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All India  
Trade Union Congress  
Twenty-ninth Session  
30 Jan. - 4 Feb. 1973  
Bankim Nagar, Calcutta

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As we go to the Press, the peace treaty on Vietnam has at last been signed in Paris. The Indian working class and working people rejoice with the people throughout the world at the triumph of the prolonged liberation struggle of the people of Vietnam against the U. S. Aggressors. The U. S. imperialists resorted to extensive barbarous bombings on the civilian population and tried in vain to compel the Vietnamese people to unjust compromise.

We salute the valiant people and working class of Vietnam on their historic victory.

The struggle of the Vietnamese people has achieved a significant success in the first phase, but the struggle to force the Nixon administration to implement the Agreement and to rebuild the country and resist any further imperialist intrigues will continue.

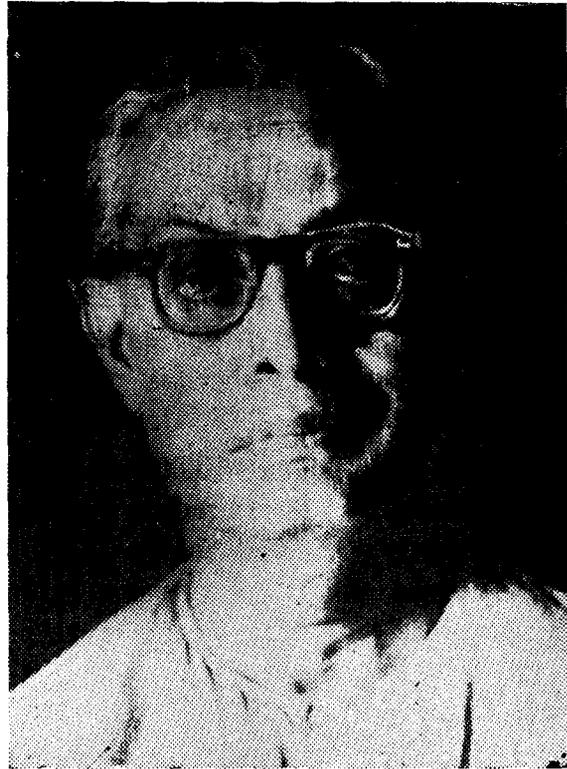
The struggle of the undying people of Vietnam is an integral part of worldwide struggle for independence, peace, democracy and socialism.

**Glory to the Vietnamese people.**

**Down with U. S. imperialism.**

.....

**IN  
MEMORY  
OF  
BANKIM  
MUKHERJEE**



The site where the 29th session of the All India Trade Union Congress Conference is being held has been named after the revered memory of Comrade Bankim Mukherjee who died in Calcutta in 1961. To those who have worked with him in political and trade union movements, Bankimda, as he was lovingly called by his comrades, needs no introduction. But the comrades who have joined the Trade Union Movement after his demise need a few lines to know who and what was Comrade Bankim Mukherjee.

He combined in him the best traditions of the national, Trade Union and peasant movements in India. He was one of those who built-up the left and democratic wing in the national, T. U. and peasant movements in India. He had always upheld the cause of the masses of the country. Bankimda joined the national movement and suffered incarceration in the twenties when the people of India under the leadership of Gandhiji rose for freedom from the British rule.

In midtwenties he shifted his field of activity to Bengal from Uttar Pradesh and formed a core of ardent militant Congressmen in the Bengal Congress who always waged an uncompromising struggle for freedom of India.

During the period of 1926-28 he built up a strong T. U. movement, organised and led 4 lacks of jute workers in Bengal. The glorious jute workers' strike in 1929 and 1930 against British employers will be written in golden letters in the History of T. U. movement. He was, since his participation in T. U. movement, associated with the A. I. T. U. C.

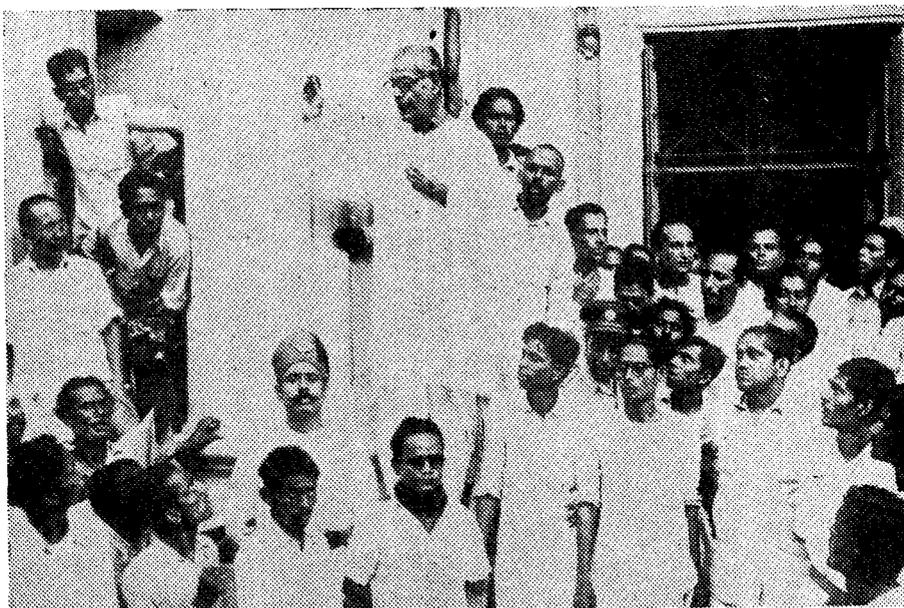
In 1930 he organised 10,000 carters of greater Calcutta and led their strike. The Police fired on the strikers, killed a few of them and Bankimda was jailed for one and half years. But the spirit in Bankimda could not remain dormant in jail. In jail he organised study circles and hundred of youth got their first education in Marxism from him. Many of them later joined T. U. movement.

In 1936 he was elected from the labour seat of Asansol collieries to Bengal Legislative Assembly. In the same year he alone with the Late Swami Sahajananda founded All India Kisan Sabha.

As the unchallenged leader of the lefts in Bengal Congress he had realised the importance of working class and peasantry in the national movement. He was one of the few who espoused the casuse of Scientific Socialism, and popularised the Russian Revolution, U. S. S. R. and propogated the concept of socialism in the masses in the early years of T. U. movement. He was elected Vice President of A. I. T. U. C., President and later General Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha (Peasants Association).

In 1952 and again in 1957 he was elected to West Bengal Legislative Assembly from Budgebudge, a predominantly working class and peasant area. In the Legislative Assembly and outside he was one of the fiery orators championing the cause of the masses. His dedication to the cause of the people earned him universal respect from friends and foes.

Some of us who had the privilege of knowing him and working with him will ever remember him with love and affection. We are confident that the cause of socialism, for which he fought with devotion, will triumph.



*"A glimpse of the revered leader"—Com. Bankim Mukherjee speaking before the Workers.*

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*The two main gates at Bankim Nagar have been designed and decorated by Debabrata Mukhopadhyay.*

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## **Message From All Union Central Council of Trade Unions, U. S. S. R.**

**Delegates and Participants 29th Session of AITUC**

Dear Comrades,

On behalf of Soviet Factory and office workers All Union Central Council Trade Unions extends warm fraternal greetings to delegates participants 29th session of All India Trade Union Congress and wishes all success in work of this representative forum of Indian working class. AUCCTU notes with profound satisfaction that fraternal ties between Soviet and Indian Trade Unions are constantly improving in interest of common struggle for peace social progress against imperialism and reaction for strengthening unity of workers and Trade Union movement. Working people and Trade Unions of USSR believe that treaty on peace friendship and co-operation between Soviet Union and India serves interests of work people in our countries and contributes to further development of co-operation between them. Soviet working people watch with unwearrying attention struggle conducted by Indian workers for their vital interests and democratic rights and wish them success in their noble aspirations.

Express our confidence that relations of fraternal friendship and all round co-operation between Soviet and Indian working people will be strengthened and extended in future for benefit of factory and office workers of USSR and India in interest of strengthening peace in Asia and throughout world.

**ALL UNION CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS, U. S. S. R.**

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राष्ट्रपति भवन, नई दिल्ली-4.  
RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN,  
NEW DELHI-4.

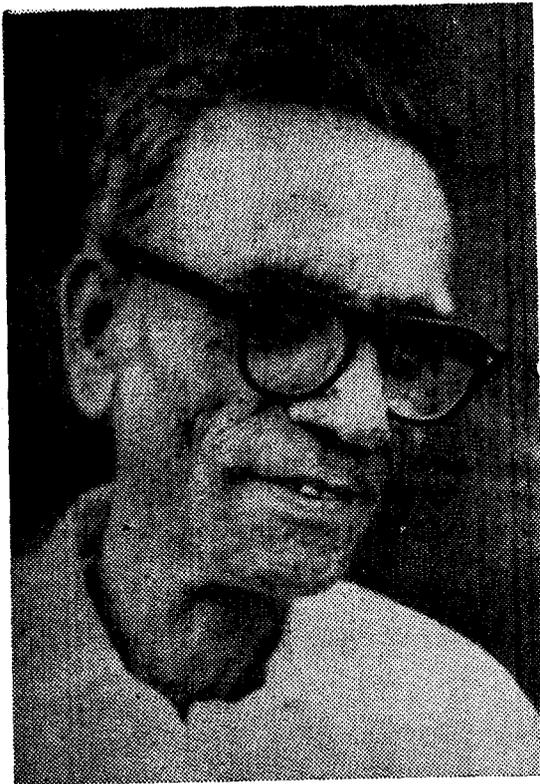
January 4, 1973.

The 29th Session of the All India Trade Union Congress is being held at a crucial time in the history of our country. Today Labour is called upon to play a vital role in realising our national objective and it is possible only if the workers put in their best. It is heartening to note that there is an increasing realisation that 'one union in one industry' as an ideal must be achieved and that the major central trade union organisations are exploring the possibility of coming together to attain this objective.

The need of having good industrial relations need hardly to be stressed. The method of compulsory adjudication has proved to be unsatisfactory for promoting good industrial relations. This has naturally placed a heavy responsibility on collective bargaining agencies. I am sure the AITUC as one of the premier organisations on behalf of Labour will focus its attention on this important issue of national significance.

I wish your Session every success.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. G. V.', is written below the text.



**S. S. Mirajkar**  
President, AITUC

# A MESSAGE

**T**he working class of India is facing many important and urgent problems and the Calcutta Session will attempt to grapple with the major questions.

The economic situation of India, the rising prices of food grains, sugar, edible oil, cloth and other daily necessities, the attacks on Trade Union rights, Bonus question and blunt refusal by the Government to grant bonus to 1.5 million Railway employees, municipal employees, Government servants, all-important question of T. U. unity etc. etc. are some of those problems.

The growing power of Indian monopolists and their threatening attitude is another question on which the attention of the session will

be concentrated and a demand for their complete and total abolition by taking over all basic industries from their control will be made.

The Indo-Soviet friendship treaty had its beneficial effects on India, with the new situation arising in the subcontinent as a result of the birth of new independent country, Bangladesh. It helped to strengthen the forces of World Peace, democracy and Socialism. The Simla agreement between India and Pakistan will also engage the attention of the Session. It also effectively scotched all the the dirty intrigues of Sino-Americans in the Sub-Continent.

The Calcutta Session, I am quite certain, will pay their tribute to the heroic fighters of Viet-Nam and will roundly condemn American imperialism for their continuous bombing of innocent civilian population and mining of Viet-Nameese ports. Even while talks and negotiation for cease-fire are on, American bombing goes on shamelessly. The Indian Working class and the Government have condemned the Americans and will once again do so at the Calcutta Session. The Indian people and working class solidly support the heroic struggle of the Viet-Nameese people.

American imperialism has become the

enemy number one of the whole of peace-loving world. It provokes wars through their stooges as they have been doing in Viet-Nam and Indo-China for years, as they have done it in West Asia, set up Israelis against the Arabs, as they attempted to do on our Sub-continent such as the war by Pakistan against India and Bangladesh. This enemy of the world, of world peace, of democracy and rising Socialism must be fought with all our might.

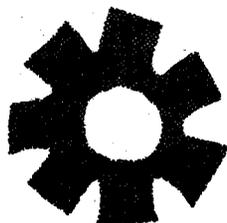
I have enumerated above some of the major issues that will come for consideration before the Calcutta Session. Other questions such as Indian Governments retracing their steps from declared policies and principles will come up for consideration and condemnation.

On all these the Calcutta Session of the A. I. T. U. C. will, I am sure, give a lead and chalk out a programme of action for the working class of India.

The Calcutta Session therefore will go down in history as an epochmaking session of A. I. T. U. C. All honour to the working class of West Bengal that they are preparing for such a session in Calcutta.

Let the working Class of India keep itself ready for action and struggle in unity with all other organisations.





## SOUVENIR

All India Trade Union Congress  
29th Session, 30 Jan.—4 Feb. 1973  
Bankim Nagar, Calcutta

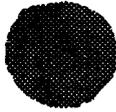


## CONTENTS

---

S. A. Dange	
Do not call me poor, call me by my class name—The working Class	4
<hr/>	
Mahendra Sen	
Advance of Workers' United Actions and the 8th World Trade Union Congress	9
<hr/>	
Parvathi Krishnan	
Social Security in India—A Review	12
<hr/>	
Dr. Ranen Sen, M. P.	
Birth of Working Class and AITUC	17
<hr/>	
Satish Loomba	
Bonus : Changes in Concept, Practice & Law	25
<hr/>	
K. G. Sriwastava	
Democratic Industrial Relations and Trade Union Rights	30
<hr/>	
P. K. Kumaran	
Struggle of the Railwaymen	34
<hr/>	
Santimay Roy	
Indian Working Class and the Challenge of Communalism and Regionalism	38

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## CONTENTS

---

Indrajit Gupta, M. P. Fight the Bourgeois offensive of Division and Disruption	43
Kalyan Roy, M. P. An Area of Darkness ? What is happening in Non-coking Coal Mines ?	47
Sunil Munshi Introducing Calcutta	58
Glimpses of AITUC	61
Helena Strzeminska Ph.D. (Econ.) Social Progress in Poland	67
G. D. R. Trade Unions care for the Social Welfare of the Worker	74
The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	76
Role of Trade Unions in Czechoslovakia	78

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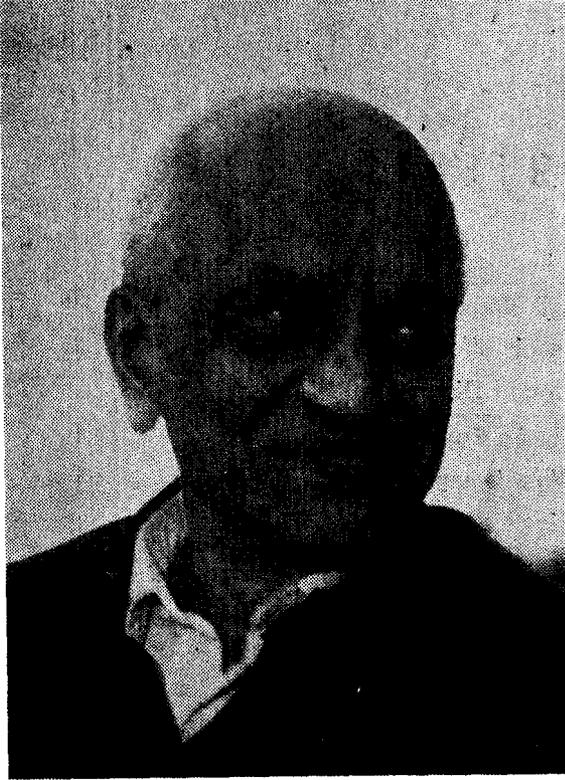
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**S. A. Dange**

General Secretary, AITUC

**T**hank you, ladies and gentlemen, and the supreme Lady, for the wonderful speeches you have made these last few days. You have appeared in so many roles and in so many places that it almost looked like a planned masquerade of the elite of Indian politics and power. Chief ministers, Congress presidents, AICC members, high level committees, Congress working committee men, reform men, ceiling men and floor men and a host of other names you took, but you said the same thing and you were the same people on the scene, again and again. You even threatened to quarrel and split and then united and smiled.

And ultimately you have given me an "Approach". You all ask me to keep looking at it for five years. You have thrown at me the most dazzling bag of money **nothing less than Rs.7000 crores**. That sight itself is enough to put me in a faint and silence me, even if a pie does not fall to my lot.

In the meanwhile? In the meanwhile, I have to wait until the kulak Chief ministers decide to **change their heart, de-kulakise themselves** and find me a bit of surplus land to work on and that, too, if the openly divorced and secretly kept lady kulaks will leave me anything behind.

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## Do not call me 'poor', call me by my class name—The working class.

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I have also to wait until the **big bosses of industry** take their share of this Rs. 7000 crores and build a few machines to let me have a job with a pay.

And if nothing else, you promise me '**job-oriented schemes**' of digging roads and a few wayside graves for those who have no patience like me to wait for five years and Rs. 7000 crores.

Anyway, I have no doubt you are sincere and that you want to make the world better for me and for yourself.

But the main trouble is **you do not know me** or purposely do not wish to identify me

correctly. I am not the sort of man you think I am.

Hence, all the while you keep on calling me "the poor", you proclaim vehemently, and some of you sincerely, that you wish to abolish poverty that is the poor, without of course abolishing the rich.

And there starts my quarrel with you.

**I resent, most strongly resent, being called "poor".**

I am working on the field or in the factory on the road or in the godown, on the shore of the sea, in the office or at your door as the darwan. I am working, giving my power of

Labour, hand and brain. I am creating that vast and useful magic called wealth, which in the final analysis some people take away from me on the basis of what they call "the law of capitalism", and make themselves rich with. **I am the creator and they are the expropriators.** And as a creator of this world of wealth, I request you to recognise in me the worker, peasant, the intellectual. And please stop calling me poor. Stop showing high-browed patronage and sympathy: I don't need it.

What I need from you is your siding with me in my struggle, the workers against the Capitalists the peasants against the land owners, the whole democracy of the people against the bureaucracy of the ruling class.

I do not want you to deal with me as a "poor individual". I am the mighty working class pitted against the exploiting classes, though, I may look pigmy and poor in a sense.

Many of you do not deliberately want to call me by my class name. Because if you do it, you will immediately recognise in me a power, that the class is. Hence you call me poor, which has no power. You want docility, not defiance. Even then I take you as my friends and hence want to tell a few things. I want to reduce my poverty, my poor-ness as a class. **I have also an Approach and a Plan to fight poverty.**

As a "poor" worker in the organised industries, I am going to fight battles for higher wages in order to reduce my poverty in concrete terms. You perhaps know that with us, "poor people", poverty is measured in concrete calories, concrete food and cloth, concrete wages and money.

**I am going to organise strikes in order to reduce my poverty, and to reduce it is your aim also—is it not. ?**

Did you hear how we all united in action,

though divided in different trade union centres, and gave a strike call recently in the jute industry ? The gentlemen there saw the concrete point of withholding our labour and its relation to their wealth and profits. So they signed an agreement with us to give increase of Rs. 45 in earnings per month and a few more jobs. Have you forgotten the bonus strike in Bombay textiles and others ?

Have I reduced thereby my poverty to some extent ? Yes, I have. But you, my friends, in your profound discussions on poverty and the poor, did you propose that the workers' wages must be levelled up throughout the country ? You did not and you will not. And even if you do, you will hedge it round with "consideration for industry" also, that is, consideration for the rich to remain rich. The only advice you give them is "avoid conspicuous consumption", that is, live and consume as before but out of sight of the "poor". And that slogan is the surest indicator of abandoning the revolution of which you speak so much !

You perhaps know how we have fought for the last five years, as measured by the mandays lost in strikes and lockouts. In 1967, the year of your great crisis, we spent 17.14 million days in struggle ; in 1969, another stage of the same developing crisis, we spent 19.15 million days ; and in 1970, we spent 20.56 million days, the highest since independence.

And during all these battles, we beat the gentlemen of the bourgeoisie, some of whom sit on your august benches, into giving us wage increase and jobs. We helped ourselves as a class to reduce our poverty and 'did not sit moaning as a "poor" people, waiting for succour.

**We admit that some of you helped us in that fight, but not all of you as a party.**

In fact, while we united from below, you



tried to back up this or that trade union centre or faction of yours from above, to dissent and divide. But the workers' will prevailed. And some of your ministers were good enough in helping settlements—but only some.

That is not enough. Hence we are now planning to launch **industrywise, nationwide actions**, to raise the level of wages in every sphere.

You say you want to fight concentration of wealth. Where does concentration come from, to begin with? From profits and values that are created by our labour. How big is that in every industry? Please see the "value added" figures in your own reports. And add to that the surplus extracted from the working peasant by the kulak and the bankers. There is the source

of accumulation of wealth, of black money, of corruption, purchase of bureaucracy and minitrocracy, of the whole world of evil.

Therefore, to reduce poverty immediately, the total wage bill in the country, that is, the share of the worker in the product must immediately be pushed up.

Similarly, the working peasant must be given land of his own and thus cut the roots of kulak accumulation.

You will then ask me if this will not lead to greater production and also productivity and thus help the capitalist to rise to bigger heights? So, mere wage increase is no final solution to the problem. The most highlyrated wage-paying monopoly system of US or Britain do not collapse because of high wages.

Yes, that is true. Our struggle for wages is not put forward as a final solution to the evils of monopoly capital. Monopoly capital cannot be controlled or regularised. It has to be beheaded, that is, nationalised.

The wage struggle is only a weapon to organise, nourish and strengthen in battle that class which is to do the beheading.

**And just as the kulak is the ally of monopoly capital, the peasant is the ally of the working class. Thus the struggle for land and wages go hand in hand for a common goal.**

Our struggle for wages is thus a political, economic, moral struggle. Hence we ask you as democrats and as socialists, to join us in it, without hedging.

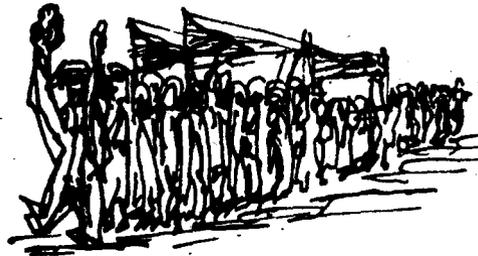
A big nationwide all-industry-wide struggle for wages is a just struggle against poverty, against monopoly, and for growth, prosperity and socialism, not only mine, not only for my petty pocket, but for all of you and us and the country.

