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THE WORKING CLASS

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COMRADE B. T. RANADIVE

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions expresses its profound sorrow at the passing away of Com. B. T. Ranadive, the founder President of the CITU, the seniormost member of the Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) and an unparalleled communist and working class leader of the country, dedicated to the path of Marxism-Leninism. Com. BTR died of cancer in Tata Memorial Hospital, Bombay at 3.10 a.m. on 6th April, 1990.

Born on 19th December, 1904 at Bombay, Com. BTR joined the anti-imperialist freedom struggle during his student life with a revolutionary zeal. Having passed his post-graduate studies in Economics with colours, Com. BTR became a member of the Communist Party in 1928 when it was in nascent stage, and plunged himself in organising the communist movement in Maharashtra and mobilising the working class in trade unions. With his indefatigable qualities he organised the textile workers of Bombay in militant trade unions. With his lucid expressions and irrefutable arguments in support of the working class rights, he instilled into the workers the concept of right to strike and was the undisputed leader of the historic textile workers' strike of 1928-29. He was arrested and jailed in 1929 December. Having come out from jail, he organised the railway workers and led their strike in February-March, 1930. He devoted specifically in organising the young workers in trade unions and formed the Young Workers' League in June, 1930. In 1931 he was a delegate to the AITUC session at Calcutta from the Bombay Gimi Kamgar Union and represented the Communist group in the conference. Com. BTR took a leading role in increasing the influence of the left trade union movement in the then AITUC. On his initiative



a conference of the red unions was held in 1933. The conference took a resolution in support of those jailed under the Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case. In 1935 the Red TUC merged with the AITUC. Com. BTR took up the political task of forging trade union unity adopting correct tactics so as to bring the entire working class on to the point of class struggle for the establishment of a socialist state. With this objective he organised study circles in the trade unions and came in the forefront of the working class struggles and building up of the Communist Party in Maharashtra. He further took a leading role in publishing the Communist journals like "Kranti" and "Mumbai Kamgar" in Marathi.

In 1934 the all India Centre of the Communist Party was formed and Com. BTR became a member of its Central Committee. After long years of near underground work, the Communist Party came in the forefront in 1937 and published its English Weekly, the National Front with P. C. Joshi as its Editor and Com. BTR in its Editorial Board. In 1940, during the Second World War, Bombay witnessed another historic strike on 4th March. Over one lakh sixty thousand workers took part in the strike demanding 15 per cent increase as war allowance. Com. BTR was the main organiser of the strike. He was arrested again by the British Government under the Defence of India Rules and put in Deoli jail for two years. From the jail itself he prepared a document calling upon the working class to support the anti-fascist war led by the Soviet Union.

In the First Congress of the Communist Party held in Bombay in 1943, Com. BTR placed a separate report on the working class movement apart from the main report placed by P. C. Joshi, on behalf of the Central Committee. He was elected to the Polit Bureau of the party in this Congress. From the very first Congress Com. BTR's activities spread all over India boosting the working class and Communist movement in the country.

In 1946 on 18th February, the historic strike of Navy started in Bombay. A number of party comrades and workers died and were injured by firing. Under the leadership of Com. BTR the working class of Bombay went on a massive strike in support of the Navy strike. Writing a homage on the death of the working women's leader Kamal Dhonde, Com. BTR called upon the working class to carry forward the struggle against British imperialism for the country's freedom undeter-

red by their barbarous repression.

In 1948 Com. BTR was elected as the General Secretary of the Party in its Second Congress held at Calcutta. He remained in the post till 1950. During this period the party led the historic Telengana peasant's struggle. In 1956 from the fourth Congress held at Palghat Com. BTR waged the determined struggle against revisionism. Strictly adhering to the principles of Marxism-Leninism and applying it to the conditions prevailing in the country, he prepared a document on People's Democratic Front as against National Democratic Front. In the Sixth Congress held at Vijayawada in 1961, he placed a separate document on behalf of 21 members of the National Council. He took a leading role in the formation of the CPI(M) in 1964 from the Seventh Congress, although he could not attend it as he was already arrested in 1962 during the Indo-China border conflict. He was elected to the Central Committee and the Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) from this Congress.

With his rich experience and devotion in organising working class movement, Com. BTR unremittingly struggled to clear the trade union movement from all sorts of dilutions by reformism and economism and deviations from left sectarianism and right revisionism and raise the consciousness of workers to socialist consciousness.

With this objective he took the leading role in the formation of the CITU in 1970 and was the natural choice for holding its rein as the President. Immediately after its formation, the CITU gave the call for trade union unity and united struggle by the working class. Under the direct guidance of Com. BTR, the CITU became a most militant central trade union organisation in the country.

But not only militancy, his teaching was militancy armed with political ideology. He therefore critically analysed the functioning of the trade unions and repeatedly emphasised on democratic functioning of the unions, sharing of information and inculcating the spirit of collective leadership, and raising the trade union movement above economism.

He pointed out the weaknesses of the trade union movement in intervening into the economic policy of the government to build up a self-reliant economy, in fighting the imperialist backed divisive forces,

on the question of unemployment, in taking up the issue of working women, unorganised labour, minorities in trade unions, in building up a fighting worker-peasant alliance, and above all, in developing an anti-imperialist outlook and wage the struggle for peace against the danger of war and against the U. S. imperialist's design for world domination and subversion of national liberation movements. To raise the socialist consciousness of workers, he exhorted the CITU to build up its independent activities on all these questions and stimulate united struggles by all trade unions in the interest of the common people. His idea of trade union unity and formation of a Confederation with the Central Trade Unions and federations to develop countrywide united struggles on common agreed points is to be emulated by all sections of workers and trade unions.

Com. BTR was seriously concerned over the rise of the divisive forces of all sorts and the weaknesses of the trade unions to see the nefarious imperialist designs behind these forces to destabilise the country. He called upon all the trade unions to unite to isolate these forces and defeat the game of imperialism, to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country.

With his deep political acumen, he called for maintaining the unity of the trade union movement with the left, democratic, patriotic and secular forces in furtherance of a left and democratic alternative to the authoritarian Congress rule and further to the establishment of the People's Democratic Front for onward march to socialism. The massive participation of the trade union movement in the two Bharat Bandhs to dethrone the Rajiv Govt. was the direct result of Com. BTR's foresight and call.

