

Two Deaths

Two revolutionaries died last week. One was 57, the other 25. One died in bed of a heart attack, the other shot it out, alone, revolver in hand with two truckloads of the Indian Army. The old one had run the full gamut of Bengal's recent revolutionary past: the terrorist days, the early communist movements, the battle against revisionism, Naxalbari, the Co-ordination Committee, the CPI (ML), and finally the battle against left adventurism. The young one had crammed the courage and intensity of several lifetimes in his five years of political work. One was seemingly at the very pinnacle of revolutionary power: Member of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the CPI (ML), and of the West Bengal State Committee, with a price of Rs. 5000 on his head. The other was a local leader whose power of death over his enemies was exceeded only by his deep involvement in the life of the people of that area. Comrade Sushital Roy Chowdhury died last week and so did Comrade Ashu Mazumdar.

The dissimilarities are but super-

ficial. Much more fundamental are the similarities. Both were ardent fighters of the CPI (ML). Both wanted freedom, democracy and revolution for the Indian masses and fought for these throughout their conscious lives. Both were loved and respected by all those who knew them. Both were immensely honest. Both served the people and their deaths were heavier than the hills: seen by all and felt by many. Finally, Sushital Roy Chowdhury and Ashu Mazumdar did not only share a purpose in life but also the cause of their death.

There will be a time and place to recount the deeds of these valiant dead. To honour them and to mourn them. But now the mind is too angry for such an exercise. Too many have been falsely and cruelly driven out into the cold, isolated, ostracised—like Sushital Roy Chowdhury—because they chose to question an adventurist “authority”. Too much young blood—wonderful, idealistic blood—has run down city streets in futile urban “actions”—like Ashu Mazumdar’s. The past cannot engage the mind as long as there is the killer present.

To say that Sushital Roy Chowdhury was killed by a heart attack or that Ashu Mazumdar was killed by the five bullets they shot into him (including two *after* his arrest and removal from the place of capture) would be merely to touch the cold dead *surface* of their death. They died because of the dangerous and destructive line put forward by a section of the CPI (ML) leadership. They have used the blind, dedicated, passionate allegiance of our petit bourgeois youth to lead the party into a line where death is the only reward and blood the only sign of success. For six terrible months of 1970-71, the flower of Bengal plunged into the abyss of adventurism. Frustration fed their faith. Their feudal-colonial past and culture, their very bitterness made them unquestioning, almost fanatic. The martyrdom of their comrades along with the emotional outpourings of their leaders pushed them—as if on an assembly line—to the altar of sacrifice. It was magnificent. But, it was *not* war.

Sushital Roy Chowdhury died fighting against this line. Ashu Mazumdar died implementing it. Both died because of it.

The CPI (ML) carried the seeds of ‘Left’ and Right deviation from its birth. This was inevitable. Right opportunism was the main danger. It still is, except that one must remember that in revolutionary times, during passages of revolutionary advance, after every success in the battle against revisionism—right opportunism manifests itself in the guise of ‘left’ adventurism and tries to wreck the party. In the beginning, in the CPI (ML) the signs were there. But they were few: isolated bits of unreason, sudden short bursts of fanaticism over-reliance on conspiracy, a tendency to stick to the city, repeated instances of directing appeals mainly to youth and students rather than directly to the toiling masses, thereby shifting the emphasis. But all those appeared to be mere flotsam in the strong, clean river of revolution. So they went unnoticed. Perhaps it was a mistake. But the fact remains that these piled up and collected and a whole range of “theories” appeared. The “theory” began, qualitatively, by describing the mechanics of individual assassination to be achieved by a conspiracy. In the beginning, this was to be a take-off point, a link between political propaganda and organisational work and the formation of guerilla forces and liberated zones. This was in March 1970. In April/May it was raised to the level of being the *only* way, the *only* link. Immediately thereafter it was announced to be the *strategy* for all the stages of the People’s Democratic Revolution. Those who accepted this theory in March failed to see that by making conspiracy the only method of organisation, by placing this conspiratorial organisation outside the control of the party unit and by *narrowing* the definition of ‘annihilation’ to mean *only the slitting of throats*—this ‘theory’ was fundamentally against Mao Tse-tung Thought. The rapid success of this line—measured in terms of throats slit—made all questions evaporate or appear revisionist.

As long as the pre-conditions laid down by the original article were maintained “successes” were few and the sphere of activity remained confined to the village, the deviation was not alarming. It was capable of correction. But then came the city ‘actions’ followed by the city annihilations. New ‘theories’ began to gush from the fountain-head.

1. The theory that the all-India bourgeoisie was comprador.

2. The theory that all intellectual or petit bourgeois leaders of the past respected by the present society were dalals of imperialism.

3. The theory that more you study the more stupid you become.

4. The theory that destruction of statues and schools, colleges, laboratories was correct, revolutionary and akin to the great proletarian cultural revolution of China.

5. The theory that *one* activist represents his entire class. Thus the participation of one landless poor peasant in one annihilation means that the *entire* landless poor peasant mass is ready to participate in the annihilations.

6. The theory that propaganda, organisation etc. are unnecessary, that only by annihilation would all these be achieved. Annihilation must come first.

