A Hammer to Smash the Enemy Part 3[1]

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November 22, 2019



Part 3: Maoism outside of China, class annihilation, and Party militarization

In this part we contend more with the theory of the sea of armed masses by looking at other tendencies within the Maoist movement outside of China, again in both their positive and negative aspects. Charu Majumdar, one of the two main fathers of Indian Maoism, once represented what is sometimes called the class annihilation line. While there are valid criticisms of his line, which he self-criticized on before his death, it also asserts the crucial and vital principles of preparing the sea of armed masses.

Comrade Majumdar, a great Maoist leader in his own right, put the issue like this:

"After the initiative of the peasant masses, to annihilate the class enemy with bare hands or homemade weapons has been released and the peasants' revolutionary power has been established, they should take up the gun and face the world. The peasant with the rifle will be the guarantee of the continuation of the peasants'revolutionary power." [1]

[1] https://struggle-sessions.com/2019/11/22/a-hammer-to-smash-the-enemy-2/

This was presented in the context of first preparing the masses, educating them in revolutionary violence pending armed struggle carried out by guerrillas. What is particularly sharp and valuable in the writings and positions of Comrade Majumdar is his insistence that the masses be mobilized to carry out revolutionary violence against the class enemy as a precursor to People's War:

"We have tried to develop the army in some areas without class struggle and have failed. Without class struggle—the battle of annihilation—the initiative of the poor peasant masses cannot be released, the political consciousness of the fighters cannot be raised, the new man cannot emerge, the peoples' army cannot be created. Only by waging class struggle—the battle of annihilation—the new man will be created, the new man who will defy death and will be free from all thoughts of self-interest. And with this death-defying spirit he will go close to the enemy, snatch his rifle, avenge the martyrs and the people's army will emerge. To go close to the enemy it is necessary to conquer all thoughts of self." [2]

As Maoists we understand that People's War is necessary not only to take power, but also, most importantly, to prepare the masses for socialism and holding power.

Majumdar's argument here is important with this in mind: in order for the broad peasant masses to be mobilized by a future People's Army, they have to be given confidence in class struggle—a sort of tempering. The masses as soldiers are equipped first with confidence in violence and then with the arms snatched from the enemy. This lesson taught by Majumdar in 1970 played out a decade later in Peru as well.

Let us recall a few facts about Majumdar that too often go unaccounted for: he recognized that the world proletarian revolution against imperialism had entered a new and higher stage as early as 1965, and he highlighted that this meant a few crucial things. The first of these is that you cannot meaningfully attack imperialism without first attacking revisionism (with the same intensity and fury with which you would the open class enemy). The second is that elections must be boycotted in this era. The third is that armed struggle is the central task of all Maoist politics. He held the boycott of elections as a universal principle:

"In the present era when imperialism is heading towards total collapse, revolutionary struggle in every country has taken the form of armed struggle; Soviet revisionism, unable to retain itsmask of socialism, has been forced to adopt imperialist tactics; world revolution has entered a new higher phase; and socialism is marching irrepressibly forward to victory—in such an era, to take to the parliamentary road means stopping this onward march of world revolution. Today, the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists cannot opt for the parliamentary road. This is true notonly for the colonial and semi-colonial countries, but for thecapitalist countries as well." ("Boycott Elections!") [3]

Many of the opportunist sections that still claim the banner of Maoism detest Gonzalo's formulation regarding the strategic offensive of world revolution, even though it originates withMao himself. When it comes to the views of Majumdar, who was one of the very first articulate Maoists outside of China, they are content to ignore it. All of these theories represented above manifested in the PPW in Peru and were important to thefoundation of MLM, principally Maoism, and Gonzalo Thought. In fact every Maoist knows that the Peruvian People's War, which is the most advanced People's War to date due to having synthesized Maoism, started from an election boycott in which the ballots were burned by revolutionaries. In many ways the Conmunist Party of Peru was operationalizing the same sentiment and spirit so vividly represented by Majumdar:

"By adhering to the parliamentary road the revolutionaries the world over have allowed a formidable blood-debt to accumulateover the ages. The time has now come to settle this blood-debt. Hundreds of thousands of fallen martyrs call upon the revolutionaries: 'Strike hard at the dying imperialism and wipe it out from the face of the earth!' It is time to rebuild the world in a new way! Our victory in this fight is certain!" [4]

Charging militants with focoism is still in fashion, as we see from many anti-Maoists. It comes as little surprise that the cowardly right-opportunists of Majumdar's day were eager to bring these charges against him. In a letter responding to a comrade in the late 1960s, he wrote,