But how does it help the peasant against the kulak, the democrats against bureaucrats, you may ask. And how can we unite with all our differing centres and slogans to do the job, when one day we unite in the National Council of Central Trade Unions and next day fall out on the ILO ?

Well, I may do that talk later on. But did you not see how we united in textiles, in jute, in Simpsons or Leyland and in Coimbatore and Bombay or in Hardwar and elsewhere ? Yes, just like that, with unity and breaks or with zig-zags of unity, one day in, one day out, we ultimately do and will succeed.

In the end, once again, please do not call me poor—call me by my real name—the **working class**, which has fought many an enemy successfully and has even built a socialist world of its own. See you again.

*[ From a talk by S. A. Dange, published in New Age, June 18, 1972 ]*



This year on October 15 will meet in Varna, in the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the 8th World Trade Union Congress. The General Council of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) which recently decided to convene the Congress proposed the drafting of two documents : (a) a draft charter of Trade Union Rights and Workers' Demands in the present period, (b) a basic document analysing the contemporary situation and events of concern to the trade union movement and including the solutions and policies advocated by the WFTU.

The World Trade Union Congresses convened by the WFTU every four years have always been high points of international united action where trade unions of all countries, of all social systems, meet, discuss and decide, irrespective of affiliation or orientation, on problems of vital interests to the workers of the world.

In this brief article, we shall discuss some of the major aspects of the background in which the 8th World Trade Union Congress is being prepared for.

As the WFTU General Council has noted, there has been positive progress in the direction of the trade union unity, though this has been more marked at certain levels of the international trade union movement than in others, and despite the difficulties and obstacles which remain and must be overcome.

This progress is demonstrated in various ways, for instance :

—in the continuation, and indeed consolidation of unity of action in countries where trade union plurality exists ;

**Mahendra Sen**  
Secretary, WFTU

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## **Advance Of Workers'**

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## **United Actions**

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## **And**

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## **The 8th World**

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## **Trade Union Congress**

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—in the progress made towards contacts and understanding between unions and federations affected by the activities of certain monopolies, multinational firms or of an entire industry ;

—by the further positive developments in international relations between the trade unions of socialist countries and those of capitalist countries ;

—in the progress, albeit slow and circumspect, made in contacts between international trade union centres.

From the platform of the WFTU General Council, Brother Pierre Gensous, General Secretary of the WFTU, issued an open invitation to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), to participate in the 8th World Trade Union Congress.

Such an approach of the WFTU arises from its basic approach to questions of international

trade union unity. Time and again, the WFTU had proposed various initiatives. Meeting in March 1972, the Bureau of the WFTU made a fervent appeal for trade union unity. The Bureau stated that the WFTU's proposals for unity "take account of the fact that the trade unions of the world hold different views on different problems, but that views coincide on other issues and that today, more than ever, unity is vital if the demands of the working class are to be won. The Bureau believes that in a spirit of mutual respect for one another's opinions, understanding and trade union unity can make progress without infringing the independence, opinions, constitutions and programmes of the different trade union organisations."

Millions of workers are now on the march, in united action which have been, in several countries, unprecedented.

What are the causes underlying this steady growth in workers mass actions and strikes? The general crisis of capitalism which continues to deepen and the deprivations of state monopoly capitalism have imposed greater misery on the working class. Even in the most advanced capitalist countries, there is already some 10 million unemployed. The scourge of unemployment continues to menace the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, as these countries continue to suffer from the ravages of multinational companies in their reinforced efforts at neo-colonial domination. Workers see from their own experience that capitalism and imperialism are unable to solve a single problem facing them—either of security of jobs or of a better future. On the other hand, living conditions are deteriorating as a consequence of the continuous rise in prices, rents, costs of foodstuffs, postal charges, transport

fares, cost of medical services and education, etc., are mounting in all capitalist countries.

In these struggles, the workers are coming more and more into direct conflict with the whole capitalist state-monopoly machine. The so-called "income policy" is not only actually a policy of wage freeze but also included restriction of democratic rights and freedoms, notably the right to strike. Under the pretext of protecting national interests, anti-labour and anti-trade union laws are being adopted aimed at subordinating the trade unions to the system of state-monopoly capitalism. The anti-trade union "Industrial Relations Act" in Britain and the growing struggles of the British workers against this hated legislation are well-known.

The struggles of the workers are, therefore, assuming more and more a political content and character. The struggles are not mostly confined only to economic demands as wages, working hours, social benefits, etc., but also include demands for an effective voice of the workers and their trade unions in the formulation, administration and implementation of all the socio-economic policies of the state, i.e., for a democratisation of the whole society and its management and running.

Moreover, in these struggles, confronted by a common adversary—state monopoly capital—the workers' common or united actions, irrespective of various affiliations and ideologies are also growing. The contacts and relations and programme for common action are beginning to take place between trade unions of different affiliations as in France, Italy, India etc.

Larger and larger sections of workers and trade unions, including those of USA, are coming out against US war of aggression in Indochina and for solidarity with the workers and peoples of Vietnam and Indochina, as also

with the Arab peoples in their struggle to liquidate the consequences of Israeli aggression. Workers' and trade unions' participation in actions for peace, against racism and neocolonialism, is increasing.

In the search for alternatives, the workers in capitalist countries are getting more and more interested in the achievements of workers in the crisis-free world system of socialism.

This is seen in the growing relations on bilateral and multilateral levels between the trade unions of capitalist and socialist countries.

The base for united action of all workers is thus expanding. The rise of international monopolies is creating another important ground for common action among workers and trade unions of various affiliations across national borders and frontiers.

The most recent meeting in London delegates from countries of Europe for common action against Dunlop-Pirelli group is an example. The move of the C. U. T. Ch. of Chile for and international trade union conference against international monopolies is another example.

The WFTU, as the only organisation which has trade unions affiliated to it from countries belonging to different economic and social systems—socialist, developed capitalist and developing countries, is constantly following a policy of building workers' united actions in defence of their common interests in their fight against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, for social progress and peace. The WFTU has, therefore, developed many initiatives for building co-operation with other international organisations. It has already established relations of mutual co-operation with WCL, especially in the field of work in ILO. It has given a call to all international organisations and independent

regional and national organisations for a round table for exchange of opinions on common issues without preconditions or imposing each others' views. The WFTU has already relations of permanent co-operation with such continental organisations as the All African Trade Union Federation (AATUF), the International Confederation of Arab Trade Union (ICATU), and the Permanent Congress for Trade Union Unity of Workers of Latin America (CPUSTAL). It has also relations of fraternal co-operation with the important autonomous national centre of SOHYO of Japan, among others.

The WFTU believes that unity and united action of workers can alone best defend and advance their interests. The situation today is more favourable than before for achieving this unity. Apart from the other objective factors enumerated earlier, the progress of relaxation of tension in international relations based on the policy of peaceful coexistence between states of different systems is opening new possibilities and perspectives for relations at trade union level too.

These advances show that correlation of forces is more in favour of democracy, socialism and peace. Workers' united strength and action can play an important role in achieving a lasting peace and happier and better future for all workers and people the world over.

It is on such firm convictions that preparations will go ahead for the grand assembly of world's trade unions at Varna in October 1973. The 29th session of the AITUC, one of the founding affiliates of the WFTU, and its work towards further development of united action on national, regional, and international levels, it is certain, will immensely contribute to the preparations for the 8th World Trade Union Congress.

The first statutory provision for a limited social security for workers in India dates back to the year 1855 when the Fatal Accidents Act was passed. This legislation provided for the heirs of a worker who died in industrial accidents to claim compensation if it could be established that the accident was caused "by personal negligence of the factory owner". Non-fatal injuries, however, were not compensable. This Act remained mainly on paper. Workers were not aware of its provisions, the trade union movement hardly existed to help them, and illiteracy and poverty of the dependants of the deceased workers made it well nigh impossible for them to utilise the complicated legal machinery for enforcing payment of the claim.

With the growth of industry, the trade union movement, and the impetus of movements for social security in the more advanced countries, schemes for social security came to be drawn up in India after the first World War.

The International Labour Organisation, the specialised agency of the then League of Nations, established after the war laid down norms of social security. Recommendations and conventions were adopted. The governments of countries, including India, were party to these decisions. Demands were increasingly raised by workers in India for improvement in their working and living conditions. It was only then that serious consideration was given to the enactment of measures to provide compensation for disablement or death arising out of an industrial accident or industrial disease. Thus, in 1922, the Workmen's Compensation Act was passed. This could be said to be the real beginning of social security legislation in this country.

**Parvathi Krishnan**

Vice-President, AITUC

## **Social Security**

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### **In India**

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#### **—A Review**

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Coming into force on 1 July 1924, this Act protected workers earning upto Rs. 200 per month against employment injuries. Employment, as defined in the Act, however, covered only the manufacturing industries, the mines, shipping and building industry. The waiting period was seven days. This has since been amended to include workers drawing upto Rs. 500 and the waiting period has been reduced to three days. A schedule for the rates of compensation to be paid for different types of injuries was also drawn up.

The next piece of social security legislation was the Maternity Benefit Act of 1951. Prior to this, various legislations had been enacted in the different States, but these were not of a uniform nature. The central legislation brought uniformity in payment of maternity benefit throughout the country.

Various committees and commissions had been set up from time to time by the government of India, both before and after independence, to go into the question of a wider scheme of social security including health and retirement benefits. In 1927, the ILO adopted the convention on health insurance. The first tentative

scheme for health insurance for industrial workers was placed before the labour ministers' conference in 1942. Professor Adarkar was then appointed to work out a scheme—he worked out a scheme which covered only three major groups of industries—textiles, engineering, minerals and metals. He also suggested that the medical services should be fully controlled by the insurance institution and not entrusted to an outside authority or to the State Governments. He recommended that the workmen's compensation and maternity benefit should be brought under such a central scheme.

The Government then set up a committee of ILO experts, Stack and Rao, to work out further details. Thus, after prolonged discussions, after numerous committees at state and central levels going into the whole question, in 1948 the Employees' State Insurance Act was passed by the parliament of independent India. A new chapter was opened up in the history of social security for workers in India, and social insurance was introduced for the first time.

This act provides for medical relief, sickness cash benefit during the period of sickness, maternity benefit and employment injury benefits. However, it leaves out an important contingency that of old age. It is purely a health insurance scheme. This scheme was followed by other schemes such as the Coal Mines Provident Fund Scheme, 1948, the Employees Provident Fund Act in 1952, the Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund Act 1947. All these schemes provided for tripartite bodies at the apex but it cannot be said that workers are directly connected with the running of these schemes.

The Employees' State Insurance Act lays down the barest outline for the scheme and the schedule of rate of contributions by the employers and employees. The rules, which are

really pertinent to the day-to-day working of the scheme are notified by the central government. A phased programme of implementation was planned which envisaged the scheme being introduced throughout the country by 1954. This was dependent on survey of industrial concentration, the spread out of existing medical facilities, location of local offices and dispensaries, provision of medical personnel and equipment, etc. But by 1954 full introduction of the scheme was still very far off.

The Scheme was first introduced in Kanpur and Delhi in 1952. And further extension took place at different intervals, so that it is only now that one can say that the majority of workers in organised industry are covered by the scheme. Workers in seasonal factories, however, and in such industries as Beedi, Handloom, etc. do not as yet benefit from the scheme.

The delays that took place in extending the scheme was due in the main to the reluctance of the state governments, which at the outset showed a marked lack of enthusiasm regarding the scheme. The original stipulation was that the State Governments would contribute 1/4 of the share of medical expenses. This led to bargaining by these Governments, and it was only in 1967, that the agreement was reached to decrease this to 1/8 per cent. However, although the act envisages that all families of the insured workers should also be included in the scheme, this has yet to take place. While in some centres and states they are included, as for example, Andhra Pradesh, in other centres they are given what is termed extended benefits (i. e. no hospitalisation), in some centres they are not at all included.

The Employees' State Insurance Scheme ran into rough weather at the very outset with both employers and the State Governments

fighting for reduction in the share they were to bear. Transitory provisions were introduced in the Act giving the employers the benefit of a lower rate of contribution for a certain period of time.

Thus, from the very beginning, it is only the workers who have been called upon to contribute the full share originally envisaged in the act, while other elements received concessions at some stage or the other. In the initial period, therefore, the total share contributed by the workers was even higher than the total share contributed by the employers. A sad commentary, indeed, on the policies of a Government that claimed to be building a "welfare state" !

When various criticisms and opposition came from different sections of the working class, employers and Governments, the Government of India appointed a Review Committee to examine the scheme and make recommendations to streamline it.

The Committee, a tripartite one, representing State Governments, employers and workers, submitted its report in 1966. These recommendations were examined by the Corporation (a tripartite organisation) who in turn recommended to Government those suggestions of the Review Committee which should be implemented. Thereafter, Government implemented only certain administrative recommendations and amended the Act to include one more employer and one more employee representative on the Standing Committee of the Corporation. And there it ended.

What were the major recommendations of the Review Committee which were unanimous and which still need to be implemented? Commenting on the transitory provisions, the committee was of the opinion that these should

be scrapped forthwith. Immediately there was a hullabaloo from the employers, claiming that this would lead to financial stringency (!). A compromise reached, therefore, was that it should be done in a phased manner.

The second important recommendation of the review committee was that the State Government's share should be increased. Here is what they had to state on this issue :

"As against the ILO experts' recommendation to charge the State Governments 2/3 of the cost of medical care to the families, the State Governments do not share in the entire cost of medical care, because the special allowance of Rs.100 per month allowed to doctors working under the scheme is paid solely by the Employees' State Insurance Corporation. The expenditure on supply of artificial limbs, spectacles, dentures, wheel chairs, etc., is also not shared by the State Governments.....

"We feel that the States' share on medical benefit for the insured person should in no case be less than the per capita expenditure on other citizens of the State. In fact, the comparison should be between per capita expenditure on medical benefits under the scheme on the one hand and the per capita expenditure on health facilities for the general public in the urban areas where the scheme is functioning, on the other."

This suggestion, was put into cold storage.

A further important recommendation was that the Central Government should contribute to the scheme. This suggestion was brushed aside unceremoniously.

The last most important suggestion was that the Government should immediately set about drawing up a comprehensive social security scheme which was being talked about for many

years—the Standing Labour Committee which considered the report of the study group on social security set up in 1957 had suggested this should be implemented in the period of the Third Five Year Plan—and an “expert machinery should be set up to evolve a ‘blue print’ for a comprehensive scheme of social security.”

This has also not been done. Talk is there of integrating the Employees’ State Insurance Scheme and the Employees’ Provident Fund Scheme—which the AITUC has consistently opposed as it is no answer or substitute for a comprehensive social security scheme which would guard workers against all possible contingencies.

At present again recommendations of the latest committee—that on “perspective planning”—are before Government. This committee has amongst other points, suggested that :

1. The Transitory provisions be repealed.
2. Exemption limit of wages be raised to Rs.3 from Rs.1.50 per day.
3. The duration of sickness benefit to be increased from the existing 56 days to 91 days.
4. The yardstick on hospital beds be increased from 4 to 7 per thousand.
5. The share of the State Government in the expenses for medical care be raised from 1/8 to 1/4 by 1977-78, and thereafter to 1/3.
6. The Central Government give financial assistance to the extent of 20% of aggregate contributions to the scheme.

The workers will have to wage an unremitting struggle to see that these recommendations are not shelved as all previous proposals have been, if the scheme is to be at all effective and helpful to workers and their families.

The scheme is administered by the Employees’ State Insurance Corporation. On paper this is a tripartite body. But in practice it works only as another arm of the Government, and it can by no means be said that workers have a say in the day-to-day running of the scheme. Even the local and regional boards—said to be “watchdogs” at the grass root level—are mere fictions and hardly function unless the State Government authorities see it fit at times to call them and put fait accompli before them. Democratisation of the working of the scheme, real association of workers with the operation of the scheme at all levels is an urgent matter.

The same applies to all other schemes of social security which are in existence, such as the Employees’ Provident Fund Scheme, the Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund Scheme, etc.

If a great deal of time has been devoted to discussing the ESI scheme as opposed to these other measures it is because it is around this scheme that the discussions of a comprehensive social security scheme devolve. Therefore, the ills of this, the benefits of it, are of great importance to social security as a whole.

The absence of actual workers’ control over these schemes have seen such ills as the failure of employers to pay up their contributions, or even those contributions which have been deducted from workers, to the funds concerned. And until this very day there is no way of bringing these employers to book—employers who have done nothing short of embezzling money which rightfully belongs to the workers. Arrears in the Employees’ Provident Fund Scheme, for instance, have now reached the figure of nearly 200 crores.

In March 1953, an international conference on social security was organised by the World

Federation of Trade Unions in Vietnam. Among the principles of social security stated well :

1. Real Social Security must be accepted as a fundamental social right, guaranteed by law to all human being who work for their living, to their families, and to those who are temporarily or permanently unable to work. The right to social security must apply to all without any discrimination.....

2. Social security must provide for all contingencies including : sickness, maternity, disability, old age, accidents at work and industrial diseases, complete or partial unemployment, death.

It must provide for assistance to all children in order to ensure their education and maintenance.

It must also provide for paid holidays for workers and for family allowances.

Social security must provide for case benefits guaranteeing a proper standard of living for the whole population.

3. In general, social security should be financed by the State or the employers, or both, without any contribution from the insured persons. Where the workers at present pay contributions, there must not be any increase and every effort should be made to reduce them and to abolish them where the workers demand it.

Representatives of the insured should be responsible for the administration of social security at all levels. This necessitates the election of members of the administrative bodies ; participation of the trade unions is also necessary. This form of administration should

prevent bureaucracy and guarantee a just and rapid settlement of claims.

Thus, social security is not the concern only of the working class. It affects the entire people of a country. If the country is to advance economically and socially, if it is to build a self-reliant economy, social security is a must and is an integral part of the whole scheme of life. We have moved forward from 1855, but we have yet to strike unitedly to achieve our ultimate goal in this sphere.

While defending the existing gains in the field of social security, the working class in our country is called upon to demand a complete overhauling of the present scheme in existence. A comprehensive social security scheme which would cover all wage earners in the country is the goal before us in this field. All toiling people have to be embraced in a scheme. In 1951, at its 34th session the ILO, in its report on "Objective of Minimum Standards of Social Security" commented that "the transformation of social insurance is accompanied by the absorption or co-ordination of social assistance and there begins to emerge a new organisation of social security, which we can describe only as a public service for the citizenry at large. This new organisation now concerns society as a whole, though it is primarily directed to the welfare of the workers and their families. It tends, therefore, to become part of national Government, and social security policy accordingly becomes coordinated closely with national policy for raising the standard of welfare and, in particular, for promoting the vitality of the population."

It is the primary task of the working class in India to remind the Government of India of this important observation and to struggle unitedly for the achievement of measures that would put these principles into actual practice.

**Dr. Ranen Sen, M. P.**  
Vice-President, AITUC

**A**ll India Trade Union Congress was born in Bombay fifty three years back. It was the first Central Trade Union organisation of the Indian working class. Its birth in a vast country like India with its remnants of Casteism, Communalism, Socio-cultural differences among various people inhabiting the country was not a small thing. The working class in those days was deeply rooted in villages and the development of industries comparatively was insignificant. The main concentration of industries and consequently of workers were in Bombay and Calcutta where Cotton Textile and Jute industries had grown. The Railways and Postal employees formed a considerable number. Another important industry was Tea plantation.

It should be recalled that living and working condition of the working class were appalling. Inhuman exploitation of men and women, existence of child labour, long working hours, absence of any labour laws etc. were rampant. The small unions based on industry or on locality joined together to form the A. I. T. U. C.

Since the birth of the working class in India in mid-nineteenth century, continuous clashes went on between labour and capital. Workers fought for their elementary rights. Again it was not a small achievement for the workers to wage such battles in the given political condition. The British regime in India was always openly siding with the capitalists who were mostly British. During the first world war the British

## **Birth Of**

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## **Working Class**

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## **And**

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## **A. I. T. U. C.**

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had to allow growth of industries to a limited extent under the exigency of war. The development of industry was thwarted due to imperialism which wanted India to be its agrarian hinterland. There was no Engineering industry which is the foundation of industrial growth in any country. But despite British policy, number of factories and mills grew and also grew the number of working class, its organisations and its struggles against capital. Historians and trade unionists should study the glorious struggles that were waged on those days in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Kanpur, Ahmedabad etc.

### **Working Class—a detachment of National struggle.**

But working class of India even in those days were not merely fighting for their economic ameliorment, they had as well joined the stream of national struggles for freedom.

One can not but recall the glorious strike by Bombay workers against the imprisonment of Lokmanya Tilak in 1908. This strike was mentioned by Comrade Lenin in one of his writings as an example of maturity of Indian working class.

Moreover, any strike struggle, any attempt to form organisations was objectively political, i.e. directed against the British Imperialist rule. The right to form trade unions or to strike was nothing but a fight for democratic rights which was mixing with the main stream of the India's fight for democracy and freedom. This was manifested in the strikes and hartals during the non co operation movement in 1920-21. The most important among them was the Assam tea plantation workers' strike and their exodus from tea plantations which resulted in the act of butchery by Gorkha soldiers led by British Officers on them in Chandpur (now in Bangladesh). People of India were shocked at the unheard of brutality perpetrated on the tea plantation workers. Another glowing instance was the strike in Bengal Assam Railways with its centre at Chittagong (now in Bangladesh). Besides these, there were innumerable strikes and hartals, big and small, of workers all over India for economic gains, for democratic rights and in response to the call of national movement for freedom. According to British sources no less than 400 strikes took place in 1921 alone.

This found its reflection in the participation of national leaders in trade unions and more particularly in their association with All India Trade Union Congress. Such wellknown national leaders like Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das, Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, Annie Besant and others had one time or other been President of A.I.T.U.C or participants in the AITUC conferences. In later days the President of India

Mr. V. V. Giri was one of the Vice-Presidents of AITUC. The second session of AITUC held in Jharia in 1921 adopted an important political resolution stating that "this Trade Union Congress declares that the time has now arrived for the attainment of Swaraj for the people of India". Attainment of Swaraj was the goal of the Indian National Congress and of Indian people in those days.

