants and workers in the leading committees. The leaders of the second congress throughout 1973-74 sought to implement Charu Majumdar's directive : "Unless the poor and landless peasants are elevated to leadership, however much revolutionary possibilities there might be, they are bound to fail" (July 14, 1970). The success that they achieved was because of their firm adherence to this belief. That the second congress could be held in a village in Burdwan under the protection of armed peasant guerillas is itself an indication of the progress made by these leaders of the CPI(ML). (The first congress was held in 1970 in an office building in a middle-class locality in Calcutta.) The base in that village could be retained for six months, and when the police encircled it in June 1974, the entire population of the village, with guns, bows and arrows fought the police, managed to make a dent in the encirclement and make a safe passage for the guerilla squads to escape. This indicates mass participation. But Kamalpur was an isolated village. The base there could not be extended to the neighbouring areas, since there was little time to build up the organisation in the outlying areas, as well as because of the sectarian lapses mentioned before—refusal to unite with other groups, etc. There were also mistakes of another nature. There was often among the leadership an over-optimistic evaluation of the possibility of advancing rapidly and underestimation of the enemy strength. This attitude was reflected in the party journals, where wishful thinking often replaced objective reporting, the justification being the need to rouse the people by flowery and emotional language. In fact, the party suffered from the three mistakes against which Mao Tsetung warned the Chinese Communist Party during the revolution there—subjectivism, sectarianism and long-winded style of writing.

Writing as early as 1967, asserting the primary importance of armed struggle, Charu Majumdar reiterated at the same time : "One may naturally ask then whether the peasantry

should not wage mass movements for their partial demands in this period. Certainly the need for such movements is still there and will remain there in future. India is a vast country, and the peasantry is also divided into various segments. So the level of political consciousness can never be the same in all classes and in all areas. So there will always be the possibility of peasant movements on partial demands and Communists will always have to take advantage of such possibilities.” (Document No. 8—‘It is only by fighting revisionism that the peasants’ struggle can be taken forward.’ 1967.)

The need for such struggles has assumed more importance right now, when a fascist dictatorship, much more sophisticated than Hitler’s or Mussolini’s, is controlling the country. Any open platform, however minimal it might be in its effectiveness, should be utilised to fight for propagating the message of the revolution and mobilise the masses. As Charu Majumdar said : “In spite of the propaganda of armed revolution, the peasants might decide to organise mass deputation, and we will have to lead such struggles. In the era of white terror, we should never minimise the importance of such mass deputation, for it is the mass deputations which will rally more and more peasants round struggles.” (Document No. 8—‘It is only by fighting revisionism that the peasants’ struggle can be taken forward’. 1967.) Workers’ strikes in the industrial areas, movements for civil rights, struggles for higher wages or land can thus be canalised into militant armed confrontation with the government.

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