"The middle class intellectuals have now started their tirade against me. But, their real target of attack is Chairman Mao. On the basis of Chairman's thought, when I say, that landless and poor peasant could establish their leadership upon the entire peasant only through guerrilla warfare—they object. They have attacked this particular portion of the 'Report of Srikakulam'—'We firmly believe that revolutionary bastion[s]in rural areas, can only be established if class enemies are annihilated through armed class struggle and the political consciousness of the peasants can be raised to a higher levelonly through this way.' They feel that this is the path of Che-Guevara. We should treat these as negative leadership. This means, the words by which they are scared off is the indication of the correct path and we have to proceed with bold steps." [5]

What Comrade Majumdar is asserting is correct: the mass movement is built through People's War and armed struggle. This again was asserted and proved in Peru with the People's Guerrilla Army being the main force, carrying out the Party's mass work.

Majumdar was unmistakable on this matter:

"Guerrilla warfare can be initiated sans mass organization and mass movement. But afterwards mass movement should be organized. Seizure of crop from the store house

of jotedars is that form of mass movement, where common people shall participate. Same thing will be seen in Assam without a shortspan. Hope, you'll also follow suite. Then what these intellectuals would clamor? They will wait for a setback and after the setback they will start shouting. But in the meantime, the peasants would get educated and they will not pay any heed to those shrill voices. Revolution, in this way proceeds through contradictions. One should not lose hope. This is dialectics." [6]

This is of critical importance in understanding the dialectical process in the development of People's War, in which the Party uses armed propaganda to develop itself and increase its quality and quantity of members. The contemporary rightists still to this day hiding under the banner of Maoism view things too numerically. They are short-sighted and narrow–minded, seeing "mass support" as a distant goal that must be achieved before militant action can be undertaken, and like their counterparts, the crypto-pacifist "insurrectionists," they promote waiting forever, forever postponing the armed struggle. In essence they campaign to prevent the only means of accomplishing real mass support. This is not to argue that armed struggle should be initiated in the total absence of a revolutionary situation, but rather that the question should not be handled in a mechanical and cowardly way.

Succinctly expressing the fact that armed action breeds mass support, Majumdar instructed the following:

"Start guerrilla warfare in as many points possible. This is imperative. This will bring a change. There will be a new awakening among the entire peasantry. This possibility is real." [7]

What Majumdar clarified in a number of ways is the need to militarize the people through action. Maoism erupted in various forms through class struggle against revisionism. The logic that our practice should follow a business–as–usual pattern, virtually indistinguishable from the practice of reformists and revisionists, is one of main conservative points of view default among the left in North America. Fortunately, we can look beyond these shores in almost any direction for better examplesand revolutionary inspiration.

Majumdar and his comrades, and the Maoists who have followed throughout history, have held that armed struggle is the principal tactic of the revolutionary masses. Subsequently, we can assert that those who attempt to disarm the masses by opposition to the sea of armed masses will come to no good end.

To tie together these points about armed struggle developing mass participation and the direct involvement of the masses in administration of daily life, we can give closer

examination to the formation of People's Committees in the early stages of a guerrilla campaign:

"Consolidation of red political power must go through a number of phases. Revolutionary People's Committees should be built immediately after an action has taken place, by those who did not participate in action. Everything depends on action, and it should be done forthwith. Because these committees would carry on the task of providing political leadership uninterruptedly. When it is not possible for the squad to stay in the area, then formation of this committee, where action has taken place, is a primary task." [8]

Today in India the Revolutionary People's Committees are not a thing of the past but a facet of the People's War for New Democratic revolution led by the Communist Party of India(Maoist), which formed in 2004 after a series of mergers and splits, tracing its lineage in large part back to Majumdar himself. The Times of India reported that the development of Revolutionary People's Committees was a testament to the people's support for their armed struggle led by the Maoists:

> "[Revolutionary People's Committees] are the rudimentary form of the parallel government set up by the Maoists in their strongholds, challenging the government machinery. The committees decide on the entire gamut of the life of villagers including health, education, irrigation, social welfare and forest protection that are handled by government agencies. The formation of the RPCs is a significant leap in the activities in a guerrilla zone and it is not possible without the full support of the people living in the area."