It was under Com. BTR's continuous and untiring guidance that the CITU rose to the great heights in the trade union movement posing a challenge to the ruling classes, as well as putting its mark in the international arena. He was the historic link between the infant period of trade union movement and the national freedom struggle against British imperialism on one hand and the present day class battles of the working class against capitalism and imperialism for the establishment of socialist states on the other. He was a great thinker, intellectual, writer, orator, practical fighter and a leader dedicated to the principles of Marxism-Leninism without a parallel. He made his entire family a family of dedicated communists. His indepth knowl-

edge of the industries was simply astounding. Similarly astounding was his unfailing memory, physical capacity and quick and correct decisions at quick turn of events, which remained intact till the last days of his life. In fact he died in harness. As a real communist he maintained strict organisational discipline and at the same time was easily approachable by even the grass root level workers to listen to their problems.

He was the Editor of "The Marxist" and gave indepth guidance to enrich the CITU journal, the Working Class and contributed regularly in it on the contemporary challenges. He wrote a large number of articles, pamphlets and booklets on working class movements and of high political and economic value. To mention a few were the Crisis of Indian Economy, India's Sterling Balance, Caste, Class and Property Relations, The Working Class and National Defence, Euro-Communism, on contradictions and the last on the fundamental problems of the Right to Work. At this juncture of the international situation when socialism is under attack by counter revolutionaries and the avalanche of reformism helped by imperialism, it is an irreparable loss to the working class and the communist movement to lose a great teacher and leader like Com. BTR, who steadfastly adhered to the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism – the dictatorship of proletariat, proletarian internationalism and the leading role of the Communist Party.

Similar is the case with respect to the new national situation when the country is being plagued by the communal and secessionist forces and the National Front Government has to survive on a hung parliament with the support of the left on one hand and the extreme right on the other.

With his death the CITU has been orphaned. But Com. BTR has left his over six decades of teachings and his Marxist-Leninist devotion as the beacon light for the working class. His name will go down in the history of the working class and Communist movement in India as a revolutionary legend. The CITU pledges to carry forward his revolutionary line unflinchingly and undeterred by any obstacles till his dream of establishment of a socialist state is achieved. The CITU dips its red banner paying the most respectful homage to Com. BTR and sends its heartfelt condolences to his wife Com. Vimal Ranadive, his son Uday, his sister Com. Ahilya Rangnekar and other members of his family.

COMRADE B.T.RANADIVE'S LAST JOURNEY TOUCHING FAREWELL TO A GREAT REVOLUTIONARY

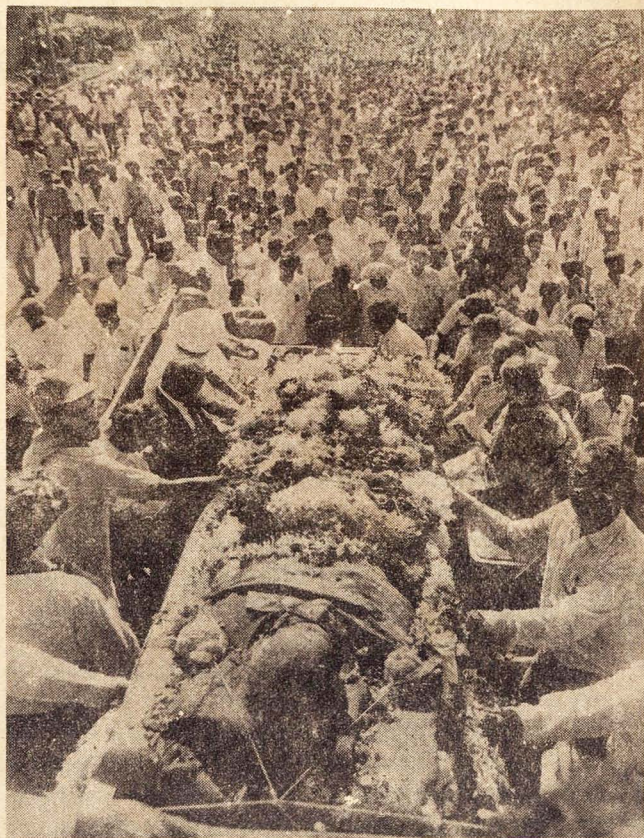
ASHOK DHAWALE

"We are today bidding our last farewell to Comrade B. T. Ranadive. His passing away has created a big void in the communist and democratic movement in India that was built over several decades, and it is a void that will not be easy to fill. We looked upon Comrade BTR as an elder brother, guiding us and working jointly with us to build a great movement of the working people for a new India. But however great our loss, giving in to despair at this juncture will mean being disloyal to the ideals of Comrade BTR, ideals for which we have all worked and in which we have achieved some success. So let us vow to carry forward those ideals, let us pledge to build a strong working class and democratic people's movement in our country, for that is the best tribute that we can pay to our departed leader today".

It was with these words that the visibly moved General Secretary of the CPI(M), Comrade E M S Namboodiripad paid homage to Comrade B. T. Ranadive, member of the CPI(M) Polit Bureau, All India President of the CITU, a towering Marxist-Leninist theoretician, and one of the foremost architects of the working class movement and its revolutionary party in India for over six decades.

Comrade BTR passed away on April 6 at 3:10 a. m in Bombay, after a long and courageous fight against cancer. A dedicated and tempestuous revolutionary life, which was indissolubly intertwined with the glorious communist movement in India, had come to a close. With the iron will-power that was so characteristic of BTR, despite the most intense and persistent pain, he continued his party activities to the very end. Just two weeks ago, while paying homage to another great revolutionary, Comrade Saroj Mukherjee, in the columns of People's Democracy and Loklahar, Com. BTR had written, "He belonged to a generation which is now fast disappearing, but which instinctively viewed all current political problems, all tactical manoeuvres of the party in the context of the strategic and basic line of the party, and of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism". The words were sadly prophetic.

At 9:30 a. m. on April 7, CPI(M) Politbureau member E. Balanandan, Central Secretariat Member Sitaram Yechury, BTR's son Uday Ranadive, and CPI(M) Comrades from Bombay brought Comrade BTR's body to the CPI(M) Maharashtra State Committee headquarters "Janashakti", situated in the working class area of Worli in Central Bombay.