### **Working Class inspired by Russian Revolution.**

The working class in India was deeply touched by the Russian revolution and the concept of Socialism which was implemented in Soviet Union despite insufficient, sometimes garbled and distorted news of events were catered to the Indian public by the hostile Imperialist agencies. The impact of Russian Revolution can be judged by a resolution adopted in the third session of the A.I.T.U.C. in 1923. It stated that "this Congress is of opinion that war has proved very detrimental to the labouring masses in general, and therefore, advise them not to take part in waging war in future so as not to help any belligerents in any shape or form especially so if the war is waged unjustly."

This shows how correctly the Russian revolution and the resolution on Peace passed in the Soviet session in Smolny in November, 1917, has made its impact on the Indian working class and its central organisation A. I. T. U. C. The fourth session of the A. I. T. U. C. held in Calcutta in March, 1924, mourned the death of Comrade Lenin and asked the working class of India to pay homage to the man who created the first workers' state in the World. The eighth session of the AITUC held in Kanpur in 1927, congratulated USSR "on having attained the

10th anniversary of the first republic of workers in spite of imperialist intervention to break it". Such was the impact of Russian Revolution and Soviet State led by Lenin. Comrades R. P. Dutt and S. A. Dange brilliantly characterised this period in their writings. Com. R. P. Dutt in his 'India Today' wrote of this period as "this great period of militancy was the birth of the modern Indian Labour movement."

Comrade Dange mentioned how the class was imbued with both patriotism and internationalism.

"Such were the founding thoughts and traditions of AITUC. There was Class ! there was internationalism and patriotism." ( Founding thoughts of the foundation of the AITUC ).

This unity with the National movement continued all throughout the history of the A. I. T. U. C. And not only did the working class take part in freedom battles it did play the role of vanguard.

"The political strikes and demonstrations against the arrival of the Simon Commission in February 1928, placed the working class in the vanguard of the National struggle".

Com. R. P. Dutt further stated in his 'India Today' : "Working class through its powerful protest actions against Imperialist misdeeds, in support of National demands by its daily battles against Imperialist repression, already stood out as a strong, organised section of the anti-Imperialist forces".

### **Emergence of left forces and Imperialist attack.**

The British Government did not remain passive onlooker at the developments. In the successive A.I.T.U.C. sessions resolutions

demanding protection from Police interference in the trade union movement, laws to safeguard the rights of workers, schemes for compensation for injuries and sickness insurance including privilege leave, minimum living wage in all industries and universal adult franchise etc. etc. The emergence of a sort of national front for freedom in which working class played no mean part. Penetration of socialist ideology in the Trade union movement started in those days which together with increasing strike struggles and formation of stable organisations of workers frightened the British rulers. Hence, in order to intimidate the movement, the Government hit out to crash the movement. Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy case was framed up and one of the accused Comrade S. A. Dange was sentenced to four years of imprisonment. Comrade Dange was publishing a journal 'Socialist' propagating the ideas of Scientific Socialism. He was one of those who took a leading part in strengthening AITUC in its early days and was several times elected as assistant secretary of the organisation. He was not only purveyor of militant trade union outlook but also of socialist ideology in the working class movement.

Comrade S. S. Mirajkar, President AITUC as well as late Comrade Bankim Mukherji played an important role in this respect.

It is historical fact that even though AITUC was in the van of glorious strike struggles and was part of national struggle for freedom and of international workers' movement for socialism, there were some reformist elements in the A.I. T.U.C. who wanted to keep the movement and the organisation within certain limits. A conflict became inevitable.

Further, since its birth till 1926, working class movement, by and large, was under leader-

ship of national leaders who naturally could not advance the working class movement any further, rather who tried to restrict the expansion of the movement on more militant lines. This attempt by the national leaders and the reformists in the movement was frustrated by the movement itself. The left Trade union leaders like late Comrade Bankim Mukherji organised the Jute workers in Bengal and led a strike of one lakh of workers in 1927-1929. Similarly in Bombay the textile workers of Bombay left the reformist leadership and launched a strike in 1928 that lasted for six months and gave birth to Bombay Girini Kamgar Union whose membership rose to 60,000 under the leadership of Comrades Dange, Mirajkar and others.

The working class movement was taking more and more militant left and socialist orientation. In 1926, first May Day was observed. In 1928, in its ninth Session at Jharia, AITUC passed a resolution embodying certain demands before the All Parties' Convention in Calcutta. The demands were future constitution of India to be declared as Socialist Republican Government of Working Class, nationalisation of industries and land, right to work, unemployment insurance etc. etc.

It was the AITUC alone which had inscribed in its banner socialist workers' Government as its goal in those days.

### **Differences in T. U. Movement**

By 1929 there were distinct groups inside the working class movement and in A.I.T.U.C. —reformist, left nationalist and socialist groups.

Years from 1926 to 1928 saw large number of strikes, hartals which were both fought on economic and political issues. British Govern-

ment took fright and passed an act named Trade Disputes Act.

In March, 1929 Important Trade union leaders like Dange, Mirajkar, Joglekar and others were arrested. Famous Meerut Communist Conspiracy was framed up.

In the meantime the tenth session of the AITUC was held in 1929 presided over by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru which resolved in favour of affiliation to AITUC to League against Imperialism and against participation in I. L. O. The reformists who were in minority walked out of the A. I. T. U. C.

Eleventh session in Calcutta in 1931 saw another split. President of A. I. T. U. C. Shri Subhash Chandra Bose and the Congress left walked out of the session and formed rival AITUC.

The net result of these splits was that the employers offensive grew. Wage cut, retrenchment, rationalisation etc. were imposed on the workers. The workers felt the need of unity and pressurised their leadership to come together.

Unity was forged in Calcutta session in 1935 where again the Socialist and Congress lefts joined together and in 1938 the rest of the elements who had walked out in 1929 again rejoined and united A. I. T. U. C. emerged much to the chagrin of British Imperialists and the capitalists. Since then till 1947 AITUC remained the sole organisation of the Indian working class. Congress elements broke away from AITUC and formed INTUC at the behest of Sardar Vallabhbai Patel who wanted a Central Trade Union organisation waded to the policy of class peace. Mr. N. M. Joshi, one of the pioneers of trade union movement in India was one of the leaders of AITUC since its

inception. His contribution to keep the AITUC united was immense. Despite his differences with the left forces in the AITUC he was held in high esteem by all in the trade union movement. Since then further splits have taken place in the AITUC the last one being engineered by the sectarian reformist leadership of the CPI (M). When they felt that their disruptive policy could not be passed in the AITUC they went out and formed CITU.

Thus, today, there are four or five central trade union organisations in the country. But AITUC remains despite all these splits, the strongest and the most militant, not in words like CITU formed by CPI (M) but in practice, central organisation of the Indian working class having its branches and affiliates in all states and important industrial centres in India.

The growth of AITUC will be revealed from the following :

Year	No. of affiliated unions	membership
1920	64	1,40,854
1940	195	3,74,256
1961	841	
1970	2981	18,62,335

Today membership is nearly 2 million.

In course of all these years working class grew not only in number but its consciousness and organisation also grew. During the post-war period of 1945-1947 mighty postwar upsurge of working class took place against Imperialism. 220 strikes in 1945 swelled to 1629 in 1946 and 1811 in '47. To mention a few—

- (a) All India Postal Employees strike.
- (b) RIN mutiny and Bombay workers took part in it on a massive scale.
- (c) Bengal Workers' strike in support of I. N. A. movement in 1946.

All these struggles had two facets ingrained in them—economical and political and were led and organised by AITUC.

### Repression on AITUC

Not content with the split engineered by congress leaders which weakened the working class, the Government unleashed a reign of terror on the AITUC and its constituents from 1948 to 1951.

Important leaders of AITUC and its affiliates were jailed or forced to go underground. The then sectarian, adventurist and disruptive leadership of the AITUC pursued a wrong policy of adventurist actions which weakened the working class and AITUC. The Government seized this opportunity and wanted to smash the AITUC. But despite the set back, AITUC again revived in 1952 and regrouped its forces. With correct policy and practice the AITUC again became the leading body of the Indian Working Class.

### Policy is the strength of AITUC

The strength of the AITUC does not merely lie in its past glorious record of struggle nor in its association with National leaders. Strength of AITUC lies in the policy it pursues. It can be really proud of a brilliant record of organising and leading working class struggles, of imparting a class sense in the workers and bringing a socialist and international orientation in outlook of workers. AITUC was one of the founding fathers of World Federation of Trade unions and an active detachment of it. AITUC true to its goal of socialist workers state has always stood in defence of the socialist states led by U.S.S.R. AITUC has guided the working class movement continuously for more than half a century. It has always kept the

the banner of unity of the class against the capitalist class, flying high. It is the AITUC that has made workers stand up as a class and today plays an important role in the country.

Role of A.I.T.U.C. since independence, the policies pursued by it and the struggles conducted by it against all odds should be mentioned.

### Post independence period and AITUC

In the post independence period the problem of development of Indian economy, industrialisation of the country through five year plans came to the fore. Questions of wages, high prices, rights of the working class, etc. have no less importance to the country as a whole and to working class in particular. There arose a class of monopolists who thanks to direct and indirect help of Government policy prospered everyday at the cost of workers and the people ; Foreign capitalists also seek to make India their happy hunting ground again. These big-business-indigenous and foreign make persistent effort to weaken Indian economy by undermining Public Sector and by various other means. They attempt to bring into their clutch the economy, hold the country to ransom by reducing production, resort to unlimited profiteering, mint millions exploiting developmental activities that go on in the country. They influence the Government through their links in the administration and in the Cabinet.

Workers have to wage continuous struggle to have their minimum requirements met. While productivity of workers are increasing, wealth created by workers are garnered by the capitalists, real wages of workers are depressed due to continuous rise in prices.

Some facts in respect of productivity of workers. Value Added by Manufacture, consumers price index, etc. etc. are revealing.

Wealth produced by workers and their share in it :

- 1) Value added by manufacture increased from Rs. 2113 in 1952 to Rs. 4621 in 1964 i.e. more than 125%.
- 2) Production per worker has increased by about 63% between 1952 and 1964, while real wages have remained static.
- 3) While productivity in industry had gone up by 66% on an average between 1962 and 1967, the real wages during this period had come down by 5%.

(A.I.T.U.C. statement before the planning commission in September 1971 )

### Employment and production.

From 1951 to 1968 while employment in factories increased at the rate of about 3% a year, industrial output expanded by about 6.5% a year.

Rise in the consumer price index has reached an all height in recent period as is evident from the following figures taken from Government sources.

	Consumers' price index :	
	1949-100	1960-100
1965-66	169	—
1968-69	212	174
1971-72	233	192
Jan. 1972	236	194
May 1972	238	196
June 1972	244	201

Since then there has been sharp price rise in more recent period.

Absence of any proper price policy of the Government, their reluctance to nationalise certain vital sectors of production of textile, sugar, edible oil etc. and taking over of

wholesale trade in grains, pulses, textiles, sugar, oil etc. is having its inevitable result, namely high rise in prices.

About workers productivity, foreign industrialist, have thus spoken

“The productivity of an Indian technical worker is 80% that of Japan. But Indian wage level is one fifth of Japanese technical worker”.

( Mitsubishi Mission, June, 71 )

While such are the facts, the real wages of workers remain stagnant. Even the other day National Commission on Labour said that the condition of workers are not very different from those described by Whitley Commission or Rege Committee ( 1944 ).

But the workers under the leadership of AITUC is not taking the situation lying down. Workers unitedly are fighting for a better deal and are forcing the employers and Government to concede. The latest instance is the attainment of 8.33% to minimum Bonus. AITUC has been fighting on three planks—fight against monopoly hold on Indian economy, for strengthening and democratising of public sector, fight for better working and living conditions of the workers and for their democratic rights.

AITUC is of the opinion that unless the hold of the monopoly is loosened, weakened and ultimately smashed and monopoly concerns nationalised the crisis in Indian economy, that has set in, can not be overcome. It is due to monopolists' grip over our economy that India is passing through the crisis which is getting aggravated everyday affecting people of all walks of life.

AITUC stands for strengthening of Public sector so that it can occupy commanding heights

of our economy and that bureaucratic control over it goes and workers' control is established. Thus alone monopoly domination can be removed.

In regard to rights and privileges of the workers, AITUC is of the firm opinion that recognition of Trade unions, collective bargaining and the right to strike are three essential ingredients of a sound labour policy which should be pursued by the Government. That is why AITUC has rejected the recommendations of the National Labour Commission as reactionary and harmful for the class. AITUC demands a national minimum wage for workers all over India based on the needs of the worker as agreed in principle in Indian Labour Conference in 1957, pegging down of prices and linking the dearness allowance to cost of living index with cent per cent neutralisation of any rise in the index.

Thus the main slogans of the AITUC transcends the limits of working class and have become the demands of Indian people barring a handful exploiters.

### **Unity is the banner**

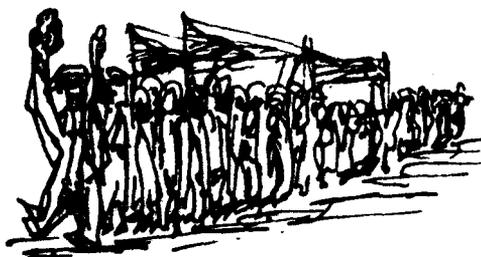
The banner of AITUC is the banner of working class unity. The unity has to be achieved at the bottom as well as at the top. For achieving this unity AITUC has to lodge principled fight against reformist understanding and policy as well as sectarian and disruptive stand. This path of fight for unity is not beset with roses, it is a difficult path. The AITUC is convinced that the pressure of the objective situation and the urge of the workers for unity will bring about a united labour facing the capital sooner or later.

AITUC has not been rest content by

enunciating such policies. AITUC and its affiliates have organised and led many mighty battles of the workers against reactionary Government policies, and monopolists, sometimes jointly with other trade unions and sometimes alone in recent past. Such battles have beaten back the offensive of the employers, have forced the Government to change their policy in favour of workers to some extent. But more battles have to be waged. The 29th session of the AITUC will lay down concrete policies of class unity and struggles, formulate specific demands of the workers, and show the

path for resurgence of national economy from the rut it is moving in. The Calcutta session of the AITUC has to become a significant landmark in the trade union movement and in our national life. Its battlecry will reverberet throughout the length and breadth of the country. The battlecry of the AITUC is the call for unity of the class, united front of all trade unions for a better working and living condition, for a better livelihood.

Our goal is establishment of Socialism and abolition of exploitation of labour.



**Satish Loomba**

Secretary, AITUC

**R**egular payment of bonus, not to one or two units but more or less to all the units in an industry, dates from the First World War, when textile mills of Bombay started payment of the 'War Bonus'. Actually this 'bonus' was supposed to compensate for the abnormal rise in prices and was therefore a kin in nature to dearness allowance. However since such payment was irregular and was entirely dependent upon the will and fancy of the employer, the workers raised the demand that it must be uniformly and regularly paid. In 1929, therefore, the Government of Bombay appointed a committee—the Bonus Disputes Committee—to go into the entire question. The Committee decided that bonus was primarily an ex-gratia payment and left the matter to be decided by the workers and employers through collective bargaining.

Thus to begin with the concept of bonus was taken to mean an ex-gratia payment, wholly dependent upon the will of the employer. Ofcourse the workers could have a say in determining its quantum through collective bargaining.

The Trade union movement refused to accept this view and numerous disputes arose specially during and after the Second World

## **Bonus :**

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### **Changes In Concept,**

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### **Practice & Law**

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War. As a result of this persistent and dogged struggle, a major change was effected in the concept of bonus. The first authoritative acceptance of this change was in the judgement of the Labour Appellate Tribunal given in the bonus dispute between the Bombay Mill Owners' Association and the Rashtriya Mill Mazdur Sangh in 1950 ( 1950 II LLJ 247 ). In its judgement the LAT held :

“Bonus is cash payment made to employees in addition to wages. It cannot any longer be regarded as an exgratia payment, for it has been recognised that a claim for bonus, if resisted, gives rise to an industrial dispute, which has to be settled by a duly constituted industrial court or tribunal.....where the industry has capacity to pay and has been so established that its capacity to pay may be counted upon continuously, payment of living wage is desirable ; but where the industry has not that capacity or its

capacity varies or is expected to vary from year to year, so that the industry court afford to pay living wages, bonus must be looked upon as the temporary satisfaction, wholly or in part, of all the needs of the employees”.

In the case of Sree Meenakshi Mills Ltd. Vs their workmen (1958 II LLJ 239) the Supreme Court further amplified this approach : “Bonus is not, as its etymological meaning would suggest, a mere matter of bounty gratuitously made by the employer to his employees ; nor is it a matter of deferred wages. It has been held by this Court in Muir Mills Co. Ltd. Vs Suti Mills Mazdoor Union, Kanpur, that the term ‘Bonus’ is applied to a cash payment in addition to wages. It generally represents the cash incentive conditionally on certain standards of attendance and efficiency being attained. This decision is based on the view that both labour and capital contribute to the earnings of the industrial concern and so it is but fair that labour should derive some benefit if there is surplus available for that purpose. Even so, the claim for bonus cannot be effectively made unless two conditions are satisfied : the wages paid to workmen fall short of what can be properly described as living wages ; and the industry must be shown to have made profits which are partly the result of contribution made by the workmen in increasing production.”

Thus as matters stood after these judgements though bonus was taken to be a right of the workmen and not merely an exgratia payment, it was not accepted as a deferred wage, nor yet as a profit sharing. It was more in the nature of an annual payment, the quantum of which was dependent upon profits as well as the level of wages and which was paid to the workers to make good at least a part of the gap between the actual wage and the living wage.

This concept of bonus stood undisturbed for several years. Various judgements of the Supreme Court continued to operate on the twin tests of bonus being due only when wages fall short of the living wage and secondly when the industry makes profits, part of which is due to the efforts of the workmen.

To arrive at the quantum, the Courts laid down a formula by which many prior charges, such as depreciation, Taxes, return on capital, interest, rehabilitation charges etc. were deducted from the gross profits and part of the surplus after deduction was paid as bonus. The proportion of the surplus which may be paid as bonus was not a fixed one, but would vary according to the level of wages and the amount of profit, etc.

The first major change on a national scale was brought in by the recommendations of the Bonus Commission (1964), through the concept of a minimum bonus which had to be paid whether a concern made any profit or not. Such a bonus, whatever may be the legal interpretations put on it, in reality became a first change in the same way as wages. Thus 4% of basic wage + D.A. could properly be called a deferred wage, paid annually. If according to the formula laid down, more was due after meeting the prior charges, that would be paid upto the maximum of 20% basic wages + D. A. Theoretically the scheme of set-off and set-on may be said to have brought in a system by which if a concern could not even pay 4% it could debit it to succeeding years. But the bare fact remains, though, not yet acknowledged, that 4% of total wages did become a prior charge and had to be paid in all circumstances.

Hence the concept of bonus in reality became a double-barelled concept : upto 4% prior charge of the nature of deferred wage ; above

4% profit-sharing after meeting other prior charges.

The workers' battle for bonus has thus come a long way. From an exgratia payment entirely dependent upon the goodwill of the employer though the concept of bonus as workers' right to a share in profits if wages fall below living wages and the level of profits justified it, to a statutory right to a minimum guaranteed bonus irrespective of profit and loss and irrespective of the level of wages, and in individual cases to their statutory right to more dependent upon the profits after meeting prior charges.

The Bonus Review Committee in the interim report submitted by the workers and public sector employees representatives and as accepted by the Government has not only further raised the quantum of statutory guaranteed bonus to 8.33% of basic wages + D. A. It has underlined the change brought in by the Bonus Commission that the minimum bonus is in reality a prior charge of the nature of a wage, in fact a deferred wage paid annually. It has yet to give its report on other aspects of the bonus issue including ceiling and coverage and determining bonus where more than 8.33% is due.

At this place it would be relevant to examine the argument for a minimum guaranteed bonus. Unfortunately many of our Trade Unionists have not yet grasped the conceptional change which has been brought about by the reality of the working class struggles. Many Trade Unions still argue that maximum bonus must be paid because there is a gap between the actual wages earned by the workers and the living wage. Bonus is supposed to bridge at least a part of the gap. This argument really ignores the great advance made by the Bonus Commission and the Bonus Review Committee. This advance consists in de-linking minimum bonus from the level of wages ( as well as of profits ).

Presumably, if one was to accept the argument of these trade unionists ( it should be noted that this was the burden of the arguments advanced by INTUC, HMS, UTUC, HMP, BMS and the CITU ) then minimum Bonus would not be due when wages reach the level of a living wage. In such case bonus would have to depend upon the level of profits and prior charges, etc.

It was the AITUC which in its memorandum on the minimum Bonus to the Bonus Review Committee and in its evidence tendered before it, pointed out that minimum bonus is due because of the increasing gap between the wages paid and the value added by manufacture. The representatives of the INTUC, HMS and AITUC on the Bonus Review Committee as well as the Public Sector Managements' representative accepted this argument. They say in the course of their Report :

“3.2 : A recent study by Dr. S. L. Shetty in the Division of Monetary Economics of the Reserve Bank's Economic Department is quite revealing. Based on an analysis of finances of 1501 large and medium companies published annually by the Reserve Bank, Dr. Shetty has found that while manufacturing costs of companies had remained at 55% of the value of output, their wage costs had declined from 14% in 1965-66 to 13.2% in 1970-71. This shows that labour is not even having the same share in 1970-71 as it had five years before, i. e. in 1965-66.

3.3 : It is obvious that all the wage increases granted since then have been than offset by increase in productivity. Also it is an undisputable fact that real wages too have been continuously eroded. Dr. Shetty further adds that profitability of the 1,501 companies registered a notable recovery over these six years ; the liquidity position of the Corporate Sector was comfortable due to the rise in retained profits in the

context of the continued sluggishness in investment activity ; the position in respect of the companies' net worth and depreciation provision has also improved ; and not only were the owned funds in excess of the gross assets created, but the excess generated steadily increased.

3.4 : We take it that the Reserve Bank's selection of 1,501 companies is representative, and that being so, this latest study in the series reveals that the raising of the minimum bonus from 4% to 8.33% will not be a burden beyond their means.

