

Dr.M.K.PANDHE
A Life of Struggles

N.RAMA KRISHNAN

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bharathi

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Author:

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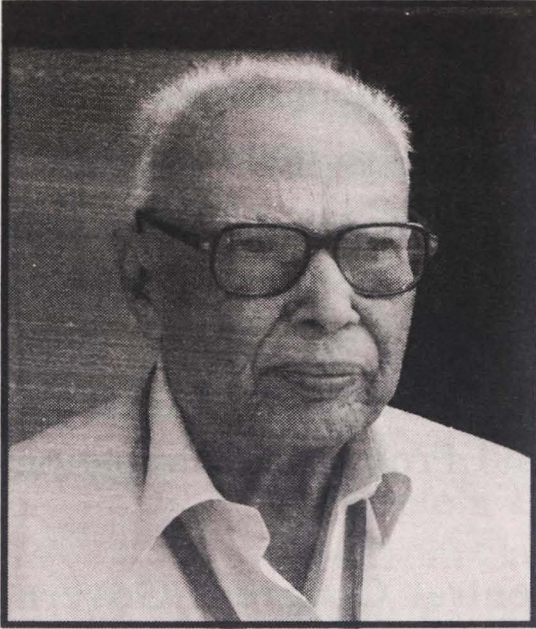
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FOREWORD



Samar Mukherjee

Former Leader of CPI(M)

Group in Parliament

Former General Secretary of
CITU

I am very happy to know that a biography of Com.M.K.Pandhe, President of CITU is being brought out and would be released in Mumbai on the 27th of this month.

When the author of this biography Com.N.Rama krishnan requested me that I have to favour a suitable foreword to his book I immediately consented since I know the great contributions of Com. M.K.Pandhe in developing CITU as a most powerful and militant organisation of the working class of our country.

For the first time, I came to know of him in the beginning of 1960. He was in the forefront along



with Comrades B.T.Ranadive, P.Ramamurti and Jyoti Basu in fighting against the reformist outlook of S.A.Dange inside AITUC. This I noticed on several occasions during AITUC conferences and meetings.

When the Communist Party split on the ideological, political differences in 1964, he opted for CPI(M) based on the real tenets of Marxism - Leninism and Proletarian internationalism.

The Central Congress Government headed by late Lal Bahadur Shastri decided to crush the CPI(M) and it arrested Comrades Muzaffar Ahmed, Promode Das Gupta, Harekrishna Konar, Benoy Chowdhury, myself and some other Comrades on the eve of 7th Congress of CPI(M) at Calcutta, under Defence of India Rules and detained us in various Jails. After the conclusion of the 7th Congress, on the 30th of December, the Central Government arrested more than 1000 leaders and active

cadres of CPI(M) under DIR and kept them in various jails of the country.



It was during this repressive period Comrades like Pandhe, Late Ramdass, S.Y. Kolhatkar and J.S. Lyallpuri who successfully evaded the police dragnet formed an underground Central Committee under the guidance of Com.Jyoti Basu and led the party for about 14 months or so.

Exactly during the same period "People's Democracy" was brought out from Calcutta with Comrade Jyoti Basu as editor to guide the entire party. We, the comrades who were in various jails were immensely pleased when we heard about this information and saw the first copy of People's Democracy. Comrades Ramdass and Pandhe functioned as two eyes of this Organ.

The author of this book narrated in detail about this venture and it is very interesting to note that Comrade Pandhe met popular personalities like Utpal Dutt and Ashok Mitra incognito and got their articles for People's Democracy.



After our release from jail in 1966, I began to know Com.Pandhe very intimately and I could see his multifarious activities in the Trade Union Front.

The continued fight inside the AITUC against the class collaborationist and disastrous policies as well as recalcitrant, adamant and undemocratic attitude of S.A.Dange and his ilk reached its nadir and it was felt by Marxist comrades that a time has come to form a revolutionary trade union organisation and attempts were made to move in that direction.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) asked Com.Pandhe to come to Calcutta and he readily shifted his centre of work to Calcutta. He began functioning under the guidance of Com.B.T.Ranadive and the Polit Bureau.

In the beginning of 1970, when the Goa Convention of Marxist Trade Union leaders decided to call a conference of Trade unions in Calcutta at the end of April, Com.Pandhe plunged himself in that work. He



strained every nerve to make this conference a grand success. I myself could see in person his tremendous capacity in organising such a conference. His earlier experience in organising AITUC conferences in Coimbatore and Ernakulam stood him in goodstead.

In this conference he was elected as a Secretary.

Following this conference, Com.Pandhe had to take the responsibility for the formation of a Central office for the new organisation in Calcutta. With the help of a handful of Comrades provided by the Bengal Pradesh Trade Union Congress (BPTUC) he started from the scratch and built a powerful Central office.

Later on, when I was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1971 and became the Deputy - Leader of the CPI(M) Group in Parliament and after 1977 as leader of the CPI(M) Group in Parliament, Com.Pandhe gave valuable help to me and other CPI(M)



M.Ps in preparing our main speeches in the Parliament. His indepth knowledge in economics, industry, rights of the working class, trade union laws are amazing. That helped the entire CPI(M) group in Parliament.

In the functioning of the CITU also he helped me a lot. When I was the General Secretary of CITU, my work in the Parliamentary forum and visiting various states to attend meetings, seminars and demonstrations etc. took considerable time. So Comrade Pandhe had to prepare the organisational and work reports etc., under the constant guidance of Com.B.T.R., President of CITU.

He succeeded me as the General Secretary of CITU at its 6th conference.

I could say a lot of things about the contribution of Com.Pandhe in developing the CITU as a mighty organisation. But I would like to confine myself to point out two or three things.

He was instrumental in forming



trade unions in Public Sector Undertakings. Many comrades in the CITU viewed his suggestion with scepticism in the beginning but later on realised the feasibility and the importance of it. In developing Steel, Coal and BHEL unions he took tremendous efforts and today when the Central Government attempting to hand over these viable units to the multinational corporations it is these thousands of workers of the public sector raised their powerful protests all over the country. I consider this is a remarkable achievement of Com.Pandhe.

Another thing which I would like to high light is on crucial issues affecting the working class, toiling millions, he took tremendous pain and efforts to form co-ordination committees of Central trade unions to protect the interests of the working class and other sections.

Formation of United Council of Trade Unions (UCTU), National Campaign Committee of Trade



Unions(NCC), Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions (SCTU), Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions(CPSTU) speak volume of Pandhe's contribution.

Com.Pandhe and myself attended many International conferences where I saw his ability to focus the main points of the discussion and put forward CITU's view point. Com.Ardhendu Dakshi elaborately points out this aspect in this book.

Com.Pandhe's biography is brought out coinciding with the 104th birth anniversary of our respected comrade B.T.Ranadive and in such a world situation where the economic crisis emanating from USA, slowly engulfing the whole world, leads to millions of people losing their jobs.

The working class and the toiling millions of our country have to wage a relentless struggle against the policies of neo-colonialism of imperialism headed by American imperialism and the rulers of this country who



push forward globalisation and liberalisation at the behest of multinationals and destroy the precious public sector units by throwing them into the laps of multinationals and monopolists of the country.

Our tasks to face the challenge in the present condition should be undertaken very seriously.

The biography of Com. M.K. Pandhe reveals that seriousness.

I hope and trust that the biography of Com.M.K.Pandhe would give encouragement and fillip to the struggling masses to carry forward their struggles against the exploiting forces and the disastrous policies of the Government of India.

I congratulate Com. N.Ramakrishnan for bringing into focus the multi dimensional personality and contribution of Com. M.K.Pandhe in a lucid, simple way to enable the reader to grasp the contents very easily. Biographies such as Com. Pandhe's would be useful to the pos-



terity in knowing the trodden path - not a smooth one - of the trade union and working class movement of the country.

Calcutta
10.1.09

Samar Mukherjee

Acknowledgement

I am very happy for the assignment given to me by Com.P.R.Krishnan, President of Industrial Workers Union, Mumbai and also President of Mumbai district committee of CITU to write a biography of Com.M.K.Pandhe, President of CITU.

Sometime back when Com.P.R.Krishnan sent word to me through Com.A.K.Padmanabhan, President CITU Tamilnadu State Committee, that I should write Com. Pandhe's biography on the pattern of Com.BT.Ranadive's biography which I wrote earlier, I immediately agreed to the proposal since I knew Com.Pandhe very intimately for the last 40 years and also aware of his rich contributions to the working class movement of the country.

When I joined the CPI(M) Parliamentary Party Office in Delhi in the beginning of 1969 as a whole timer, I was accommodated at 13, Windsor place in Com. K.Ramani, M.P's residence. Com. Pandhe and his family lived in one portion of the building and in the other portion Com.K.Ramani M.P, Com.M.R.Venkataraman, Leader of CPI(M) group in the Rajya Sabha and myself lived.

Com.Pandhe along with his trade union work used to help CPI(M) M.Ps in their Parliamentary work. Thus I came in close acquaintance with him.

His grasping power is superb. At a glance he can explain anything whether it is related to the functioning of the ministries or select committee reports or statement of the ministers placed on the table of the Lok Sabha. On important items like Address of the President to the both Houses of the Parliament, Pre-budget economic survey or Budget he used to go through them and prepare main points to be focussed by CPI(M) M.Ps in Parlia-

ment. Whenever CPI(M) M.Ps sought his advice on crucial issues to be raised in Parliament, like a ready reckoner he used to provide information and suggestions.

His analytical capacity is incisive and tremendous. He is a voracious reader and posted with update information. His writings are thought provoking, very simple and devoid of jargons.

All these years I never found a ray of anger on his face. With immense patience he used to convince. His arguments would be forthright but persuasive.

Any Comrade can approach him at anytime for his advice and he is readily available to them.

Com. Pandhe and Com.Pramila Pandhe are affectionate towards comrade's families and sympathetic to them. They are an ideal couple to be emulated.

It is my bounden duty to thank all those comrades who helped me in writing this biography.

I convey my sincere thanks to the Industrial Workers Union, Mumbai and it's President Com. P.R.Krishnan, a veteran of many a trade union struggle, for sponsoring the book.

I am highly thankful to our veteran leader Com.Samar Mukherjee for favouring a suitable foreword to this book.

At the age of 96, he is the eldest leader of the Communist movement of the country. Despite his advanced age he kindly consented to my request and took great pains to go through the entire manuscript and sent his foreword. Com.Samar Mukherjee is a role model for thousands of comrades like me. I take this opportunity to convey my reverential regards and best wishes to him.

I am thankful to Comrades Pramila Pandhe, veteran leader Kanai Banerjee, Ardhendu Dakshi, P.R.Krishnan, T.K. Rengarajan and M.M. Lawrence for their interviews given to me.

Comrade R.Govinda Rajan, veteran leader of the Insurance Employees Movement and former Jt.Secretary of AIIEA and Com. S. Chandra Sekar, vertran leader of CITU have gone

through the manuscript and edited it in a nice way. I am highly thankful to both of them for their kind help.

I am thankful to Com. A.K.Padmanabhan and Com. A.Soundararajan respectively President and General Secretary of the CITU Tamilnadu State Committee, Com. K. Vaidyanathan, Vice-president CITU Tamilnadu State Committee, Com. K.Veeramani, Correspondent of "Theekkathir" Daily in New Delhi and Selvi Sarada Devi for their timely help in completing the book.

I am thankful to M/s. Bharati Puthakalayam, Chennai and Com.K.Nagarajan for publishing this book.

I am also thankful to Com. P.Ravi for his wrapper design and Com. C. Kalyanasundaram and Com. K. Elango of Vaigai Printers and Publishers, Chennai for the neat printing of the book.

Chennai
13-1-2009

N. Rama Krishnan

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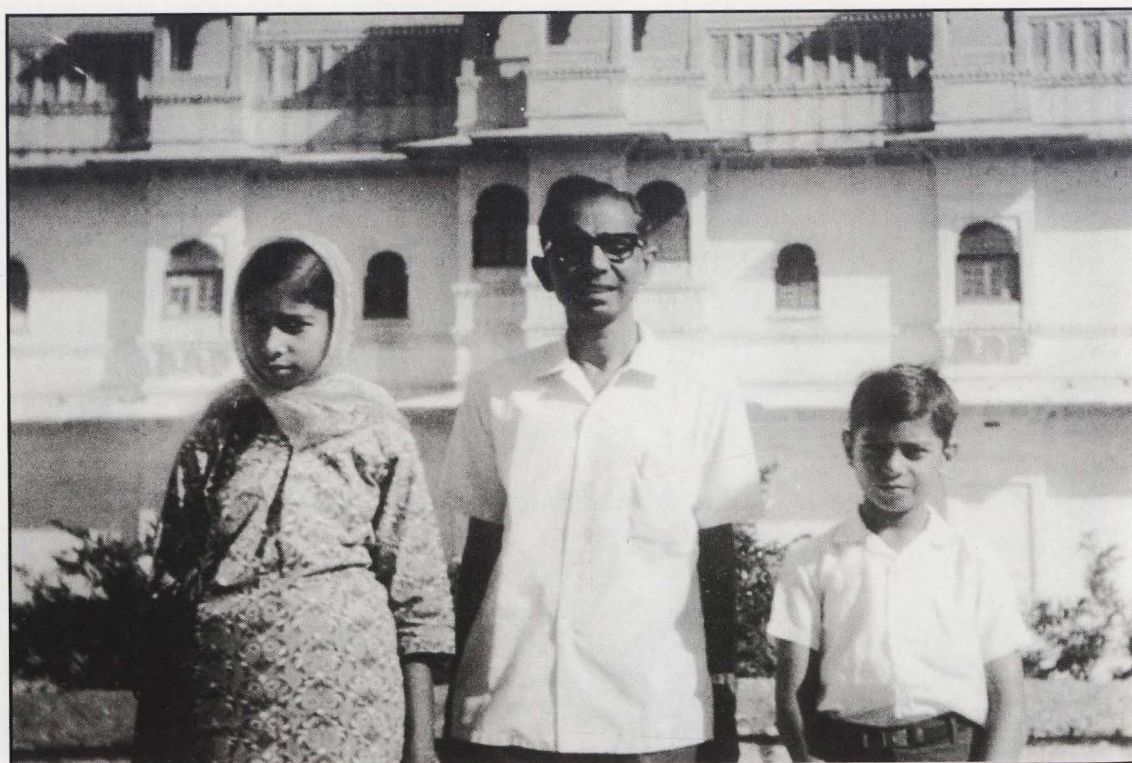
Pandhe's meeting with Fidel Castro after attending International Conference against Globalisation in Havana in 1994.



Meeting the President of ACFTU Com. Ni Zhi Fu in Beijing in 1984.



Flag hoisting in the Conference of All India Coal Workers Federation in 1987.



Pandhe with his daughter Ujwala and son Milind.



P.R. Krishnan garlanding Pandhe in Mumbai.



At the inauguration of the Congress of International Energy and Mines Conference (From Left) Arthur Scargill(U.K), Alain Simon(France), M.K.Pandhe, M.M.Lawrence and E.Balanandan.



On the eve of the meeting of U.C.T. U. alongwith Jatin Chakraborty, P.Ramamurti and George Fernandes



Pandhe with Vimal Ranadive, Ahilya Ranganekar, T.K.Rengarajan and with some other comrades.



Pandhe with B.T. Ranadive and other steel workers leaders in Durgapur Steel Conference.



Chittabrada Mazumdar, Pandhe and P.R.Krishnan in Mumbai.



Pandhe with Sailen Das Gupta, Chittabrata Mazumdar, Jyoti Basu and Kali Ghosh.



Pandhe with Pramila and grand daughters Sonali, Monali and Pupali in China.

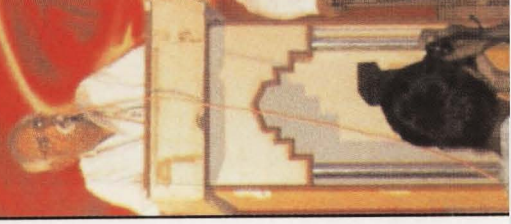


Pramila Pandhe, Brinda Karat and Ranjana.



Pandhe with A. Soundararajan and A.K. Padmanabhan
addressing a Press Conference.

ஸ்ரீ மாமலார்த்தி ஸ்ரீ நீராவ விழா



2008 செப்டம்பர் 22
 சென்னை - கிழக்கு மதுரை
 கிழக்கு மதுரை, சென்னை

1. Family Background

A Popular trade union leader of the country and President of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) Dr. Madhukar Kashinath Pandhe, popularly known as Dr.M.K.Pandhe was born on the 11th of July 1925 in Poona in Maharashtra. His father Kashinath Pandhe was Inspector of Schools and his mother Anandibai Pandhe was the headmistress of a primary school.

Kashinath Pandhe who hailed from a poor family had only formal education in the beginning. Kashinath's father was a farmer in village Ale in Poona District. For high school education young Kashinath used to work in some places and in the evening attended night classes. Thus, he got through matriculation examination which was a rare thing in those days. It was considered as a very big qualification also.

Kashinath married Anandibai who hailed from Nirgudsar, a village in Poona

district. He also taught his wife Anandibai who had no formal education. After some years she started working as a primary school teacher, and later became a trained teacher.

After his matriculation, Kashinath, became a school teacher and after some years he became the Head Master. Then he was promoted as an Educational Inspector.