From 9:30 a. m. to 3:30 p. m Comrade BTR's body, draped in the Party's red flag, was kept for people to pay their last respects. A galaxy of the CPI(M) leadership from all parts of India had gathered to pay last respects to the departed leader. This included almost the entire Polit Bureau, General Secretary E. M. S. Namboodiripad, West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, "People's Democracy" Editor M. Basavapunniah, AIKS President Harkishan Singh Surjeet, CITU General Secretary Samar Mukherjee, CITU Treasurer E. Balanandan, Kerala State Secretary of the Party V. S. Achuthanandan, Andhra State Secretary L. B. Gangadhar Rao, and Tamil Nadu State Secretary A. Nallasivan. Amongst the Politbureau, only Nripen Chakraborty could not come due to ill-health.

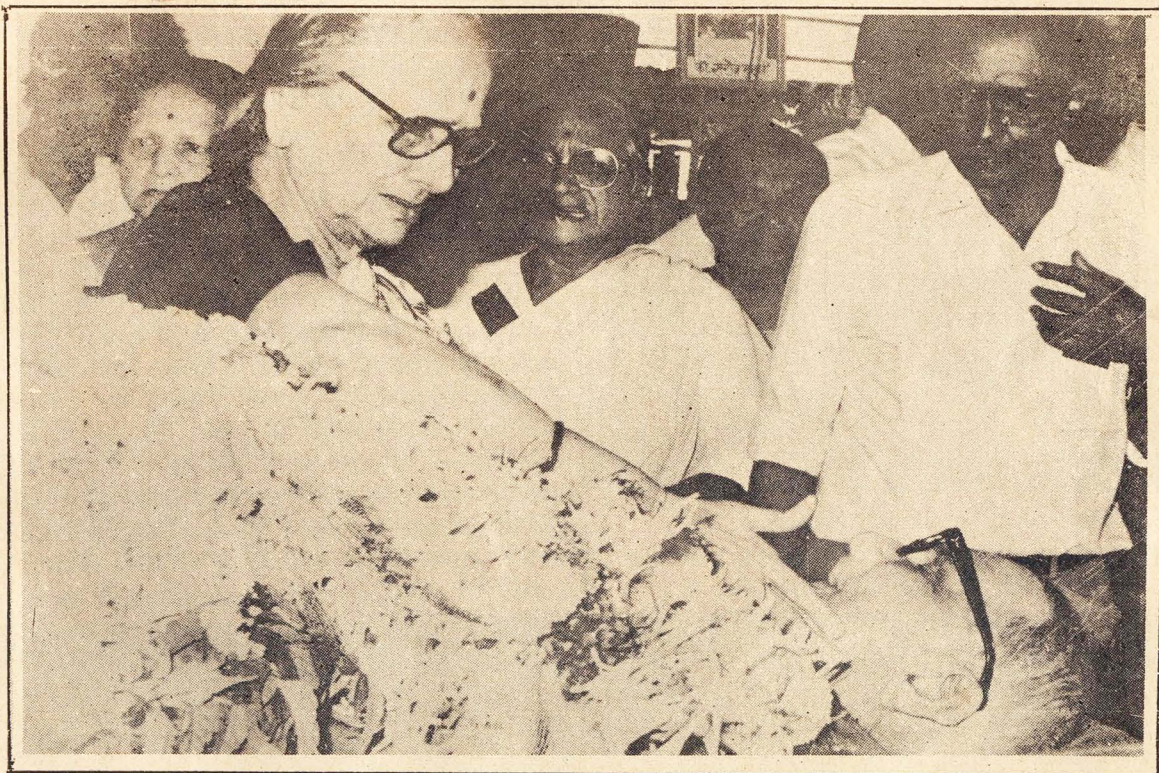
The full CPI(M) Central Secretariat - Sunil Moitra, S. Ramachandran Pillai, P. Ramachandran, Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury — was present, as was the Secretary of the CPI(M) West Bengal State Committee and West Bengal LF Chairman Sailen Das Gupta. Central

Committee members who were present, included Kerala Chief Minister E.K. Nayanar, West Bengal Land Reform Minister Benoy Chowdhury, Kerala LDF Chairman M.M. Lawrence, T. K. Ramakrishnan, M. Hanumantha Rao, R. Umanath, K. N. Ravindranath, Kanak Mukherjee, CITU Secretary M. K. Pandhe, AIDWA General Secretary Susheela Gopalan, DYFI President M. A. Baby, Biman Basu, CPI(M) Delhi State Secretary Jogendra Sharma, Karnataka State Secretary P. Ramachandra Rao, U. P. State Secretary Ram Sumer Yadav, Punjab State Secretary Mangat Ram Pasla, Rajasthan State Secretary Hariram Chouhan, Gujarat State Secretary Thakurbhai Shah, and others.

Several other party and mass organisation leaders had come from far and wide, and they included West

dan and Shailen Dasgupta draped red banners on BTR's body on behalf of the Kerala and West Bengal State Committees of the CPI(M) respectively. The leaders consoled Vimal Ranadive and Ahilya Rangnekar, both Central Committee members of the family. CPI(M) Maharashtra State Committee Secretary and CCM Prabhakar Sanzgiri, CCM Godavari Parulekar, S.Y. Kolhatkar, P.B. Rangnekar, A.B. Savant, L.K.Oak, Ganghadar Appa Burande, K.L. Malabade and other leaders of the Party and mass organisations in Maharashtra paid floral tributes to a great revolutionary leader whom they had the good fortune to have known so well all these years.

On behalf of the CPI National Council and the AI-TUC., CPI Central Secretariat Member A.B. Bardhan placed a wreath, and this was followed by other CPI



Bengal Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Subhash Chakravorty, AIKS General Secretary Ramnarain Goswamy, CITU Secretary P. K. Ganguly, Jibon Roy and Ranjit Basu, SFI President A. Vijayaraghavan, Brinda Karat and S. B. Bharadwaj (Delhi), Daulat Ram (UP), M.P. Acting State Secretary Shailendra Shailey, S. Kumar, Bahadur Singh Dhakar and Promod Pradhan (M. P.), Suryanarayan Rao (Karnataka), S. N. Solanki (Haryana), Sarala Maheshwari (West Bengal), Ajeya Rout, Janardhan Pati, Lambodar Naik (Orissa), Ashis Sen (BEFI), and many others.