It may be recalled that the fall in labour's share of value added by manufacture, however, is not a new feature originating from 1965-66. The National Commission on Labour had also observed that this has been a persisting trend right from 1947. We have referred to the statistics from 1965-66 to point out the fact that in spite of the Payment of Bonus Act and the minimum bonus provision therein, this trend has not been arrested and the fall in labour's share of the value added is still persisting.

3.5 : Thus the shortfall in labour's share in 1970-71 as compared to 1965-66 is 14% minus 13.2% = 0.8%. This 0.8% is 1/17th of the labour's share of 14% as it stood in 1965-66. This approximately represents a fall of 6% in the labour's share in 1970-71 as compared to 1965-66. Thus the percentage of wage cost has gone down by 6% of the total wages, which included cost of labour welfare, bonus under the Act, Provident Fund, E. S. I. contributions etc. The raising of minimum bonus to 8.33% will only involve an increase of 4.33% of the total wages i. e., basic wages and dearness allowance without the cost of labour welfare, provident fund, E. S. I. contributions, etc. Therefore, even with the 8.33% as minimum bonus, the wage cost would be less than the 1965-66 level.

Thus at the minimum level bonus is now squarely delinked both from profits and from the level of wages and has become a right of the workers, statutorily guaranteed.

What about the bonus due above the minimum ? This is yet in the sphere of profit-sharing. The Bonus Review Committee has to give its opinion on it. However, one thing is clear and that is that the present formula must go. It is complicated, gives rise to disputes, and is weighed against the workers.

At present the Bonus Act covers about 50% of the total wage and salary earners. Large numbers of industrial workers like those in Railways, P&T, Defence, all undertakings run departmentally, All-India Radio, etc. are outside its purview as well as a large number of non-industrial workers like office workers in Central and State Governments, municipal workers, employees of universities, colleges, schools, of hospitals and of various financial institutions. All workers in establishments employing less than 20 persons are also excluded. By a judgement of the Supreme Court, all those who are excluded from the purview of the Bonus Act have no right to bonus even otherwise.

The three representatives of the workers organisations on the Bonus Review Committee said in their interim report that all wage-earners in all areas of employment must be brought within the purview of the Act. The other members have not opined on this question ; but it is to be discussed in the final report.

The excluded workers have raised a powerful voice for extension of bonus to them also. The Government, while not extending the Act to these has taken several contradictory positions. Sometimes they say that so far as the Central Government employees are concerned,

the matter is before the 3rd Pay Commission. When challenged that this is not included in the Commission's terms of reference, they said that the Bonus Review Committee is considering it. At the same time they are also on record as saying that this question is outside the terms of reference of the Bonus Review Committee.

The fact of the matter is that the Government would not like to pay Bonus to its employees whether in the Railways, Defence, P & T or elsewhere. At the same time it senses the urgent desire of these workers to remove the illogical and unjust discrimination by which bonus has so far been denied to them. Hence its equivocation and vacillations.

The Pay Commission's Report will be out by February '73. But the Pay Commission is concerned only with the Central Government employees which constitute roughly about 50% of the excluded category. This still leaves

lakhs of workers in educational institutions, AIR Staff Artists, Hospital, State Governments, municipalities, smaller establishments, financial institutions etc. And in any case the Pay Commission is not seized of the issue.

The Report of Bonus Review Committee is expected be out by May 1973. It is not possible to pre-judge what it will say on this issue. However one thing is clear. Whatever the Commission and the Committee may say, a real coordinated mass movement is necessary to win the right of bonus for the lakhs of workers who are yet denied their right. This will be a major task in the coming period.

The concept of bonus has been changed through the persistent and dogged struggle of the workers. The law of bonus has been changed to accept the changed concept. Now onward to further changes in the concept and the law, and to extend these to all wage-earners.



**K. G. Sriwastava**

Secretary, AITUC

## **Democratic Industrial Relations And Trade Union Rights.**

**W**hen we hear the terms 'Hindu Socialism' or 'Arab Socialism' or Socialism growing out of the soil of a particular country ; one of the vital things which remain undefined is the rights of working people vis-a-vis the exploiting class under the socialism. All sorts of 'Socialists' have now to say something about the working class and their rights and most of them end with better and just better living conditions. It is only the scientific socialism of Marx and Lenin which clearly envisage a continuous fight between the working class and capitalist class in a capitalist society and Stae ; the former wining battle after battle—economic and political till the later are defeated and in the new regime of socialism the capitalist as a class is abolished.

In their battle, working class establishes its rights and insists on codifying them into state law—called industrial relations laws. The bourgeois state usually does not agree to their

demands unless forced to. These are the democratic trade union rights.

There are other types of trade union laws also. Some of the reformists but believes in bourgeois society introduce and frame trade union laws to create confusion, create illusions about bourgeois court of law, and try to wean away working class from the path of class struggle. These bestow some immediate gains to the working people within the framework of that society and are therefore naturally welcome in the beginning.

Still there are Trade Union laws introduced precisely to check the growth of militant class conscious TU struggles.

Sometime there are TU laws which are a combination of the three. TU movement decided to accept or reject these on the basis whether in a given situation it will help it to grow or retard. In India the first TU Law enacted is Indian Trade Unions Act XVI of 1926. In those days the right to form trade unions was denied and workers for their agitations were prosecuted for violations of law of Contract. Acceptance of the right nay facility of forming trade unions and exemptions from certain financial obligations was in accordance with the demands of TU movement. But

along with it was introduced Registration of Trade Unions and the right of Government through its Registrar of Trade Unions to interfere in the internal affairs of Trade Unions. It will be recalled that recently when the British Parliament passed the law of Registration of Trade Unions even the British TUC has opposed it and the struggle is going on.

48 hour week working, Workmen's Compensation Act, Maternity Benefit Act, E. S. I., E. P. F, Gratuity Act are some of the important laws which workers forced the Government to bring forward. These laws have some lacunae but in the main are a step forward.

Industrial relations laws in our country, as in any bourgeois country have been framed to curb militant T.U. movement. This will be evident from the fact that there have been introduced or amended whenever struggles have grown more than the earlier period.

The first Industrial Disputes Act 1929 was brought after the six months' strike of Textile workers in Bombay. The Industrial Disputes Act 1947 was introduced after the wave of unprecedented working class struggles in 1946-47. And now again after the highest man-days lost in 1967-68, thinking of bringing new Industrial Relations law is going on.

Another common feature of these laws or the proposed law is to put more curbs on strike struggles and offer in various forms third party intervention in industrial disputes either through compulsory adjudication or the same thing called compulsory arbitration through Tribunals, Commissions and the like.

Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 successfully for some years diverted the attention of the working class to Tribunal and Labour courts and it took about a decade to get than disillusioned

of this method of setting industrial disputes.

Space does not permit to go into this subject in greater details. In the last ten—fifteen years the working class availed of Tripartite bodies to settle these cases. There were not statutory but since Government had a hand in it, to an extent they served the purpose. L.L.C., S.L.C., Industrial Committee of various industries, wageboards and tripartite meeting specially called for the purpose were the various forms used. By and large the utility of those forums is not so effective as earlier.

Working Class in India has learnt from its own experience that bi-partite collective bargaining is the only democratic method for settling industrial disputes. It does not want third party intervention and also retain its right to strike, which is the only guarantee for the success of collective bargaining. Trade Union movement is united on the issue though not on details.

Collective bargaining immediately brings to the fore the issue of who is the representative of the workers at factory/industry or national level. The bourgeoisie have been avoiding this issue at the national level and the law of compulsory recognition adopted in 1947 was never put into operation. Bourgeoisie wanted to be sure that before the right of recognition is statutorily conferred on the Trade Unions its own unions started in 1946-47 through the ruling party get somewhat stabilised. In some of the states like erst-while Bombay and then present Madhya Pradesh a system of 'representative' union was introduced. This was to be determined by the Governmental agency (taking care that the interest of Trade Union belonging to ruling party are safe).

The biggest service to the bourgeoisie was done by the ruling Congress Party in 1946-47 was to disrupt the TU movement by forming INTUC. Since then if there is anything called labour policy of ruling Congress Government at the Centre and the States, it has been to support the INTUC at all places and at all cost. If they have failed at some places in the beginning and quite a number of places subsequently, it is only because working class there even in the face of unprecedented victimisation, repression and suppression fought this disruption doggedly. Later on of course workers in many places realised that company unions can for sometime get them certain advantages but ultimately the policy of class collaboration is in no way advantageous for class struggle. If this disruption is still tolerated in some places it is because since the working class movement in our country have been further divided both by the rightists as well as left adventurists and a united class conscious TU movement on correct lines could not be built up. Working Class did force during this period all unions (including INTUC and other Unions leadership) to come together to fight for their immediate demands but organisational unity is still not within sight.

Bourgeoisie and their Government took shelter behind this multiplicity of Trade Unions not to allow collective bargaining to grow. In 1969 in the Steel Industry all the unions came together and entered into a collective agreement on wages and some service conditions on national level covering both public and private sector, giving a lie to the scandles that collective bargaining is hampered and not possible when there are more than one Trade Unions. None-the less INTUC, Government and employers are not willing to extend this experiment in other industries. In Cement Industry where

this experiment was undertaken this year INTUC, Employers and Government broke it.

After the strike wave of 1967-68 and 69, the Government started considering afresh about the industrial relations law. The first act was to bring Essential Services Ordinance Act, 1968 banning not only Central Government employees strike in September 1968 but keeping it on statute and using it in other industries as well to curb their strike struggles. Emergency powers which were given to Government in 1962 and 1965 were freely used against working class struggles. Defence of India Rules, 1971 is also being utilised for this purpose. There are the interim measures till the fresh Industrial Relations Act is introduced in Parliament. The outline of the proposed Act clearly conforms to the pattern follow up till now by the bourgeoisie in that it puts fresh curbs on strike struggles, keeps third party intervention alive and in the name of unfair labour practice ensures that whenever they want the recognition of unions can be withdrawn and unions of their choice foisted.

Essence of democratic industrial relations are recognition by the employer of a union that has majority following, and collective bargaining on all issues affecting working class with the right of strike without any hinderance, if negotiations fail.

The feeling of one union in one industry is ideal but in the present circumstances in our country is not feasible in the near future. A formula has therefore to be evolved so that a bargaining agent is elected on behalf of all workers.

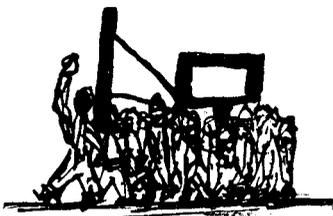
Several exercise by the trade unions, Government, Public Institutions and other have been going on. The major difference is whether the bargaining agent should be elected by secret

ballot or by verification of membership of TUs. The main defect in verification of TUs is in the fact that one of unions ( generally belonging to I N T U C ) gets a weightage in the form of various facilities for enrolment of members as against other non-recognised unions. Secondly the I N T U C does not want to give up the privileges they have been having in some major centres. The ruling party comes to their rescue by allowing such State laws to override national understanding on recognition. This is simply because the ruling party has not given up the policy of having their own TU wing to serve this purpose. Election in 1971 and 1972 giving majority of the Congress Party again after their defeat in 1967 elections and division in Congress party gives them some hope of retaining hold over working class by hook or crook.

Efforts are also being made to impose restrictions on the formation and functioning of TUs by the Government. Restriction on membership for the purpose of registration ; discouragement to the extent of practical banning of so called outsiders (non employees including ex-employees), and increasing the powers of Government through Registrars of Trade Unions

in the internal affairs of the unions. On the one hand the Government is imposing these restrictions while on the other in the ruling party including INTUC there is a prevalent theory that in a 'democratic' set up more than one union is a must. On the whole this seems to be meant to retaining INTUC and one more bourgeois party TU Centre on the pattern of AFL CIO in USA and finishing with all leftists militant trade unions. In our view workers should have unfettered right to form and select his Trade Union and its leadership without any interference from the employers or Government. Reduction of the number of trade unions and building units has to be achieved by working class alone on the basis of its consciousness and understanding.

The whole gammut of Trade Union rights and democratic TU industrial relations is under attack from the burgeoisie and its Government. Working class can and will have to fight it and obtain full, TU right and democratic industrial relations on the basis of united struggles and class consciousness of winning scientific socialism and not just any socialism which most of the bourgeois political parties and T.U. centres are repeating day in and day out.



**P. K. Kumaran**

## **Struggle Of the Railwaymen**

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The last major struggle launched by railwaymen was the one day token strike of September 19, 1968. The strike call was given by the All India Railwaymen's Federation along with other organisations of Central Government Employees. The response from the railwaymen was, however, very poor. The Central, South Central and Western Railways withdrew the strike notices. About 40,000 workers of the S. E. Railway, 23,000 of the Eastern Railways, 30,000 on the N. E. Railway, 50,000 on the N. F. Railway, 40,000 on the Northern Railway, 9,000 in the Chittaranjan Loco Works, 7,000 on the Southern Railway, 800 in the Integral Coach Factory, 300 on the S. C. Railway and 100 on the Western Railway, were all, that participated in the strike. The strike was banned by an Ordinance issued by the Government six days before the date fixed for strike. About 6,000 employees were arrested and put in jail,

more than 5,000 were suspended from duty, and 12,000 were terminated from service. It took almost a year, to get all the punishments cancelled, court cases dropped and break-in-service condoned. The main issues of the strike remains unsolved even to this day. However a Pay Commission was appointed in February 1970 to look into the questions raised during the strike and the agitation which followed the strike. The AITUC and other central trade union organisations had rallied round the victimised employees, fought against victimisation, and forced the government to restore normalcy and appoint the Pay Commission to go into the service conditions.

Ever since the 15th Tripartite Indian Labour Conference in July 1957 worked out the norms for calculating a need based minimum wage for a worker in India, the railwaymen have been demanding that their scales of pay should be based on the need-based minimum wage. The minimum wage was then calculated on the basis of prevailing cost of living index, as Rs. 127/-. The Second Pay Commission which was appointed in August 1957 to examine the question did not recommend the need-based wage on the plea of lack of resources. They only merged the dearness allowance with the

basic wage and recast the scales. The Commission's recommendations were a thorough disappointment and this led to the 5 day general strike in 1960.

However, prices continued to rise and the value of the wage suffered a steep decline. Agitation and demonstration by the employees forced the Government to appoint two Dearness Allowance Commissions. Finally the formula of dearness allowance that emerged provided for a review of the allowance after the cost of living index registered an average rise of 10 points for the preceding 12 months. Thus even the formula ensured steady erosion of wages. Even when the 10 point average rise was reached, compensation was only 90% at the minimum of the lowest scale and 40% at the highest scale. That was why the discontent was rising at a rapid rate which finally led to the 1968 one day strike for which the Government prepared as if to meet a civil uprising.

It is three years since the appointment of the Third Pay Commission. During these three years the prices did not wait for the Commission and rose to staggering heights. The Pay Commission had to announce three interim awards, each after considerable agitation. Today the minimum wage of railway employees is Rs. 170 comprising of Rs. 70 basic wage, Rs. 71 dearness allowance and Rs. 29, the three instalments of interim relief, while comparable jobs in other sectors of industry are fetching about Rs. 220 to 260.

For about a year after the strike of September 1968 there was no strike actions on railways. During this period they were subjected to humiliating behaviour by the bureaucratic officers of the railway. In August 1969, workers of the Diesel shed, Loco staff of Howrah went

on strike for two days. In October the Electric Drivers and Assistant Drivers of Howrah struck work for two days. Thus the lull was broken.

In January 1970 workers of New Jalpaiguri and New Bongaigaon struck work for one day each. In the same month workers of Tikiapara car shed struck work for two days. And railwaymen of Mughalserai and Danapur struck work for three days.

In February workers of Malda Town struck work for two days and the workers of Loco Work Shops, Perambur for one day. In March 1970 railwaymen of Katihar and Chamagram struck work for one day each and workers in Kharagpur and Santargachi struck work for two days. In April that year, railwaymen of New Bongaigaon and Malda Town struck work for one day each, Engineering workshops, Sabarmati for three days and some workers in Danapur Division for five days.

May 1970 witnessed a major strike by the Loco Running Staff of Southern Railway for six days, demanding 8 hours duty, pay protection and job guarantee for medically decategorised staff, implementation of the promises made by the Railway Minister during their 1968 July strike etc...On the Eastern Railway, workers of Narkeldanga, Sealdah and Ranaghat went on strike for 5 days, of Chitpur and Andal for 3 days and Sitarampur for 2 days. On the South Eastern Railway, Dongargarh firemen struck work for two days. Shalimar Loko and Traffic staff struck work for one day, and Santragachi Loko Staff and Tikiapara Car Shed staff for one day each. Katihar staff on NF Railway struck work for one day.

In June, Malda Town workers struck work for 4 days and firemen of Adra for 2 days,

Bhilai Marshalling yard staff for 2 days and Sahdol staff for one day.

July and August saw the workers of Siliguri struggling against police atrocities. They were on strike for 11 days and the staff of Alipurduar for 6 days. New Jalpaiguri for 10 days and New Bongaigaon for 5 days. Workers in Kharagpur Division struck work for 3 days and Santragachi Loco staff for one day. Adra Division staff struck work for 4 days and Chakradharpur Division staff for 3 days and the Engineering staff of Nagbir for 2 days. Kharagpur Division was again on strike in August for 9 days, Adra Division for 4 days, Bilaspur Division for 11 days, Nagpur Division for 9 days demanding redressal of long standing grievances. Nimpura Carriage and yard staff went on strike for 2 days, Santragachi Carriage and Wagon staff for 1 day and Bondamunda for 1 day. In September 1970, on the Eastern Railway, most of the workers of Dhanbad and Danapur Divisions and sections of Asansol and Sealdah Division went on strike for 22 days. Court cases foisted on the employees during this strike are still pending. In November that year the Diesel POH Shop Kharagpur struck work for 5 days.

In February 1971, Loco Running staff, Retail Division was on strike for 4 days and Tatanagar staff for 9 days and Diesel Loco Shed staff Gooty for 1 day. Dhanbad Division staff was on strike for 8 days. In March-April, 1971 employees of the Eastern and North Eastern Railways at Garhara and Barauni, the biggest transshipment centre in India, was on strike for 33 days protesting against discrimination in the matter of payment of project allowance which was being paid to all other central Government staff in that area. The strike was withdrawn after a no victimisation

promise by the Central Labour Minister, which was later disowned by the Railway Minister.

In April, the workers of the Diesel Loco Shed, Guntakal was on strike for two days. In June, Katihar staff was on strike for 1 day and in July Lumding staff struck work two times for one day each, and gang men of Gangapur ( W. Ry ) for one day.

In August, the conservancy staff of Kanchrapara went on strike for 8 days. Gang men and Locoshed workers of Ratlam was on strike for 3 days in September, squatting on the track until their grievance was settled.

In April 1972, there was a one day strike in Sealdah, Loco shed workers of Mhow resorted to mass sick leave for one day, and the class IV employees of Kota squatted on the track for one day.

In May, 1972 about 500 workers of N. E. Railway marched to Delhi and held a demonstration in front of the house of Railway Minister demanding withdrawal of court cases, punishments and cancellation of break in service imposed on them during the 33 day strike of Barauni. The Railway Minister, at first promised to announce favourable decisions but later went back on his word because the officers of the Railway Board did not agree. The leading workers sat outside his house on hunger strike. The issue was taken up in the Parliament by members belonging to the CPI and after considerable discussion and exchange of words the Prime Minister intervened in the dispute. Finally after a week's hunger strike, announcement was made in the Parliament condoning the break in service of several thousands of employees who have been on strike on several occasions since 1949 to 1972. And the leaders of N. E. Railway went back happy and jubilant.

In August, yard staff of Moghulserai went on strike demanding better working conditions and filling up of vacancies. This was followed by strikes and go slow movement by loco staff at Andal, Jha Jha, Sahib Ganj, Danapur. Carriage and wagon staff of Howrah also went on strike in the same month.

In September 1972, Loco Running Staff of Southern Railway and Hubli Division of S.C. Railway went on strike for 17 days putting forth the same set of demands for which—they had gone on strike in 1967, 68, 70. This strike brought the Southern Railway almost to a stand still. 500 trains had to be cancelled or curtailed.

In October the workers of the Integral Coach Factory struck work inside the factory for one day followed by dharna and protest demonstrations for several days. In November Katihar workers were on strike for 3 days. Most of the actions enumerated above, except those on the S.E. Railway were organised or led by category-wise organisation or action committee or co-ordination committees which are functioning as rival bodies to the recognised unions. And most of the strikes were sparked of by the arro-

gant behaviour of the officers, or their refusal to hear the girevances of the staff or refusal to receive a memorandum or their failure to take action when the staff are attacked by police or RPF or hooligans from the public.

There are so craft-wise organisations on the Railways and the important ones among them have formed into and All India Railway Employees' Confederation. They are planning countrywide agitation, demonstration and a central rally in Delhi in April 1973.

The denial of the Government to grant bonus to the Railway workers has made the two recognised federations and their affiliated unions to launch a movement and talk of strike ballot. S.E. Railwaymen's Union has already taken strike ballot. There is talk of organising a united movement by the two federations.

The report of the Third Pay Commission is expected at the end of December and if their recommendations are not satisfactory, then broad united struggle for the basic demands is on the ageanda. AITUC will try to influence all the different organisations, though marching separately, to act together.



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## **INDIAN WORKING CLASS AND THE CHALLENGE OF COMMUNALISM AND REGIONALISM**

**A**s Indian people is celebrating the twentieth year of Independence, it is worth reviewing the strength and weakness of the position of Indian working class vis a vis the challenge of neo colonialism like communalism, regionalism—as the disintegrating elements eating into the vitals of the revolutionary potentials of the basic classes like workers and peasantry—undermining thereby the forward march to their democratic and socialist fulfilment.

The struggle against British rulers unified our people and accustomed Indians in all parts of the country, notwithstanding their difference in language, creed and caste to work for the common goal of freedom from foreign rule. But even in that period the forces of disruption were unmistakable.

We have seen how in 1905, the upsurge in Swadeshi movement in Bengal was brought to

a halt by the outbreak of communal riot in Jamalpur and Dacca and how the great mass movements of 1921-22, 1924, 1926, 1928 and 1930 has been broken to pieces by the communal riots in Calcutta, Kanpur, Dacca. In 1924/28 militant trade unionists issued its first direct appeal to the working class, exposing the game of Imperialism and big mill owners and urging them to resist—communal riots.

