

An Encounter with Charu Majumdar

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IN THE LATE 1960S, A STUDENT at the Jadavpur University and a Naxal activist visited Charu Majumdar (just after his release from jail following the Naxalbari revolt) at the CIT housing estate where Sushital Roy Chowdhury, one of the founders of CPI(M-L), formed later, was staying. The student along with his co-revolutionary turned up after being called (they were waiting at a bench of the park inside the housing complex). Among those present there was Nirmal Brahmachari, now staying in Norway. The co-revolutionary asked about the veracity of 'liberated zones'. CM said, " Chairman himsell said this and hence there shouldn't be any doubt."

Recollecting the encounter, the friend, a well-known name among the cost accountants, told this writer, "Questions about the future of Naxalbari battle came in my mind. The blind subservience to Mao Zedong would not lead the revolution to success, I thought. Gradually I withdrew from the Naxalite struggle".

CM does not seem to have endorsed Nikita Sergeivich Khrushchev's reference to Marx's letter to the German political worker Wilhelm Bloss in the secret speech as the first secretary of the erstwhile Communist Party of Soviet Union at the 20th Congress in February 1956. "From my antipathy to any cult of the individual, I never made public during the existence of the [1st] International the numerous addressees from various countries which recognized my merits and which annoyed me. I did not even reply to them, except sometimes to rebuke their authors. Erngels and I first joined the secret society of Communists on the condition that everything making for superstitious worship of authority would be deleted from its statute. Lassalle subsequently did quite the opposite." After all, he was a strong proponent of personality cult several years before his ridiculous slogan—'China's Chairman is our Chairman and China's path is our path.'

CM's penchant for personality cult was reflected during his detention after the Chinese aggression in October 1962. Jyoti Basu narrated CM's abortive bid to impose his blind subservience to Mao Zedong and subjugate the CPI accordingly. At one meeting attended by Niranjana Sengupta, freedom-fighter and minister of the first United Front government in WB, Promode Dasgupta, then secretary, West Bengal State Council, CPI and later a founding politbureau member of CPI(M), said Basu, "Charu Majumdar suddenly said that he would feel pride if we declare our party a constituent of the Communist Party of China and chairman of Communist Party of China as our chairman. I reacted, 'Look, after these words from you, there is no point in discussing politics with you. But as we are in jail, we will discuss movies, weather but not politics'." [Biplab Dasgupta—Jyotibabur Sange—part II—two-part autobiography, as told to former CPI(M) MP Biplab Dasgupta]

His endeavour to make Naxalites sycophants of Mao was emboldened in the early 1965 when he began releasing his Eight Documents. The third of them, dated 9 April 1965 read, "There was an attempt to negate the significance of the entire Chinese Revolution by openly criticizing the source of this spontaneous movement, the great Chinese Revolution and its Great Leader Comrade Mao tse Tung. Above all, later on, it was as a consequence to the denial of this Chinese Revolution that the slogan was raised within the Party that the revolution will be achieved not through the Chinese path but only through a truly Indian path. And from here itself was born today's revisionism." Ludicrously, he described the shift as "left sectarianism" in the way of a "movement along the correct path."

Pity is that Maoists and most of the over-ground groups of CPI(ML) continue to eulogise CM in a mendicant way. On the contrary, almost forgotten are Dhaneswari Devi, Simaswari Mullick, Nayaneswari Mullick, Surubala Burman, Sonamali Singh, Fulmati Devi, Samsari Saibani, Gaudrau Saibani, Kharsingh Mullick and "two children" who embraced martyrdom in braving the armed police force at Prasadote in Naxalbari on 25 May 1967. CM too did not even name those subalterns in his article, *One Year of Naxalbari Struggle*, made no mention of the martyrdom of those that belonged to the sub-class 'semi-proletariat' in Lenin's words. Instead, he resorted to bragging about fissile potentials of Naxalbari episode. "Naxalbari has been created and hundreds of Naxalbaris are smouldering", an expectation that was pathetically belied.

The new party—CPI(M-L), formed on May Day 1969 in its first conference in May 1970, made afoot the personality cult of Majumdar. Party organ *Liberation* wrote that the task before the party was to "establish firmly the authority of the leadership of Comrade Charu Majumdar at all levels".

However, the tragedy was awaiting Majumdar and his worshippers. His message of greetings to the CCP on its 50th anniversary in 1970 was totally ignored by the Chinese media unlike in the past.

There is no denying that Majumdar had inspired thousands to plunge into the armed struggle for overthrowing the 'semi-feudal and semi-colonial' government, run by the 'comprador bourgeoisie'. But theoretical posture appeared to be pretentious as within a few years after the formation of CPI(M-L), his magnetism became ineffective, failing to create an impulse among hundreds of youths to plunge into armed revolutionary path unlike in the end-1960s. The adventurist essence of Naxalbari came into the open. Nonetheless, the CPI(Maoist) and most of the variants of over-ground CPI(M-L) indulge in personality cult of CM—directly or indirectly. Portrait of Majumdar is placed aside Marx, Lenin and Mao at every state party conference and congress of the CPI(M-L) Liberation but no ideological debate on CM is encouraged.

Very true, the Naxalbari struggle took up cudgels for the 'semi-proletariat', especially the landless peasants as never before in the history of peasant movement unlike the Bengal unit of All India Kisan Sabha which, in its submission, before the Bengal Land Revenue Commission (1940), headed by Sir Francis Floud was evasive about ryot-status for the share-croppers (bargadars). On behalf of the four-member team from the Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha—Bankim Mukherjee, Bhowani Sen, Abdullah Rasool and Rehati Burman—Mukherjee, reveals the minutes, "agreed that a bargadar who supplies seed, cattle and plough, finances agriculture, and thought that if the Sabha's scheme was explained to the middle classes they might agree to give rights to the bargadars. At present they would not do so.". Incredible as it may seem to many, only the Krishak Praja Party unequivocally stated, "Our recommendation is that the provision of Sir John Kerr's Bill should be restored, by which it was proposed to treat tenants bargadars who supply the plough, cattle, and agricultural implements." [An incisive essay on the role of political parties by Pranab Kumar De, vice-president, West Bengal Land Reform Officers' Association in Bengali website *Bangalnama* [<http://bangalalama.wordpress.com/2010/06/01/tebhaga-purbokal-uttorkal/#more-2931>] But those who tried to cash in on personality cult—of Stalin or Mao did an incalculable damage to the revolutionary-democratic movement whose aim remains the transformation of production relations. They lack the courage to dispassionately read the 33000-plus word secret speech of Khrushchev, the historical importance of which expanded following the open-up of hitherto declassified Comintern Archive. A rich crop out of it is Sobhanlal Dutta Gupta's *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India, 1919-1943: Dialectics of Real and a Possible History*, based on his six-month research work at the Comintern Archive in Moscow in the 1990s.

'History-slaughter house' (Hegel)– slowly pushes Majumdar to the banks of Lithe. He was, debatably, a detractor from dialectical logic. His commitment to revolutionism was genuine, but of a petty bourgeois strain. □□□