The first wreath was placed by E.M.S. Namboodiripad on behalf of the CPI(M) Central Committee, and this was followed by other leaders. V.S. Achuthanan-

leaders like Madhavrao Gaikwad, L.S. Karkhanis, B.S. Dhume, Tara Reddy and others.

Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Sharad Pawar, and Union Petroleum Minister in the National Front Government, M. S. Gurupadaswamy, came personally to offer condolences and pay their last respects. The Governor of Maharashtra, C. Subramaniam, sent wreath and a message. Janata Dal State President, Mrinal Gore and other J. D. leaders like Nihal Ahmed, Dr. Shanti Patel and Jagannath Jadav placed wreaths. Leaders of other Left, democratic and secular parties like the PWP, RPI and RSP were also present. From the cultural field well known Urdu writer Ali Sardar Jafri, renowned cine artiste A. K. Hangal and others came to pay homage. Leaders of

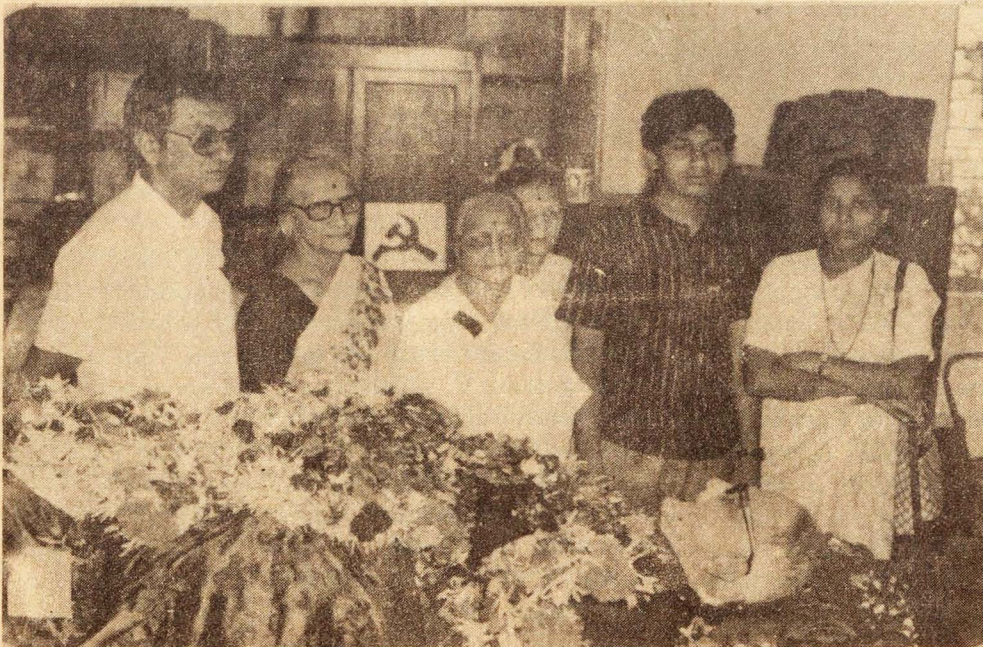


several trade unions and workers' federations too numerous to mention paid their last respects to a revolutionary leader of the working class.

And then, of course, there were the common people and members of the Party and mass organisations who had reached Bombay in their thousands from all over Maharashtra. Several of them were in tears at the passing away of a leader whom they had deeply revered and loved.

Every single Marathi daily in Bombay, including the Shiv Sena mouthpiece *Saamnaa* as well as other reputed Marathi dailies throughout Maharashtra, ran editorials hailing Comrade BTR as a staunch Marxist-Leninist who remained scrupulously faithful to his principles to the end. Whatever their ideological differences all these newspapers paid tributes to Comrade BTR as an utterly selfless and dedicated leader and architect of the Communist movement and the working class movement in India.

At 4 p.m. on April 7, the large funeral procession began from "Janashakti". Comrade BTR's body was placed in a flower-bedecked truck, in which sat members of the Polit Bureau and his close family members. At the head of the procession were 86 young Red Volunteers of the DYFI-SFI with red scarves round their necks, who marched with dipped red flags. The number of volunteers signified Comrade BTR's age, and the first 13 of them carried large red banners to signify the 13 Party Congresses that Comrade BTR had helped to guide. There was another truck meant for Central Committee members, but all the CCMs insisted that they would walk in the funeral procession as a mark of



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respect to BTR's memory. Along with them were leaders of the other Left, democratic and secular parties. This was followed by a mass of thousands of people from all walks of life — workers, peasants, agricultural labourers, adivasis, women, youth and students.

Coursing through Pandurang Budhakar Marg, N.M. Joshi Marg, Gokhale Road and Ranade Road for nearly two hours, the procession reached the Shivaji Park crematorium. Balconies on the way were full of people and wreaths were offered along the way. The