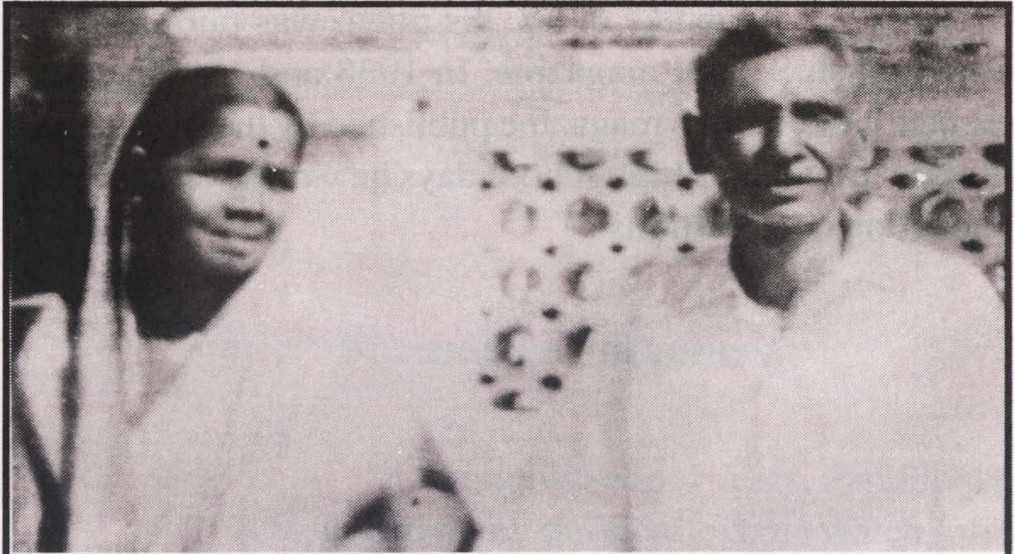
Madhukar was the second child of the couple. He had one elder sister, four younger brothers and five younger sisters. Due to large family Anandibai had to face difficulties in managing her duties and household work.

His father was an atheist and mother was a very religious minded woman. But both were secular minded and humanitarian to the core. People belonged to all religious communities, all castes including Dalits were welcome in their home.

Moreover, Kashinath had to help in educating his nephews after the death of his brother. They stayed in his home itself and pursued their studies. Kashinath and Anandibai helped the downtrodden and under privileged sections and were well known in those areas where they served.

These traits of his parents exercised a decisive influence on young Madhukar. His father used to tell him examples of temple priests exploiting the religious sentiments of the people etc. Madhukar had shown keen interest in his studies and always stood first in his class.

Pandhe's father, since he was the educational officer, used to get regular transfers to various places in the province and his mother in view of the Government Instruction which al-



Pandhe's Parents

lowed that husband and wife should be posted in the same place also used to get these transfers. So, Pandhe also had to change his school frequently. Thus, he had his primary education at Talegaon, Dabhade, Saswad and Khed. Khed, which was the birth place of martyr Rajguru, a co-revolutionary of Bhagat Singh was renamed after his martyrdom as Rajguru Nagar.

Similarly, Pandhe had his higher education at New English School at Junnar, Shivaji Maratha High School, Poona, Modern High School, Poona, M.E.S.School at Baramati, L.N. Sarvajanik High School, Jalgaon, Pachore High School at Pachore, Municipal High School at Pandharpur and New English School at Sholapur and finally H.B. Devakaran High School at Sholapur. He passed his matriculation examination in 1944.

In 1937, at the age of 12, his poem was published in New English School magazine. In 1938 and 1939 he was editing a hand written magazine published by the students of his class. During his high school days he won several prizes in debating competitions.

2. Formative influences

During his school years, Pandhe witnessed many political events which influenced him considerably.

In 1937, Pandhe attended a public meeting of Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru at Khed. He saw Jawaharlal Nehru for the first time and got his autograph also. He also attended the meetings of B.G. Kher, Acharya Kaka Kalelkar, Sankar Rao Deo and was influenced by the freedom movement led by Gandhi. He came under the spell of P.S. Sane, known as Sane Guruji, a well-known social reformer and Marathi writer of Maharashtra. He was a teacher in a school and influenced by workers and kisan movements. He wrote number of novels in Marathi and *Shyam Chi Aai* (Mother of Shyam) was considered as the best among his novels. Most of his novels and short stories dealt with the social structure of the society, the movement of

the working class and peasantry . His writings criticised the unethical behaviour in the society and pointed out how superstitious feelings adversely affect society.

Pandhe who already had a bent of mind towards social reforms due to his parents was naturally drawn towards Sane Guruji's teachings.

Pandhe's thirst for knowledge was so deep which forced him to become a member of the Municipal library at Jalgaon and other places.

In 1939, Pandhe for the first time heard the word of 'Socialism' from Sane Guruji's books, In 1941, when he was going through the bookshelves of Pandharpur library, he saw Communist Manifesto and borrowed it from the library. Within a day or two he had thoroughly gone through the book which gave the first glimpse of scientific socialism to him. Afterwards his interest in the Marxist literatures began to increase manifold. In 1941, Pandhe participated in May day procession at Pandharpur jointly organised by some left-ist individuals including the Royists.

In the same year he got a chance to read Lenin's biography written by V.M.Bhuskute and a book on Russian revolution in Marathi written by P.V.Gadgil.

In 1943, Pandhe wrote in his school magazine an article on Mao, Chu Teh and Chou-En-lai and also about the heroic struggle being waged by Russian people against German aggressors and Chinese peoples struggle against Japanese aggressors.

Pandhe hated the aggression of Hitler on Czechoslovakia and wrote a letter of solidarity with the Czechoslovakian people and sent it to that country's Ambassador. The letter was published in the journal brought out by the Embassy. The Ambassador not only thanked Pandhe but asked him to be in touch with him. He also advised Pandhe to concentrate on his studies.

In this period Pandhe felt the need to learn Hindi to have a countrywide access. He therefore attended Hindi classes organised by national movement and passed "Prathmik, Pravesh", "Parichaya" and "Rashtra Bhasa" examinations during his high school days.

3. Party member

On the 9th of August 1942, following the arrest of Gandhi and other leaders, countrywide Quit India Movement started and Pandhe took part in it in Sholapur. Few weeks afterwards, Pandhe came in contact with the Communist Party through a school mate. Only in July the ban on the party was removed by the British government and it had just started functioning openly.

Through a party member, Pandhe got a book written by S.Y.Kolhatkar on nationalism in Marathi and also got translated extracts in Marathi from 'Capital' published by P.V.Gadgil. The book "Red star over China" written by Edgar Snow impressed him very much. He also read, "Tagore's visit to Russia" and books related to Indian Communist movement and party journals.

District party leaders who noticed Pandhe's ability and talents entrusted him with the job of forming student union. So,

by the end of the year, Pandhe started working among high school students under the direction of the party, and very soon he became the district secretary of the student's union affiliated to All India Students Federation (AISF). He began visiting working class areas, talking to the workers in groups. prepared hand written posters and also took political classes to the workers. He explained to them in a simple way about the problems of the working class, class struggle, about socialism, capitalism, rudimentary concept of surplus value etc.,

One Marathi book "How one is having his livelihood" was very much helpful to Pandhe to explain various aspects of working class life to them.

Local party leaders in Sholapur who watched the performance of Pandhe were satisfied with his work and decided to make him a party member. Following this, he was made a party member on Lenin's day, the 21st January 1943. At that time he was only 17 years old. Pandhe was overwhelmed by this gesture since it was difficult to get party membership in those days.

After matriculation, Pandhe joined D.A.V.College of Sholapur for B.A course. The College Principal who had seen that he had distinction in Mathematics asked him to take the science group and Pandhe took science course. He also attended the classes for some days. Since he had to spend more time to science classes he could not spend time for party work. Party leadership asked him to take arts group and he did accordingly. He took History and Economics as major, logic and Sanskrit (special classes) as ancillary. One

Professor asked him that since he had special aptitude for Sanskrit classes he should appear for KavyaTirtha examination of Kashi Vidyapeeth. He planned to appear for that examination and prepared for it. However, he could not complete.

He was one among the first 10 students to get merit scholarship in the college. He got a monthly scholarship of Rs. 15/- and college monthly fee was only Rs.5 in those days. Upto his graduation he got regular scholarship.

It can be safely said that his college period between 1944 and 1948 was the best period in his academic life.

The studies in college and other political activities divided his time. During the Post-war upsurge in 1945-46 he was inspired by the heroic RIN mutiny, peasants uprisings in various parts of the country, Revolt of Warlis which was led by Godavari Parulekar could be cited as one of the instances.

He took keen interest in the debating society of his college which used to meet once in a week and discuss current political topics. Pandhe attended all these meetings and put forth Party's views in an effective way. Sometimes there used to be acrimonious debates on the attitude of Communists regarding Quit India Movement. Congress minded students blamed the Communists as pro-British and anti-national and Pandhe had to counter their arguments and demolish them forcefully.

Pandhe was elected as the secretary of Marathi Literary Association of the College. He utilised this opportunity

and arranged meetings of Communist leaders like S.A.Dange, veteran leader Ali Ashraf, Sajjad Zahir and well-known Communist singer Amar Sheikh, who was well known for singing patriotic songs.

Pandhe also used to attend meetings of well-known Marathi writer Ananta Kanekar, well-known literary critic N.R. Phatak, well known Marathi singer Heera Bhai Badodekar and Congress leader Sankar Rao Deo. Pandhe arranged their meetings in the college also. He directed a shadow play on Indian freedom movement which won a prize in the college annual function.

Students union in the college brought out a hand written magazine "Dhavatejag" in Marathi and Pandhe regularly contributed articles on literary and political topics.

When the second world war ended in 1945, there was a big upsurge in the country demanding the release of I.N.A. prisoners who were captured by the British government under charges of sedition. Pandhe took active part in this movement in Sholapur.

In 1943, Dr. B.K. Basu who later become the President of Dr.Kotnis Memorial Committee came to Sholapur to meet the family members of Dr.Dwarakanath Kotnis after his passing away in China. Dr.Kotnis who was sent to China on a medical mission by the Congress party to help the Chinese people who were fighting against the Japanese aggressors of their country died there while serving the people. Dr.B.K. Basu was also in the mission. After his return to India he came over to Sholapur to give details about Dr.

Kotnis's activities in China and also to offer condolences to his family.

After meeting the family members of Dr. Kotnis, Dr. B.K.Basu, himself a Communist, paid a visit to the CPI party office.

The Party Committee decided to arrange a meeting for him at the Sholapur Town hall. The responsibility to arrange the meeting was given to Pandhe. In that meeting Dr. B.K.Basu had narrated the dedicated role played by Dr. Kotnis and the respect he commanded there. People who participated in the well attended meeting were surprised to hear how an Indian doctor from the city of Sholapur was respected in China. It is needless to say that Pandhe himself was overwhelmed by this speech.

Once the Principal of the D.A.V. college took a wrong stand on religious issue. He compelled the students to attend Arya Samaj propaganda. This compulsion was severely resented by the students. An agitation was started in the college by the students. Pandhe pointed out to the Principal that if any student desired he can participate but there should be no compulsion on others. But as the Principal was adamant and refused to see the reality. The agitation was intensified.

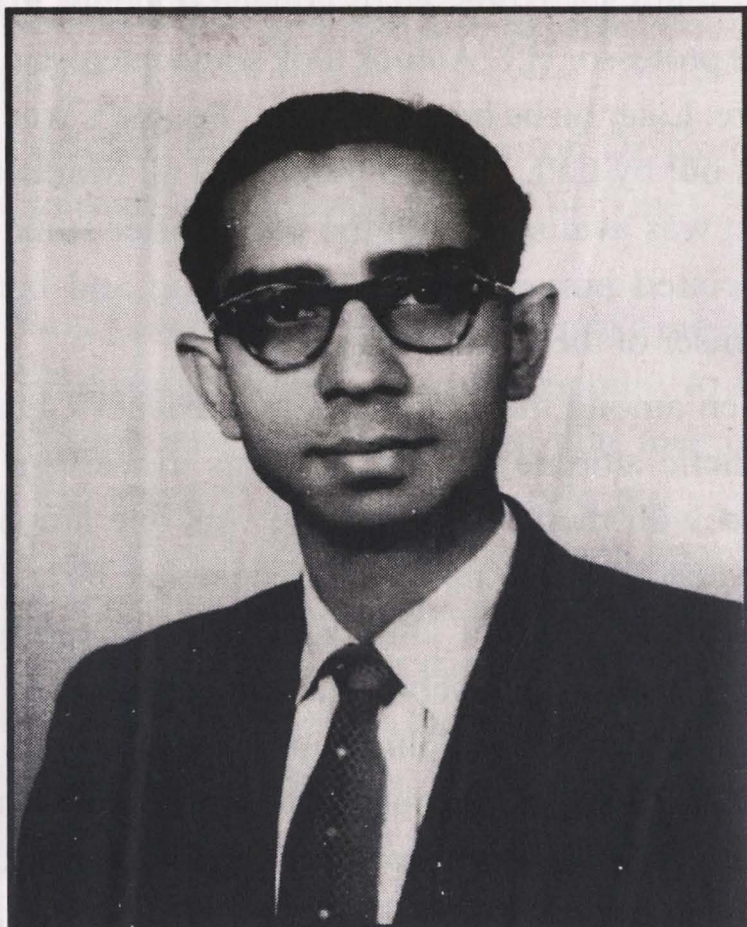
Pandhe who led this agitation solicited the support of Professors for the cause of the students. Pandhe met one Arya Samaj professor who conveyed his displeasure on the compulsion. Ultimately the compulsion was stopped due to

strong resentment expressed by college students. In that process one professor H.L.Auluck took some interest in Marxist literature. Later on he began reading 'People's War' weekly brought out by CPI. He also purchased all Marxist Literature that was available with the party. After some time he disassociated himself from Arya Samaj and became a sympathiser of the Communist Party.

Even among the professors and teachers, many took sympathetic attitude towards students movement and co-operated with them. Prof. Bandre was one among them. Though he was a wellknown Kannada writer, he had a sound proficiency in Marathi language also. As a progressive thinker he read all available Marxist classics and showed keen interest in Marxist philosophy and also had high regard for the Marxists. He not only co-operated with the students movement but gave lectures also in support of them.

Though Pandhe got himself involved in almost all the student activities, he nonetheless was keen on his studies. His political activities in no way upset his studies. As a student of economics he read a large number of books on economic theories. In this way he got exposure to various bourgeois philosophical Literatures and studied Marxist outlook on those bourgeois economic thinkers.

Due to financial difficulties Pandhe had to do part time service during the war period in Joint Yarn Distribution Committee for handloom weavers and was getting Rs.40 per month as remuneration.



Pandhe (1960)

In 1946, the Government of Maharashtra appointed Handloom Weavers Enquiry Committee. Pandhe along with some college students worked as investigator for the committee which gave him some experience about basic research work.

4. Deep in Political activities

In the year 1946, when Pandhe was in the third year of his B.A. Honours degree, elections were to take place for the provincial assemblies. Well known freedom fighter and one of the prominent leaders of Indian National Army (INA) Dr.Lakshmi Saigal came to Sholapur to address a Congress party election meeting.

In the same year, Maharashtra Kisan conference was held in Karanji and Pandhe attended it as an observer from Sholapur. There he met Communist leaders S.V.Parulekar, Godavari Parulekar, and a number of kisan leaders and became acquainted with them. In this conference. he acquired first hand knowledge of problems of peasants and saw the importance of this movement along with trade unions. It was at this conference he met Pramila for the first time.



Pandhe attending I.L.O. conference in Geneva as a member of Indian Delegation in 1978.

Again, in the same year Communist leader B.T.Ranadive came to Sholapur and attended a student's meeting. It was here Pandhe met B.T.R. for the first time. A meeting of Maharashtra Pradesh Trade Union Congress was held there and B.T.R. attended it. Pandhe also attended this meeting as an invitee from Sholapur. There he heard BTR's speech on national and international situation as well as on current trade union situation in India.

In the same year, Communist Party's Sholapur city conference took place wherein Pandhe was elected as a member of the city committee. He took part in the deliberations also.

Following this conference, he was asked by the party leaders to do more work in the trade union field. Party members from the student front were asked to go to working class areas, organise meetings and take part in membership drive campaign of the Lal Bawta Girni Kamgar Union.

Pandhe also did another work for the party. He was entrusted with the job of translating party documents from English into Marathi and he did it fairly well.

At about this time, he came in contact with K.T.Sule, who was the first labour lawyer in the country. He often used to come to Sholapur to attend important labour cases. He was very devoted and honest to the core and maintained a simple living. Naturally, he was also a source of inspiration for Pandhe.

In 1947, Maharashtra State Party Conference was held in Dhule and as a delegate from Sholapur, Pandhe took part

in it. That was the first time Pandhe attended a state conference. B.T.R. guided the deliberations of that conference.

In the beginning of 1948, an All India Students Conference was convened in Bombay. Pandhe attended that conference as a delegate from Sholapur. The Government of Maharashtra banned the public rally at Kamgar Maidan but the conference decided to defy the ban. When the procession was on, the police with a view to disperse the participants fired tear gas shells, made lathi charge and finally resorted to firing. Ahilya Ranganekar was injured in the police firing. Pandhe's younger brother Prabhakar was also with him at that time.