In 1921 mighty revolts of the Mopla peasantry in Malabar and of the peasantry of Kishoreganj were degenerated and at later stage in communal riots. During the last phase of our freedom struggle in 1946, when there was a gigantic upheaval leading to RIN revolt and Bharat Bundh on 29th July, again communal monster raised its ugly hydrahead, beginning with the great Calcutta killing, when 10,000 people lost their lives, immediately followed by the tragedy of Noakhali, Bihar and Punjab. Thus the unity of Indian working class was in shambles.

Between March and September 1947 nearly half a million perished as a result of communal orgy in East and West Punjab, Sindh and North West Frontier Provinces.

The fresh communal outburst proves that communal politics which is a legacy of the

pre-independence India, had not ended despite the departure of the British from the scene.

In 1947, September, Gandhiji had to undertake fast to prevent the spread of communal riot, throughout the Eastern regions of Calcutta and its suburb.

Then again Calcutta students led by AISF and the Tramway workers brought out a massive demonstration to save Gandhiji's life. 1947 communal conflagration spread throughout Northern India, particularly Punjab and Delhi, culminating in the grim tragedy of 30th January of 1948, which gave a stunning blow to our national conscience, for nearly a decade. The mass killings in India immediately after the partition were regarded, to a great extent, as a reaction at worst retaliation, against what was happening in Pakistan where the British hand behind the massacre of Hindus was clearly evident.

The problem remained during the post independence period. But for the time being highlighted as a result of shock the nation received from this tragedy. R.S.S. was banned technically but the administration particularly bureaucracy took on energetic action.

There was no follow up action in a systematic, well-planned manner. After 1957, the shock was absorbed and the communal and regional spirits began to re-emerge as a part of conscious and deliberate policy of Indian and foreign reaction, to undermine our democratic and social advance particularly the growing might of Indian working class.

In Gauhati, Jabalpur, Meerut, Chandusi & Aligarh, 1960-61 witnessed the beginning of a new period of ultra rightist dominance in national and social area, where worst kind of regional and communal riots were in the offing.

“Fight that terrible poison of communalism that has killed the greatest man of the age... that evil has not ended with the killing of Gandhiji. It was an even more shameful thing for some people to celebrate this killing in various ways. Those who did so or felt that way, have forfeited their right to be called Indians”—this was how Jawaharlal Nehru put Hindu communalism on the dock and during the spate of communal riots in 1961, he entrusted Smt. Indira Gandhi to organise congressmen to some sort of organised democratic resistance to these diversive forces particularly communalism. Thus after the preliminary spade work done by Indiraji in 1961, the first National Integration Council came into existence, the first ever conscious national effort to fight the process of disintegration because of the direct threats posed by communal and regional black dragon.

By 1964-66 onward, challenged of communalism and regionalism had been causing great anxiety to responsible democratic parties and particularly the Indian working class.

Language riots of unprecedente ferocity swept North ( U. P., Bihar ) South ( Utkal, Tamilnadu ) East ( Assam ) West (Maharashtra) followed by the rise of communal monster in Calcutta, Rourkela, Ranchi, Jamshedpur ( 1964-65). The whole tribal belt of Central India was on the verge massive communal explosion in which the basic classes, peasantry and working class became the worst victims. Organised working class could put up only a feeble resistance even at its strongest base like Calcutta and Jamshedpur except a few individual cases of heroism. 1967-68 witnessed the emergence of various disruptive Senas like Shiva Sena in Maharashtra, Lachit Sena in Assam, Tamil Sena in Tamilnadu and the

corrosion of the ruling party itself ( Congress ) by the Communal Virus. It was followed by "the spate of communal, regional and caste riots in the four corners of the country which rammed it house to the Govt., that unless something is done, the situation would go out of hand." From 26 in 1960 the numbers of communal riots shot up to 92 in 1963 which too were higher than the average for 1954-60 the incidence of Communal violence show a continuous upward trend since then, rising to 220 riots in 1967 and 327 in the first six months of 1968. What is worse, communal-cum regional disturbances are now more bloody and more ferocious than ever before, during the nine years between 1954 and 1960 the numbers of persons killed in communal riots was 316 of which 262 were Muslims and 54 Hindus but in 1967 alone as many as 301 persons were killed and in the first six months of 1968 the number of killed exceeded in 1967 figure.

Communitywise breakup is available only for the first nine months of 1967, and it shows that, as between 1960 the Muslims among the killed were 86 per cent, but there were indications that in the last three months of 1967 and the first six months of 1968 the percentage of Muslims among the killed has considerably increased.

As in Calcutta, Rourkela and Jamshedpur the abject failure of the organised working class to offer even a show of resistance, to the murderers, looters and to those other heinous criminals, repeated in Ranchi, in 1967. What has happened as a result of the connivance of police, army and magistracy in Ranchi on the one hand and no resistance by the organised working class on the other is known to all. "More than 700 Muslims-workers were killed, burnt and women abducted." Repititions have

been so many times, that now the muslims have started to think their lives, honour, prestige and properties are not safe in this country. In every riots it is working class, and particularly organised militant working class, became the major target of onslaughts. At this stage Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, was thinking to gear up the effort to face the challenge of divisive forces particularly the mighty challenge of communalism.

The result was the summoning of the meeting of the re-organised National Integration Council at Srinagar on 20th June 1968, to give a much desired lead to meet the challenge of communalism and regionalism on a national scale.

In this noble endeavour to develop a national consensus, organised working class in general and All India Trade Union Congress in particular, offered fullest co-operation, not only by sending their representative but also by contributing in the deliberation, offering constructive criticism as well as, suggesting various positive measure to the Govt. of India to combat communalism and regionalism.

That the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi understood perfectly the stake of the nation is clear from her inaugural speech "The fight against communalism is a matter of our survival as a civilised and forward looking community."

"The present challenge of communal monster does certainly demand to us that we all take counsel with each other and proceed to meet the challenge of the monster."

This revived National effort started, get going by forming various sub-Committee including a committee of the Trade Unionist which includes the representatives of AITUC, INTUC etc. 1969 September 15th to 30th witnessed the grim communal masacare of Ahmedabad and

Baroda in which more than 1500 people mostly poorer sections of the community, according to an unofficial report, lost their lives, and that they were predominantly Muslims. The whole trade union base was in ruin.

In 1968 greater Calcutta industrial area witnessed Communal riots in Matiabruz, Tittagarh, Tellinipara and Bhatpara followed by another riot at Jagatdal in 1969. It was again followed by the reappearance of Communal-cum-Regional riots at Sankrail and Bansberia in 1970.

In all these places, workers of all denominations Hindus and Muslims, Bengalees and Biharees became the common victims resulting the corrosion of the unity of working class in the face of the offensive of Jute and Textile barons.

In 1970 first week of May during the four days of communal frenzy in the town of Bhiwandi with a population of one Lakh and 40 thousand at least 125 persons were killed, nearly 2000 were injured. 4000 were rendered homeless and more than 20000 fled from the town. Twenty percent of the town's houses were burnt down, some 8000 out of 40000 power looms were burnt to ashes, rendering about 10000 workers jobless. 16 out of 40 sizing mills were reduced to cinders, throwing another one thousand into the streets. Similar communal blood baths were witnessed in Jalgaon, Thana and the other surrounding areas.

Here also the organised working class tried to resist but that proved to be merely a feeble resistance compared to Shiv Sena, RSS combination who were the real authors behind this diabolical orgy.

In the city of Bombay, once the great metropolis of Indian working class, the monster of regionalism was combined with communalism

and Shiv Sana gang could hold organised working class movement at bay inspite of their back wall resistance. They had to pay very dearly with the precious life of Com. Krishna Desai, one of the darling child of the working class of Bomcay.

Guntur Session of AITUC in 1970, warned the danger of Communalism and regionalism, but the follow up measure was missing.

From 1971 April to 1971 December Indian people in general and working class in particular lived up to its anti imperialist reputation and stood beside the valient Mukti Bahini of Bangladesh as a matter of its fraternal duty, by keeping a lose vigil on the communal amity front and keeping up production drive in the much needed armament production. Moreover as a result of the explosion of two nation theory a new climate of secularism began to prevail in this sub-continent. Since there has been no organised attempt to grapple seriously the virus of communalism even in the year of Bangladesh liberation, communal riots broke out in Gulbarga (Mysore), in Cannanore (Kerala) followed by Aligarh, Varanasi, Ferozabad and regional riots, at Assam and Andhra where the fire has still been raging.

Except Gulbarga in Mysore I had been in almost all the affected areas to have a look on the inside and untapped sources of these ghastly tragedies.

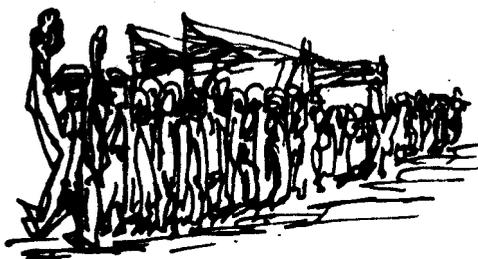
In Varanasi, more than 12 workers of Silk industry ( domestic ) lost their lives and more than 50% lost their machines and woven textile and their properties. In Ferozabad, the bangle workers predominantly Muslims, became the victim of communal wrath of Hindu artisans and small traders.. Nearly 60 died, 1000 injured, 10 lakhs property damaged. Unfortunately on

Aligarh Muslim University Bill issue, Muslim communal elements could sway the Muslim working class and dragged them into communal political action, resulting in complete polarisation of working class of Ferozabad. Indian working class should take due lesson from Varanasi and Ferozabad riots.

In Andhra and Assam over Mulki rules and language issue, the working class in these two regions have been valiantly trying to defend their class brothers, from the attack of the regional chauvinists. But their efforts so far have not been equal of the great anti-imperialist and international tradition to their class brothers in other countries.

At best in isolated pockets in Andhra, and Assam, the heroic working class could keep the attackers at bay. But they have yet to develop the authority and influence to intervene during the period of crisis.

*It is a time for the Indian working class therefore not merely to criticise the bureaucracy and the Government but also along with it evolve its own programme of action with an appropriate machinery to confront this virus of neocolonialism based on its own independent initiative and resources. Otherwise the battle for socialist revolution would be a mere coffee house gossip.*



**Indrajit Gupta, M. P.**  
Secretary, AITUC

Recent weeks and months have witnessed some disquieting developments of a disputive and divisive nature in our national life. These, if not properly resisted and exposed, can play havoc with the cause of trade union and working class unity. It is necessary for the AITUC cadres to be sharply vigilant regarding the new dangers: otherwise, a formal or mechanical notion of unity as simply the coming together in common actions of different organisations may turn out to be negated in practice by the reactionary forces.

The recent chain of events in, Assam, Andhra, U. P., and other places represents a similar conspiracy to rouse mass frenzy on linguistic, regional, and communal questions leading to fratricidal strife and orgies of violence. It is typical to find that the spokesmen of the ruling class, including Central Government ministers and not excluding the Prime Minister herself, are far less outspoken in their condemnation of these acts of "Civil War" than they are of class "Violence" by workers, peasants, Naxalites and the like.

The large-scale atrocities committed on the non-Assamese minorities, particularly the Bengali-speaking people, in the name of a linguistic dispute over the medium of university-

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## **Fight the Bourgeois Offensive of Division and Disruption**

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level education, cannot but sharply divide the working class of Assam employed in the Tea plantations, railways, oil installations, Government offices, etc. The hatred and mutual distrust aroused by the chauvanists and reactionary elements (and utilised for their own purposes by warring Congress factions) infects, the workers also and, does immense damage to their class solidarity.

Similarly, the separatist movements in both the Andhra and Telengana portions of Andhra Pradesh are deviding the Telegu-speaking working class into "Mulkis" and "non-Mulkis" on so-called regional lines. How absurd! As though the problems of backwardness, unemployment, and uneven economic developments...the inevitable results of capitalism...can be solved simply by deviding one State into two! It is to the credit of the working class of Andhra's growing industrial centres, that—unlike in Assam—it

has been striving, mainly under AITUC's influence—to Counteract the game of the separatists to the best of its ability. Trade Union in Hydrabad as also in the Andhra region have been coming out in favour of maintaining the integrated State with adequate safeguards for Telengana. It is noteworthy that the Visakhapatnam Trade Union Council successfully called upon the workers not to get involved in the pro-seperatist “Bundh” calls. In Vijayawada, trade unions were in the forefront of a massive demonstration on which goonda attacks were made. Nevertheless, the continuing separatist agitation cannot but have harmful effects on the unity of the working people.

In several districts of Uttar Pradesh recently the most heinous atrocities have been perpetrated by communal reactionaries on Muslim and Harijan poor peasants. One of the worst affected has been in Azamgarh, from where large numbers of industrial workers in Calcutta hail.

Along with these examples of calculated violence, fratricidal the “Sons of the Soil” slogan is again rearing its head in a disruptive form. Some years ago, this slogan was used with devastating effect by the reactionary “Shiv Sena” to divert and divide the workers in Maharashtra. Similar trends are now being encouraged in Bihar, Orissa, and parts of Madhya Pradesh. The justified grievance of the local population about inadequate job opportunities is sought to be utilised to inflame chauvinistic passions against workers coming from “outside” States. Bihar Chief Minister Kedar Pande's provocative speech with its slogan of “Bihar for the Biharees” has done immense damage, despite the severe criticism of it in Parliament and even at the recent Congress Session in Calcutta.

Our multinational working class must exercise constant vigilance and determined opposi-

tion to the new aggressive tactics of Reaction. This chain of events within a short period cannot be dismissed as accidental. In Assam the hidden hand of the C. I. A. worked in unison with the worst elements of the Congress party itself. In Andhra it is clear as day light that the powerful landlords of the coastal Circar districts are out to block the passage of new land ceiling legislation and to dominate over Telengana. In U. P. passions have been incited by RSS fascist hooligans against the Muslim minority and by upper-caste land lords against the poor Harijans.

In the reality of uneven development of capitalism in India, no solution of the massive unemployment problem can be found through distortions of the “sons of the soil” slogan. The trade unions must fight for a non-capitalist path of development. They must come forward boldly with positive slogans which offer a really radical perspective in relation to the present social and economic frame work. Failure to educate and mobilise our working class with such an outlook will only result in worker fighting worker, and the youth falling victim to the worst forms of chauvinism.

The trade union movement must take up as its own cause the fight for maintaining the integrities of the linguistic States against separatist forces ; for the linguistic rights of all minorities including the right for regional autonomy in specific cases ; for an end to communal violence against Muslims, Harijans, and others.

The counter-offensive of Reaction has as one of its principal aims the division of the forces of the working class. It is part and parcel of the desparate Rightist manoeuvre against the democratic and left forces of which the organised trade union movement is an integral component.

Yet another though more indirect tactic of

the bourgeoisie is to divide the working class from its democratic allies among other classes and to pit them against each other.

This is sought to be done in a subtle manner by propagating bogus "theories" about the underlying causes of high prices and stagnant production so as to put the blame on the workers' shoulders. The mounting impatience and frustration of the people, including Congress supporters and many Congressmen themselves (as was clearly revealed in several delegates, speeches from the rostrum at Bidhan Nagar), at the slow pace of progress towards fulfilment of the "Garibi Hatao" slogan, are sought to be diverted by pointing an accusing finger at the working class as the culprit responsible for the peoples' sufferings.

Thus Congress ministers, planners, Government economists and bureaucrats are working over time to convince the public that "Garibi" can only go when there is an abundance of commodities which requires greatly increased production, which, in its turn is being held back by "Workers' indiscipline", irresponsible strikes, go slow, etc. Similarly, according to these gentry, high prices of consumer goods and essential articles are caused by the accumulation of excessive purchasing capacity in the hands of the workers and employees who are enjoying high wages, bonus, etc.

These distorted and inverted theories of bourgeois ideologues have a method in their madness. They are aimed firstly at making the general public hostile to the workers and to the trade union movement, secondly at preparing the ground for anti-working class laws which would put crippling restrictions on the workers' right to organise and strike a' la Mr. Tata's famous Memorandum; and thirdly, at linking wages to productivity and even reducing the size

of the workers' cash earnings. Such is the philosophy behind the Labour Ministry's new proposals for a "comprehensive" industrial relations law and behind the newly amended Payment of Bonus Act which seeks to "freeze" a part of cash bonuses by crediting them to the workers' P. F. accounts.

But it is the united front of the working class with other democratic classes that is sought to be undermined by painting the workers as the villains of the piece, because of whom prices are rising and production falling.

Thus, the struggle for trade union unity and for the unity of the trade unions with other sections of the working people, has to advance in a difficult and complicated situation where divisive and reactionary forces and theories are desperately trying to block the way.

This is not surprising. Objective conditions in the country are inevitable stimulating the urge for united trade union actions on issues of common interest to the working class. Since the 28th Session of the A. I. T. U. C. at Guntur the movement for trade union unity and united actions has made positive advances and secured notable gains.

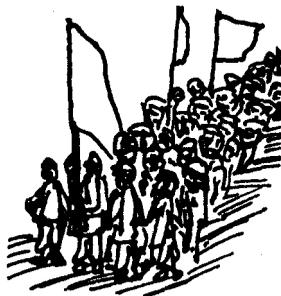
There have been joint strike actions in various industries at State level. For the first time since the 1958 all-India strike of Port & Dock workers, an example of a country-wide industrial action was provided by the Cement workers who conducted a complete and militant strike for wage increase which was unfortunately betrayed at its height by the I. N. T. U. C. leadership under pressure of the Government of India. For the first time, too, Delhi saw a mammoth demonstration of Railwaymen on December 15th jointly organised by the A I R F and the N F I R. The national Council of Trade Unions, comprising the I N T U C, A I T U C

and HMS, is potentially, a powerful instrument for developing united trade union struggles though, unfortunately, it has yet to take roots among the masses at factory or area levels. United trade union pressure has secured in this period, the enactment of the laws for retiral Gratuity and minimum Bonus of 8.33%.

It would, however, be illusory to imagine that united union actions from issue to issue—although their great importance must not be minimised by a sectarian lack of initiative—can overcome the multi-faced forms of disruption and provocation employed by the bourgeoisie. It is still a far cry to achieve the minimum organisational understanding and cohesion without which the all-round counter-offensive of Reaction cannot be effectively fought. The C. P. M. leders split the A I T U C and set up the CITU with “revolutionary” slogans which have already brought them to a blind alley. The I N T U C is badly split—a house divided against itself by acute factional rivalries and

unable to resist ministerial pressures, beyond a point. The H. M. S. leadership has itself got infiltrated by the Congress, while the remaining socialists are at sixes and sevens.

A gloomy picture? Not at all. The working class is justifiably aggrieved, impatient and in a militant mood. A lack of clear national perspective often makes it fall prey to the bourgeois divisive ideology and engineered confusions. But life itself is driving home the lessons of class and democratic unity, and this process cannot be halted by reactionary diversions and sectarian disruptions. What is needed at this moment is a bold and skilful standard bearer who can rally the board masses of the working class in militant but non-sectarian way and develop the immense latent forces of united struggle for a new life. This is the opportunity awaiting the A I T U C, and the A I T U C alone, if it can rise equal to the task of giving flesh and blood to the teachings of the W.F.T.U. in the concrete conditions of our country.



**Kalyan Roy, M. P.**

General Secretary, Indian Mine Workers' Federation

1. On the 5th May, 1972, the Government side in West Bengal Assembly moved a Resolution urging the Central Government to take over the entire non-coking coal mining industry without further delay.

2. In the Assembly debate, all the leading members of the Congress and the CPI took part. The Chief Minister himself painted the mine owners as criminals and antinational who have been cheating both the Government by non-payment of Royalty of about Rs.30 crores and workers by non-implementing the Recommendations of the Coal Mines Wage Board. The resolution was passed unanimously.

3. One of the basic reasons for moving this Resolution is the desperate condition of the coal mining industry in West Bengal which no Government could any longer ignore. Even a bourgeois Government in West Bengal which has been supporting the move for joint-sector else-where has been forced to come to the conclusion that nationalisation is the only way to save this vital mineral industry from total destruction. There is no other way ; no mixed or joint sector would work here. But such is the power of the Coal Lobby in the Central Government and cabinet that even this unanimous Resolution of the Assembly has been put into a cold storage.

#### **Criteria for take over**

4. In spite of several discussions in the Parliament and fierce attack on the Government

## **An Area of Darkness ?**

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### **What is Happening**

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### **In Non-Coking**

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### **Coal Mines ?**

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#### *A Case for Immediate Nationalisation.*

from all sides for its failure to take over this industry, the Government has been repeatedly assuring the Private Sector that there is no intention to take over the non-coking coal mines. This is what Shri Kumaramagalam told in the Rajya Sabha on the 21st November : "The Government did not intend to nationalise these mines as long as the mine owners invested adequately out of the profits they made so as to be able to build up for productions in the future, implemented the Wage Board Redommendations so far as the labour was concerned and paid the royalty due to the Government as well as the Provident Fund dues to the workers."

The mine owners' reaction to these threats has been even more blatant violation of all the criteria laid down by the Mines Minister.

How desperate has become the situation can be seen from the following facts :

### Decline in production

6. There has been a steady decline in production.

Year	Output from West Bengal ( Million Tonnes )	Percentage of West Bengal's output to National Output
1968	20.07	26.76
1969	20.35	25.57
1970	19.21	24.87
1971	17.01	22.60

According to another information, while the all India production in 1971-72 fell to 71.56 million tonnes, the West Bengal production further declined to less than 17 million tonnes. In other words, the production of West Bengal has gone back to the level of 1961-62 ; while the production of all the outlying areas—Assam, Pench valley, Chanda valley, Singrauli, Singareni etc. increased their production as can be seen below, bulk of it coming from the Public Sectors :

	( Million Tonnes )	
	1970-71	1971-72
Assam	0.52	0.63
Pench	3.21	3.48
Chanda	2.23	2.70
Singrauli	1.17	1.30
Singareni	4.05	4.71

### Declining Employment

7. The employment position is also equally worsening. Sometime back, the W. Bengal coal field used to employ on an average daily

nearly one lakh thirty thousand workers, now it has declined to less than one lakh. Similarly the employment position in all other outlying areas including Jharia has improved. The following statement submitted by the Government in the Consultative Committee on mines shows the alarming position of West Bengal :

Field	1970	1971
Andhra Pradesh	19,416	21,559
Madhya Pradesh	48,383	49,760
Maharashtra	7,340	7,884
West Bengal	108,688	99,216

Since then, in all these areas there has been a substantial recruitment in the Public Sector, like the Bharat Coking Coal ; the position in this state has further deteriorated.