For our purposes, we should grasp that the three-in-one combinations applied to correct the shortcomings of the Shanghai Commune, as well as the sea of armed masses to correct capitalist restoration, are already manifest in the People's Wars. Abysmally, the principles upheld in these People's Wars are absent in most organizing efforts in the US with the exception of the Communist Party Reconstitution movement. This is due to the aforementioned default conservativism of North American society as well as a refusal to study history with present conditions in mind, in the interest of creative application of revolutionary theory to our current practice. Mao explained this misstep in his classic text "Reform our Study":

"Many comrades seem to study Marxism-Leninism not to meet the needs of revolutionary practice, but purely for the sake of study. Consequently, though they read, they cannot digest. They can only cite odd quotations from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin in a one-sided manner, but are unable to apply the stand, viewpoint and method of

Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin to the concrete study of China's present conditions and her history or to the concrete analysis and solution of the problems of theChinese revolution. Such an attitude towards Marxism-Leninism does a great deal of harm, particularly among cadres of the middle and higher ranks." [10]

A study of our own history in the US provides numerous examples of politics spreading through rebellion and even violent action, rather than the other way around, which the reformists insist is the only possible way. Take for instance the Ferguson and Baltimore rebellions. These mass rebellions were a political conduit, reaching thousands of people who otherwise have been alienated from the business–as–usual model of leftist agitation–propaganda, which simply cannot reach them. Likewise, the antifascist movement, with its orientation toward physical action, reaches more people than all of the infoshops and Communist journals (including this one) can hope to. The best we can manage is to make use of these actions and rebellions to impart revolutionary scientific methods to those whose interest was piqued by action. There is a push–and-pull relationship at play here. We see this truth, which Comrade Majumdar discussed often, in the fact that Maoists in India are still commonly called "Naxalites" after the original Naxalite rebellion.

We should also remain aware of, and vigilant against, those Shanghai Party Committee types who want to bribe the masses away from politics via endless economic service programs. We should call them what they are—protégés of Liu and Deng. They will tell you to keep waiting while they put you to work in their programs, which they admit are no different in practice from the work of revisionists.

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> "With us, with our armed struggle, the authentic and only true liberty begins to be born. We are trumpets of the future, the inextinguishable fire that crackles in the stormy present."

—Communist Party of Peru, "Towards Guerrilla Warfare"

In a speech at the US Maoist Conference for Line Struggle in 2018, a representative of Red Guards Austin argued eloquently that the line of march for the US Maoist movement must be through the militarization of all pre-Party formations and the simultaneous concentric construction of the three instruments ofrevolution. This speech is included in the book Documents from the US Maoist Conference for Line Struggle, available from Fourth Sword Publications. Many of the positions put forward there still face a lot of controversy online and at various levels of discussion among Maoist and Maoist– sympathetic groups and individuals. Much of this journal has

already discussed the disagreements we have with those who seek to oppose Gonzalo's synthesis of Maoism— which for us is the only MLM.

For our purposes we will expand upon some of the concepts put forward by the comrades at the conference, who defend the line of militarization and concentric construction.

Maintaining that People's War is the principal form of struggle as mentioned above, the PCP explained,

"The militarization of the Communist Parties *is key* for the democratic revolution, the socialist revolution and the cultural revolutions." (General Political Line of the PCP[hereafter GPL]; emphasis original) [11]

Anyone can see why militarization is key for new democratic revolution in the semi-feudal oppressed nations and socialist revolution in the imperialist countries. What is important here is why militarization in cultural revolutions is crucial to prevent restoration. Gonzalo, like several before him, identified the fissure between the masses and the army as a site where restoration was operationalized. Unlike his predecessors and armed with historical materialism, Gonzalo was able to theorize this problem and its solution correctly, based in the most firm laws of science and MLM, principally Maoism.

Chairman Gonzalo makes three main arguments why all Communist Parties must militarize. They are as follows:

"First, because we are in the strategic offensive of the world revolution, we live during the sweeping away of imperialism and reaction from the face of the Earth within the next 50 to 100 years, a time marked by violence in which all kinds of wars takeplace. We see how reaction is militarizing itself more and more, militarizing the old States, their economies, developing wars ofaggression, trafficking with the struggles of the peoples and aiming toward a world war, but since revolution is the principal tendency in the world, the task of the Communist Parties is to uphold revolution shaping the principal form of struggle: People's war to oppose the world counterrevolutionary war with world revolutionary war." (GPL) [12]

As mentioned before, the concept that the struggle of the world proletarian revolution against imperialism has reached a higher stage originated with Mao himself and was taken up by Maoists outside of China, like Majumdar and Gonzalo. It is a core principle throughout all of the published material of the PCP that in the strategic offensive of world revolution we must implacably combat revisionism in order to fight imperialism. The more conservative notion is to form a united front with revisionism, under the claim that this is the best way to fight imperialism, and that anything else is "sectarian."