Coinciding with the conference, there was a general body meeting of party members in the student movement. Party leader B.T.R. addressed the gathering. He vehemently criticised P.C. Joshi's policy of trailing behind bourgeois Congress Party. He also advocated a militant line. Delegates were very much inspired by his speech.

In the same year, 1948, Pandhe passed B.A. (Hons) with good marks. For Honours there were some extra papers and he successfully completed every thing and got honours.

5. City Party Secretary

The second Congress of the Communist Party of India was held in Calcutta in the month of March 1948. This conference elected B.T.Ranadive as the General Secretary of the Party in place of P.C. Joshi.

The main political resolution adopted at the Congress termed India's independence as sham and called upon the working class of the country to overthrow the newly installed Congress Government by organising revolution. The Central Government which was closely watching the developments inside the Party, banned Communist Party and its mass organisations one by one.

Throughout the country thousands of Communists were detained and many hundreds went underground.

It was in this background, Pandhe came back to Sholapur from Poona after

appearing for B.A (Hons) examination and got himself involved in the Party work. One day when he was attending a public meeting, his sister came there and informed him about the arrival of police at his house in search of him.

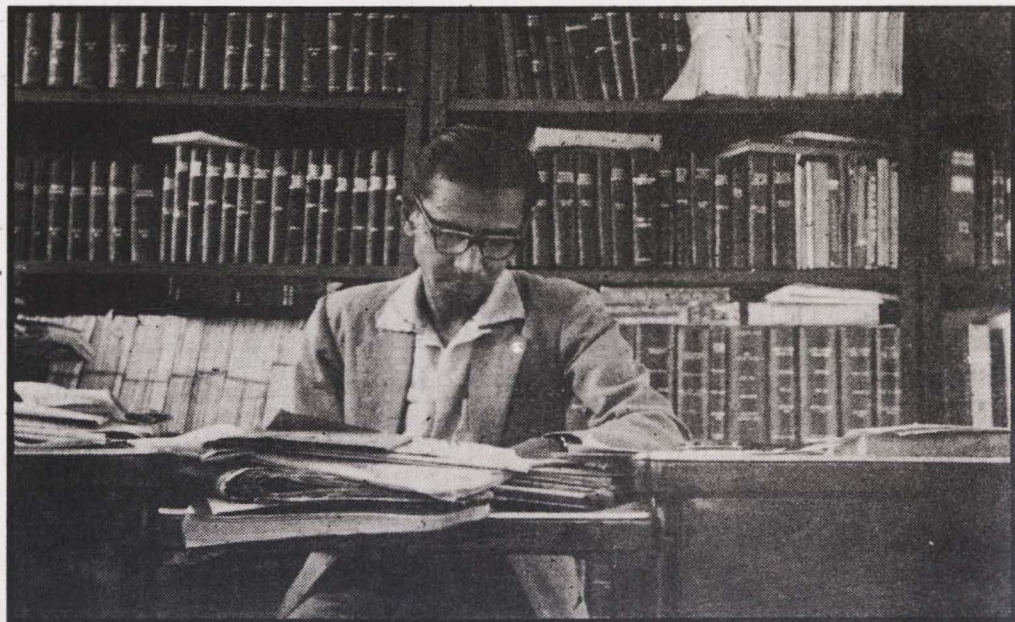
Immediately, party leaders who were there asked Pandhe to go underground and Pandhe disappeared from that place before the arrival of police. But almost all the City Committee members of the party were arrested and kept in jail.

Underground life was a new experience to him. He never experienced that life earlier. For about 27 months he stayed in the houses of workers.

Since a large number of district level leaders were put behind bars, a necessity arose to re-organise the district committee with Pandhe as the Sholapur city committee secretary. He was only 23 years old at that time.

Pandhe by remaining underground moved from house to house to activate Party, trade unions and mass organisations and developed open legal activity wherever possible. It was an adventurous and bad period for the Party.

An All India textile fraction meeting was convened in Bombay secretly to prepare for an all India textile strike and Pandhe was asked to attend it. In the meeting P.Ramamurti explained the situation and gave direction. The meeting decided to call for a strike, but that strike could not materialise.



Working in AITUC as a secretary in 1967.

Meanwhile in 1949 another call was given for an indefinite railway strike in March, But that was also fizzled out.

Since, police was vigorously searching for Pandhe in Sholapur, he had to shift from one place to another. Once, he stayed in the enclosure meant for Criminal Tribes in Sholapur where they were kept behind barbed wire line.

There was a big campaign earlier during the thirties to remove barbed wires and ultimately the government removed them.

Pandhe and others earlier used to go there and conduct political classes.

Now, Pandhe used to go there 2, 3 times in a week and stayed in their huts. The Police came to know of it,

one day sent 150 policemen to arrest Pandhe and others. They surrounded the entire area. Pandhe was worried how to get out of the area. The tribes people came forward to help him. They asked Pandhe to follow them.

There was a sewage canal in that area. It had only knee deep water. But nobody could dare to go near it because of very bad stench. 2,3 tribes people practically lifted Pandhe and waded through the sewage water and took him to the other side of the canal. Pandhe, from there went to weavers houses and escaped.

The police searched for Pandhe for more than 3 hours in the entire criminal tribes settlement area and returned empty handed.

In the same year, some textile mills were closed down in Sholapur and party gave a call to break the lock of the mills and enter to re-open the mill.

So, under the leadership of Waghan Singh, 200 workers tried to break the lock of a mill and all of them were arrested. There was a severe lathi charge also. Arrested people were put under preventive detention. There was a big response from the people for this struggle.

Chakkarai Chettiar, the then President of the AITUC, called for a meeting of AITUC in Bombay. Pandhe attended that meeting under a different name. Though Chakkarai Chettiar was not happy with the adventurous line of the Party he never criticised it openly. In the meeting he condemned the repression on Trade union movement and demanded release of all the persons detained without trail.

During this period there were firings inside Erawada. Sabarmathi, Cuddalore and Salem jails and many comrades were killed.

The Organ of the Communist Information Bureau (COMINFORM) "For Lasting Peace, For Peoples' Democracy" wrote an editorial which criticised the wrong political - ideological line pursued by the then leadership of the Communist Party of India.

This editorial was welcomed by the entire party and encouraged comrades to study Indian situation in an objective manner. Inner-party discussion began for a new approach. The Party was divided into two ideological trends one led by Dange and Ajoy Ghosh another by Rajeshwar Rao.

It had its echo in Sholapur district committee also. The two well-known leaders of the party in the district G.D.Sane and Meenakshi Karadkar left the Party and many supporters also distanced themselves from the Party.

This happened when Pandhe was still underground.

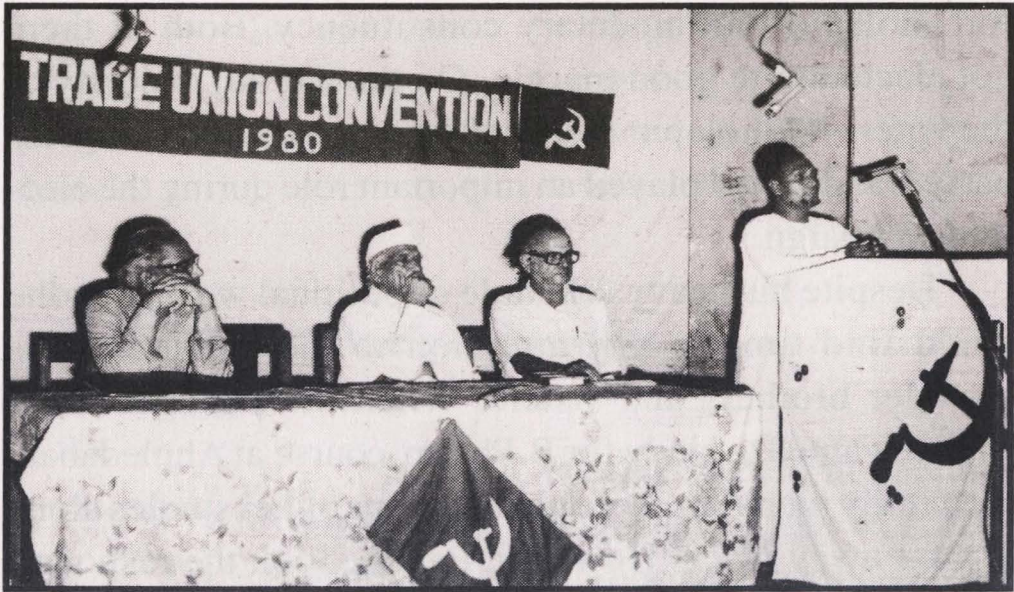
Though he could not come out openly, majority of the Party members of the district were with the party. A section of the party members supported Sane and others, This created certain problems inside the Party. Prolonged inner party discussion took place. Though Pandhe tried his best to unite the party, it was difficult to carryout. Sane and his supporters criticised Pandhe for all the ills. They did not say a word about the wrong party policy but blamed Pandhe for all the debacles.

It was shocking for Pandhe who sincerely tried to implement the early line, as a true soldier of the Party. So, objecting these adverse criticism he proposed to step down from the post of City Party secretaryship.

Seeing the ideological division in the Party, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union intervened in the situation and a four member delegation consisting of Ajoy Ghosh, S.A.Dange, Rajeswar Rao and M.Basavapunnaiah went to Moscow to discuss the differences with the Soviet Party leadership. The delegation met Comrade Stalin who intervened and gave a proper advice. Accordingly a document was prepared about the approach towards Indian revolution as a basis of Party unity.

Comrade S.V. Parulekar who was underground invited a two member representation to brief on the report of the Party mission to Moscow. The Sholapur committee nominated Pandhe and Ramayya Soma to meet Parulekar. The delegation met M.Basavapunnaiah in a secret place along with Parulekar and Basavapunniah explained about the Moscow visit and gave directions regarding unification of the Party on the basis of new document. The Sholapur unit of the Party was unified on the basis of the advice given by Com.Basavapunnaiah and S.V. Parulekar.

In the middle of 1951 the ban on the party was lifted. So, Pandhe came out openly. At that time, there was a talk of uniting the unions led by the Communist Party and Peasants and Workers Party. A proper person with adequate trade union and political knowledge was required to carry out this task and Communist Party proposed the name of



Attending a Trade Union Convention at Port Blair along with Freedom fighter Prithvi Singh Azad in 1980

Pandhe for the joint secretaryship of the united union. Sane and others opposed the name of Pandhe. Com.S.G.Sardesai and a senior communist leader who attended union meeting supported the name of Pandhe. Ultimately, Pandhe's name was endorsed by the union. R.K.Khadilkar who belonged to the Peasants and Workers Party, became the president of the union.

This unifying attempt derived good response and its membership increased considerably and the number of struggles also went up.

The first general election took place in the beginning of 1952. G.D. Sane was the candidate of People's Front which included Communist Party and Peasants and Workers Party for Sholapur Assembly constituency and Peasants and Workers Party candidate Shankar Rao More

for Sholapur parliamentary constituency. Both of them got elected with good margin. On the whole, majority of the voters in Sholapur district voted against the Congress party. Pandhe had played an important role during the election campaign.

Despite his heavy schedule of political work, Pandhe could find time to pay attention to the studies of his younger brothers and sisters. When his younger sister Malati wanted to study for B.Pharm course at Ahmedabad, the family members were not in favour of her studies alone at a far away place. However, Pandhe took the responsibility of her studies and engaged himself in two tutorial jobs to earn sufficient money for 4 years. He also helped her to study for M.Pharm. Later she got doctorate in Pharmacology and played a prominent role in strengthening Ayurveda at the national level.

Pandhe was also elected as a Secretary of Sholapur Branch of Goa Freedom Struggle Association which arranged several satyagrahis to enter Goa State in a non-violent manner.

He also edited a party weekly *Marathi EKJUT* which highlighted peoples struggles. He joined Sholapur Journalist Association and was elected as a secretary in 1955.

6. Back to Studies

In 1953, Pandhe wanted to continue his studies. He wanted to join M.A. But party leaders did not like that idea. They thought that Pandhe may leave the movement after his Post-graduation. The District Committee of the Party refused to give permission.

Pandhe approached the State Committee with a request to permit him to do his M.A. State Committee accepted his request.

He joined M.A. and took the curriculum of 8 papers and studied hard. While carrying out his Party work for two years he could find time at night for his studies. However there was no M.A. course in Sholapur College and some books were available only in Poona. He took 2½ months leave from the Party and went to Poona, studied 16 hours a day and completed his study and then passed M.A.

Since he was an outside student, authorities of the Gokhale Library in Poona did not permit him to use their library. He approached Prof. D.R.Gadgil, who was a director of that institute and who alone could grant permission. He allowed Pandhe magnanimously to use the library and take books for reference knowing fully well about his political and trade union connections. Otherwise Pandhe might have been forced to purchase 125 books needed for his study which was beyond his means.

This was how Pandhe came in contact with Dr.Gadgil.

After the results were out when Pandhe went to thank Dr.Gadgil, he told Pandhe that since he had done his M.A. on his own without any help why he did not go for Doctorate. He further told Pandhe that he stopped taking students for Ph.D., but as a special case he could guide Pandhe for Ph.D., Pandhe thought that it was a prudent advice and accepted his suggestions. He, without consulting anybody immediately enrolled his name for Ph.D in Poona University.

Though Pandhe hurriedly enrolled himself for Ph.D., he could not spare much time for his research. He had to attend various types of work allotted by the Party. The political and union activities did not allow him to concentrate on his studies. Samyuktha Maharashtra movement, Goa liberation movement took his considerable time. Moreover, Pandhe was the secretary of Goa Vimochana Samity at Sholapur.

All these compelling reasons delayed his thesis work.

Dr. D.R. Gadgil who noticed the inordinate delay on the part of Pandhe in submitting his thesis sent a letter to



Outside Kremlin near Lenin Mausoleum, Moscow in
1988(Pandhe 2nd from the left)

him in which he stated that since he decided not to take anymore student for research, Pandhe should complete his thesis within a shortest possible time and he also assured Pandhe that he may arrange a scholarship for him if he wants to continue his research or else Pandhe should give up that work.

Pandhe was keen on completing his thesis. He contacted state party leadership for permission and got it. He went to Poona and completed his thesis including field work within the stipulated time. He also got the scholarship of about 250 rupees per month.

The Poona University to whom he submitted his thesis, appointed V.V.Giri and Prof. Dunlop from Harvard University as referee for the thesis and submit valuation report. Both of them approved the thesis and the University awarded him Doctorate in 1960.

But, when Pandhe submitted his thesis for approval, communist leader S.A.Dange asked Pandhe to go to Delhi and work in the AITUC headquarters. So, he proceeded to Delhi in September 1958 and joined AITUC head quarters.

7. Family life

In the year 1957 Pandhe married Pramila in Poona. Their marriage took place on the 14th of July. Pramila belonged to a railway officer's family. Her father G.V.Wad was a class I officer in Railway, stationed at Bhusawal. She studied upto 9th standard. There were two teachers in her school who were Communists and Pramila came to know about communism through these teachers.

At the age of 17, she was married to Dattatreya Govind Limaye, a Civil Engineer. His family was a communist family. So, after the marriage, Dattatreya encouraged Pramila in social service work.

Pandhe was a close friend of Dattatreya. He used to go to his house and had discussions with him. In that process, he knew Pramila.

After the second world war was over, Pramila was working among women, par-

ticularly among refugees. Datta's niece Ambu Limaye who was also a Communist, took part in the social service work along with Pramila. Both of them used to go to slum areas and help women.