### All Investment stopped—negligence and Callousness

8. The employers are attributing this decline in production etc. to the shortage of wagons. This is absolutely misleading and distortion. The shortage of wagons is nothing new—it is a chronic problem. The only difference is, in 1970-71, the position further deteriorated but that was confined not only to Asansol-Raniganj belt. It was an all India phenomena. The main reason is the total stoppage of all development and a large scale closure of mines. All types of investments have been frozen since last three years. Old and worn-out machinery and equipment are being used. The present position is that managements are even refusing to repair the defective machinery and closing down section. Purchase of stores for running the mines has been cut down by 80%. All the Rules and Regulations and Acts for Conservation and Safety are being flagrantly violated.

### **Violation of Safety rule and Rise in accidents**

9. In a note, the Director General of Mines Safety has stated :

“Lately fear of Government take over of non-coking coal mines following the recent nationalisation of coking coal mines has made the Private Sector coal industry shy. **The standard of implementation of Safety laws in some of these mines is generally going down since the owners are not investing any capital and even for day to day running of mines there is not sufficient spending of money by them.**”

Can there be any more alarming picture than this ?

10. The result is accidents, death and serious injuries are shooting up in non-coking mines all over the country, particularly in Asansol-Raniganj belt. According to the information of the Director General of Mines Safety, as many as 29 persons died in mine accidents in West Bengal collieries during the period from January to June, 1972, as against only 18 during the corresponding period 1971. A simple fact will illustrate the utter negligence of the employers and callousness of the Mines Department to protect the workers from serious accidents ; Safety helmets and protective foot-wear are the two most important items of protective equipment which are required to be supplied to every worker **by the owners free of cost under the existing law.** Out of over two lakh workers employed in the non-coking coal mines, not even one thousand have been supplied with any foot-wear. The supply of foot-wear in West Bengal coal field is practically nil.

### **Large scale Closure of mines**

11. Coming back to the question of decline

in production and employment, it is due to two main factors :

a) Large scale closure of mines in last three years, particularly last year. Here a strange thing is to be noted. The Government is neither fully aware of the situation nor in possession of all facts. At different times, the Central Government and Ministers give different statistics regarding the number of working mines and number of closures in this State. In a note submitted to the Consultative Committee on Mines, the Government stated in December that there are 206 coal mines in West Bengal—three in Public Sector and 203 in Private Sector—bulk of the production and employment are in the hands of Bengal Coal Co, Equitable Coal Co, Turner Morrison, K. Worahs, Chanchanis, Birlas, Poddars', K. C. Thapar, Nandolal Jalan, Surajmal Nagarmal, Jaipuria etc. Of the 203 working non-coking mines in the field, 154 are small mines, 34 medium mines and 15 large mines, capacity of these mines being as :

- (i) Small mines—upto 10,000 tonnes—  
Output/month
- (ii) Medium mines—10,000 to 25,000 ”
- (iii) Large mines—25,000 to 50,000 and above.

In a letter dated. 15th July, 1972, Shri Kumara Mangalam stated : **“Out of 240 collieries in West Bengal, 58 are lying closed for over 3 years and 10 have closed down within 3 years.”**

Over 100 million tonnes of very high grade blenable and metallurgical coal are left in these mines and sometimes spontaneous fires are breaking out. Some of the mines which were

closed down like the Dhemo Main colliery. Patmohana colliery, Karnani Nimcha colliery have been opened up with one-third of their labour and producing less than 25% of their installed capacity. In this way, although the Government is trying to minimise the extent of increasing unemployment following closures, conservative estimate indicates that nearly 30,000 workers have been thrown out of employment in last three years.

### **Purpose behind the closures**

Many more mines are on the verge of closure and some of the closure notices are pending. None of the notices are because of exhaustion of reserves. The closures have been due to either unwillingness on the part of owners to invest any more money or to reduce cost by reducing the strength of the working force. This sort of "Closure" has become a handy tool of the employers to compel the workers to accept lower wages and give up their dues etc. The constant threat of closure is being skilfully used to create demoralisation among workers. Whenever a colliery is closed down for sometime, old workers gradually leave even without their dues. After sometime, the same mines are reopened with new hands with much low wages. A few old workers who cling to their quarters are ultimately driven out by the gangsters who become "besses" of such mines. This has happened in a number of mines in 1970-72 — Benalee, Karnani Nimcha, Burradhemo, North Brook, East Satgram etc. As a matter of fact the developments in the Benalee colliery show the close collaboration between the Police and mine barons. The Benalee management is being prosecuted by the Coal Board for closure without notice. The management then through

an High Court Order removed all the machinery under Police escort. It refused to either implement the Award of the Central Government Industrial Tribunal to pay the unemployed workers their legitimate dues etc. or any proper retrenchment benefits. But the workers simply refused to leave their quarters which was the main intention of the management which all along wanted to reopen the mine with new hands. The management recruited a large number of gangsters and with the help of Jamuria Police false cases were filed against the trade union activists. The Union became aware of the move of the management and repeated complaints were made to the Police and District administration and Chief Minister. The Police did move but shamelessly and openly on the side of the Karnani management. Two supporters of the Union who were helping the unemployed workers with ration and one leading member were picked up in November-December under the MISA. And simultaneously the gangsters attacked the old workers. While the old workers resisted, a large scale arrest was made. Even today, over 20 workers are rotting in Asansol Jail. When the remaining workers were forced to abandon the quarters, the goondas ransacked them and hoisted a Tri-colour flag. And now it is reported the management is too willing to reopen the mine.

### **Retrenchment and resignations**

(b) The other factor is mass scale retrenchment visible and invisible—ban on all recruitment and tendency to "appoint" more and more badli workers without recording their names in Muster roll. Besides, a large number of workers have thrown out on **Medical grounds**

without any compensation or gratuity. This was also pointed out in the Report of the Study Group for Coal under the National Commission on Labour in 1968.

The situation has further deteriorated as many workers have been forced to submit their resignations whose number in West Bengal alone would be several thousands.

### **Condition of workers worsening—Non payment of statutory dues**

12. As a result since 1970 the condition of workers has been steadily worsening. In pre-1971 the workers of the Asansol-Raniganj belt were better placed in comparison to workers of other various coal mining areas like Jharia, Hazaribagh, Madhya Pradesh etc. They earned more. The contract system which was widely prevalent in Jharia was virtually abolished and non-existent in this belt. And even the implementation of the Coal Mines Wage Board Recommendations was far better in this area. He admitted that while the average weekly earning of colliery workers in Raniganj belt was Rs. 50.27, in Jharia belt it was as low as Rs.47.30. One of the main reasons for this higher wages in Asansol area was better payment of Variable Dearness Allowance which is linked to the Cost of Living Index.

Now the position has been entirely reversed since the take over of the coking coal mines. Not only the medium and small mines but even big mines like Bengal Coal, Equitable, Turner Morrison etc. who more or less had implemented the Wage Board Recommendations are now flatly refusing to either pay increment to the monthly paid staff or proper V. D. A. Excepting two captive mines belonging to the IISCO and J. K. Nagar Aluminium concerns,

none of the non-coking mines in West Bengal has paid Rs.2.16 paise per day as V. D. A. In mines, old facilities are being withdrawn and old rates are under constant attack. When the workers of the North East Salanpur colliery struck against this arbitrary wage cut in the middle of last year, it was crushed with the help of police.

13. Some of the mines in the Private Sector, both in West Bengal and other areas, were all along guilty of irregular payment of weekly and monthly wages, bonus and other statutory dues. But since the take over, Jharia belt, including the non-coking coal mines, has made a big advance while non-payment and irregular payment have become **epidemic** in West Bengal affecting all classes of mines, big, medium and small.

14. The position is even worst in the Bhattar Group of coal mines, Western Kajora colliery etc. All told about Rs. 3 to 4 crores of unpaid dues have accumulated in the hands of mine owners in West Bengal alone.

### **Non-payment of Profit sharing Bonus.**

15. Equally serious is the position in relation to the payment of Profit sharing bonus. Some of the mines including big ones do not even bother to maintain any Bonus Registers in forms A, B, & C, neither have made any payment. In reply to a question on 14th April, 1972, the Labour Minister stated that as many as 92 coal mines in West Bengal are guilty of this gross malpractice. So far as the payment of 8.33% Bonus, the Labour Minister stated in the Rajya Sabha in December last year that only 19% of workers in the Private Sector coal mines have received so far. In West Bengal coal field, out of 203 non-coking coal mines,

only SEVEN mines have paid uptill now—this too after gherao and pay boycott. The rest including the big ones are evading on various pretexts. The responsibility of the Industrial Relations Machinery “ends” after filing some cases in Asansol, Dhanbad and other Courts. And a huge number of cases have piled up whithout any end in sight.

Since then the position has further deteriorated and number of pending cases has gone up. The Union Labour Minister has also thought it wise to remain silent regarding the progress of his discussion with the Governments of these two States.

#### Mis-appropriation of Provident Funds

16. The position as regards Provident Fund in all non-coking coal mines, particularly in this field, is even more shocking. A loot is going on. On 11th June, 1971, the Union Labour Minister stated in the Rajya Sabha an account of outstanding coal mines P. F. dues :

(a) 1968-69	Rs. 4.76 crores.
(b) 1969-70	Rs. 7.00 „
(c) 1970-71	Rs. 6.87 „
( up to 3-12-70 )	

The Government assured that all steps are being taken to recover the amount. And what is the result ? The latest position has been stated in reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha on 17th November, 1972 which is as follows :

“As on 31.3.1972, a sum of Rs. 10.42 crores was outstanding from private sector collieries on account of dues of Coal Mines Provident Fund as shown :

Region	Amount due
( in Crores of Rupees )	
Bihar	3.46
West Bengal	6.41
Madhya Pradesh	0.35
Other States	0.20
<hr/>	
Total	10.42

#### West Bengal Tops the list

17. The West Bengal coal mines top the list of non-payment and missappropriation of provident fund dues. Of the total dues mentioned above, the following three group of collieries account for 53% :

Name of the Company	Amount Outstanding
Turner & Morrission	Rs. 1.48 crores
Equitable Coal Co. Ltd.	Rs. 1.41 „
Bharat Coking coal Ltd.	Rs. 2.72 „
<hr/>	
Total	Rs. 5.61 „

The coal mines belonging to the Equitable Coal Co, are entirely in West Bengal and now are being managed by the Industrial Reconstruction Corporation of India. Yet the management has taken no steps to clear the dues. Similalry, the majority of the Turner Morrission coal mines also are in West Bengal. Even the dues from the medium sized coal mines are staggering. Take for example three coal mines—Patmohana, Damoda and Western Kajora ; the total dues outstanding is Rs. 33.01 lakhs. Out of which the Damoda coal mine in Raniganj area alone has not paid about Rs. 20 lakhs.

## **MISA. Mineowners and Government**

18. As the Chief Minister of West Bengal sometime back thundered that MISA would be applied to defaulting employers, representations were made to him. There was no response from him.

19. But then came the pressure from coal lobby. And what happened afterwards is most interesting. The Union Minister for Labour in reply to a question in Rajya Sabha stated to say that the MISA is applicable only so far as ESI and Provident Fund dues are concerned. It is not applicable to Coal Mines Provident Fund.

### **Massive Government Subsidy to Non-Coking mine owners**

Thus the non-coking coal mine owners are resorting to slaughter mining by totally violating all Safety and Conservation rules and Regulations and refusing to pay Royalty and wages and other dues to the workers and misappropriating Provident Fund. And at the same time the Central Government through Coal Board are giving them massive financial assistance and subsidy in the name of stowing and adverse factors. The money which is distributed among the non coking mine owners is collected by the Government through a cess per ton from the consumers. And who are consumers who pay the cess? The Railways, Thermal Power stations and other Public Sector concerns. The money collected from them goes to the most unscrupulous gangs of employers. A strange picture arises of public sector financing private sector. All who are receiving this massive financial assistance are at the same time facing many cases filed by the

Government for non-payment of royalty, non-payment of dues to the workers, misappropriation of Provident Fund and utter negligence of Safety and Conservation rules etc. The persistent demand to stop payment to those mine owners who are facing prosecutions for violation of various laws has been turned down by the Government.

During 1969-70, 1970-71 and 1971-72, a subsidy of Rs, 2.65 crores, Rs, 2.40 crores and Rs, 1.74 crores respectively have been given to 62 Coal Mines.

### **Vicious attacks on Trade Unions**

20. It is clear that the mine owners in the non-coking coal mines have launched a vicious attack on the workers. This is nothing new. All along the workers and democratic trade unions in this area had to face severe police repression and gangsterism. Mine owners, Police, gangsters and local Industrial Relations Machinery have all along worked in close collaboration. Murders of trade union activists, implication in series of false cases, mass scale arrest and victimisation, whole-sale eviction of workers from their quarter were all along a rule and not exception. Yet under the leadership of the Colliery Mazdur Sabha (A.I.T.U.C), workers fought back. In 1967, two workers, Paras Singh and Chingi Jaisawara were shot dead by gangsters in front of police in the Dhemo Main colliery. In August, 1970, the Andal police shot dead two workers of the S. K. Jambad colliery who were protesting against illegal lay-off and termination. One of the dead workers, Jaysree, was a key organiser of the CMS in that belt. Miners have evolved new forms of struggles—under-ground strikes. Series of such strikes took place in Bankola, Ramnagore, Benali and other coal mines in

between 1967 to 1972. Faced with this strong resistance by the workers, the mine owners always shouted about "law and order" problem in this belt. Because inspite of severe police repression and gangsterism, mine owners were never able to crush the movement and had to concede many of the demands. That is why workers of Asonsol-Raniganj belt were better off than miners of other fields. The contract system was virtually wiped out.

#### **C.P.M's attacks on other unions**

21. The formation of the First United Front Government for the first time halted the police repression and led to the extension of trade union among the unorganised sections. The process was continued with the formation of the second United Front Government. But from the middle of 1969, the C.P.M.-led union which was a negligible force made a determined bid to oust all other unions and launched an open attack on the A.I.T.U.C. and HMS unions inorder to become "only union" in the belt. In a mad rush to eliminate all other unions, the C.P.M. recruited all sorts of anti-social elements, criminals, wagon breakers, company-men and local throghs and made frontal attacks on coal miners who were members of other unions. While other unions succumbed as in Sripur group of collieries, the A.I.T.U.C. union defended its bases with grim determination and courage. In majority of places, the C.P.M. hordes retreated. The mine barons were extremely happy with the situation and encouraged these clashes which diverted the attention of workers from building up a powerful united movement. Over 100 persons were killed in Patmohana, Benali, Sri Amritnagar Selected, Jambad, Sripur, Victory and other mines.

22. With the fall of the second United Front in March 1970, within a year and half, the C.P.M. led unions collapsed like a house of cards. Majority defected to new unions formed by various Congress factions. Others either abandoned their mines or left the field. In its reckless drive to liquidate all other unions, the C.P.M. ultimately destroyed itself.

#### **Mushroom growth of "Congress" Unions— New wave of gangsterism**

23. But a new danger has arisen. The sprouting of numerous unions (Eight or Nine) under Congress flags are exactly copying the CPM tactic, to capture unions of the AITUC. The unions affiliated to HMS and INTUC are not being spared. The anti-social elements, wagon breakers, criminals and hoodlums who were so long working under the CPM banner quickly changed their sides. And they found immediate shelter in various unions set up by Congress factions, MLAs and Ministers. The tactic is same ; the method is same—attack a colliery from outside till either the workers surrender or leave and then appoint some thoughts and rowdies (mostly with long criminal records) to control the labour with the full assistance and backing of the managements. The only difference is during the United Front regime, the police and managements were helping the CPM from behind. Now the Police and the CRP are in the forefront, moving together with newly converted "Congressmen."

24. Police Camps have been set up in a number of mines. The number of false cases against AITUC activists has gone up to nearly 130 involving over 200 persons.

#### **Increasing eviction of old workers**

25. The past practice of mass scale eviction

of old workers has been intensified. This has been frankly admitted by Shri R. K. Khadilkar in Raja Sabha on the 19th May, 1972.

Since then many such evictions from Damoda, Benali and other coal mines have taken place. In spite of repeated representations to both the Central and West Bengal State Governments from all quarters, including the General Secretary of the AITUC, no action has been taken to enable the workers to return to their quarters. And the managements are taking full advantage by dismissing them enmasse. Shri Khadilkar has also remained absolutely mum over his talks with the West Bengal Government and Chief Minister. The conclusion is irresistible. The West Bengal Government has no intention to stop this naked gangsterism in the coal belt.

#### **Police and clashes between "Congress" Unions**

26. But this attack is not confined to non-Congress unions alone. In quite a few mines like Madhujor, Karnani Nimcha, Belbad, Kumardih, Toposi, Proper Kajora etc. three to four Congress unions have been set up in each place who are continuously fighting, trying to eliminate each other. Numerous clashes have taken place in these mines between them leading to the death of more than 10 persons. The local administration and police are also taking sides in these fights and various groups of "congressmen" are vying with each other to secure the help of the administration. Ultimately, the local thanas and managements are deciding which "Congress" faction should be supported and which "Congress" union should be recognised.

The entire atmosphere has been vitiated.

And one is tempted to describe the entire area as "Area of Darkness".

#### **New Trend of Unity and growth of united movement**

27. However, this is not the entire picture.

There is another side—a hopeful and brighter side.

A distinct trend towards unity and united move are developing and has already taken a concrete shape. Faced with the naked gangsterism and continuous offensive from the mine barons, the four Central Trade Union Congress AITUC, INTUC, HMS and UTUC—have come closer which was not possible in last 20 years. Following the successful three day Satyagraha and hunger-strike by the AITUC led CMS unions in mid April, 1972, on the demands of nationalisation etc, the four Central Trade Unions set up a Steering Committee to conduct struggle mainly on the demands of Nationalisation, Opening of closed mines, Full Implementation of the Wage Board Recommendations, payment of proper Variable Dearness Allowance of Rs. 2.13 paise per day and introduction of Gratuity. Joint strike notices were served and throughout the belt joint campaign was launched which culminated in a huge mass rally at Asansol on 4th June, last year, where for the first time, leaders of the four trade unions spoke from the same platform. The new "Congress" unions openly attacked the strike call. But masses of the workers rallied behind the strike call and when it was about to take place, the Chief Minister intervened. On his personal request, twice the dates of strikes were changed. There was utter panic in the camp of mine owners and their stooges. At last on the 1st July, 1972, a tri-partrite meeting was held at

Calcutta under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister and an industry-wise Agreement was signed. The employers, thoroughly demoralised at the unexpected turn of events and firm stand of the four Central Trade Unions and threat of the Chief Minister that the Police would not act as strike-breakers, succumbed and agreed: (a) to introduce the Gratuity Scheme on the lines of Bharat Coking coal with effect from June 1st, 1972; (b) to pay the arrear of the Variable Dearness Allowance by the 15th August, 1972 and also to pay the enhanced Variable Dearness Allowance from 1st April, 1972 with immediate effect etc. The strike notice was withdrawn and the workers for the first time tasted the fruits of united action and felt jubilant. However, although most of the mines have started paying enhanced dearness allowance, a majority of them are still refusing to pay the arrear.

#### **Role of Central Govt.—Passive pro-employer**

28. So long the Central Government remained passive, an idle spectator, perhaps thinking that nothing would come out. But after the Agreement on 1st July, the Union Labour Minister woke up and called a meeting at Delhi on 4th July, where he tried to give a different interpretation of a clause of the Agreement regarding the fixing of the date from which the remaining arrears of Variable Dearness Allowance will be paid. The interpretation of the Labour Minister was unanimously rejected by all the trade unions. However, the Calcutta Agreement produced a great impact on other non-coking coal belts in other states. Another tri-partrite meeting was held at Delhi on 12th September, 1972, where it was decided that what has been agreed by the non-coking mine owners at Calcutta would be implemented on an All India level. It was also decided that

the Labour Minister would call another tri-partrite meeting in November, 1972, to review the progress of implementation of the Agreement. The representatives of the trade unions also raised the demand of revision of the entire wage structure of the coal mining industry.

29. But since then the Union Labour Minister had not called another tri-partrite meeting. The mighty Central Government has dared not to take a single step to implement the agreements and decisions of Calcutta and Delhi agreements—which can only be done by taking over the entire non-coking coal mines and nothing else.

30. Taking advantage of this, the mine owners have started offensive on two fronts. On the one hand, a terrific propaganda has been let loose by the mining Associations against the Bharat Coking Coal Ltd. in order to divert the people's attention from their own malpractices and misdeeds. On the other hand, as stated before, fresh attacks are taking place on the workers and democratic trade union movements in almost all the non-coking coal mines throughout the country—brutal police firings in the Bird's group of mines in Hazaribagh dist. in Bihar and in Jhagrand colliery in Madhya Pradesh in September.

#### **Coal Lobby active in Delhi**

31. At the same time the mine owners are extremely active in Delhi. They are trying to influence them to give them an assurance that non-coking coal mines would not be nationalised. Once this assurance is given, the owners are pledging that they would make a large investment and fulfill whatever target is fixed in the Fifth Plan—a sheer hoax.

32. But anybody who is even distantly connected with the coal industry knows that any concession to the non-coking coal mine owners at this stage would be disastrous. Concession would lead to further concession ; as in the past price rise was followed by further price rise while modernisation, safety, conservation etc were totally ignored.

**15th January—All India Strike—Nationalisation only solution**

33. The workers are not prepared to be idle spectators. A joint meeting of the leaders of the Central Trade Unions of both Bihar and West Bengal was held at Asansol on the 10th December, 1972 and it was decided that on the 15th January, 1973, there would be a one day strike in all the coal mines, both Public and Private Sector, throughout the country, demanding Immediate Nationalisation, Reopening of the closed mines and Revision of the entire Wage structure etc.