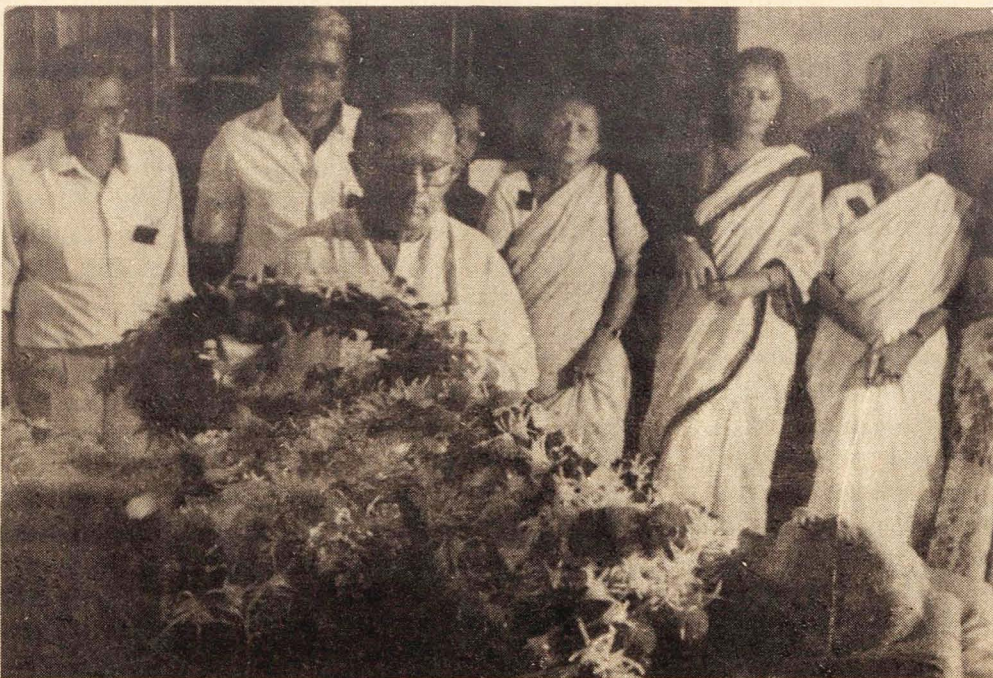


procession carried large red banners and also photographs of Comrade BTR and the air was rent with resounding slogans like "Comrade BTR Lal Salaam", "Comrade BTR Amar Rahe", "Long Live Marxism-Leninism" and "Victory to the CPI(M)".

The condolence meeting at the crematorium was addressed by E.M.S. Namboodiripad (CPI-M), A.B. Bardhan (CPI), Mrinal Gore (Janata Dal) N.M. Kamble (Congress), Vithalrao Hande (PWP), Arjun Dangle (RPI), Dadu Atyalkar (Kamgar Aghadi), Pushpa Mehta (RSP), T.M. Porkho (DMK), B. Bapat (Lal Nishan), G.V. Chitnis (AITUC), Shanti Patel (HMS), Shankar Salvi (HMKP), and Manohar Mehta (BMS). It concluded

with the speech of Prabhakar Sanzgiri (CITU) who said that taking inspiration from Comrade BTR's life and work, the Party and working class movement in Maharashtra would spare no efforts to dispel the dark clouds of communalism that are threatening to engulf the State, the working class of which was the first to learn its lessons against imperialism and capitalist and feudal exploitation. After this Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad lit the funeral pyre amidst a crescendo of resounding slogans.

Comrade B.T. Ranadive is now no more. The last journey of a legendary, pioneering, revolutionary leader has ended. But his life of relentless struggle against ex-



ploitation and injustice, of uncompromising defence of the working class and its revolutionary vanguard, of ceaseless battle for the purity of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and proletarian internationalism, has lit millions of sparks, and will continue to light many millions more, until his goal of Revolution and Socialism become a reality in India and elsewhere. As a comrade wrote in the Condolence Book. "We vow to carry forward the Red Flag from where Comrade BTR has passed it on to us.!"

CONDOLENCE MESSAGES

Messages expressing grief and condolences were received by CITU Centre on the demise of Com. BTR from the following :

Com. Parsa Satyanarayana, K. Venkateswaralu, V. Srihari Andhra State Committee, Com. Janardhanrao, Vice President Rly. Employees Union, Hyderabad, Com. Rampada Chakraborty, All India Confederation of Mercantile & Commercial Employees, Calcutta, Com. Deben Bhattacharya Assam State Committee of CITU, from HSCL Employees Union, Vizag, Com. Narasingarao, Visakhapatnam, Com. Amal Ghosh Dastidar Assam State CITU, Secretary Paradip Bandar Sramik Union, Com. Joice Histeelcon, Visakhapatnam, M.P. Medical and Sales Representative Association, Com. G.N. Kumar, Div. Secretary, National Railway Mazdoor Union, Jabalpur, G. Ramanujan, President, INTUC and Shri Gopeshwar, Gen. Secretary, INTUC All India Peerless Employees Union, (AIIEA), West Bengal Medical and Sales Representatives Union, Calcutta, Abdul Bashar, President and Nurul Anwar General Secretary, Jatio Shramik Federation, Dhaka, Com. B. Chakraborty Bailadila, Baster, Convenor, Peerless Employees Union, Northern Zonal Committee, Com. J.D. Mokal, Secretary All India BHEL Employees Union, Bombay, General Secretary, ITC Workers Union, Bangalore, Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union, Calcutta, Hindustan Steel Employees Union, Alloy Steels Plant Unit, Durgapur, Com. Benoy Aich, General Secretary, Eastern Zone General Insurance Employees Association, from CITU wing ECIL, Secunderabad, Com. Ajoy Biswas, ONGC Workers Union, Agartala, Com. Biren Roy Calcutta, Mohan Punamia, Rajasthan Trade Union Kendra, Comrade Benoy Konar, Paschim Bengal Pradeshik Krishak Sabha, Com. Indrajit Gupta, Gen. Secretary, AITUC, New Delhi, J.K. Bose, Gen. Secretary, NCOEA (CITU), Ranchi, Nizhifu, Chairman, All China Federation of Trade Unions, Beijing, Mrinal Banerji, Gen. Secretary, Steel Workers Federation of India, Ibrahim Zakaria, WFTU Gen. Secretary, K.G. Srivatsava, Asian Pacific Trade Union Co-ordination Committee, N.S. Bhangoo, All India Railway Employees Confederation, T.K. Mohanty, Bhubaneshwar, Com. Shiv Ram, HMT Pinjore, Com. Narayan Bhartiya, CPI(M) Indore Dist. Committee, and also on behalf of Forest and Agriculture Dept. Sramik Karmachari Union, Public Works