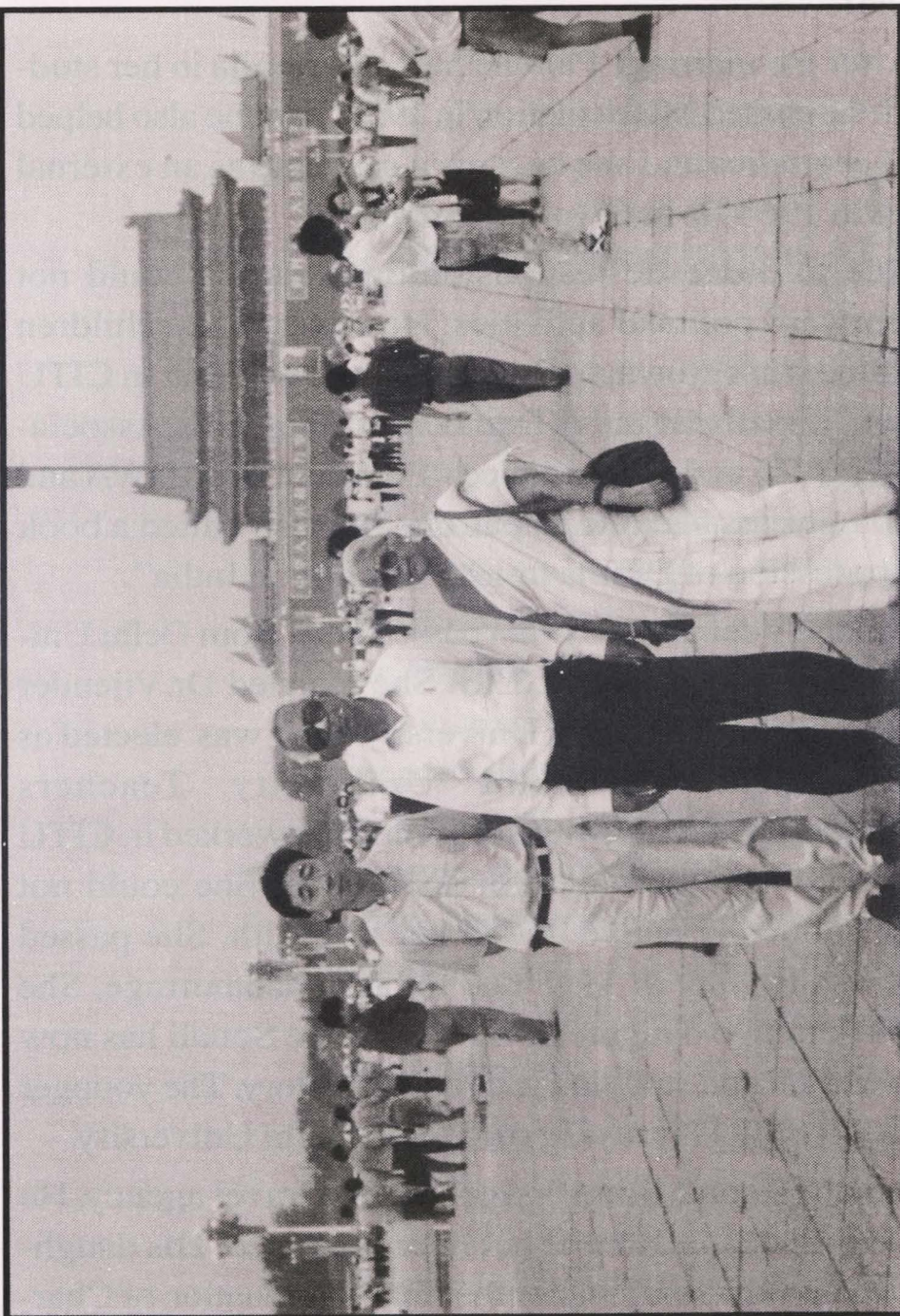
During 1948-1951 period when the Communist party was under ban, Pramila worked as a Party courier along with Raghunath Deshmukh, B.D.Gujarathi and B.T.Ranadive's nephew Bhaskar Ranadive. They used to take letters from Poona to Bombay. At that time Pandhe also was in underground. After 1952, Pramila was doing party work in Poona. When Koyna dam was constructed Dattatreya got a job there. They lived in Koyna dam area. There also Pramila continued her social service. At the end of 1954 Limaye got some ailment and hospitalised. He was operated for gall bladder problem. But due to Doctors negligence he died.

After her husband's death, Pramila went back to Bombay and stayed with her brother M.G.Wad in Dadar. After 2 months she went back to Poona to continue her matriculation studies. She stayed in a hostel at Seva Sadan.

By this time Pandhe also came to Poona when he got fellowship from Gokhale Institute for his Ph.D studies.

Pandhe used to meet her at her hostel. Pramila had to face some difficulties in the hostel and could not concentrate on her studies properly. In this period friendship between Pandhe and Pramila developed and they decided to marry. The marriage was solemnised on 14th July 1957.

In 1958, when Pandhe was called for AITUC work the family shifted to Delhi. Their daughter Ujwala was born on



Pandhe with Pramila in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1997

19th June 1958 and their son Milind was born on 11th January 1960.

After the marriage Pandhe helped Pramila in her studies and she passed Matriculation in 1958. Pandhe also helped her in her studies and she became a graduate as an external student in 1964 from Gwalior University.

Due to domestic responsibilities Pramila could not carry forward political activities. However, when children were some what grown up Pramila started working in CITU and later joined All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) and became Vice - President of AIDWA and after some years became its patron. She also edited a book on "suppression of Drama in 19th Century in India".

Pandhe's daughter Ujwala passed B.A. from Delhi University and later became L.L.B. She married Dr. Vijender Sharma, a lecturer in Delhi University. who was elected as the President of Delhi University Teachers Association(DUTA). Ujwala for some time worked in CITU and worked as a journalist for some time. She could not remain politically active due to her ill health. She passed away on 28th May in 1998 due to brain haemorrhage. She gave birth to two daughters. The elder one Sonali has now passed M.Phil and studying for Ph.D in history. The younger daughter Rupali is studying for B.A in Delhi University.

Pandhe's son Milind is working in a travel agency. He married Sulochana Talreja, but later separated. His daughter Monali is now studying for the final examination of Chartered Accountancy course.

8. At the Headquarters of AITUC

After the arrival of Pandhe in Delhi to work in the Central Office of AITUC, Dange formed a syllabus committee for trade union classes. The committee consisted of Indrajit Gupta, S.Y.Kolhatkar, Satish Loomba, Pandhe and Rajbahadur Gour. Pandhe was nominated as Convenor of the syllabus committee. He took one year to prepare 30 lecture notes which included laws of social development, capitalistic economy, socialism, labour laws in the country, history of International trade union movement, history of Indian Trade Union movement, organisation and functions of trade unions etc.,

The syllabus was published by AITUC in 1961.

The AITUC started a sanatorium in the middle of fifties at Betul in Madhya Pradesh in co-operation with World Federation of Trade Unions(WFTU) to help

the sick trade union leaders during recuperation. For some time it was run well but later it could not function properly due to lack of proper management. The AITUC activities around the area being weak, it was difficult to pay attention to it. Hence, it became a drag on AITUC resources and it was decided to wind up the sanatorium. Dange gave the responsibility to Pandhe. He along with Keikar from Nagpur completed the work successfully.

Pandhe also prepared notes for many wage boards. It began with sugar wage board, A memorandum on behalf of AITUC was prepared by Pandhe. It outlined how much wage should be given to sugar workers in the light of recommendation of 15th Indian Labour Conference. Similarly Pandhe prepared or helped to prepare notes for other wage boards including Engineering and Jute wage boards.

In 1959 under the leadership of Pandhe an AITUC delegation was sent to Prague to attend Czechoslovakian Trade Union conference. This delegation included Amar Sheikh, a well known singer from Maharashtra. In 1961 Pandhe attended Social Security Committee of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) held at Prague. He also visited WFTU head quarters and met Louis Sallaint, General Secretary. He visited Soviet Union after the meeting.

In Ahmedabad and various other places, Consumer Price Index (CPI) Numbers were manipulated which cheated the workers to the tune of hundreds of crores of rupees. Indulal Yagnik leader of Mahagujarat Janata Parishad requested AITUC to help in studying the fraudulent index. Accordingly Pandhe was sent to Ahmedabad for preparing a report. Later



Meeting with President of India Sri K.R. Narayanan along with Mrs. Ching Lan, wife of Dr. Kotnis in 1992

AITUC also deputed Pandhe to study the price index in Hyderabad and Delhi. He gathered all facts and figures and thoroughly exposed the index fraud. A big campaign was made by AITUC to rectify the price index. The Government was forced to correct the figures and the workers got substantial rise in D.A.

Pandhe also prepared a memorandum to the Bonus Commission. He also attended a number of Tripartite Committees on behalf of AITUC such as Steering group on wages and Central board for workers education etc.,

During this period AITUC formed N.M. Joshi Memorial School of trade unions and Pandhe was nominated as

the director of the School. Some trade union classes were conducted on behalf of the School in different states.

AITUC published workers education series and Pandhe was the Convenor of the Editorial Board. It published "Common market what it is?" This book comprised three main articles by Rajni Palme Dutt, S.A.Dange and third one by Pandhe and it also included other informative materials collected by Pandhe.

On the eve of 1962 general election, Pandhe wrote a pamphlet for the Party, "Wages since Independence" for election propaganda. Pandhe also prepared material for "Party Speaker" an election bulletin brought out by the Party for campaigners.

When Pandhe joined AITUC headquarters he found AITUC accounts were not properly maintained and audited by competent persons for 5, 6 years. So he talked to Dange and suggested preparation of accounts as per accounting system and auditing it through qualified auditor. After proper auditing, accounts were submitted in the Coimbatore AITUC conference in 1961. Dange appreciated the system.

Pandhe was one of the major organisers of the Coimbatore Conference from the Centre along with K.G.Srivastava.

On the 13th September, 1963, The Communist Party and AITUC organised 'Great March to Parliament' the first of its kind in India. Dange gave some major responsibilities to Pandhe. The demonstration went upto the gate of Parliament which was addressed by Dange and others.

9. Inner - Party crisis and split

Since the 4th Congress of the Communist Party of India held at Palghat in 1956, two distinct trends began emerging inside the Communist Party. One trend insisted on National democratic revolution under the joint leadership of National Bourgeoisie and working class, i.e., Communist Party's collaboration with the Congress and sharing power. The other trend was People's Democratic revolution under the leadership of working class. The front would consist of peasantry and other toiling sections to fight against the big bourgeois-land lord alliance.

P.C.Joshi, S.A. Dange, C.Rajeswar Rao represented the former trend and B.T.Ranadive, P.Sundarayya, M. Basava punnaiah, Jyoti Basu, Surjeet, Muzaffar Ahmed, Promod Das Gupta represented the latter trend.

The inner-party crisis deepened in the next few years and it found its echo inside AITUC also. Dange had high hopes that Pandhe would support his political line but Pandhe did not agree with his line. He fully supported People's democratic revolutionary line.

After the death of Party's General Secretary Ajoy Ghosh in January 1962, the crisis became acute and the party split took place in April, 1964 with 32 members from the National Council walking out of the meeting and forming CPI(M).

One incident took place at this time. Dange and Mrs. Dange were residing in a house which was in the name of Rajya Sabha M.P. Niren Ghosh. On the eve of the Party split, Niren Ghosh with a view to vacate Dange family, surrendered that house to the Government. Dange and Mrs. Dange had no place to stay. Dange therefore shifted to A.S.R. Chari's residence. However, Mrs. Dange preferred to stay with Pandhe's family.

Pandhe agreed and Dange and Mrs. Dange arrived at their residence in North Avenue and stayed there for some time.

By this time P. Ramamurti's wife Ambal fell ill due to mental stress and had to be hospitalised. Since Ramamurti stayed near Pandhe's residence, he requested Pandhe that his two young daughters should be provided food in Pandhe's house till his wife was discharged. Dange stayed with Pandhe's family while Ramamurti's daughters were also coming for food in Pandhe's house at the same time. After a few days, Dange got some accommodation somewhere and



Pandhe addressing the conference of Czechoslovak
Trade Union in 1959 at Prague

they moved to that place. After split in the Party Pandhe joined the party which later on came to be known as the CPI(M).

In the month of May in 1964, CPI(M) Polit Bureau member M.Basavapunnaiiah asked Pandhe to help the new Party centre. Pandhe sent a letter to Dange requesting him to relieve him from AITUC office and joined the CPI(M) centre which was also the Parliamentary office of the CPI(M). He joined Ramdass and Desh Raj Chadha in maintaining that Centre. After some time Shiv Varma joined them. Since it was the Party's Parliamentary office Pandhe had to look after that work along with Co-ordination of trade union movement under the leadership of the newly formed party.

10. 14 Month underground life

The Congress Government at the Centre viewed that with the emergence of CPI(M) the left trend would gain strength in the country and decided to strike at the root of the new Party by unleashing repressive measures and it selected December 30th in 1964 for that purpose.

When the new Central Committee of CPI(M) was about to meet on the 30th December, 1964 at Trichur in Kerala, it swooped on the entire leadership at the early hours of 30th December and arrested all the leaders who were there and over 1000 leaders and cadres all over the country.

On the 29th December, Pandhe was in Kancheepuram in TamilNadu to address a general body meeting of weavers. After the meeting he stayed at the residence of K.S.Parthasarathy, a well-known Party

leader and President of Tamil Nadu Handloom Weavers Union.

In the midnight, police knocked at the door of Parthasarathy and took him to police station. He also hurriedly went with them lest they may search the house and arrest Pandhe also who was sleeping inside the house. After the police left, his family members suggested Pandhe to leave the place immediately since there was a possibility of police coming again and search the house.

Next morning Pandhe came to Chennai by bus and went straight to the State Committee office only to be told by the veteran comrade Annachi Sankara Narayanan that all the comrades in the office were arrested in the midnight and advised Pandhe to go to Madras Central Station and stay there and take his train to Delhi.

Pandhe accordingly went to the Madras Central Station and entered Grand Trunk Express for Delhi. But he was not aware that a warrant was pending against him in Delhi.

The Delhi Police which came to know of Pandhe's travel by Grand Trunk Express through the Reservation chart, waited for him at the New Delhi Station. When Pandhe came out from the station and hired a taxi suddenly a police officer came and occupied the front seat and told Pandhe that he was under arrest.

Pandhe told him that he had to go to his home first and then to police station. After reaching his house Pandhe asked him how he could be arrested without proper warrant? Meanwhile Pramila Pandhe told him in a hush up tone that Major



Meeting with A.B. Vajpayee, Prime Minister, to handover a cheque for Rs. 10 Crores
as the contribution of coal workers for Gujarat Earth Quake relief

Jaipal Singh sent word that Pandhe should go underground. Pandhe took some money and escaped through the back door of the house. As soon as he left, police came to his house with an arrest warrant and searched for Pandhe but return empty handed.

Pandhe who hurriedly left his home went straight to R.K.Kadilkar's house and from there to K.G.Srivastava's house who was a close confidant of Dange. K.G. was surprised to see Pandhe but told him that he can confidently stay with him.

Next day he shifted to some working class quarters. Pandhe wanted to contact Major Jaipal Singh but he had to wait for somedays since Major was also underground.

Finally, when he met Major Jaipal Singh who asked him to proceed to Bombay and contact S.Y. Kolhatkar who was also underground. Ramdass also was there. So, Pandhe went to Bombay and met Kolhatkar and Ramdass. By that time a message came from jail comrades who asked them to establish a Party centre in Calcutta.

Kolhatkar and Pandhe came to Calcutta and stayed in a hotel. Com.Ramdass also reached Calcutta separately. At a particular time they met Ramdass and with the help of some local comrades, they got some place to stay. Then Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri, a Central Committee member was also contacted and he also came to Calcutta. N.Prasada Rao from Andhra was to be contacted and for that purpose Pandhe was sent to Vijayawada and he met him and informed about party's decision.



Pandhe receiving a Memento from Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma , President of India in 1997.

A particular day was fixed for Central Committee meeting and on that day Pandhe, Ravi Sinha, Ramdass, Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri, Major Jaipal Singh, Prasada Rao and one comrade from Karnataka met and under the guidance of Jyoti Basu decided to form an underground Centre. The West Bengal State Committee had nominated Sailen Das Gupta in charge of necessary technical arrangements. Thus a proper mechanism was set up in Calcutta. A house was rented out in Dharamtala Street for this purpose. Stenographer Unnikrishnan and Chari from Andhra were inducted for office work. Thus a Party centre was formed, which guided the entire party till the middle of 1966 when the leaders were released. This underground Committee used to meet

Jyoti Basu periodically and take his advice. Pandhe was included in the reorganised underground Central Committee.

It was during this period “People’s Democracy” weekly was started with Jyoti Basu as editor. Dramatist Utpal Dutt rendered big help in this venture. Pandhe used to go to his house during night time to collect his article and discuss party matters. Pandhe was also asked to contact Dr. Ashok Mitra who was working as a professor in the Indian Statistical Institute at that time. Pandhe used to go to his office under a false name Sadasivam. Afterwards Ashok Mitra began writing for “People’s Democracy” under a pen name.

Within 3 months, its circulation went upto 13 thousand and it guided the entire Party. In the beginning it was 12 pages and afterwards it was increased to 16 pages.

11. Back at AITUC office

While looking after “People’s Democracy” along with Ramdass, Pandhe began developing contacts with the trade union cadres in West Bengal. Manoranjan Roy and Md. Ismail were with the Centrist group at that time. They sent word to Pandhe and conveyed their desire to work for the Party. This was as per advice given to them by Jyoti Basu.

Pandhe was gradually going to other states to develop trade union contacts. Thus a nucleus took shape. A preliminary type of countrywide trade union contact was formed.

By April 1966, those who were arrested in 1964 were released by the Government of India.

Dange without giving time to others, all on a sudden called for AITUC conference. Those who were in the CPI(M)

pleaded under the leadership of Comrade Dinen Bhattacharya for the postponement for a couple of months. But Dange refused to agree to this demand.

At that time Pandhe was still underground. His warrant was not cancelled. CPI(M) group leader in Parliament, A.K.Gopalan met the then Home Minister and urged upon him to withdraw the warrant. Then only warrant against Pandhe was withdrawn. He came out openly after 14 months underground life just two days before the AITUC conference.

The AITUC Conference which was held in Bombay in 1966 witnessed heated discussions. Dange had to face barrage of criticism from P.Ramamurti, B.T.Ranadive, Pandhe and others.

When the election for the office - bearers took place, P.Ramamurti was pitted against Dange for the Post of General Secretary. Though he lost the election P. Ramamurti could muster considerable number of votes. One fourth of the delegates supported him.

The AITUC conference elected Pandhe as one of the secretaries and Md.Ismail as one of the Vice-Presidents. P.Ramamurti, Jyoti Basu, Monoranjan Roy and Balanandan were elected to the Working Committee and B.T.Ranadive was elected to the General Council.

The CPI(M) comrades inside the AITUC wanted unity in the organisation. P.Ramamurti moved a resolution "Platform for trade union unity" which was adopted unanimously by the conference.

After this conference, Pandhe again started attending AITUC office. At the same time he was also In-charge of

CPI(M) Parliamentary office. He used to attend parliamentary office between 8.30 and 10 a.m. and remain in the AITUC office between 11 a.m and 5 p.m. Again he would attend Parliamentary office and work upto 9 p.m. Thus he divided his timings.