34. The working class has decided to launch

this strike not only for the revision of the wage structure but to save the national wealth from planned destruction. As nationalisation has crippled the gangsters and thugs which once dominated the entire Jharia belt, the fight for nationalisation is also a fight against the gangsterdominated scab unions in the non-coking coal belts.

35. That is why the newly sprung "Congress" unions are so desperately trying to foil and disrupt the strike campaign. The police also have become active. But the entire mass of miners are on the move.

36. The 15th January, 1973, will be a turning point in the history of trade union movement in the mining industry and if the Government fails to pay heed to the call of the strike and continue to ignore it, and indefinite strike will be the answer of the working class to force the Government to nationalise the entire non-coking coal mines to finally put an end to chaos and anarchy and rule of jungle perpetuated by the mine barons.



## Sunil Munshi

### The origin

A few years prior to the end of the seventeenth century the East India Company had established a factory in Hooghly, 25 miles up the river from Calcutta. But the English merchants developed a conflict with the Mughal Fouzdar and had to abandon Hooghly. On the 24th August of 1690 they led by Job Charnok, halted for the night at Sutanati village and then decided to stay on.

Eight years later, the Company took on lease from the Nawab, at a rental of Rs.1300 a year, the three villages of Sutanati, Kali-Kotta and Govindopur and obtained permission to build a fort. Within twenty years the activities of the Company expanded so much that they had to take a further lease of 38 villages contiguous to the original three. These forty-one villages constitute what is more or less the Calcutta municipal area of today.

This 'peaceful progress' was however, marred by Nawab Siraj-ud-Dowla who, in 1756, marched with a large army to Calcutta, occupied it and destroyed the English fort. But this liberation was short-lived. Next year at the battle of Plassey the fate of India was sealed for about two hundred years.

During the second half of the eighteenth

## Introducing Calcutta

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century Calcutta grew in importance, size and population. A new fort, Fort William, was built in 1773 in order to avoid repetition of the events of 1756. The Mayor's Court had been, in the meanwhile, established in 1727 by Royal Charter. In 1774 an Act of the British Parliament introduced a full-fledged Government—a Governor General for India with his head-quarter at Calcutta, a Council of four members, a Supreme Court and so on. For one hundred and thirty-seven years Calcutta continued to be the Capital of British India. In 1911 that role was ended with the shifting of Capital to Delhi.

### Unbalanced growth

Before the census of 1872, Calcutta's population was anybody's guess. In 1752 one estimate put it at just over four lakhs while in 1866 the officially accepted estimate brought it down to three and a half lakhs. In 1971 Calcutta's total population rose to 31 million with

a mean density of 3049 persons per sq. km. There are all symptoms of this burden of overpopulation becoming heavier in the coming years.

Calcutta municipal area is only 36.92 square miles while the continuously built up greater Calcutta area with 36 municipalities to administer it, is spread over 490 square miles stretching for about 50 miles along the Hooghly. This is now called the Calcutta Metropolitan District (CMD). Though the CMD occupies one-hundredth of the area of West Bengal, over three-fourth of the total urban population of the State or forty-three per cent of the urban population of the hinterland comprising of West Bengal, Bihar and Assam with an area of 2.37 lakh square miles and a population of 145 million in 1961, are concentrated here. The Calcutta Metropolitan District is the largest urban complex in India. This seemingly unbalanced growth of Calcutta can only be explained by the gross disparities in occupation opportunities that have existed and grown between the giant urban complex and its vast rural hinterland.

Over 80% of the registered factory workers of West Bengal are in the 140 square miles of urban tracts of the CMD (the CMD included both urban and non-urban tracts) but the remaining 20% area spread over in the 33,700 square miles of West Bengal. Over 95% of the electricity produced in the State is consumed by the Calcutta and the Asansol-Durgapur complexes. It is this factor that magnetically draws thousands of landless and jobless people to the primate city and its neighbourhood from the hinterland. And as Calcutta grows, other small and medium urban centres decays or stagnates.

### **Export orientation**

Calcutta has always been an export-oriented port through which Imperial Britain sucked out India's wealth for over two hundred years. Jute the golden, fibre and tea, coal, iron ore, manganese, mica, lac, and tobacco and hundreds of other industrial and agricultural raw materials were collected at Calcutta by rail, road and water ways and then taken out of the country for the benefit of Britain's economy, thus imparting to Calcutta the inglorious role of a tout working in the interest of foreign merchants. From Calcutta by roads, railways and waterways the tentacles of Britain reached the innermost parts of North-Eastern India. Dalhausie Square, Calcutta's central business district, still bears the imprint of such a character. The Imperial rulers are gone but there has been little change in Calcutta's role.

The British rulers had no interest in industrialising India. But they wanted processed jute and tea and they needed repair shops for their ships and locomotives. In 1858 the first jute mill was established at Rishra in Hooghly and a little later another at Baranagar. By 1931 out of a total of 95 jute mills in India, the Calcutta industrial belt could boast of having 90 with more than three lakh workers employed in them. The growth of the engineering industry began with the growth of the Calcutta port and the opening of the railways a little over one hundred years ago. Today greater Calcutta is the foremost centre of engineering industry in the country but absence of diversification makes the industry precariously dependent on railway orders.

### **The fourth port**

Not very far back in history Calcutta was the first port of India.. In 1969-70, however,

Calcutta ranked fourth among the major Indian ports in total tonnage handled. This is particularly due to Calcutta's inability to handle bulk cargo. Calcutta is located at a distance of about 126 miles from the sea face on the Bay of Bengal. The Hooghly river and its upper reaches known as the Bhagirathi river, are silting up rapidly due to diversion of Ganga water through the Padma some five hundred years back. During summer months the Bhagirathi gets completely cut off from the Ganga. As a result, there is no force left in the Hooghly to push back tide-borne silt and keep the navigation channel free. Consequently, the traffic which the port could handle a decade ago (8-10 million tons a year) has sharply dwindled (6-7 million tons). This dangerous threat to the port of Calcutta is the reason why Farakka barrage project has been designed and is being executed. Forty-thousand cusecs of water flowing through the Hooghly throughout the year can at least prevent further deterioration of the navigation channel ; and then at Haldia is going up the sister port which will be in a position to handle bulk cargo that Calcutta is nable to cope with.

### **Blurring the view**

Calcutta has been variously called the city

of processions, the nightmare city, the dirtiest city in the east and so on and so forth. Today at least six organisations are engaged in changing the face of this giant metropolis—the Calcutta Corporation, the Calcutta Improvement Trust, the Calcutta Metropolitan, Water and Sanitation Authority—the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation, the Irrigation Department and the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority ( CMDA ), with CMDA as the overall coordinating body. The foundation stones for the second bridge over the Hooghly river and the tube railway under the city have been laid, satellite towns are being thought of, and work for the improvement of bustees where over 7 lakh working people live like animals, is in progress. But one is yet to learn about any plan to make Calcutta economically viable as a city capable of gainfully employing rural immigrants or about any plan to create sufficient job opportunities in the medium and smaller urban centres throughout the state enabling them to absorb bulk of the outmigrants from the rural areas. Meanwhile the Birlas, the Tatas and the Martin Burns construct a glittering music hall here, an art gallery there, parks and skyscrapers to tantalise the vanity of the naive, and hope that these would blur the view and make the main issues obscure. But can they ?



# Glimpses of A.I.T.U.C—the Path Traversed 1920-1973



**First Session :**  
Bombay, 31 Oct., 1920

Presided over by Lala Lajpat Rai. The session was represented by 64 Unions with a total memberships of 140, 854.

The resolutions adopted related to the maintenance of a register of unemployed ; legislation to abolish criminal prosecution for violation of long term labour contracts under the indenture labour system ; compensation for injuries and sickness insurance including privilege and sick leave.

Lala Lajpat Rai elected President and V. M. Pawar General Secretary.

**Socond Session :**  
Jharia, 30 Nov. to  
2 Dec , 1921

Presided over by J. Baptista. Resolution adopted demanding reduction in hours of work, wage revision, etc. ; Demanded Swaraj for the people of India and supported the swadeshi movement. A message of sympathy to the famine stricken people of Soviet Union and call to all workers to help the people of Soviet Union.

C. R. Das elected President and Dewan Chamanlal General Secretary.

**Third Session :**  
Lahore. 24 to 26 March,  
1923

Session reaffirmed opposition of the working people to war. Resolutions demanding privilege leave and legislation granting protection against unemployment, old age and sickness and abolition of underground work for women in mines.

C. R. Das elected President and Dewan Chamanlal General Secretary.

Fourth Session :  
Calcutta, 30 to 31  
March, 1924

Presided over by C. R. Das. A condolence resolution on the death of V. I. Lenin.

The demand that police and army interference in labour disputes should not be permitted was reiterated. Protested against retrenchment in railways.

D. R. Thengdi elected President and N. C. Sen General Secretary.

Fifth Session :  
Bombay, 14 to 15 Feb.,  
1925.

Demanded minimum living wage in all industries, adult suffrage, 8-hour working day and maternity leave with pay. The conference adopted the objective to "cooperate and federate with organisation of labours having similar objective in any part of the world."

C. F. Andrews elected President, F. J. Ginwala and N. M. Joshi General Secretaries.

Sixth Session :  
Madras, 9 to 10  
Jan, 1926.

Presided over by V. V. Giri.

The demand for Swaraj reiterated, as also the demand for an 8-hour working day, maternity benefits, minimum wages, elected representation of labour in Central and provincial legislatures.

Rai Sahib Chandrika Prasad elected President and N. M. Joshi General Secretary.

Seventh Session :  
Delhi, 12 to 13  
March 1927

Session attended by Communist member in British Parliament, Sapurji Saklatvala.

Resolution expressing support to the national freedom struggle of the Chinese people, condemned Govt. of India for sending army to China in aid of imperialism.

Reiterated the earlier stand on working class demands of 8-hour day, minimum wage, adult franchise etc.

Diwan Chamanlal elected President and N. M. Joshi General Secretary.

Eighth Session :  
Kanpur, 26 to 28  
Sept., 1927.

Decided to boycott the Simon Commission, Resolution demanding release of all those detained without trial.

The session sent greetings to the workers of the Soviet Union on the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution, and noted that May Day celebrations had been held for the first time in that year.

Condemned the Government for its attitude in preventing Government employees organisations affiliating to the AITUC and registering under the Indian Trade Unions Act.

C.F. Andrews elected President and N. M. Joshi General Secretary.

**Ninth Session :**  
Jharia, 26 to 28  
November, 1928.

Presided over by M. Daud.

The Congress regarded the British Labour Party as "guilty of a grave betrayal against the working class of India". Demanded a minimum wage of Rs. 30 for all and condemned rationalisation. The session demanded abolition of land lordism and zamindari system. Jawaharlal Nehru elected President and N. M. Joshi Gen. Secretary.

**Tenth Session :**  
Nagpur, 30 Nov.  
to 1 Dec. 1929.

Decided to boycott the Royal Commission on Labour (Whitley Commission) and not to make any nominations to the ILO.

First split in AITUC, and many leaders like V. V. Giri, N. M. Joshi, Diwan Chamanlal, M. K. Bose and R. R. Bakhle walked out and formed the Indian Trade Unions Federation.

Subhas Chandra Bose elected President and S. V. Deshpande General Secretary.

**Eleventh Session :**  
Cal., 7 July 1931.

Second split in AITUC when Communists walked out and formed Red Trade Union Congress.

Resolutions were passed urging the release of the Meerut conspiracy case prisoners, congratulating Soviet Russia on "achieving uplift of the Workers".

Workers were called upon to struggle of power to the people, abolition of Indian states and parasitic landlords, nationalisation of land, public utility services, mineral resources and banks.

R. S. Ruikar elected President and Mukundalal Sircar General Secretary.

**Twelfth Session :**  
Madras, 10 to 12  
September, 1932.

Presided over by J. N. Mitra.

Demanded immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners.

S. L. Khandelkar elected President and Mukundalal Sircar General Secretary.

**Thirteenth Session :**  
Kanpur, 23-24  
Dec, 1933.

Called upon textile workers to launch a general strike in defence of their wages and conditions of life.

Resolution expressing the opinion that it was necessary in the political interests of the workers and peasants to form a political party of their own.

Hariharnath Shastri elected President and Sibnath Banerjee General Secretary.

**Fourteenth Session :**  
Calcutta, 19 to 21  
April, 1935.

Red TUC dissolved and all unions and members under its leadership were merged with the AITUC.

Resolution condemned the continued detention without trial of about 9000 detenus.

R. S. Ruiker elected President and R. A. Khedgikar General Secretary.

**Fifteenth Session :**  
Bombay, 17 to 18  
May, 1936.

Presided over by Maniben Kara.

Greetings to the people of Abyssinia fighting against Italian aggression and to the toilers of the world. Accepted the proposals put forward by V.V. Giri as basis of unity subject to certain modifications. Sibnath Banerjee elected President and Maniben Kara General Secretary.

**Sixteenth Session :**  
Delhi, 1-2 Jan. 1938.

Total of 98 affiliated unions with a total membership of 122, 650.

Conveyed greetings to the Soviet Union "the citadel of world revolution", supported the peace policy of the Soviet union and declared that the Indian Working class will fight for the defence of the Soviet Union with all its might and at all cost. Greetings to the people of China and Spain.

Dr. Suresh Chandra Banerjee elected President and B. K. Mukherjee General Secretary.

**Seventeenth Session :**  
Nagpur, 17 April 1938.

Special joint session of the AITUC and the NTUF for structural unity between the two.

It was agreed that all political questions and questions of strike shall be decided by three-fourths majority of the General Council.

The official flag of AITUC was decided as an ordinary red flag with the letters TUC inscribed on it.

The decision was taken that the AITUC would not affiliate itself to any international organisation. Unions were given freedom to get affiliated directly if they wished to do so.

Dr. Suresh Chandra Banerjee elected President and R. R. Bakhle General Secretary.

**Eighteenth Session :**  
Bombay, 28 to 30  
September, 1940.

Condemned the repression launched by the Government under DIR Act ; protested against the ordinance promulgated amending the payment of wages Act providing for deduction of war funds from wages, and also against the ordinance to conscript skilled industrial labour. Resolution opposing the war adopted.

V. R. Kalappa elected President and N. M. Joshi, General Secretary.

**Nineteenth Session :**  
8-9, February 1942.

Prior to the session a group of unions led by M. N. Roy, Maniben Kara, V. B. Karnik and others seceded from AITUC, Pandit Nehru was present by special invitation. No resolution on war could get three fourths majority.

V. V. Giri elected President and N. M. Joshi General Secretary.

**Twentieth Session :**  
Nagpur, 1-3 May  
1943.

Presided over by C. C. Banerjee.

Demanded restoration of civil liberties and sent greetings to the Red Army for its victories against the Nazi hordes. Govt. permitted holding of Delegates session only. S. A. Dange elected President and N. M. Joshi General secretary.

**Twenty First Session :**  
Madras, 19 to 23 J n  
1945

Presided over by Fazal Elahi Qurban.

AITUC then had a total membership of 451, 915.

Demanded national independence and release of all leaders still in Jail. Resolution adopted for affiliation with WFTU.

Mrinal Kanti Bose elected President, N. M. Joshi General Secretary.

**Twenty Second Session :**  
Cal , 13 to 19 Feb 1947

AITUC had by then with a membership of 6,96,194.

The session adopted a resolution stating that the objective of the working class was to establish an independent socialist India with all power to the working class. It demanded nationalisation of industry, living wage, social security, etc.

S. A. Dange elected President and N. M. Joshi General Secretary.

**Twenty-Third Session :**  
Bombay, 1949.

Prior to this INTUC and then HMS had been formed.

V. Chakkarai Chettiar presided.

Demanded release of all prisoners and restoration of democratic and trade union liberties.

S. A. Dange elected President and N. M. Joshi General Secretary.

**Twenty-Fourth Session :**  
Cal., 27 to 30 May 1954.

Affiliated Unions 937 with a membership of 655,940.

V. Chakkarai Chettiar presided.

Demanded wage revision, opposed rationalisation, demanded social security schemes.

V. Chakkarai Chettiar elected President and S. A. Dange General Secretary.

Twenty-Fifth Session :  
Ernakulam, 25 to 29  
Dec 1957.

S. S. Mirajkar presided.

For the first time a large number of fraternal delegates from other countries attended the session including WFTU.

1282 Delegates representing 14,00,000 members attended.

At this session the two-pillar policy resolution was adopted which declared that the AITUC stood for "helping in the development of the economy of the country resolutely defending the interests of the working masses."

Demanded 25% wage rise, Ban on nuclear weapons.

S. S. Mirajkar elected President and S. A. Dange General Secretary.

Twenty-Sixth Session :  
Coimbatore, 6 to 12  
January 1961.

Affiliated Union 841 with 1317 delegates and 333 observers.

Demanded recognition by ballot, need based minimum wage, a comprehensive social security scheme etc.

S. S. Mirajkar elected President and S. A. Dange General Secretary.

Twenty-Seventh Session :  
Bombay, 16 to 22, May,  
1966.

2667 delegates from 872 affiliated union.

Main resolution on the need to establish unity in the trade union movement adopted.

Call for a movement for an end to the U. S. aggression in Vietnam.

S. S. Mirajkar elected President and S. A. Dange General Secretary.

Twenty-Eighth Session :  
Guntur, 28 Jan , to 1  
February 1970.

Members of CPI (M) boycotted the session and subsequently seceded from AITUC to form rival centre CITU.

Resolutions adopted calling for a resolute struggle against monopoly, for trade union unity and for achieving need based wage.

Session demanded repeal of Essential Services Maintenance Act and restatement of all victimised government employees and withdrawal of all cases against them.

S. S. Mirajkar elected President and S. A. Dange General Secretary.

Twenty-Ninth Session :  
Calcutta, January 30  
to February 4, 1973.

Now in session.

**Helena Strzeminska**



Helena Strzeminska, Ph. D. Econ., specializes in problems connected with the arrangement of everyday tasks of working women and other socio-professional groups, as well as forms of leisure against the background of the developing social infrastructure and the growth of services. Helena Strzeminska co operates with the European Centre of Coordination and Working Plans of Social Science UNESCO in Vienna. The study deals with international research on time budget. Helena Strzeminska participates in the works of the Collective Team at the Planning Committee to establish a long-term socio-economic development scheme in Poland. She is the author in many scientific works on serious subjects.

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# **Social Progress In Poland**

**Helena Strzeminska Ph. D. (Econ.)**

# SOCIAL PROGRESS

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## IN

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## POLAND

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### The Right to work

The factors which have made possible a policy of full and rational employment were an agrarian reform, which completely eliminated rural unemployment, and a high rate of economic growth based on the nationalization of industry and planned deployment of financial resources, which created jobs outside agriculture.

Throughout the period, as a result of the development of the national economy, and above all its public sector, there has been a steady growth of employment illustrated by the following figures : from a total of 4,753 thousand in the public sector in 1950 to 7,008 thousand in 1960 and 9,953 thousand in 1971.

The stabilization of employment in the countryside coupled with the spread of jobs outside agriculture has made possible a more productive use of labour resources and helped to improve rural living standards.

One of the features of the Polish economy is that the annual increase in employment has been rising faster than the increase in the labour supply. The vacancies on the labour market regularly exceed the number of persons seeking work .

The growth in women's employment has been as follows : from 1,700 thousand in 1950 to 2,448 thousand in 1960 and 4,119.7 thousand in 1971.

Women at work are guaranteed certain special rights which enable them to remain in employment not only after marriage but also childbirth :

—12 weeks paid maternity leave :

—two, paid, non-deductible half-hour breaks in the course of the working day for feeding an infant (in effect a one-hour shorter working day) ;

—a guaranteed right to special paid periods of release to attend a sick child ;

—a prohibition against dismissal or notice of dismissal at any time during the period of pregnancy and maternity leave ;

—the obligation of the employer to provide suitable working conditions during the period of pregnancy.

A further factor enabling women to take full advantage of their right to work is the development of such welfare amenities as infant and nursery schools for children under school-going age and day hostels for older children. These make it possible for mothers, who have no other opportunities for arranging supervision for their children, to remain at work.

Thanks to equal opportunities for attending schools and vocational training of all types and in consequence to achievement of standards of education on a par with men, the policy of equal pay for equal work, and the opening to them of all rungs in a chosen career, women now make up a substantial proportion of working staff ; 39.3 percent of the total employed in the public sector of the economy.

### **The right to rest :**

Working hours in Poland are statutorily set at eight hours per day and six hours on Saturdays, and may not exceed 46 hours a week. Breaks of 15 minutes for meals and refreshments are allotted which are fully paid and count towards the working day.

In a number of areas there is a shorter working week of 42 hours, which applies to persons employed in the administration, Justice, research institutes, education, public health, publishing, radio and television, the press, etc.

At the same time in various branches of industry, especially those operated on a round-the-clock basis, a four-shift system is being introduced on an increasing scale, reducing the average working week to 42 hours.

Employees working in unhealthy or particularly onerous conditions enjoy a shorter working day of six or seven hours, giving them a 36 or 42 hour-week respectively.

In the textile industry the abolition of the night shift on Saturdays has shortened the working week to 44 hours.

Altogether, a shorter working week is enjoyed by 1.3 million employees, exclusive for juveniles.

Free days are Sundays and holidays. There are eight official holidays ( apart from Sundays ) in Poland.

The law on vacation leave is on an universal nature and so applies to all employees and work-places. It has introduced a single system of leave for both manual workers and staff.

Under the new regulations ( the Act of April 29th, 1969 ), which have extended vacation rights, the length of leave is graduated

to years of service, with prior periods of education and training counting towards them.

After six years service to 20 working days leave and after ten years service to 26 working days leave. The inclusion of the period of training and education in the years of service is aimed at offering equal chances of qualifying for a longer holiday to both employees who want to work after leaving primary school and those who have attained a higher level of education. In accordance with this principle every employee has the opportunity at age of 26-27 of an annual leave of 26 working days.

The uniform system of leave does not, however, preclude allowance being made for the special working conditions to be found in certain branches of the national economy. Thus, persons employed in unhealthy or onerous conditions remain entitled to additional leave. The longer holidays enjoyed by certain categories of employees, such as mine workers, seamen, school-teachers and academic and research staff, remain in force. In order to organise holiday facilities for employees and their families on Employees Holiday Fund ( FWP ) was set up at the Central Council of Trade Unions under an act of February 4th, 1949. It invested the FWP with a legal personality and specified its responsibilities and tasks in organizing rest and recreation facilities during vacation periods and after work, organizing and running holiday homes, hiking and sports camps and excursions, and conducting and supporting research into the organization of holidays.