Department, Shramik Karmachari, Union, Irrigation Department Shramik Karmachari Union, and PHED Karmachari Union, Insurance Employees Association, Patna Division, Com. Saroj Bhattacharya, Bengal Immunity Workers Union, Calcutta, Com. Manjari Gupta, Calcutta, Com. S.S. Rawat, IDPL Kamgar Union, Rishikesh, Reserve Bank of India Employees Association, Nagpur, Com. Balkrishna Vyas, Chini Mill Mazdoor Union, Jaora, Com. Shafiuddin Ahmed, Bangladesh Ganotantrik Sramik Federation, Dhaka, Com. Rajeswari Murugesan, Tamilnadu Nutritious Meal Employees Association, Com. R.C. Sah, Bhartiya Railway Traction Workers Association, General Secretary, Buckingham & Carnatic Mills Staff Union, Madras, All India Janwadi Mahila Samiti, Sonapat, Com. S.N. Solanki, CITU Haryana State Committee, Com. N.K. Upadhyaya, Bangalore, Com. Pushpen Roy Chowdhury, All India Peerless Employees Union, Calcutta, Peerless Employee's Union, Cuttack, Com. Ram Nath Rawat, Chini Udyog Karmachari Union, Laksar, Bank Employees Federation of India, Calcutta, CPI(M), District Committee, Raipur, M.P. President, Raipur Division Insurance Employees Union, Harvinder Kaur, E.P.F. Staff Working Women Welfare Association, Chandigarh, Com. Sandhya Tripathi, AIDWA Dist. Committee SDL, Com. Badal Saroj, CITU, M.P. State Committee, Com. Narendra Kumar, Lal Jhanda Shramik Union, Bijnore, U.P. and Com. C.R. Majumder, Mercury Travels (India) Ltd. Employees Union, Madras. Mesbahuddin Ahmed, General Secretary, Jatiye Sramik Jote, Bangladesh, Com. Umraomal Purohit, HMS, Com. Sibdas Bhattacharjee, East India Pharmaceutical Works Employees Union, Com. Robin Mukherjee and Harisadhan Mitra Federation of Metal and Engineering Workers Unions of West Bengal, Com. Madan Lal Katyayal, Oriental Power Cables Employees Union, Com. Ram Narain Goswami, Gen. Secretary, AIKS, Glass & Potteries Kamger Union, Santhal, Parganas, Bankura District Committee of CITU, Com. I.R. Asrana, Godugu District General Workers Union, Durgapur Citizens, Com. Tara Bhubaneshwar, Dayanand Rane, Bombay and Com. Patwarthan Singh Rathod, President, Guna District Committee of CITU ; Hindustan Steel Plant Union, Alloy Steel Unit ; N.K. Krishnan and Parvati Krishnan, Madras ; CITU unit, Neemuch ; B.S.S.R. Union, Patna.(Bihar).

CONDOLENCE MEETINGS

Broadbased condolence meetings, processions and rallies were organised all over the country by the CPI(M) and CITU State Committees and unions to pay homage to Com. BTR.

In the Central CITU office a condolence meeting was held immediately on receipt of the sad news on 6th April. A large number of leaders of other trade unions came to pay homage and place wreaths on Com. BTR's photo and sign the condolence book. Telephonic messages came from various places, including embassies.

A mass meeting was organised by the Delhi State CPI(M) on April 11 at V.P. House lawns, which was attended by a large gathering. Leaders of various political parties and other walks of life

paid homage to Com. BTR. The meeting was presided over by Com. H.K.S. Surjeet. Among those who paid homage to Com BTR were E. Balanandan, Prakash Karat, CPI(M), Chaturanan Mishra (CPI), Chitta Basu (FB), Tridib Chowdhury, (RSP), etc. Joginder Sharma, (CPI-M) placed the condolence resolution.

The Delhi State CITU organised a mass meeting on April 13 at Pyarelal Bhawan, New Delhi. The meeting was presided over by Samar Mukherjee, General Secre-



tary of CITU. The condolence resolution was placed by P.K. Ganguly, Secretary. Among those who paid homage to Com. BTR were E. Balanandan, Treasurer, Md. Ismail, Vice-President, M. K. Pandhe, Md. Amin, (Secretaries) ; S.B.Bhardwaj, Gen. Secretary, Delhi State CITU, Homi Daji (AITUC), Brij Mohan Toofan (HMS) ; Sushil Bhattacharjee (UTUC) ; Pritish Chanda (UTUC-LS) etc. The meeting ended with resounding slogans "Red Salute to "Com. BTR", "Com. BTR Amar Rahe".



HOMAGE TO COMRADE B. T. RANADIVE

SAMAR MUKHERJEE

The passing away of Comrade BTR is a very big blow not only to the Communist movement but also to the democratic, secular and Left movement, particularly to the working class movement of the country. He has left at a time when the need for his guidance is greatly felt in view of the new developments of a reverse process in the Socialist countries of Eastern Europe and a graver threat to our national unity posed by secessionist forces backed by world imperialism.

So long as he was alive and active, Comrade BTR made valuable contributions to formulating the politics and tactics of the Party in the changing circumstances keeping a constant watch on and with a close observance of the quick turn of events. He played a leading role in fighting revisionism inside the united Communist Party, ultimately leading to the emergence of CPI(M) in the year 1964, though at that time he was inside the jail. His fight against Left-sectarianism inside the Party, which expressed itself in the form of Naxalism, is equally important.

Both revisionism and Left-sectarianism had got international backing - one from the Soviet Union and the other from the People's Republic of China, which are the two biggest Socialist countries in the world. But experience has proved that the fight conducted by the CPI(M) against these two deviations to defend the purity of Marxism-Leninism and its correct application in the concrete conditions of India, was absolutely right. This independent stand of our Party increased its prestige not only nationally but internationally too.

After the formation of the CPI(M), the fight against these two deviations, particularly against revisionism, continued inside the mass organisations. These struggles later on led to a split in the mass organisations such as trade unions, kisan, student, youth, women's organisations, etc. The Party was split in 1964, but the split in the trade union organisation came in 1970. The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was founded on May 30, 1970 through a big conference and a massive rally held at Calcutta. Comrade BTR was elected unanimously the



At 6th Conference of CITU at Bombay in May '87

President and Comrade P. Ramamurti the General Secretary. Though Comrade P. R. resigned from the post of General Secretary due to health reasons in the Kanpur Conference, Comrade BTR remained President till his death.

Though the formation of CITU was dubbed by the revisionists as an attempt to divide the trade union movement by the Marxists, the real objective behind the formation of the CITU was to build a revolutionary trade union movement and to forge broadbased united struggles. In his presidential address to the CITU's foundation conference, Comrade BTR made it clear that the role of the CITU will be to build up unity of the working class and not to encourage disruption, and to develop countrywide struggles to bring about basic changes in the society by constantly raising the workers' consciousness to the level of Socialist consciousness.