The CPI(M) team in the Parliament though numerically lesser than CPI's, its performance was far better. M.Basavapunnaiah and Niren Ghosh were in the Rajya Sabha. A.K.Gopalan, Dinen Bhattacharya, Md.Ismail, Anandan Nambiar, R.Umanath, Dr.Saradish Roy, Kolla Venkaiah, and Lakshmi Das were in the Lok Sabha along with others.

A.K.Gopalan was the leader of CPI(M) Group in the Parliament. He combined Parliamentary activities with party work. He used to send CPI(M) MPs to address gate meetings of Hotel workers union, textile and engineering unions in Delhi. He also sent MPs to various states where police repression took place.

Pandhe used to prepare main speeches of CPI(M) MPs whether it was on budget or no - confidence whatever may be. He also helped them by providing important materials for questions in Parliament. A.K.Gopalan's speech on B.M.Kaul's Untold Story, R.Umanath's speech on CIA, could be cited as some of the examples.

Leader of the Civil Rights movement, Barrister N.C.Chatterjee was in the Lok Sabha. He was friendly with A.K. Gopalan and used to visit to CPI(M) Parliamentary office regularly. Pandhe helped him in preparing his speeches also.

In the 1967 general election, CPI(M) got 19 seats in the Lok Sabha. It had many stalwarts like A.K.Gopalan, P.Ramamurti, R.Umanath, K.Anandan Nambiar, E.K.Nayanar, V. Viswanatha Menon, Jyotirmoy Bosu and Md.Ismail. Till 1969 Pandhe helped this team also in Parliamentary activities.

12. Modi Nagar Police firing

In the beginning of 1968 the workers of Modi Nagar textile mills demanded increase in their wages etc., and started struggles. There were three textiles mills at that time which employed over 7 thousand workers. Pandhe used to go there on behalf of AITUC for workers meetings.

In the month of March, when the workers were peacefully demonstrating, the police at the behest of mill owners, opened fire on them and killed 6 workers. At that time Pandhe also was on the spot. Workers stood like a wall around Pandhe and whisked him to the Chawl where they lived.

Then Pandhe came to Delhi and issued a statement on the police firing. After some days a warrant was issued against Pandhe and police came to 4, Ashoka Road to arrest him. A.K.Gopalan who was there asked

police how they could arrest Pandhe without warrant? They have to go to U.P. to bring his warrant since Modi Nagar was part of U.P. State.

When A.K.Gopalan was arguing with the police, Pandhe escaped from that place and stayed at 20, Rajendra Prasad Road where some of the CPI(M) MPs were staying. Afterwards he was changing his residence regularly. While remaining underground Pandhe continued his work to assist M.Ps in their work.

He also attended Burdwan plenum as a delegate and spoke on the ideological issues.

After some months he got bail and attending court at Modinagar. Every month he had to go to court and wait there for the whole day. Then the case, would be posted for the next month. This affected his regular work and he consulted P.Ramamurti. He told Pandhe that since this case was committed to sessions court we could arrange a lawyer, but that lawyer demanded 25 thousand rupees to appear on behalf of the workers. Ramamurti after seeing the case papers advised Pandhe to appeal to the High Court at Allahabad against the Magistrate's order of committal of the case for trial.

Ramamurti gave a letter of introduction to Pandhe for his lawyer acquaintance in Allahabad. That lawyer's father was a good friend of Ramamurti. Pandhe went to Allahabad and met him who was very much pleased with Ramamurti's letter and took up the case. He argued it very well and quashed the case in two sittings at the Allahabad High Court.

Pandhe produced that order in the sessions court at Meerut and here also the case was quashed. Along with Pandhe about 50 workers who were also co-accused with him were also acquitted.

Our union demanded Judicial enquiry into the police firing and compensation to the victims. Charan Singh, the then Chief Minister of U.P. refused to institute an enquiry and also to pay compensation to the victims.

In the beginning of 1969, Pandhe was asked by the CPI(M) Party leadership to move to Calcutta to look after trade union work. So, he went there, stayed at the party head quarters and began his work.

In between he used to come to Delhi to attend AITUC meetings as the secretary of that organisation and also to attend tripartite meetings on various problems.

The situation inside AITUC began getting worsen day by day.

In 1967, Bengal Pradesh Trade Union Congress (BPTUC) planned to conduct its conference. Manoranjan Roy, general secretary of the BPTUC requested Pandhe to help him in preparing reports etc.,

At that time, the dominant leadership of AITUC formed a large number of bogus trade unions with a view to get majority at the forthcoming state conference in Bengal. Their plan was to bring a large number of delegates from these bogus unions to shore up their strength.

Pandhe wrote a letter about these fictitious unions to the General Secretary of AITUC after getting factual posi-

tion from Monoranjan Roy. They claimed membership for some unions where the industry itself was closed long before.

Dange who could not refute the charges levelled by Pandhe, issued a circular against him to all general council members stating that Pandhe had removed from office certain valuable documents. This charge was made by Dange just to prevent Pandhe from attending AITUC work.

AITUC's car was in Pandhe's name and he returned it to Dange stating that the car was more valuable than the affiliation papers.

But in the AITUC Working Committee meeting a number of leaders, particularly Indrajit Gupta, Y.D.Sharma, Kalyan Roy, K.T.K.Thangamani and certain others argued in favour of Pandhe.

In the overall interests of AITUC and keeping its unity intact they insisted to withdraw all charges levelled against Pandhe. P.Ramamurti had a talk with CPI leadership on this issue. So, the AITUC leadership withdrew charges against Pandhe and he joined AITUC Central Office again.

In an earlier general council meeting, due to political vendetta B.D.Joshi had levelled serious charges against Pandhe such as disruptive activities, forming rival unions, helping rival unions, belittling AITUC leaders, bringing AITUC into disrepute etc., which were far from truth. That was also subjected to a heated discussion in the AITUC.

When Pandhe was underground he gave all the accounts paper, receipt book, cash book and vouchers etc. to the Au-

ditor of AITUC Bal Bhagawat to keep them safe under his custody. Bal Bhagawat was staying nearer to Pandhe's house. One day Pandhe's house in North Avenue was raided by the police in search of him.

On seeing this, the Auditor's wife out of fear of police, destroyed the receipt book and other documents. The entire accounts were destroyed. The auditor Bal Bhagawat was a supporter of Dange.

A charge was made against Pandhe for not giving accounts for 3 years. Pandhe explained the events that took place. Dange already said in the 1966 AITUC conference that some important work given to Pandhe was not done. At the first General Council meeting after the conference, M.S.Krishnan, AITUC treasurer stated that Pandhe did not submit accounts. Pandhe narrated in detail what actually had happened.

AITUC decided to enquire about it. Bal Bhagawat who was the auditor of AITUC told the entire truth. Ultimately that charge against Pandhe also was dropped. However Pandhe had to face difficulties one by one while working in AITUC.

At the general council and working committee meetings, B.T.Ranadive, P.Ramamurti, Jyoti Basu, Niren Ghosh and Pandhe severely criticised Dange for his undemocratic functioning as well as for his undermining working class struggles and for not following the resolution on the "platform of trade union unity" moved by P.Ramamurti at the AITUC conference.

Because of Dange's adamant attitude, about 300 unions

led by CPI(M) activists could not be affiliated to AITUC. Dange was forming rival unions against genuine unions led by CPI(M) and got affiliated to AITUC. So, it was clear that he was not keen on maintaining unity in AITUC. CPI(M) leaders also began to feel that working in the AITUC was not practically possible.

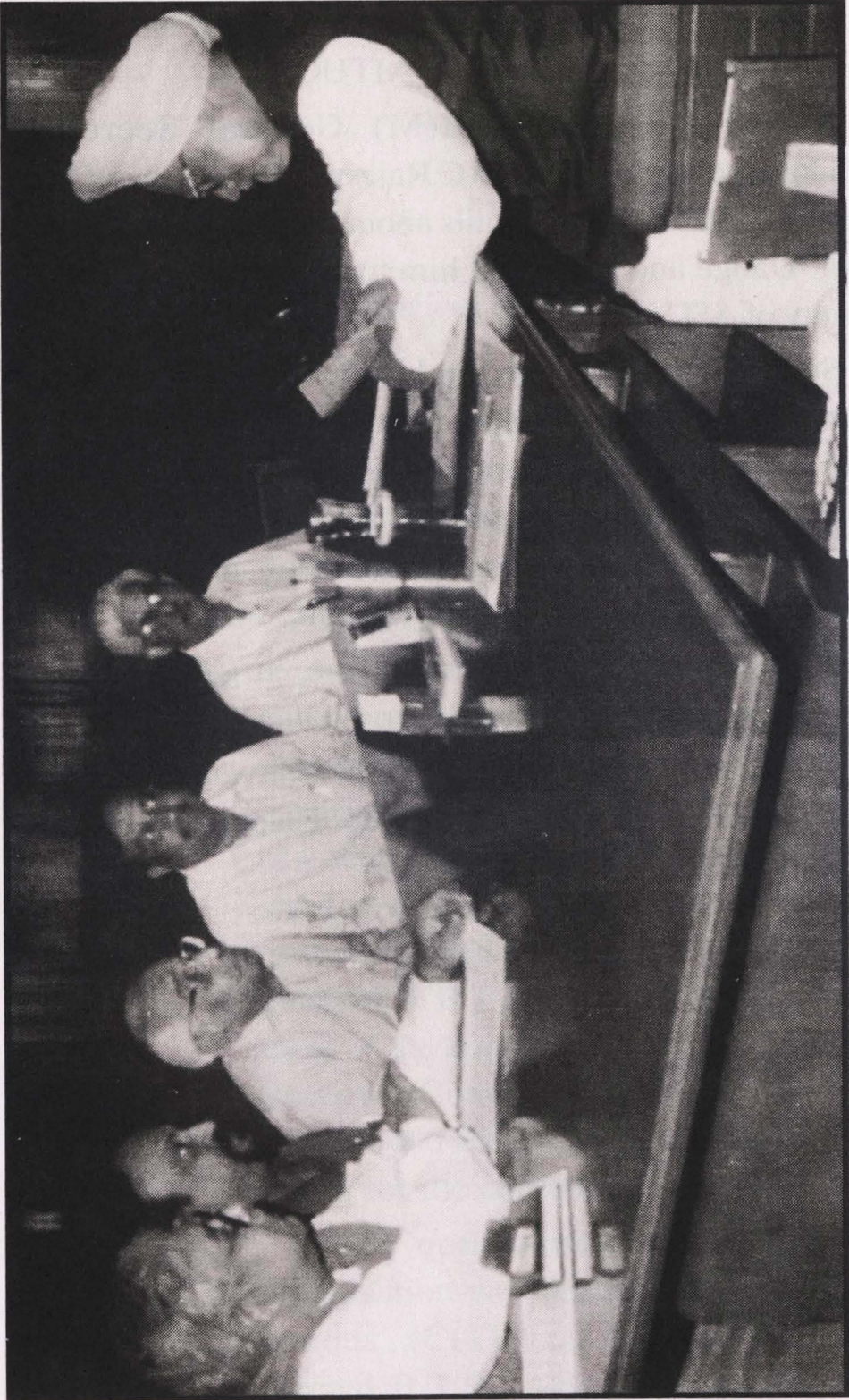
Then the question of holding All India Conference also cropped up. BPTUC General Secretary Manoranjan Roy sent a letter to the AITUC leadership that the forthcoming conference should be held in Calcutta. Dange did not agree to that proposal. He said it would not be a unity conference and it was an attempt to capture AITUC.

He and his followers decided to hold that conference at Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. Dange told without any compunction, that if the conference was held at Calcutta he might be manhandled. He did not want to go to Calcutta.

Working Committee members belonged to CPI(M) met together and decided to call a convention in Goa to consider the situation and decide appropriate steps. The Goa State committee of AITUC led by Gerald Periera made all arrangements for this meet.

A Convention consisting of the general council members of AITUC and office - bearers of State Committees took place on 9th and 10th of March, 1970.

P.Sundarayya, General Secretary of the CPI(M) and M.Basavapunnaiah, member of the Polit Bureau of CPI(M) also attended this Convention as observers to know the exact position. The Convention reviewed all the developments



Meeting with Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India in 2007 in a CPSTU Delegation.

in various states. Central leaders explained how Dange was not prepared to keep the unity of AITUC.

At this juncture CPI(M) General Secretary P.Sundarayya wrote a letter to C.Rajeswar Rao, General Secretary of the CPI giving details about the disruptive activities of Dange and requested him to take steps to preserve the unity of AITUC.

Sundarayya also stated in his letter that if Rajeswar Rao wanted to preserve the unity then, all the 300 unions to be affiliated with AITUC and forming rival unions and following un-democratic methods should be stopped forthwith. He also stated that democratic functioning and implementation of the platform of trade union unity was a must.

C.Rajeswar Rao rejected the suggestions of P.Sundarayya in an outright manner.

After detailed discussion, the Goa Convention decided to call a conference of trade unions at Calcutta from 27 to 31st May, 1970.

13. Formation of CITU

As decided by the Goa Convention, a conference of trade union delegates commenced on the 27th April, 1970 at the Indoor stadium at Calcutta.

The call for a conference at Calcutta evoked good response and created great enthusiasm all over the country. Many comrades who were inactive due to Dange's recalcitrant attitude welcomed the formation of a new organisation. Though the time was short, even then more than 4 thousand delegates attended this conference. Under the guidance of B.T. Ranadive, Pandhe prepared most of the documents of the conference. Reception Committee under the Chairmanship of Jyoti Basu made excellent arrangements for the conference.

The conference named the new organisation as 'Centre of Indian Trade Unions' (CITU) on 30 May 1970 and elected B.T.Ranadive as President and

P.Ramamurti as General Secretary and M.K.Pandhe, Niren Ghosh and Manoranjan Roy as secretaries.

At the conclusion of the conference a massive rally was held at the Brigade Parade ground which was attended by over 5 lakh workers.

Building a new Organisation

After the foundation conference was over, the imperative need was to establish the head quarters for the new organisation. Naturally it fell on the shoulders of Pandhe. It was a difficult task and Pandhe fulfilled it admirably. In this venture he was helped by the BPTUC leadership.

They provided Parameswar Singh, Biswanath Dasgupta, Prakash Ghosh and Prasantha Ghosh at the initial stages. Sudarshan Roy Chowdhury, a lecturer in a Calcutta college was asked to help the CITU Journal. For sometime Brinda (Karat) also worked in the central office.

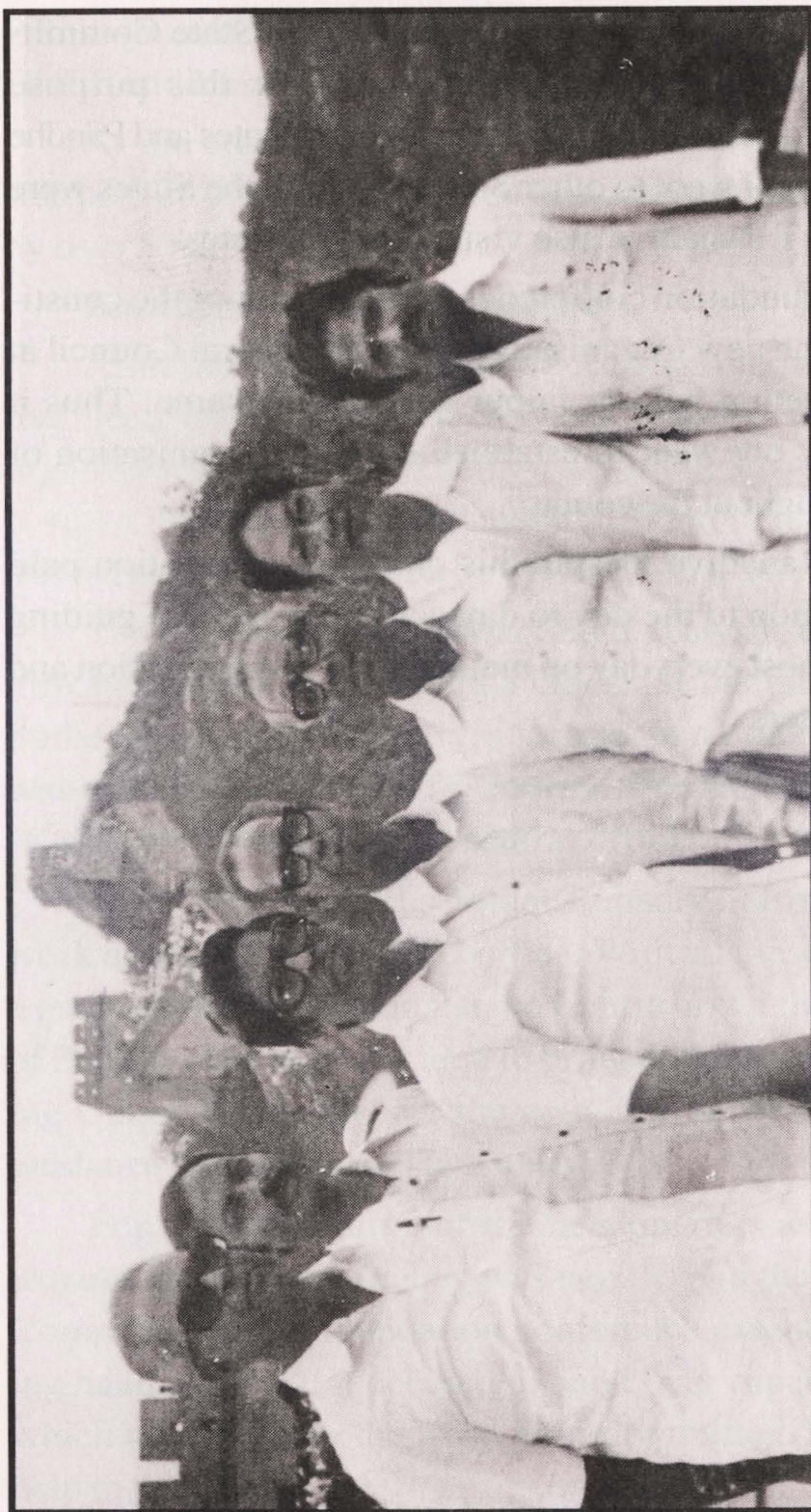
After 7 or 8 months Vimal Ranadive also desired to work as a staff in the CITU office. With all these comrades a team started functioning at the Centre under the guidance of Pandhe. The team decided to bring out a journal. "Working Class" to co-ordinate the activities as well as to give guidance to the various state units.