The PCP outlines the second reason for militarization's universality: "Second, because capitalist restoration must be prevented. When the bourgeoisie loses Power, it introduces itself inside the Party, uses the army and seeks to usurp Power and destroy the dictatorship of the proletariat to restore capitalism. Therefore, the Communist Parties must militarize themselves and exercise the all-round dictatorship of the three instruments, forging themselves in people's war, and empower the armed organization of the masses, the people's militia, so as to engulf the army. For this reason, Chairman Gonzalo tells us to'forge all militants as Communists, first and foremost, as fighters and as administrators'; for that reason every militant is forged in the People's War and remains alert against any attempt at capitalist restoration." (GPL; emphasis original) [13]

This only scrapes the surface, and elsewhere the PCP goes into more detail about preventing restoration via militarization, explaining how the left within the Party must fortify itself to prevent the right from taking control of the military. In the USSR, this occurred when General Zhukov, after having prevented the revolutionaries during the Stalin era from targeting Khrushchev, was appointed to the highest positions inthe military by none other than Khrushchev to return the favor. It was Zhukov as defense minister who opposed the political commissar system on the basis of the political commissars not being military men. This is nothing short of preventing the Party from commanding the gun, which in this case meant the gun was commanded only by those in the Party (the rightists) whom Zhukov was loyal to, cementing the division between political and military matters—turning the army into a tool for reaction.

Just as crucial as Party–level militarization, when discussing restoration, is the third point made by the PCP—the militarization of the masses and society:

"Third, because we march toward a militarized society. By militarizing the Party, we complete a step toward the militarization of society which is the strategic perspective to guarantee the dictatorship of the proletariat. The militarized society is the sea of armed masses which Marx and Engels spoke of, that guards the conquest of power and defends it once conquered. We take the experience of the Chinese Revolution, ofthe anti-Japanese base at Yenan, which was a militarized society where everything grew out of the barrels of guns: Party, Army, State, new politics, new economics, new culture. And in thatway we develop war communism." (GPL; emphasis original) [14]

This is the crucial point we must engage with when reclaiming the lessons of the Shanghai Commune and the Sheng-wu-lien as discussed in the previous parts. The fact that the PCP center this as the strategic perspective is of the utmost importance to anyone seriously engaged in promoting the universality of cultural revolution. Like Majumdar, Gonzalo was adamant about the role of action in the process of building the

Party as a militarized force and forging links with the masses, who are being militarized through concrete actions:

"The militarization of the Party can only be carried forward through concrete actions of the class struggle, concrete military-type actions; this does not mean we will only carry out various types of military actions exclusively (guerrilla actions, sabotages, selective annihilation, armed propaganda and agitation) but that we must carry out mainly these forms so as to provide incentive and development to the class struggle, teaching with deeds, with these types of actions as the principal form of struggle in the People's War." (GPL)

Gonzalo further explains this point in the context of the overall course to Communism through the turbulent period of socialism:

"The mass line aims at materializing what Marx indicated, the general arming of the people with the goal of guaranteeing the triumph of the revolution and preventing capitalist restoration. This is a thought of great perspectives that shall carry us up toCommunism: Only by organizing this sea of armed masses shall it be possible to defend what is conquered and develop the democratic, socialist and cultural revolutions." [15]

The PCP referencing Gonzalo explains the flaws in opposition to this theory:

"He refutes those who propound that the masses don't want to make revolution or that the masses will not support the People's War. He teaches us that the problem is not with the masses because they are ready to rebel, but rather it is with the Communist Parties who must assume their obligation to lead them and rise up in arms. He differentiates from those positions that today are based on 'the accumulation of forces,' which propose parsimoniously accumulating the masses by way of the so-called 'democratic spaces' or the use of legality. Such an accumulation of forces doesn't correspond to the current moment of the international and national class struggle." (GPL) [16]

These ideas of entirely and pervasively arming the masses or the working class are rooted in Marxism itself, appearing long before Mao, Majumdar, and Gonzalo. Marx himself insisted that the proletariat be armed:

"To be able forcefully and threateningly to oppose this party, whose betrayal of the workers will begin with the very first hour of victory, the workers must be armed and organized. The whole proletariat must be armed at once with muskets, rifles, cannon and ammunition, and the revival of the old-style citizens' militia, directed against the workers, must be opposed. Where the formation of this militia cannot be prevented, the workers must try to organize themselves independently as a proletarian guard, with elected leaders and with their own elected general staff; they must try to place

themselves not under the orders of the state authority but of the revolutionary local councils set up by the workers. Where the workers are employed by the state, they must arm and organize themselves into special corps with elected leaders, or as a part of the proletarian guard. Under no pretext should arms and ammunition be surrendered; any attempt to disarm the workers must be frustrated, by force if necessary. The destruction of the bourgeois democrats' influence over the workers, and the enforcement of conditions which will compromise the rule of bourgeois democracy, which is for the moment inevitable, and make it as difficult as possible—these are the main points which the proletariat and therefore the League must keep in mind during and after the approachinguprising." ("Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League") [17]

Mao, Majumdar, and Gonzalo are simply operationalizing the position of Marx, and synthesizing this position with the Leninist theory of the vanguard Party. Not only is Marx concerned with the role of the petty bourgeoisie within a Party attacking the gains of revolutionary upheaval, but he is also talking here about untheorized People's Committees. These very principles were made real in the base area of Yenan, in the Shanghai Commune, and in the liberated zones in India and Peru as well as in the shantytowns of the latter.

The Yenan base area in the 1930s and its social militarization are particularly compelling to examine in this regard. To be brief, most considered the Long March an abject failure that devastated the ranks of the Communist Party. This is not the Maoist viewpoint, however. In every assessment, Maoists must divide a thing into two and evaluate its aspects. While the reactionaries led by Chiang Kai-shek were engaged in tallying body counts, the surviving Communists, under the leadership of Mao, were still waging armed struggle—this time against the Japanese imperialist invaders. Having been more than decimated by the eradication campaigns, famine, and disasters on the Long March, the CPC began to militarize in the context of the war against Japan. In this condition, they had to rely on training the masses as soldiers in the People's War. They had no embedded mass organizations, and most of the people in the area had heard nothing but rumors about the "red bandits." They had clearly rejected the line of "accumulation of forces" and "postponement of armed struggle"—instead, their armed propaganda, political education campaigns, and expropriations of arms and grain are what provided them a mass base, a process that constituted a turning point in all of Chinese history.

Yenan went from the landing site of the ragtag guerrilla military and Party to the largest base area in all of revolutionary China. This was no coincidence but instead the result of careful study and analysis according to the principle of going lower and deeper among the most profound masses and educating them in revolutionary violence. The rectifi-

cation movement from 1941 to 1944 set the tone for the future GPCR; it saw mass education programs and the broad study of Mao's writings as well as the Communist classics. The construction of the Yenan Soviet is such an important part of our history that it deserves it's own article. To give the reader a basic idea, this period was when Mao produced some of his most revolutionary texts, including "On New Democracy," "On Practice," and "On Contradiction." The creation of these groundbreaking theoretical works amid the breakthroughs in political and military practice is a shining example of the correlation between theory and practice. The Yenan base area is also where Edgar Snow arrived and helped reveal Mao and his ideas to the world, and where Norman Bethune revolutionized military field medicine.

The history of this period is not only an argument for mass militarization—but also an argument against the idea that militarization means a rejection of democracy. Those making this argument that militarization is anti-democratic cannot view the dual aspects of the phenomenon.

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Maoism was in many ways born in embryo in Yenan, where Mao Zedong Thought became the official ideology of the Communist Party of China. Of course, this development did not proceed along a straight and even path—it passed through theturbulence of the GPCR, and through the revolutionary activity it inspired all across Asia and the world. It was shaped by those applying Mao's teachings throughout the world proletarian revolution, and in Peru it was brought to a new, third, and higher stage —Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism. This was a tortuous journey, which saw devastating setbacks, bloodshed, and aborted ideas. The spirit of Marxism compels usto view "failure" in this context, to embrace our rich history and to reclaim it from those who have never dared to make revolution. It was inevitable that Mao's Thought and the class struggle would produce a Communist of the caliber of Gonzalo, who could correctly assess these and many more lessons. Those deaf to these lessons, who operate under a hysterical bourgeois rejection of radicalism, do not live up to the standard of Marxism. In the words of the great Lenin, "I don't know how radical you are, or how radical I am. I am certainly not radical enough. One can never be radical enough; that is, one must always try to be as radical as reality itself."

This a tall order, and the history of Maoism has filled it time and time again by always pushing itself further.

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