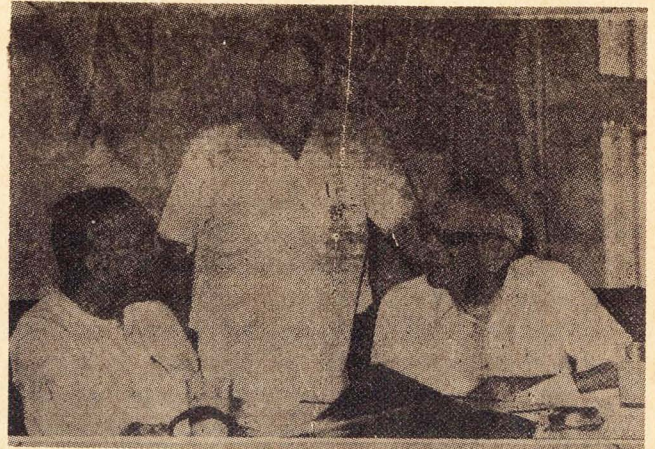
After the birth of the CITU, a drive for building trade union unity was initiated as the urge for unity was growing among the working class. Simultaneously, an attempt was going on to prevent any unity and isolate the CITU. The result of this was the formation of "National Council of Trade Unions" with INTUC, AITUC and a section of the HMS under the patronage of the then Labour Minister, R. K. Khadiolkar, on one hand, and the emergence of UCTU, a joint platform of struggle with CITU, the remaining section of HMS, HMP and others with George Fernandes as convener on the other. This unity, later on, helped to bring a change in the leadership of the All India Railwaymen's Federation, in which process George Fernandes became its General Secretary.

This unity had a profound impact on the railwaymen. In this background, the loco running staff went on a strike in 1973 demanding reduction of hours of duty to eight hours which forced the railways administration to come to some agreement with the Loco Running Staff Association. This created the background of the historic all-India railway strike in May 1974 under the banner of the united platform called the NCCRS (National Coordination Committee of Railwaymen's Struggle). Even being a very small force inside the railway trade union movement, the CITU was able to play an important role in the formation of the NCCRS. In the convention where the NCCRS was formed, the CITU was represented by the late Comrade Nrisingha Chakravarty and Samar Mukherjee on the advice of Comrade BTR. How we, as the representatives of the CITU, tried our level best to forge the unity was narrated by Comrade Nrisingha Chakravarty in his book *The History of Railway Trade Union Movement* in the following words :

Through this convention a National Coordination Committee of Railwaymen's Struggle, known by its popular abbreviation NCCRS, came into existence.

The principles followed in the formation of this Committee was that all organisations were treated with equality, having one representative each in the Committee subject to the fact that AIRF was permitted to include General Secretaries of its affiliated unions as members of the Committee. But for conducting day to day work a smaller committee known as Action Committee with two representatives each from AIRF, CITU, AITUC, BMRS, AIREC and AILRSA, with George Fernandes, was set up. Comrade Samar Mukherjee had to use all his persuasive skill to bring about acceptance of this formula by all the organisations.... Within LRSA also there was a vociferous section who were opposing unity with AIRF and the militant pro-unity section had to work hard to convince others. Samar Mukherjee, on behalf of CITU, had to intervene for building up the unity" (pp 80-81).

This success in achieving the unity was the result



of the correct policy pursued by the CITU. It is to be noted that during this whole period, from the time of the convention to the end of the strike, I maintained a close link with Comrade BTR and got his valuable guidance.

Another glaring example of building a platform of joint struggles on an all-India basis, in which the CITU played a significant role, is the formation of the National Campaign Committee consisting of nine central trade unions (minus the INTUC) and about 50 industrial and employees' federations, through a joint convention held at Bombay on June 4, 1981. This unity created great enthusiasm among the workers and employees which was reflected in the massive rally held at Boat Club before Parliament on November 23, 1981, followed by a one day all-India general strike on January 19, 1982. Later on, this unity was further extended

covering the unions which were outside the NCC, to develop far broader struggles under the banner of a new platform as in the case of public sector unions, port and dock workers' unions, etc.'

Behind all these steps and actions has there been close and constant guidance from Comrade BTR. From the platform of the CITU's Kanpur Conference, Comrade BTR gave the call for further broadening the unity by bringing all trade unions, including the INTUC, under the banner of a confederation of trade unions. Though it is a longdrawn process to get this call materialised, the call has been endorsed by the subsequent conferences.

Comrade BTR took keen and constant interest in strengthening and developing the CITU as the most militant central trade union with a higher level of consciousness and as the most organised and disciplined, democratic organisation. Whenever he was in Delhi, he used to come to the CITU office regularly and on time. He strengthened the central office by inducting some important cadre from States and various fronts. He introduced the system of regular meetings of available Secretariat members for developing and improving the functioning of trade unions. He always laid great emphasis on organising the unorganised sections of the labouring masses who constitute the overwhelming majority of the labouring population in India.

Comrade BTR consistently fought to bring the trade union movement out of economism and draw the workers into political movements combining the fight for economic demands with the fight for change of policies of the bourgeois-landlord Government and ultimately for a change of the Government.

On the question of the threat to national unity and integration of the country and for the defence of democracy against authoritarianism, he assigned a greater role to the working class. He highly praised the role played by the working class in Punjab, Assam, Darjeeling, Tripura, etc., under the leadership of the CPI(M), CITU and other Left forces. In each meeting of the Working Committee and General Council of the CITU, he highlighted all these aspects in his speeches. Even when he was unable to attend the last Working Committee meeting held at Kalyani in West Bengal due to illness, he sent his written speech as President in which he said :

"The Hindu communalists and obscurantists, Muslim fundamentalists, the Khalistani secessionists, the sponsors of Hindu Raj, the RSS, BJP and those who fan communal riots, all are the worst disruptors of national unity and have to be fought relentlessly. To adopt a soft attitude towards any one of these forces is to betray the country and objectively join hands with foreign forces who seek to redivide it".