For the functioning of the headquarters as well as to expand its activities money was needed and the Reception Committee of the foundation conference extended a helping hand to CITU. It decided to hand over rupees one lakh which was saved by the Reception Committee. It was a big help to the CITU.

The CITU leadership decided to form State Committees and conduct State conferences. For this purpose P.Ramamurti had undertaken a tour to many States and Pandhe and Md. Ismail went to other States. Thus all the States were covered. B.T.Ranadive also visited several states.

The foundation conference could not adopt the constitution for the new Organisation. So, the General Council at its first meeting held at Jaipur adopted the same. Thus it took nearly one year to establish a proper organisation of CITU throughout the country.

B.T. Ranadive. despite his other pre-occupation paid great attention to the day to day activities. He was guiding Pandhe almost everyday on major issues of organisation and policy matters.



A CITU delegation under the leadership of Pandhe which includes Md. Amin, M.M. Lawrence and some others at the Great Wall of China.

14. Braving heavy onslaughts

The Central Government which was keenly watching the emergence of a new militant organisation decided to strike it at the beginning itself.

The first attack came in Durgapur steel plant. For about two weeks the workers fought heroically in protest against victimisation of their leader Dilip Mazumdar. It was a glorious strike. Pandhe went there and helped the leadership of Durgapur union in facing the police repression. The CITU organised solidarity action against the brutal police repression. This struggle enhanced the prestige of CITU. CITU Centre brought out a booklet explaining the glorious struggle of Durgapur workers.

In the year 1971, the Central government brought Family Pension Scheme as part of Employees Provident Fund Scheme. While the other trade union

organisations welcomed the scheme, the CITU thoroughly studied it and pointed out how the workers had to pay more and get less. Pandhe analysed this scheme in depth and wrote a pamphlet **“Family Pension Scheme - A hoax”** and nailed down the arguments thread bare, which was translated and printed in almost all major languages.

In the beginning, many could not fully realise the implications. But when the scheme started getting implemented they came to know the fallacy. Later on, the data provided by the government itself revealed that the out go was less than the income. Finally, when the government wound up the scheme, it had a surplus of 14 thousand crores of rupees.

After this revelation the other trade union organisations understood that the scheme was a hoax. It vindicated the correct stand of CITU.

The Central Government brought out a Compulsory Deposit Scheme by which the workers were forced to deposit the rise in wages compulsorily with the Government. The CITU organised extensive campaign against it. In this campaign Pandhe had an important role. He visited several centres to explain the wage freeze policy of the Government.

In a short time the CITU emerged as one of the major trade union centres at the national level.

15. Trying time

Following the rigged elections in West Bengal in 1972, a heavy repression was let loose on the CPI(M) and CITU cadres and supporters. Hundreds of them killed by Congress - Naxal combine with the connivance of Police. Thousands of comrades who belonged to CPI(M) were driven out from their areas. This terror continued upto January, 1977 when the elections to the Lok Sabha was announced.

During this entire period Pandhe stayed in the Central Committee office in a room near to that of veteran Party leader Muzaffar Ahmed. Once a bomb was hurled at the room where Muzaffar Ahmed stayed and he was shifted to the first floor. Pandhe had opportunity to meet him regularly and discuss several problems of mutual interest.

Pandhe and other comrades had to work under constant threat of the hoodlums.

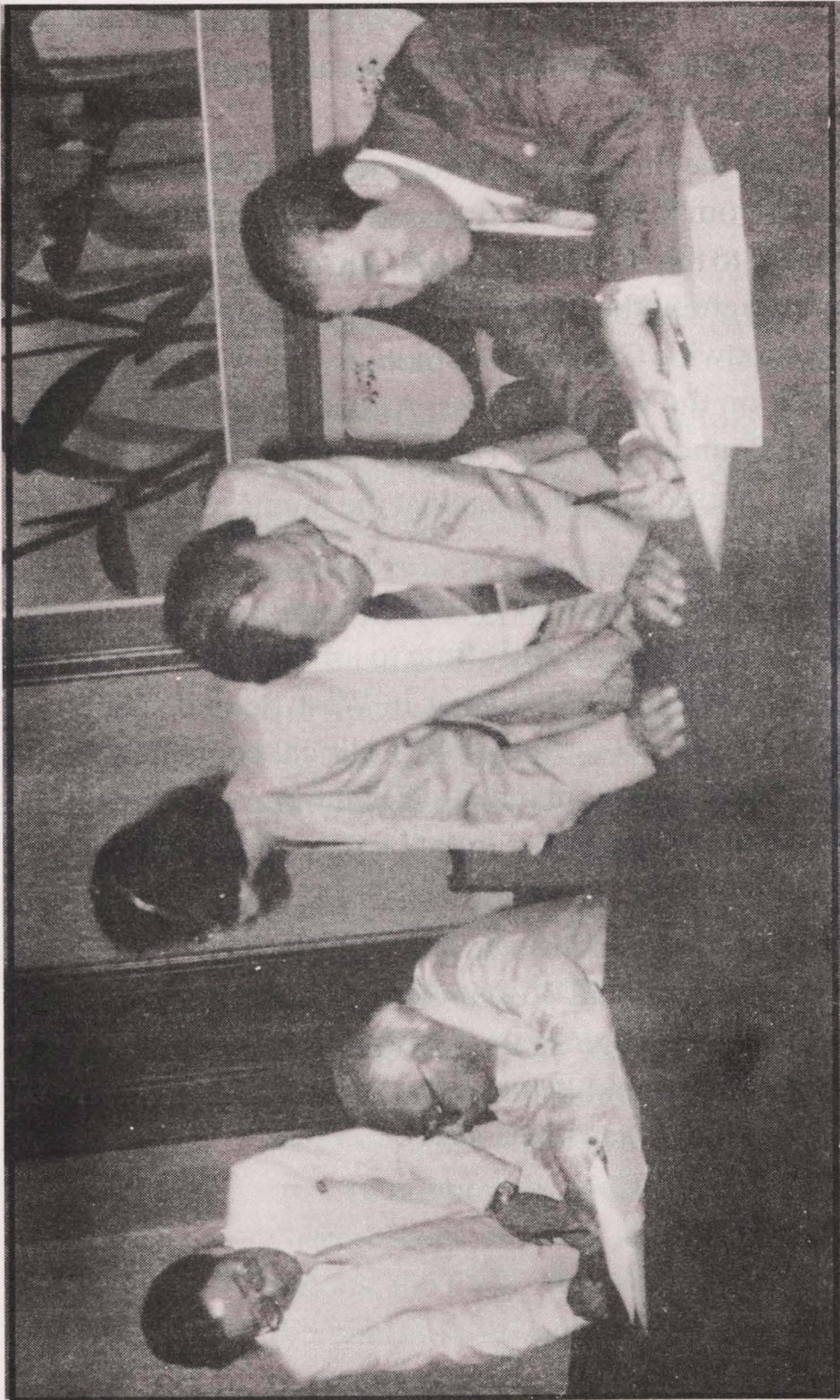
During night time it was very difficult to move. Throughout day and night Party volunteers guarded the office.

Once BMS trade union leader Dattopant Thengdi came to the Central Committee office of the Party and met Pandhe during emergency. He was underground at that time. They wanted to join the campaign conducted by CITU. Pandhe told him that the matter require discussion in the UCTU. Only after 1978 a joint movement with BMS became possible.

In 1973, the second conference of the CITU was held at Ernakulam. Pandhe submitted the work report to the conference. A fraternal delegation from Vietnam attended this conference. It was the first time that an International delegation attended the CITU Conference.

After the conference, the delegation went to Calcutta. They were given a rousing reception there.

During Emergency, Pandhe went underground for some days. Then he came out and continued his work. At that time Pandhe as editor of CITU monthly "The working class" faced many difficulties with the Censor Officers. He was refused permission to publish the declaration of I.L.O. Convention on freedom of Association and right of collective bargaining in the "Working class". The Censor officer raised objection to it. The same officer refused permission even to publish Dimitrov's article on fascism. So, Pandhe filed a case against the Censor officer at the Calcutta High Court and got permission to print it.



Pandhe signing the joint declaration with Confederation of Korean Trade Unions in 1999.

During this period, CITU Working Committee met secretly at Chennai. Comrades who were underground also attended this meeting.

During the Emergency period, the Government reduced the bonus from 8.33 to 4%. It passed a law in the Parliament with regard to this. CITU opposed it and organised a big campaign throughout the country. Pandhe played a crucial role in this nationwide Campaign to mobilise the workers against the attack on the working class. At that time HMS left the National Council of Trade Unions and joined UCTU. The UCTU organised agitation against the bonus reduction and against Emergency.

Due to restrictions on Trade Union activities during Emergency, Pandhe used his time to arrange publication of some books through a publisher in West Bengal. They include "Bonded Labour in India" "Political content of Education", "Child Labour in India", "Tibet from serfdom to slavery", "Social life in Rural India", "Spot light on Steel Industry", "Spot light on coal Industry" etc.

In this period Pandhe also got a fellowship from Indian Council of Historical Research to collect materials on working class upsurge against British rule in Sholapur in 1930. Important unpublished materials were collected from archives and individual interviews.

16. Towards working class unity

As per the decision of the CITU to build the unity of the entire working class on common issues, Pandhe played an important role in developing united actions under the leadership of B.T.Ranadive and P.Ramamurti. CITU issued an appeal to all the trade unions to unite against the policies of the Government of India. As a counter-weight to this policy the then Union Labour Minister, R.K.Khadilkar, called a meeting of INTUC, AITUC and HMS which resulted in the formation of National Council of Trade Unions. It was a clear attempt to isolate CITU and other trade unions which opposed the Government of India's policies.

To counter this nefarious move of the Government of India and its kow-toying unions, the CITU decided in 1973 to take the initiative to call a meeting of other trade unions such as UTUC, UTUC (Lenin

Sarani) TUCC of Forward Bloc, HMKP, All India Insurance Employees Association, Confederation of Central government Employees and Workers, All India State Government Employees Confederation etc., They held a meeting in Delhi and formed United Council of Trade Unions (UCTU).

The UCTU organised several action programmes against compulsory deposit scheme, wage price policy of the Government of India, declaration of emergency and reduction of Bonus from 8.33 to 4 per percent. George Fernandes and M.K.Pandhe were joint convenors of the UCTU. Pandhe played an active role in organising these programmes.

In the year 1974 the All India Railway strike took place which resulted in the victimisation of a large number of railway workers. B.T.Ranadive took the initiative in mobilising legal defence of the victimised railwaymen. Pandhe was co-ordinating the activities from the CITU Center. He wrote to ILO opposing the victimisation and at the intervention of ILO a large number of railwaymen were reinstated. Several prominent lawyers like Sadhan Gupta, Nara narayan Gooptu, Arun Prakash Chatterjee, Salil Ganguly and others gave free service and legal defence to the Railway men. Justice was made available to several railway workers by the remarkable help given by these lawyers. The CITU also collected funds for the relief of the victimised railway workers. UCTU and Pandhe played important role alongwith Com.Samar Mukherjee and Nrisingha Chakraborty.

In the beginning of 1976, HMS agreed to cooperate with UCTU and joint campaign against depredations of emergency was organised all over the country. Pandhe played a key role in co-ordinating activities with HMS.



Expressing Solidarity with Hillington Nurses in U.K. in 1997.

After the withdrawal of emergency, a non-Congress Government was formed at the Centre with Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. The new Government brought Industrial Relations Bill and CITU took initiative in organising a National Convention against the bill in which all the central trade unions including INTUC and BMS were involved. Pandhe was given the responsibility for this as the convenor. This convention decided to organise a massive rally before Parliament. Ultimately the bill could not be pursued by the Government of India.

In 1981, a massive convention was held in Mumbai on common issues facing the working class, which decided to form National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions (NCC). P. Ramamurti moved the main resolution in the convention. Pandhe was a major activist in the functioning of the NCC. In 1981 for the first time a nationwide strike was organised on a common charter of demands. NCC organised several struggles on pressing issues of the working class.

When the Government of India appointed a committee under Dr. Arjun Sen Gupta to propose reorganisation of public sector undertakings, Pandhe appeared before the committee on behalf of CITU and defended the concept of strengthening of the public sector. However, when the report of the committee was submitted to the government it gave recommendations advocating practically dismantling of the public sector in a phased manner. The report was kept secret by the Government. Pandhe managed to get a copy of the report and CITU published it and organised extensive campaign against it. The CITU got support from other Trade

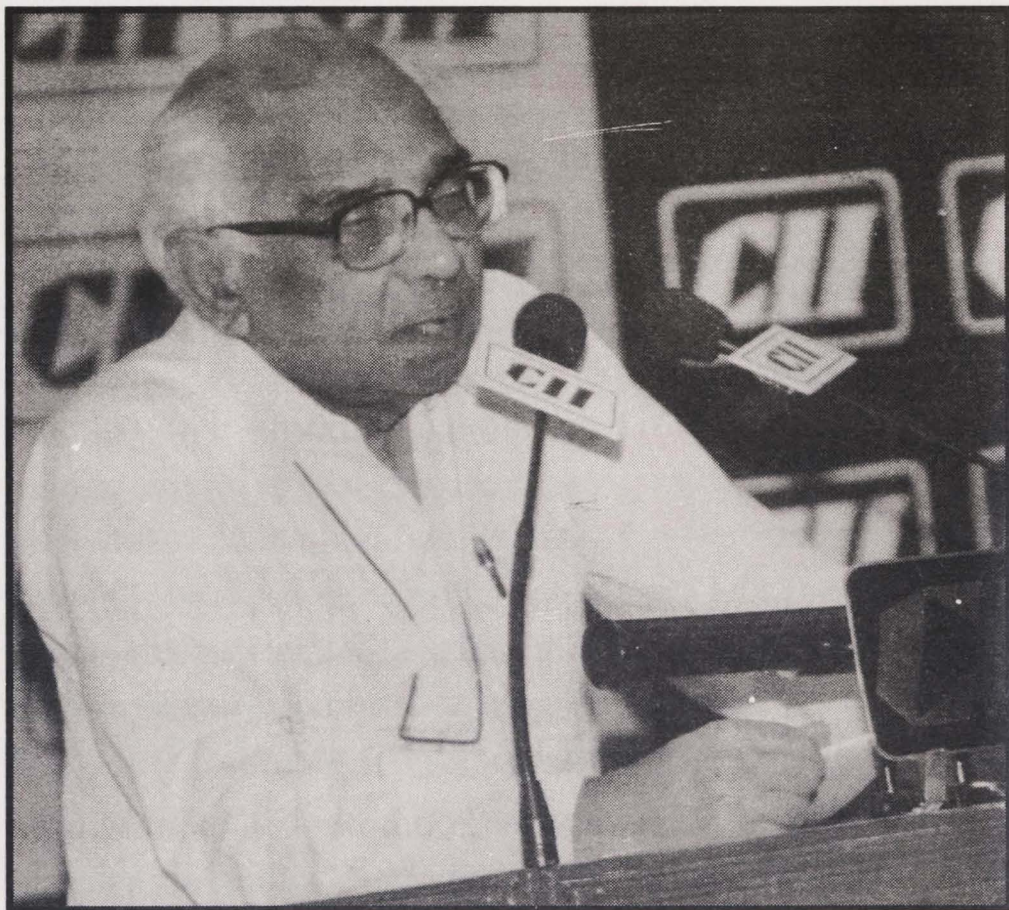
Unions which enabled it to develop a united movement of public sector workers.

Pandhe played a major role in bringing together at the national level public sector employees movement. In 1985 CITU organised an All India meeting of public sector unions under the presidentship of B.T.Ranadive. Pandhe submitted a detailed report on the public sector employees movement which constituted a Co-ordination Committee with Pandhe as the Convenor. Next year (February 1986) a joint public sector convention was held in Hyderabad which resulted in the formation of a Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU). This committee organised first nationwide strike of public sector unions in India. Later it became the mouth piece of public sector employees movement.

In public sector wage negotiations in Steel, Coal, BHEL, NTPC, Bharat Electronics and other industries. Pandhe played an important role. The nationwide struggle against the anti-working class guidelines issued by Bureau of Public Enterprises and by the Department of Public Enterprises assumed nationwide importance and Pandhe's contribution was major in these struggles.