Under our system employees have the right to avail themselves of the welfare facilities of their work-place. This right is guaranteed by a number of acts of law. Work-places arrange and subsidize not only holidays but also other

forms of recreation on holidays and weekdays ( free of charge or at reduced rates ).

The number of persons going away on holiday has been rising steadily, from 716 thousand in 1960 to 2,548 thousand in 1971. At the same time, more and more people are making use of other forms of recreation ( tours, Sunday and holiday excursions ) organised by tourist associations and enterprises as well as work places.

Another way in which not only right to rest but also to protection of health is given effect is in the form of rest cures three to four weeks). In addition, social security benefits entitle every employee to seek sanatorium treatment. The costs of developing physical culture, tourism and sport are borne by the government, state enterprises and voluntary organisations. Sport facilities are used free of charge or at reduced rates by some 3.8 million members of sports and physical culture organizations and by many millions of unaffiliated persons.

The implementation of the right to rest is closely interlocked with the right of access to cultural amenities.

All cultural property is treated in Poland as a public service available to all. A 1946 decree declared libraries and library collections to be national property at the service of the community. It also set up a nationwide network of public libraries maintained by the state. The same aims led to other legislation dealing, among other things, with the cinema, the protection of cultural property, museums, theatres, and so on. By way of example here are some figures illustrating the expansion of libraries. In 1969 there were 8,545 public libraries (as against 4,193 in 1950) and an annual readership of 6.3 million (as against 1.7 million in 1950).

The development of culture and its universal spread have made possible by the support of the state, since most cultural facilities are run at a loss. For instance, box-office receipts met only 40 per cent of theater expenses and even less in the case of opera houses and concert halls. Government expenditure on culture has quadrupled in the last 15 years.

### **The right to Education :**

The right to education in Poland is guaranteed not only by a universal, free and compulsory system of primary schooling, but also by free access to secondary education (general and vocational) and higher education, Government assistance to those studying is provided through study grants and scholarships expansion of material aid to children from working-class, farming and intelligentsia homes.

The development of a universal system of education began with a campaign against illiteracy. The national census of 1938 disclosed an illiteracy rate of 12 per cent in the town and 27.6 per cent in the countryside. After the war the number of illiterates was estimated to be in the region of four million. The Abolition of illiteracy Act (1949) obliged all persons between 14 and 50 years of age who were illiterate or semi-illiterate to attend special free course of education. The result was the elimination of illiteracy as a social phenomenon.

The principles which have actuated post-war educational policy have been that it should be uniform, universal, free of charge, compulsory and public. At present, all children aged 7-14 attend primary school, while the attendance rate the 14-17 age group is 84.0 per cent,

In the 1967-68 school year 81 per cent of

primary-school leavers went on to some form of secondary education. At present the proportion of primary-school leavers who continue their education at general education secondary schools and trade schools exceeds 96 per cent.

The growth of education is shown in the following attendance figures ( in thous. ) :—

	1950/51	1969/70
Primary schools	3,281.8	5,443.1
General secondary schools	194.4	309.7
Special schools	21.3	82.5
Vocational schools	634.7	1,605.0
Colleges and Universities	125.1	322.5

A feature of the Polish education system is that it also embraces adults working at full-time jobs who can continue their education at schools of all levels and vocational courses.

In the 1969-70 school year, primary schools for adults were attended by 47.4 thousand persons. In addition, there were 84.6 thousand persons, people supplementing their knowledge at adult primary school courses, while 136.3 thousand persons enrolled as adult. Over 650 thousand were improving their skills at vocational schools of primary and secondary level, and 118.1 thousand were studying for university degrees.

The scale of adult education in Poland can be judged from the fact that it produces 55.3 percent of all graduates from primary vocational schools of a general education type, 24.8 percent from general secondary schools, and almost 40 percent from colleges and universities.

It should be added that these students enjoy certain privileges such as day release for class attendance without loss of earnings, extra leave to study for examinations and reimbursement of travel expenses incurred in attending classes away from home.

## The Right to Social Security

Social security in Poland embraces the following benefits :

- medical care
- sickness benefits
- old age pensions

—compensation for accident at work on occupational diseases.

- disability pensions
- maternity allowances
- family allowances
- widows and other department pensions.

In the post-war period the range of benefits has been extended. Apart from the classic forms of social security, a number of new cash benefits have been introduced, among them family allowances ( in 1948 ), sanatorium allowances ( in 1948 ), payments of the order of sickness benefits in the event of an employee being quarantined as a result of a contagious disease in his household ( in 1950 ). sickness benefits for working mothers during a period of personal care of their children ( in 1954 ) and extra pension benefits, as well as new benefits in kind such as vocational training, accommodation in old-age pensioners' homes, etc.

One of the major achievements of recent years has been the reform of the superannuation system carried out in 1968 which increased retirement, disability and family pensions. Between 1968 and 1970 the average pensions rose by 34 per cent.

At the same time, the number of persons covered by social security has grown considerably. Before the war only 6 per cent of the population ( 15 per cent with dependents ) were insured and in any case entitled to a much narrower range of claims than at present. Today all employees together with their dependents carry social insurance. In 1969 the

number of insured totalled 25.3 million, which is 77 per cent of the population.

Social insurance is closely connected with health protection. The constitutional right to protection of health assumes the principle that the facilities of the public health service must be open to all. Forms of medical care are provided free of charge not only to employees and their dependents but also to other persons covered by social insurance: pensioners, servicemen and their families, students, writers and artists, and members of co-operatives. In addition, the principle of general exemption from medical charges also applies to preventive measures (vaccination, mass medical tests, hygiene supervision of children), the treatment and prevention of tuberculosis, compulsory treatment of contagious and venereal diseases, ambulance and casualty ward services for persons injured in traffic accidents, and all care of infants up to one year of age.

No fees are charged for treatment of out-patients in clinics for children up to the age of

14, or in oncological, cytological sports-health and alcoholic clinics.

Drugs are supplied free of charge to sufferers from tuberculosis and contagious diseases, railwaymen, servicemen, persons eligible for welfare relief, and pensioners. Other persons pay 30 per cent of the price.

The insured and their dependents are entitled to free treatment in hospitals, out-patients departments, and health centres. Altogether 95 per cent of all medical services are provided free of charge or at reduced rates.

The universal spread of medical care and progress in medicine have led to a drop in infant mortality. Compared to 1938 when a rate of 140 per 1,000 live births was recorded, it had fallen to 30.4 in 1969.

At the same time, average life expectancy has risen, in the case of men, from 48.2 years in the pre-war period to 66.8 in 1965 and in the case of women, from 51.4 to 72.8.

*'Struggle is the tradition'—Jute Workers before IJMA Hd. Qrs. 1953*



*'Fight against foreign and indiginous Capital'  
Jute workers before IJMA Hd. Qrs. Calcutta 1969*



# German Democratic Republic:

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## Trade Unions care for the

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## Social Welfare of the Workers

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The rights and duties of the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions (FDGB) not only include the constitutional right of co-determination in all questions of production management and planning in Socialist enterprises but also the duty to see to the immediate working and living conditions of its members and all workers. For more than 20 years now the Trade Unions of the GDR have been running an efficient Social Insurance system and their own holiday service as well as successful cultural, educational and training schemes. In addition they have a say in other everyday concerns of their members and all workers. These tasks—they are laid down in a "Labour Code" partly worked out by the Unions—are gathered together under the general heading of "workers' facilities". There have been, without doubt, great improvements in the facilities provided for workers. There are works' canteens, factory restaurants and factory shops, sewing rooms and excellent washing facilities. However, there are still factories and offices whose workers' facilities are not so worthy of praise. This is due to a number of reasons. Plain neglect on the part of the directors and other

responsible state-appointed managers, lack of qualifications and ignorance of the laws as well as infrequent use of the trade union right to co-determination are factors which lead to difficulties and shortcomings in workers' facilities which could be avoided.

Since the 8th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) in June 1971, the trade unions have been paying closer attention to these problems. The superordinated trade union leadership is constantly demanding that the trade union responsibility for workers' facilities in the factories and offices should not be neglected nor pushed into the background in the eagerness to fulfill the plan targets. As suggested by the FDGB, it is already laid down in the "Labour Code" that the duty of the managing directors to see to the social welfare of the workers and that they should co-operate closely with the trade union committee in the particular factory or office. Among other things it states that "the enterprise is obligated to supply the working people in the enterprise and at their place of work with high-quality meals, food-stuffs and refreshments."

Thus a plan providing for improved working



*This inflatable structure contains the 400-seat works restaurant which serves up meals for the construction workers of a large-scale building site in Dresden.*

and living conditions of the employees is worked out and included in the production plan of each enterprise. This plan also contains suggestions made by the workers regarding improvements of facilities at work, peak-hour transport, construction of housing and many other problems. It is discussed, as is the whole works plan, as draft at trade union meetings.

The factory trade union committee exercises its right to co-determination as regards workers' facilities either directly or through an honorary Commission for Workers' Facilities which is made up of approximately 15 to 20 members depending upon the size of the enterprise. This commission makes sure, for example, that the workers are supplied with appetising meals (hot and cold) by the works canteen, or that there is a snack assortment during the work breaks, or that there is always a wide choice of foodstuffs and other essential articles in the factory shops and it does this by urging, inspecting and

openly criticising. This commission also tries to ensure that the social facilities in the enterprise, such as shoe-repairs or tailor's workshops, run smoothly and without hitch. For this purpose the enterprise makes a certain amount of money available from a Cultural or Social Fund. These are thus financial benefits which the worker receives in addition to his regular wage. In the final analysis these facilities leave him more time for his family and further qualification.

It must also be mentioned that the number and size of the social facilities naturally depends upon the situation, size and national economic importance of each enterprise. Smaller production units do not always have their own canteen or restaurant; they must either share in the facilities of larger enterprises or in the corresponding facilities in towns or small localities so that the workers there can also share in the advantages of workers' facilities.

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# **The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**

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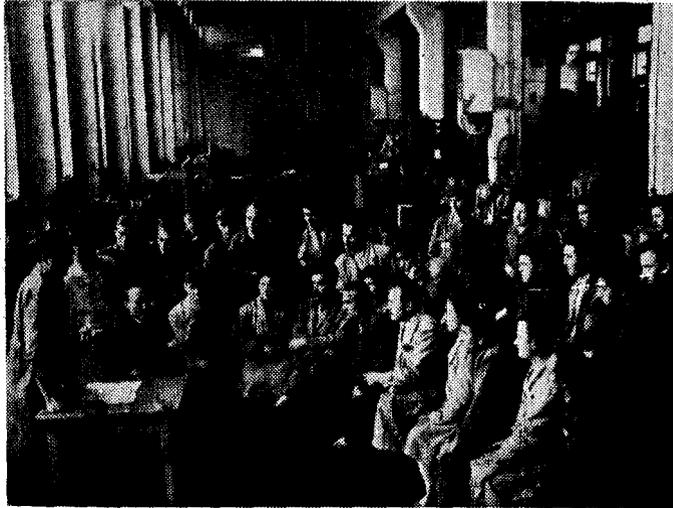
## **The Character, Rights and Duties of The Federation**

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is above all a socialist self-managing and democratic community of working people and citizens, equal peoples and nationalities and hence a socio-political community with the same status and character as the smaller social communities of which it is composed. The emphasis, not without reason, is on all the three basic factors which are present in the federation as a community: the working people or man under conditions of associated labour and work with socially-owned means of production, the citizen in his interests and activities outside associated labour, and, finally, the peoples and nationalities. It should be noted that apart from the Yugoslav peoples, which as national groups

exists and exercise their sovereign rights within the frameworks of their republics, the Yugoslav community includes nationalities (national minorities) which, as a rule, have their separate national states outside Yugoslavia. These nationalities exercise their rights as equal subjects together with the Yugoslav peoples.

Apart from this, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a federal state freely united peoples and their socialist republics and the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo within the composition of the Socialist Republic of Serbia. As such, it is based on the rule and self-management of the working class and all working people.

The latest constitutional amendments provide for the substantial restriction and more precise definition of the present broad constitutional



*A meeting of the workers' council of the machine plant of the Tractor and Agriculture Machinery at Zemun near Belgrade.*

rights and duties of the federation, which will be confined more to matters which are in the common interests of all the peoples and nationalities of Yugoslavia. These are (a) ensuring socialist socio-economic relations and the unified foundations of which they are based ; (b) ensuring the elementary democratic freedoms and rights of the individual and the solidarity and social security of working people ;

(c) ensuring a unitary market and co-ordinating economic and social development ; (d) establishing the sovereignty and equality of the peoples and nationalities and their national freedoms ; (e) safeguarding the country's defence and international organizations and in connection with this safeguarding the independence, security and territorial integrity of the country.



# ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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The Revolutionary Trade Union Movement is the largest organisation of the working people in Czechoslovakia. The movement has a membership of five-and-a-half million, nearly 90 per cent of the population employed in the socialist sector of the national economy.

The Trade Union Movement is a voluntary, democratic organisation, in which the working people associate to exert their influence on the management and administration of production, the national economy and the state, to ensure the raising of their social and living standard, in keeping with improving results of their work.

In socialist Czechoslovakia, the trade union movement is one of the largest and most influential educational organizations, because with their participation in the solution of everyday problems in production, they learn how to run their socialist state.

## T. U. Rights

Trade union organisations in factories and on higher levels of the trade union movement have the right to participate in the preparation and the drafting of national economic plans, to assess their fulfilment and ensure that the rich experience and knowledge of the working people be applied in planning, management of factories and whole national economic branches.

Apart from this, Czechoslovak trade unions, in particular their organisations in factories, enjoy a high degree of co-responsibility in decision making on basic working and social conditions in the factories. For example, without the participation of the works committee, which is an elected organ of the primary trade union organisation, the works management may not dismiss a worker or issue or alter working, wage, premium and other wage statutes, and the existing legislation even guarantees the works committee the right to halt production if the state of machines and equipment or inadequate safety measures endanger the health or the lives of the workers.

The duty and the right of the trade union organization to participate in the management of production and administration of the state applies to all levels of the Czechoslovak national economy. This reflects the real freedom of individual, the freedom, which is not only a formal possibility, a formal right, but a reality constituting a real basis for free, creative decision-making and acting. This ensures that full use will be made of all the creative forces of our working people, the initiative of our workers, technicians, economic workers and all other working people.

## Relations with the State

The Revolutionary Trade Union Movement as an organization of the working class, which is the ruling class in this country, is not in an antagonistic position towards the socialist state. Between the socialist state, its Government and other bodies and institutions on different levels of state and economic management, a relationship has been established which expresses the unity of interests, unity in solving fundamental questions concerning the economic, social and cultural development of the society.

Naturally, this should not imply that the trade unions accept uncritically all proposals and standpoints put forward by state bodies and institutions, that they accept passively all directives issued by state institutions. In all negotiations the trade unions apply their own standpoints, and in practice it often happens that at the proposal of trade union bodies and at their recommendation, changes are made in draft directives or bills.

In Czechoslovakia, many state directives are issued as joint resolutions of the Government and the Central Council of Trade Union—the supreme managing bodies of the state and the trade union organisation.

Therefore, the Czechoslovak Revolutionary Trade Union Movement is the most important organization of the working class and the other working people which, under the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia ensures for all upright people a peaceful and quiet life, an optimistic future based on the work of the citizens, on the notion that the working people in this country are real makers of all values—and that the results of this work will never again become the source of easy capitalist profits, but will be a source from which the welfare of all people is stemming.

## A Striking recovery on the West Bengal Labour Front.

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Labour had never been an inhibiting factor for industrialisation of the State. The turmoil in the labour front in the late sixties was the result of a deep industrial recession. It was not the cause. With the return of political stability, there has been a marked improvement in industrial relations. A comparative study of the labour situation will establish this point :

	Closure	Strike	Lock-out	Gherao
1967	123	232	206	611
1968	140	268	149	30
1969	183	766	128	517
1970	322	678	128	60
1971	143	225	122	20
1972	151	217	152	32

Labour is cheap. Labour is skilled. Labour is intelligent. A conscious working force is an asset to the entrepreneurs.

The Govt. having a massive mandate from the people, dedicated to the task of economic uplift of the poor masses is determined to carry forward the present improvement in industrial field.

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ISSUED BY THE GOVT. OF WEST BENGAL

## THE MONGOLIAN PEOPLES' REPUBLIC

What do you know about our Country ? What have you read about it ?

MONGOLIA is a country with a thousand-year-old history and an ancient culture. In Mongolia, hoary antiquity is blended with flowering youth.

MONGOLIA is a country of original mores and national traditions.

MONGOLIA is a country famous for its fauna and its geography. There are tall snow-capped mountains, boundless steppes, and virgin forest inhabited by the world's rarest animals.

MONGOLIA is the first country in the world to accomplish the historical transition from feudalism to socialism.

"Mongolia"—an album of black-and-white and colour photographs, portraying the country's economy, culture, and the way of life of the Mongolian people. The album is published in English, French and Russian. 30 signatures.

"The Mongolian People's Republic in 50 Years"—a collection of facts and figures showing the strides made in the economy, culture and living standards of the people in the 50 years from 1921 to 1970. The book is published in Russian and English. 12 signatures.

"Pictorial Art in Mongolia Today"—a photo-album showing the works of Mongolian painters and sculptors. The descriptive text is given in Mongolian, Russian, English, Spanish and German. 16.5 signatures.

"Socialist Mongolia"—a booklet, giving facts and figures about the social life, economy and culture of the Mongolian People's Republic, illustrated with black-and-white and colour photographs. Parallel texts are given in Russian and English. 5 signatures.

"Mongolian Decorative and Applied Arts"—an album containing colour and tone photographs of works by Mongolian artists. The descriptive text is given in Mongolian, Russian, English, French, Spanish and German. 13.5 signatures.

"Damdingiin Sukhe Bator"—a set of unique photographs illustrating the life and activity of Damdingiin Sukhe Bator, a prominent revolutionary and the founder of the Mongolian People's Government. The descriptive text is given in Mongolian, Russian and English. The set comprises 40 postcards.

"Mongolia"—colour slides, showing the life of the Mongolian people. Several series of a general character will come out for the 50th anniversary of the Mongolian People's Revolution to be followed by thematic sets, each comprising 12 or 24 colour slides.

"Mongolia"—a new edition of the magazine Mongol Ulus in English which formerly came out under the title Mongolia Today. The new edition will be more lavishly illustrated and will give a broader view of the country.

"Mongolian Melodies"—a set of gramophone discs with recordings of national operas, folk and modern songs, and symphonic music by Mongolian composers. The set will be enclosed in a colourfully designed cover.

Sets of stamps, colour and 3-D postcards showing the sights of Mongolia, flora and fauna, and works of art.

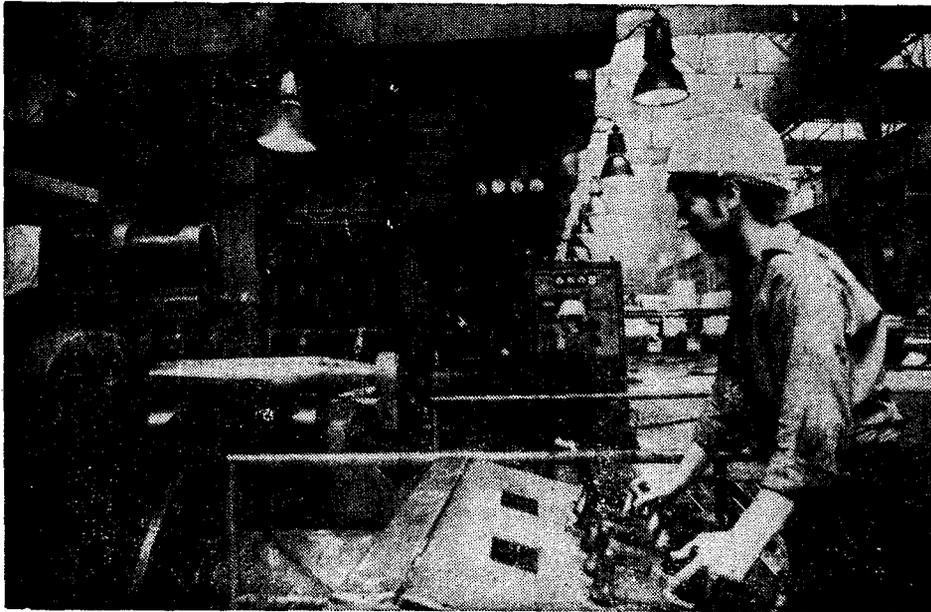
Orders for new literature about the Mongolian People's Republic may be placed by readers or organisations to the Mongolian State Book-sellers at the following address :

**MONGAL ULSYN, NOMYN KHUDALDAA**

41, Lenin Street, Ulan Bator, Mongolian People's Republic

# A Glimpse On The Life Of Working People In Czechoslovakia

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*Every third family owns a car*

In 1970 there were 750,000 cars in Czechoslovakia and by 1975 this number is expected to have risen to 1,560,000. In reality this means that every third family—in 1980 every family—will own a car. In this respect no small task is that of the metallurgical plant—the East Slovakian Iron Works in Kosice (on picture)—where production of car-body metal for the domestic motor industry has just begun. In future as much as 200,000 tons of this material which is in great demand will be produced in Kosice.

*Seventy-two television sets to  
every 100 homes*



In the Czechoslovak capital, Prague, there are 61,711 houses with a total of 383,177 flats, according to the last census. All of the flats have electricity laid on, more than 95 per cent of them have running water and almost three-quarters have gas. In one third of the Prague flats there is central and independent central heating, and almost 80 per cent of them are equipped with bathrooms or showers. Sixty-four of every 100 have refrigerators, 72 television sets and 60 washing machines. ( Picture shows a new housing estate in a Prague suburb ).



*A Fairyland kingdom*

Fantastic little castles, mansion houses, towers and steeples are what Mr. Antonin Lehecka, a blacksmith from Hradiste near Plzen, has been making out of iron waste for years now in his spare time. He has used these little complexes to give a most intriguing appearance to his home, both inside and out, to the garden and the yard, attracting visitors from near and far.