7. The theory that oppression is necessary to revolutionise the people. Also the theory that every murder of the enemy must be paid back by a murder. Instant revenge became the credo.

8. The theory that the urban petit bourgeois youth need no longer go to the villages. By destroying statues, schools, colleges etc. they were integrating with the rural masses.

9. The theory that in India, in the present age city and village, town and countryside are the same, indivisible. The work in both is the same, tactics in both shall be the same. The *only* work in the cities is armed guerilla attack.

10. The theory that Comrade Charu Mazumdar is the only authority, only he understands Mao Tse-tung Thought, that he is the Party, that he must be obeyed *uncondition-*

ally and not to obey him is not to be a communist. Comrade Lenin in 1918 or Chairman Mao in 1950 did not get nor did they demand this sort of blind, superstitious, unreasoning obedience.

11. The theory that to attack only when one is sure of winning is revisionist.

12. The theory that the rich peasant is an enemy and can be annihilated.

Sushital Roy Chowdhury fought all this. His hopes and revolutionary discipline kept him silent for a long time. Then when he began to speak he was insulted, isolated and abused as a centrist, a revisionist, a coward. His love for the Party and his unflinching loyalty to the international leadership sustained him in his fight. He had nothing else.

The Party leadership refused to give him information reports, shelter. For a long time they stopped his allowance. This and worse, was the fate of many others—whoever chose to oppose the leadership.

Sushital Roy Chowdhury, revolutionary and patriot, died, hounded by the police. This was natural, and he accepted it joyfully. But it was the abuse, insult and suspicion from his comrades which broke his heart. It was their complete deafness to the repeating teachings of the international leadership (evidenced by the Indian language broadcasts of Radio Peking) which tore at his hopes for revolution. It is this betrayal of faith and comradeship which killed him.

Ashu Mazumdar, made up for his inexperience by his fiery zeal, his fantastic courage and his capacity to organise. He obeyed the Party. In this obedience he put everything he had; in the end his life. Ashu was not responsible for what he was asked to do. What he was responsible for he did magnificently. His toughness had no cruelty. His command led off with repeated examples of death defying courage. His respect for elders—all elders, his affection for the local people—all people, was apparent in every action. That is why when Ashu died people wept.

Ashu Mazumdar had the courage and intelligence, the initiative and dedication necessary to be a revolutionary cadre. Had these integrated with the rural poor, the revolutionary tinder, Ashu might have caused a conflagration. But no, Ashu was in the suburbs of Calcutta. Ashu's death is great. It has the bravery and sacrifice of the supreme martyr.

But to what purpose!

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It is time the people and the revolutionaries asked this question. How wonderful were those days! The days of shining hope, of daring to think and daring to act. The days when we investigated, inspired and integrated. When we came under a common banner which rose like a high flame and could be seen from far away. Think of those days when we led not only politically, but also morally, when the whole people answered for us whenever the enemy dared to abuse us. Think of those days when we were feared by the oppressive few and loved by the many. What happened? Why do so many fear us? Why whenever there is an unreasonable murder do all of us tremble and hope that it was not the work of 'our boys'? Where is the working class who will lead our revolution? Where is the roused peasantry? Where is the People's Army so flauntingly announced in 1970? Why did so many vote so overwhelmingly in spite of all the threats, the bombs, the pipeguns? Shall we be blind to all this? Two hundred 'annihilations', three hundred martyrs: fresh young blood spilled on pavements, for what? What answer have we got for the locked-out worker, the land-hungry debt-ridden peasant, the people suffocated by a spiral of prices—aching under brutal oppression and cynical betrayal, to the invasion of Cambodia, Laos? The CPI (ML) leadership have only one answer, annihilation, squeezed simplistically to mean only one thing—slitting an individual's throat.

Now this leadership, decimated by arrests, death and expulsion, is again changing its line. Economic work among the peasantry, concentration

upon the urban classes (working), building of rural bases, downgrading of annihilation of the class enemy—all these are being put forward. But there is no accompanying analyses, valuation, self-criticism. Thus this leadership goes on, sowing confusion and reaping death. Sushital Roy Chowdhury and Ashu Mazumdar were the latest harvest.

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Mr Suraj Singh's letter (February 13) once again points out the undemocratic state of Delhi University. Last year many B.A. and B.Sc. students of Calcutta University, including myself, applied for admission to the M.A. and M.Sc. course of Delhi University. This was not anything new but some RSS-led students raised a hue and cry and demanded that not a single student from Bengal be admitted because "they are all Naxalites and will poison academic life"! No logic or common sense is expected from the Jana Sangh, but the strange part of the story is that under their pressure the University authorities passed a resolution restricting the admission of students from West Bengal. By what right these people could stop the migration of students from one part of the country to another which incidentally is stated to be the capital of the world's largest 'democracy' in unknown to us. What we know is that not a single student from West Bengal was admitted to the M.Sc. course only because they appeared potentially dangerous to a fascist party, namely the J.S. And, think of it, all these took place before the very eyes of those guardians of democracy who cry themselves hoarse in parliament over individual rights, not to mention the Marxists. Without a bit of shame they are appearing again in another election to seek our votes in the name of democracy!

Apart from MPs, the silence of Delhi University students over this disgraceful act was also depressing.