After the passing away of P.Ramamurti and B.T.Ranadive, Pandhe had to play a key role in CITU's efforts in building united movement of the working class.

When the policy of globalisation was accepted by the Government of India in 1991 Narasimha Rao was the Prime Minister and Dr. Manmohan Singh was the Finance Minister. The CITU decided to oppose the policies of globalisation,



Pandhe addressing a conference of the Confederation of Indian Industries in 1996

privatisation and neo-liberalisation. Pandhe wrote the first booklet in the country opposing these policies which was translated into all the major languages. A united movement soon developed which gave birth to the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions. The committee organised twelve nationwide strikes to oppose the policies of globalisation, privatisation and neo-liberalisation. The participation of workers in each strike went on increasing and the number of participants swelled in crores. Central and State Govern-

ment employees, railways and defence employees, banks and insurance employees, ports and docks, seamen, factory, mine and plantation workers, IT workers, unorganised sector workers, pharmaceutical workers joined the Sponsoring Committee and Pandhe was one of the leading figures in the struggles launched by the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions.

In implementing the CITU's policies of uniting the working class irrespective of ideological differences, Pandhe has been attending the national conferences of INTUC, BMS, AITUC, HMS and other central trade unions and industry - wise federations and stressing the need for united struggles of the working class to protect their legitimate interests. In these gatherings he was advocating the proposal of CITU to form a Confederation of Indian Trade Unions so that the common policies can be evolved to fight unitedly against the capitalist onslaughts. Though the concept of confederation was not accepted by some trade unions, the concept of united struggles was assuming more important proportions.

17. To develop fraternal relations

Since 1959, Pandhe is attending trade union conferences held at various Countries. In the month of April of that year he attended Czechoslovakian trade union conference held at Prague. He also greeted that conference on behalf of AITUC. In 1961 he attended Social Security Committee meeting of WFTU which also took place at Prague. Afterwards he visited Soviet Union.

In 1978 and 1979 he attended two conferences of International Labour organisation (ILO) held at Geneva.

In 1984 he led a high power delegation of CITU to China. It consisted of Pandhe, Kamal Sarkar, Md.Amin, M.M.Lawrence, K.K.Roy Ganguly. Ashit Dutta and Lalaji Babu, This delegation visited many places in China for three weeks. In 1985 he led two delegations of CITU to the Soviet Union. One delegation consisted

of Pandhe and K.Ramani and another one had Pandhe, M.M.Lawrence and Md.Amin. These two delegations discussed with Soviet trade union leaders about mutual co-operation between CITU and AUCCTU.

In the year 1987, 150 trade union leaders from various trade union centres from India were invited to the Soviet Union. Among them 30 were from CITU. Pandhe was the leader and Chittabrada Mazumdar was the Deputy - leader of CITU delegation. At Moscow, mass meeting of Soviet and Indian delegation took Place. This meeting discussed about the mutual co-operation. The Soviet trade union delegation prepared a note which was full of praise for Nehru's policy and the policies of the Government of India were lauded. Other trade unions from India such as INTUC, AITUC and HMS agreed with this assessment. But CITU did not agree with this assessment and refused to sign the declaration.

In 1989, WFTU conference held in Soviet Union. Pandhe led a five member delegation consisting of Samar Mukherjee, Vimal Ranadive, A.K.Padmanabhan, and Sunil Basu Roy. Pandhe while speaking on behalf of CITU, criticised the policies of WFTU for not mentioning the anti-people policies of the Government of India and their lukewarm attitude towards imperialism.

In 1992, Pandhe led a four member delegation to the W.F.T.U. Conference held at Damascus. There also the delegation disagreed with the policies of W.F.T.U. It particularly opposed a resolution which linked social clause with International Trade. Ultimately W.F.T.U. withdrew the reso-

lution. AITUC and all other trade unions from India supported the stand taken by CITU.

Pandhe attended W.F.T.U. conferences held at Delhi in 1997 and also held at Havana in 2005. He led a 17 member delegation to this Havana conference.

Apart from these conferences he attended a number of International conferences on safety, health and environment. He attended Madrid world conference as a member of the Governing Body of the National Safety Council. He also attended International Safety Conference at Stockholm, Sweden and participated in the discussion. He took part at the World Safety Conference at Hamburg, Germany on the same issue. In 1998, he also attended a conference on International Safety held at Sao Paulo, Brazil.

He was a member of the National Safety Committee for about 25 years and was elected as the Vice - President for one term.

He led a 11 member Indian delegation to the Johannesburg (S.Africa) Congress of Southern Initiative on Globalisation and For Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR) held in 1994. Similarly, when a Congress of SIGTUR was held at Calcutta in 1997 he played a prominent role in it, and also at the Seoul (South Korea) conference held in the year 2000.

In these conferences Pandhe placed the view point of CITU.

An interesting thing happened in Seoul. There was a big rally at Seoul against neo-Liberalisation. Pandhe spoke at



Pandhe and other Trade Union Leaders in front of Tiananmen Square at Beijing

the rally condemning American occupation of South Korea. The U.S. troops stationed there were listening to his speech as well as watching the demonstration when Pandhe was demanding withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea.

Pandhe during the course of his speech supported the workers struggle against the capitalists of South Korea and foreign capitalists. He also appealed for unification of Korean fatherland. The Korean people are one, a single nation, but the imperialists have divided, he stated

This speech of Pandhe was well received by the audience.

In the International conference On Safety in Metal Industry Workers held in 1995 at Barcelona (Spain) Pandhe took part in the conference and spoke on safety problems in Indian Steel Industry.

At the world conference on the ban on Asbestos held at Tokyo in 2002 he read a paper highlighting the dangerous consequences of use of Asbestos in industrial undertakings in India.

Since Pandhe was the President of All India Coal Workers Federation he attended International Conference of mineworkers at Cairo (Egypt) in 1991 on behalf of his organisation.

Similarly he attended the mine and energy workers conference held at Algiers in 1995 and he was elected to the Executive committee of the organisation. Later he attended Mont Lucon (France) conference of the mine workers and was elected as the Vice-Chairman of the IEMO.

At the Cochin Conference held in 2002 he was elected as the Co-Chairman along with Arthor Seargill (from England).

Pandhe also attended Bulgarian Trade Union Conference, Czechoslovakia trade union conference and CGT conference of France also.

Before the liberation of South Africa, African National Congress (ANC) held a conference at Durban. From India only CITU was invited as a trade union and on behalf of CITU Pandhe attended that conference.

Pandhe went abroad many times on good will mission. In the month of January, 2000, Pandhe led a good will mission to Vietnam which consisted of Pandhe, Chandi Prasad and Nikhil Mukherjee. In 1997, he led a delegation of 11 members to Damascus Conference of Trade Union International of Transport Workers.

In 1994, the CGT of France called a meeting at Cairo to consider the question of renewal of the World Trade Union movement. Number of countries from Latin America, Africa and Asia represented in it. Pandhe while addressing the gathering assured CITU's solidarity with all those who conduct class struggle and anti-imperialist struggles.

In 1985, E.Balanandan and Pandhe attended Cuban trade union conference at Havana. Fidel Castro attended it. Pandhe and Balanandan met Castro. He enquired from the CITU leaders many things about India. They had an one hour meeting. Castro came to the table where Pandhe and Balanandan sat and put many questions regarding Indian agrarian situation, government's policy and India-Pakistan relations.

In 1991, Pandhe also attended another International trade union conference against Globalisation at Havana. He led a 15 member delegation of the CITU. At the conference he was taken to the Presidium. He chaired one session. During this conference again, he had a meeting with Fidel Castro along with some International delegates.

In 2001, he took part in a world conference on Right to Energy held at Marakkus, Capital of Morocco. Mirnal Banerjee and S.Devroye, Prasanta Nandi Chowdhry also attended. While addressing the gathering, Pandhe spoke on the problems of Energy. He pointed out that if they want to make energy for all, then it should be in the state sector. He also pointed out that multi-national corporations are charging higher rates for the transfer of technology. They should give in cheaper rates. In this conference there was a talk of public - private participation. Pandhe said that it was nothing but privatisation. He strongly criticised Enron dealing. He was elected as the Vice-Chairman of the International Committee on Right to Energy.

In 2006, he, along with Sukomal Sen attended an International meet at Brussels convened by W.F.T.U to discuss the struggle against globalisation and for Trade Union rights.

In 1994, he attended an International conference on North-South Dialogue held at the city of Pisa (Italy). In that conference he was a Panel Speaker along with representatives from Brazil and Germany. Here, he spoke on the policies of the developing countries.

In the years 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000, Pandhe attended I.L.O. Conferences held at Geneva. He participated



J. Hemachandran, T.K. Rengarajan, Pandhe, A.K. Padmanabhan, Deivaraj and M. Subramaniam at the CITU State Conference held at Madurai.

in the discussion on the International Committee on I.L.O. Conventions. He also addressed an I.L.O. plenary Conference on globalisation.

Pandhe also undertook some private visits to abroad. He went to China twice, North Korea once, European countries thrice, United Kingdom five times, Singapore, Bangkok thrice each, Malaysia twice and Japan once. Altogether more than 60 times he went abroad, During ILO conferences, Pandhe and other CITU delegates made contacts with trade union leaders of other countries and developed regular contacts. Thus trade unions from nearly 50 countries are having regular contact with CITU.

Ardendu Dakshi, one of the leaders of CITU highlights the respect Pandhe held in international trade union movement:

“Pandhe’s international connections are also something to be wondered about. Personally I have visited many countries in the world and to my surprise I found out almost everybody I met associated with trade union movement knows Pandhe and remembers him with respect. Even our adversaries show reverence to him because of his commitment to the cause of working class...

“In the SIGTUR (Southern Initiative for Global Trade Union Rights) conference in Calcutta in the year 1999 when the Australians and representatives from some other countries created a big fuss when we demanded some changes in the declaration of the Conference, it was almost at the breaking point. Pandhe’s wisdom, articulation and patient persuasion finally helped to issue an unanimous declaration signed by everybody. About 20 countries attended this conference.”

At the conference of CITU held at Bangalore, 55 foreign delegates representing 35 countries attended. This was the largest gathering of foreign delegations.

In order to carry forward the policy of the CITU to strengthen international trade union unity, Pandhe played a significant role in the international trade union movement. He was elected as Co-President of the International Energy and Mines Organisation in 2003 which has its headquarters at Paris. Com. Arthur Scargill, a well-known trade union leader of British mine workers was the other Co-President. This organisation brought together several trade unions of mine workers all over the world on a common platform.

When the International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU) and World Confederation of Labour decided to merge together to form a single International Trade Union Centre, Pandhe was invited in 2006 by CGT of France for an international discussion on the question of International Trade Union unity in which General Secretary of ICFTU and WCL were present. In the meeting Pandhe placed the following issues which should form the basis of international TU unity.

1. Opposition to all types of aggressions, blockades and unilateral sanctions imposed on developing countries.

2. Support to the liberation movements such as Palestine, etc.

3. Struggle against the policies of globalisation, privatisation, outsourcing and attack on T.U. rights.

4. Ban on nuclear weapons and destruction of all nuclear stockpile.

5. Struggle against growing inequality internationally and nationally.

6. Struggle against MNCs attempts to control the economy of developing countries.

7. Expressing of solidarity with working class struggles ranging all over the world.

8. Opposition to pro-employer trade unions which should be based on united struggles and they should function democratically.

9. Protection of rights of informal sector workers and women workers.

10. Worldwide T.U. unity should include WFTU and ALL China Federation of Trade Unions.

On behalf of CITU, Pandhe advocated that International T.U. unity is possible on the basis of the above programme. The unity of two international organisations was not based on these issues. The representative of ICFTU and WCL agreed to have a debate on these issues which they stated was possible only after the merger of two organisations.

Pandhe took initiative in organising an international conference of coal mine workers in India as per the decision of the International Energy and Miners Organisation (IEMO) and International Confederation of Energy and Mines Union (ICEM). Accordingly, a meeting of all major international organisations was held at the CITU headquarters in Delhi in July 2007 which decided to hold such a conference in Kolkata on 14-16 December 2007. The conference was attended by over 100 representatives from major coal unions from 13 countries in the world irrespective of international affiliations or ideological convictions. It was attended by the Director, ILO, and an expert from ILO Head Quarters at Geneva. The Union Coal Minister Dr. Dasari Narayana Rao inaugurated it. After prolonged deliberations it adopted a unanimous declaration on the present situation in coal mining industry all over the world after the advent of globalisation and attack on trade union rights of the workers. Pandhe submitted a paper in this conference and anticipated what could be the outcome of the conference. An International Committee was constituted to pursue the con-



clusions of the conference. Pandhe was included as a member of the committee.

It was a unique conference and for the first time in the recent history, trade unions could be brought together on a common platform irrespective of ideological differences.

In December 2007, Pandhe attended the WFTU presidential council meeting held at Khartoum(Sudan) and explained the views of the CITU on the prevailing international situation and the role of trade unions.

In July, 2007 Pandhe visited Australia and developed bilateral relations with Australian Council of Trade Unions. He had a detailed discussion with Ms. Sharon Borrow, president of ACTU who also was the Chairman of International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). He also visited unions namely CEMEUA, Maritime Union of Australia, Manufacturing Workers Union of Australia and attended Regional

Co-ordination Committee of Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade union rights.

In June 2008, Pandhe was invited to attend the Congress of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) of United States at Puerto Rico. For the first time CITU got access to U.S. Trade unions. The conference opposed Bush Government's policies on Social Security and demanded withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Pandhe appealed in the conference to develop a common movement of trade unions to fight globalisation. Pandhe visited Chicago and paid homage to Chicago martyrs. Later he visited the headquarters of the Communist Party of USA and discussed problems of International Communist movement. He further visited the office of the Transport Workers Union at New York and discussed with the leadership of the union the need for International co-operation between Indian and U.S. transport workers.

Pandhe then visited U.K. and had detailed discussion with Brandon Baspr, General Secretary, Trade Union Congress. He also attended a meeting of IEMO and had a talk with Arthur Seargill about the activities of the IEMO. The leaders of French energy union were present in the meeting. In all the programmes in USA, Pandhe was accompanied by Pramila.

In April 2008, the CITU hosted the 8th international Congress of Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR) which was attended by 180 delegates from India and 18 foreign countries. The Congress was held

at Cochin which discussed at length the impact of Globalisation on the working class. It was attended by the Chief Minister of Kerala, Com. Achudanandan. The inaugural and concluding speech in the Congress was delivered by Pandhe.

In November 2008, Pandhe visited Australia to participate in the co-ordination committee of coal miners at Sydney. The meeting decided to hold the Second International Conference of Coal Miners at Edinburg (Scotland). In the third week of April 2009 which coincides with 25th anniversary of historic strike of British coal miners. Pandhe has been given the responsibility of preparing a paper on the attack on Trade Union Rights of the coal mine workers.

18. Guiding the Federations

Apart from looking after C.I.T.U., activities Pandhe continuously guiding many Federations in various capacities.

He was the President of the Construction Workers Federation of India for several years. Only at the last conference he relinquished the post. He was the President of the Steel Workers Federation of India for 27 years. He was the President of the All India Coal Workers Federation for about 25 years. He was the Vice-President of Water Transport Corporation Workers of India for about 20 years. He is the member of the National Joint Committee for Steel Industry since 1976. He is the member of the Joint Bi-partite Committee for coal industry since 1973. He is the member of the BHEL Joint Committee since 1977. He is the member of HSCL, Bharat Refractories, Bharat Electronics Joint Committee.

He is the member of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Port and Dock workers. He is the member of the National Shipping Board under the Ministry of Surface Transport for 25 years.

He was a member of the Ramanujam Committee to draft the labour laws constituted by the Government. The Committee went into the labour laws, needed some more time. But the government did not extend the time limit. So Ramanujam decided to give a report stating his views on all issues and on behalf of CITU, Pandhe sent a note of dissent to the report.

The Committee also visited several places to meet people.

Pandhe was a member of Consumer Price Index Review Committee known as Rath Committee. This Committee investigated into the compilation of Consumer Price Index Numbers and found number of defects in the compilation.

The Committee however did not highlight all the irregularities of the Index. Hence he and BMS leader Sathe wrote a note of dissent to the Report.

C.I.T.U. conducted a big campaign on the Consumer Price Index. Pandhe wrote two pamphlets on this issue.

Since 1970, Pandhe is the editor of "Working Class". After B.T. Ranadive's demise he became the Chairman of its editorial board. He is also the editor of "CITU Mazdoor" Hindi journal.

Both these journals are educating the working class throughout the country. "The working Class" is coming out regularly for the last 38 years without any break. The CITU Mazdoor is also coming out regularly.

Under the guidance of B.T. Ranadive, Pandhe was helping the activities of All India co-ordination committee of working women. After passing away of B.T. Ranadive, Pandhe is regularly attending the conferences of working women and guiding their deliberations.

Pandhe took keen interest in developing industry wise activities of CITU. In the Federation of Road Transport, Plantation, Bidi, Anganwadi, Pharmaceutical, Fishermen and Fishery workers, Electricity workers Pandhe used to attend their meetings and conferences and guide them in their struggles and organisational matters.

He was regularly attending the conferences of Central and State Government Employees, banks and insurance employees, defence and railway employees and stressing the need to strengthen class struggles against capitalist exploitation.

He wrote extensively in the souvenirs published by Trade unions on the occasion of their conferences and emphasised the need of unity of class and objective of strengthening of the struggle.

He is the member of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Port and Dock workers. He is the member of the National Shipping Board under the Ministry of Surface Transport for 25 years.

He was a member of the Rameswaram Committee to draft the labour law for the Government. The Committee was headed by Mr. B. K. Chatterjee.

19. Front rank Leader

When Pandhe joined Delhi headquarters of the AITUC, he became the Secretary of the AITUC unit of the Communist Party. Later he was elected as a member of the Head quarters Committee of the CPI. He was also elected as the President of the People's Publishing House Employees Union in the year 1962.

After the split in the communist movement, Pandhe joined the CPI(M) headquarters at Delhi and looked after Delhi State Committee of CPI(M). From the party centre he was also helping the development of trade union movement. He was incharge of the Parliamentary office of the party since 1964 to 1969.

In 1977, at the 10th Congress of CPI(M) held at Jullundur, he was elected to the Central Committee and at the Party Congress held at Calcutta he was elected to the Polit Bureau of the party.

For some years he was in-charge of CPI(M) Himachal Pradesh Committee. Later he was made in-charge of Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh State Committees of the party.

After the Delhi Party Congress in 2004 he was nominated as the trade union convenor of the Party and looked after party activities in trade union fronts in different industries. Apart from this, Pandhe fulfilled several assignments given by the Polit Bureau from time to time.

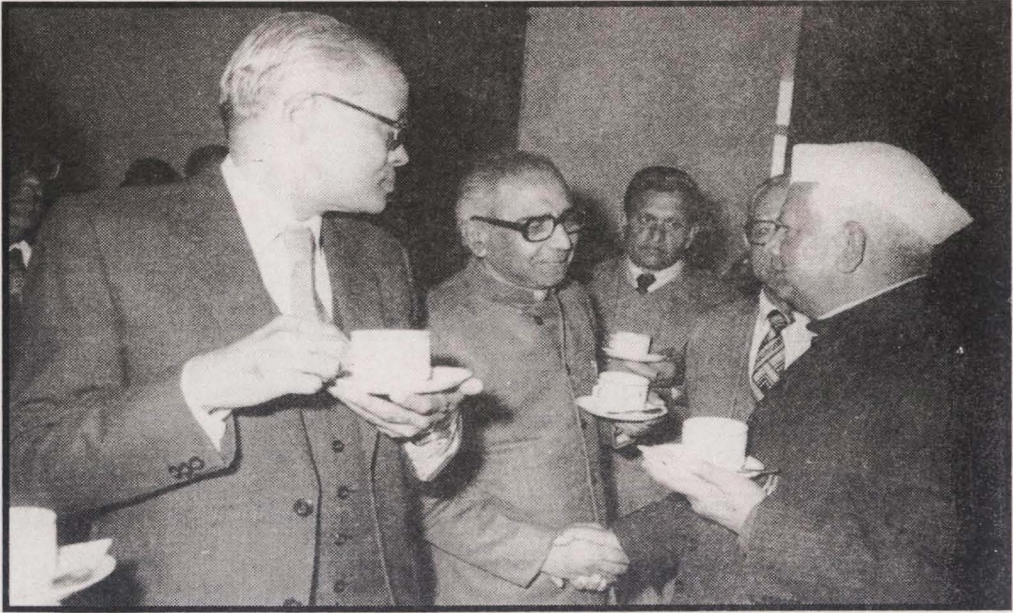
In CPI(M)'s struggle against revisionism and sectarianism, Pandhe is an active participant in defending the principles of Marxism - Leninism.

He also played an active role in finalising the document on Tasks of the Trade Unions in 1966 and 1981 while played a major role in finalising the review of the Trade Union front document.

Under the guidance of B.T.Ranadive, Jyoti Basu and P.Ramamurti, Pandhe played an important role in deciding the tactics on the trade union front. In building the party on the trade union front Pandhe was always having a front rank position.

Pandhe consistantly stressed the need for trade union cadres to link their day to day activities with the final objective of building a socialist society in India.

As a prominent Communist leader he was always accessible to the rank and file comrades and helped comrades to understand party policies and their implications for the trade union movement.



Pandhe with Labour Minister N.D. Tiwari

Pandhe was nominated by the Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) to be the Chairman of the presidium of the 19th Congress of the party, held at Coimbatore in the month of April, 2008. He also delivered the Presidential Speech at its inaugural session.

20. Brothers and Sisters

Among the five brothers in Pandhe family M.K. Pandhe is the eldest son. His younger brother Manohar was in the Education Department of Maharashtra Govt. and settled in Pune after retirement. Vasanth the third son in the family passed away at an early age who's son Anil is a Construction Engineer and completed 10 Thousand houses for Bidi workers in Sholapur known as Godavari Parulekar Nagar. He also constructed a Township known as Naliniben Mehta Nagar for earthquake victims in Rajkot district of Gujarath. Prabhakar the 4th son joined Air Force and settled in Pune and died due to a serious ailment. The youngest Sudhakar is looking after the agricultural farm at Sangam in Sholapur District.

Pandhe has 6 sisters. Kusum 87 elder than Pandhe was an Education Officer in the Government of Maharashtra and is



Mother and Sister with ailing Pandhe

settled at Sholapur. Malati younger to Pandhe was a lecturer in a Pharmacy College at Ahmedabad and is working to popularise Ayurveda at the National level. Vimal is a Naturopathy Specialist and was working for several years at Ahmed Nagar. Now she is settled at Bangalore with her son. Sindhu retired as a college lecturer now settled at Pune. Usha was a school Teacher and now retired and settled at Pune. The youngest Shaila was also a school teacher and having a retired life at Ahmed Nagar.

Pandhe's father died at the age of 92 and mother at the age of 98.

21. Contributions to Continue

Pandhe who was one of the secretaries of C.I.T.U. in the beginning, became General Secretary in the year 1991 and became it's President since 2003. Though he has completed 83 and entered into 84th year he works as usual methodically. He is touring the country extensively and attending various types of meetings and Seminars. As a prolific writer he is writing articles on all important matters concerning working class.

His colleagues of last several decades point out his versatile contribution to the growth of C.I.T.U. and also highlight his qualities.

Ardhendu Dakshi has to say the following words:

“First of all to the comrades he is down to earth, friendly, patient and understanding. This makes easy for the comrades

to open his or her mind without any hesitation. This is obviously a great quality for a leader.

“Secondly he never gets angry. He never uses harsh words and keeps cool even in the most adverse conditions. I have really found a person who remains un-disturbed in the face of worst family tragedies and extremely adverse condition in public life.

“Thirdly, his greatest quality is to bring out the central point of the real matter in a long discussion where many ideas and observations are expressed by others. This quality gives him the right to have the final say in a meeting. And lastly one has to admire his elephantine memory. All these qualities together have given him an invisible stature as a leader who presides over an organisation which is democratically run with greater mass contact, knowledge and commitment.

“Sometime in 1971 my cousin brother who was a political worker in Bangladesh was murdered by the Pakistan military police. The news came in the ‘Statesman’. To my surprise I received a letter from Pandhe expressing his condolence. He found out from other sources that he was my cousin.

“Pandhe personally knows thousands of trade union comrades all over the country which no other trade union leader can claim...”

Veteran CITU leader and President of CITU Mumbai Committee P.R.Krishnan narrates an incident which shows Pandhe’s vigilance against alien approaches.

“Here I am recalling an incident. It denotes to Pandhe’s watchful eyes, careful ears and alert mind. The incidence took place in Mumbai. but was reported in some foreign news journal. Sometime in 1986 there was a visit to Mumbai of a foreign trade union delegate. He was Francois Forgeue of The Trade Union Solidarity. A committee of trade unions under the influence of Naxalites had organised a reception for this leader in their office in Mumbai. The leaders of this committee are closely known to me. This committee is also a constituent of the Trade Unions Joint Action Committee which comprises of Central Trade Union Organisations and independent unions in Mumbai including CITU, AITUC, HMS, HMKP etc. and Kamgar Aghadi. I am member of this committee. The Trade Union Solidarity Committee of Naxalites had invited me also to attend that meeting which they organised for the foreign trade union leader. Like many other members of the Trade Union Joint Action Committee, I also attended this meeting in the office of the Trade Union Solidarity Committee. Not only this, but the foreign delegate also paid a courtesy visit to our union office at Dadar just as he visited other trade union offices. The news of this reception and my participation in that meeting was reported in the journal of International Liaison Committee. The CITU Central Office in Delhi gets this journal regularly and Pandhe happened to read this news item in that. According to him, my participation in that meeting was not proper.

“After sometime when I met him in Delhi he pointed out that my attending that meeting was politically not cor-



Pandhe welcoming a delegation from All China Federation of Trade Unions. P. Ramamurti and Samar Mukherjee also in the dais.

rect and CITU comrades should avoid gatherings like this and narrated the background of each and every organisation.

“I realised my mistake and told Pandhe that I will never have any association with such people and will remain extremely careful in future. This shows how alert, careful and watchful are Pandhe’s eyes, ears and mind and how minutely he tries to safeguard CITU’s political and ideological positions....”

P.R.Krishnan also points out the care and concern of Pandhe towards comrades :

“Here I would like to quote one example of Pandhe’s concern towards his colleagues. We were all at Ichalkaranji in Maharashtra for the CITU State Conference in October 2006. One day after this conference, Pandhe and CITU general secretary Chittabrata Majumdar were to address a national seminar of Airport employees in Mumbai. It was on 14th October. We all knew Chittabrata was not in good health and needed medical attention. So Pandhe from Ichalkaranji telephoned to airport employees leader Naresh Lal in Mumbai and instructed him that he should see that arrangements be made to provide a wheel chair to Chittabrata on his arrival at the airport and to give good attention to his needs in Mumbai. I had participated in this seminar with Pandhe and Chittabrata Majumdar. While taking lunch in the seminar hall on the day I conveyed to Chittabrata what Pandhe’s instructions were to the airport comrades from Ichalkaranji. I could observe that Chittabrada was very much



Pandhe with Pramila and grand daughters and with some comrades in China.

moved on hearing this from me. And so was I too. I could then see Chittabrata with a smiling face nodding his head with heart felt feelings towards Pandhe.

“Another feature I have observed in Pandhe is that he will always make it a point to enquire about the old comrades with whom he had previous contact and may try to somehow find time to go and meet them despite his busy schedules.

“The role played by Com.Pandhe in bringing about the slogan of unity of different sections of working class and trade union organisations on common platform is quite significant. The steps, be it with the formation of United Council of Trade Unions, National Campaign Committee, Platform of Mass Organisations, or Sponsoring Committee of Mass Organisations. Similarly formation of the Committee of public sector trade unions (CPSTU). Likewise, the role played by Com.Pandhe in spreading the message of international working class unity to combat the onslaught of globalisation is equally important. This became very much visible in the Bangalore meet of the 12th All India Conference of CITU in 2007 January, which was attended by 68 fraternal delegates from 30 foreign countries.

“Com. Pandhe when dealing with problems in the party or issues to be handled by trade unions and in regard to organisational matters, he is very stern and serious on ideological issues and organisational problems within the party and T.U. front. He insists for observance of strict party dis-



Pandhe with R. Singaravelu and A. Soundararajan

cipline for every party member working in mass organisations”.

T.K. Rengarajan, Vice-President, CITU gives his impression on Pandhe’s role in the development and growth of trade unions in Public sector.

“I first met Com.M.K.Pandhe at the second conference of CITU held at Ernakulam. He was very busy with the arrangements there. From the inaugural conference to the second conference his work had been doubled.

“Com.Pandhe, Com.R.Umanath and myself functioned in the Joint Committee on BHEL for more than two decades. During these meetings I observed his negotiating ability.

“ He is thorough in all subjects including history and geography.

“Whenever I need the past experience of the Communist movement or trade union movement I used to refer to Com.Pandhe.

“Recently he helped me for my maiden speech in the Rajya Sabha. He is an extraordinarily capable comrade. His knowledge, contact in the trade union movement is amazing.

“His role in exposing the Government’s policy in public sector and unifying all the other central T.U. Organisations against the wrong policies of the Government is an important one.

“At this age also he is visiting coal mines, steel plants and other public sector industrial undertakings to have the first hand information on the latest position and also to report to the workers and understand their view point. This method should be followed by every trade union functionary”.

Com. M.M. Lawrence, Vice-President, CITU, and General Secretary of CITU, Kerala State Committee, highlights certain qualities of Pandhe.

“In one way or other multitude of persons in India and abroad interact almost daily with Com.Pandhe, whose less known full name MADHUKAR KASHINATH PANDHE.

“Right from the manner in which he puts his signature, Pandhe has touch of class that draws him intimately to the mass of workers and peasants. By writing his name in CAPITAL letters, Pandhe demonstrates that he owns full authority for whatever is stated in the communication and the re-



Pandhe addressing a press conference at Chennai.
(2003)

cipient is reassured of this fact in unmistakable manner. Likewise, in any mass rally, Pandhe puts his thoughts succinctly. Everyone in the crowd has a feeling that what he says is personal message to each one in the crowd.

“Meetings, discussions, travel and writings - these are four broad classifications of activities through which Pandhe directs mass movements to bring about social change with the objective of securing to working class their right to become the ruling class. To save time, he combines travel with writing. His travels are too numerous and frequent that one wonders whether he spends more time in the air than on the land!

“Another way by which he saves time is through hopping from one conference to another - at times, across re-

gions and continents. In this way he minimises his presence at any conference to the bare minimum necessary.

“As a colleague and member of delegation led by him, I had on several occasions accompanied him to meetings and conferences held abroad. In most international gatherings, Pandhe’s leadership is unobtrusively accepted. Suggestions from him evoke intense interest from delegates to the conference from far and wide. As the meetings conclude, most of what he suggested eventually turn to become the decisions of the conference.

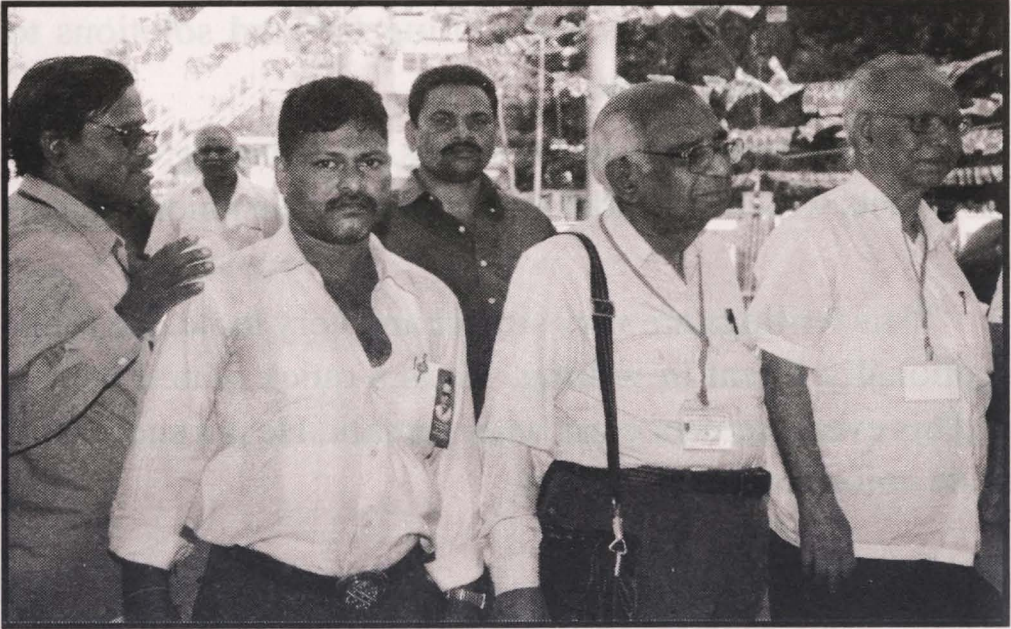
“Pandhe believes that unity of working class - both at domestic and international level - is of paramount importance. He would be ill at ease with anybody whose action may lead to weakening of unity. Quite naturally, he avoids committing mistakes and expects his colleagues do likewise.

“In the context of capitalist globalisation, the unfinished agenda may need more patience and time. He conserves time by restricting rest and leisure.

“I wish him good health and long life to fulfil the task he had set for himself on behalf of the working class”.

Veteran C.I.T.U. leader Kanai Banerjee appreciates Pandhe’s qualities.

“Pandhe’s attitude towards Comrades is very good. Whenever some advice is needed, in the absence of elderly comrades, cadres seek Pandhe’s guidance and he used to



Pandhe with Md. Amin and other Comrades

give useful advice. His authority was accepted as a trade union leader and guide.

“His role in developing Public sector trade unions is a big achievement. He developed exceptional skill in wage negotiations. So, in respect of Public sector undertakings, his position was almost absolute.

“His help to me in developing a good library at the CITU office is noteworthy. He gave me big encouragement in this venture. He uses library more than anybody.

“His tremendous memory power stands goodstead for his leadership. He can present so many facts of the past and link it with the present struggle His memory is helping comrades in current affairs.

“Tracing problems and putting forward solutions to them is his superb talent.

“Conventions etc., he impresses the gathering with concrete facts which no leadership of other trade unions can do it.

“His writings are very simple and very lucid. He is exceptionally fluent in writing. He is a quick witted person and his every sentence has witty remark. He is a successful trade union teacher.”



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