I got the opportunity to see Comrade BTR first in 1943 when I attended the First Congress of the Commu-

nist Party of India, held at Bombay, as a delegate. I was then the Secretary of the Party's Howrah District Committee. But I came into close contact with him only after I became a member of the CPI(M) Central Committee in 1966. This closeness further increased after the formation of CITU in 1970, after I was elected in Parliament in 1971, during the all-India railway strike in 1974, after I became Secretary of the CITU. Some times he used to stay in my room at 9, Dilkusha Street when he visited Calcutta.

Apart from his great contributions to the discussions in the Party committees and CITU meetings in matters of formulating Party and trade union policies, tactics and practical steps, I have learnt a great deal from personal discussions with him, seeking his guidance on various issues and problems. From his innumerable writings, articles, speeches in seminars, and lectures in Party and trade union schools, it has been established that Comrade BTR was an outstanding leader of exceptional qualities with firm conviction in the theory of Marxism-Leninism, with a deep knowledge of international and national developments and vast experience of the working class movement. His personal life was very simple and disciplined. He felt concerned about the health of other comrades. Personally, he warned me several times to refrain from taking too much food lest I accumulate extra fat in my body. I tried to follow his warning but many times failed due to circumstances.

How his life was deeply dedicated to the cause of the Party and revolution can be seen from the fact that, despite his serious illness and acute pain, his mind was occupied with the problems faced by the Party in relation to international and national developments. Last month when he came back to Delhi from Bombay, we held the meeting of the CITU Secretariat on March 9 and 10 at his residence in which he fully participated and gave his guidance. He agreed to prepare the draft document for the convention on the "right to work as a fundamental right" to be held at Durgapur on April 2 and 3, which he completed in time. This was his last valuable contribution to the cause of the toiling masses.

His life is a big source of inspiration to the people and our comrades. He has left for us a heavy responsibility to carry forward the tasks he has set before us. The CITU Secretariat has decided to publish, in the form of books, all his speeches as President since the foundation conference till the last Working Committee meeting, and important write-ups and articles published in different magazines, to educate the working class. It will be very difficult task to fill the gap created due to the demise of Comrade BTR. Only by our collective effort can we overcome this.

I pay my sincere homage to Comrade BTR's memory.

His Memory Will Be Ever With Us

JYOTI BASU

Comrade BTR is dead. Till the last moment of his life, he worked with dedication for the cause of the workers and deprived sections of society and of Socialism and Communism. He never faltered in his belief in Marxism-Leninism, nor did any doubt assail him about the successful outcome of the struggle for a classless non-exploitative society whatever the zigzag path that has to be traversed. He had his own views regarding the happenings in the Socialist world but he never for a moment lost faith in Marxism-Leninism. We shall miss him during the discussions in the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee of our Party in regard to the changes that are taking place in Eastern European Socialist countries and in the USSR.

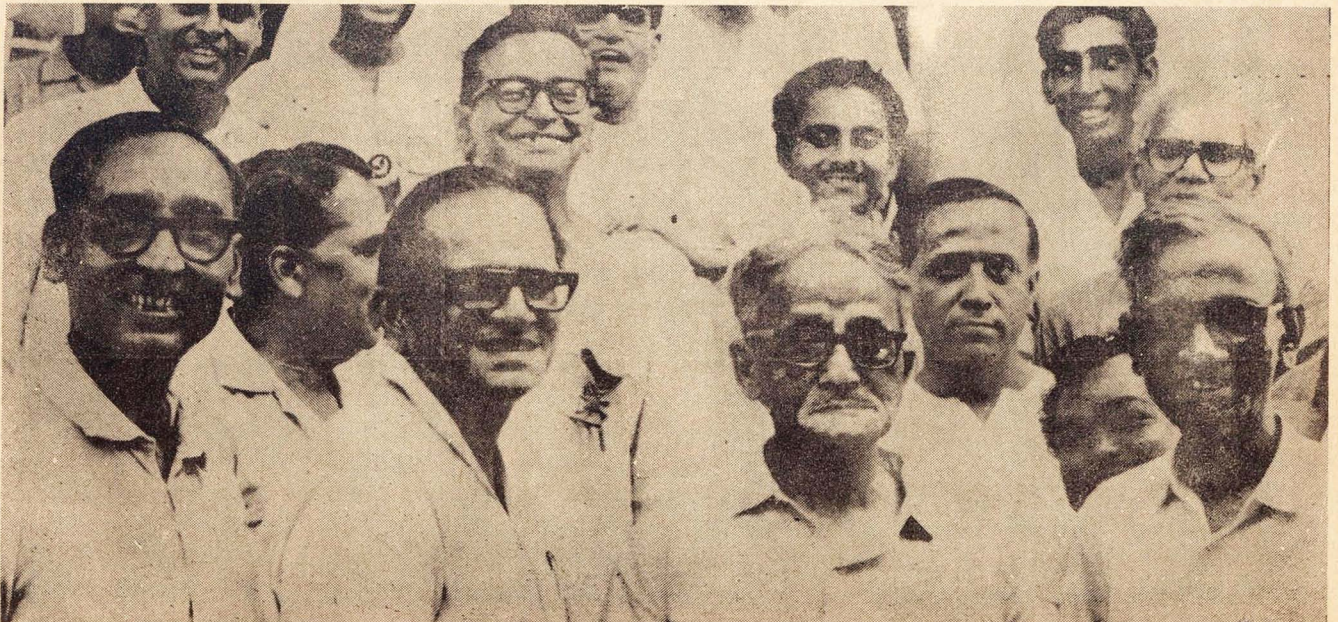
Comrade BTR was possessed of a sharp intellect and concentrated all his attention on building the Party and advancing the working class movement in the economic and political spheres. Like a true Marxist, he pinpointed the weaknesses of the working class movement and pointed out again and again that the majority of the workers were still divided and under the influence of the bourgeoisie. He advocated relentless and continuous economic struggles against exploitation and injustice and fought for politicalising the working class so that it can rise against economism. Again and again he reminded the trade unions of their bounden duty to help the kisan movement and build workers' and kisans' unity. He urged upon the employed workers to fight for the unem-

ployed workers and make a common cause with them. One of his best articles was in regard to right to work to be incorporated in the Constitution even though he was of the view that in a part-capitalist-part-feudal set-up this right could not be fully assured.

In the long period of his life and work as a leader of the united Communist Party and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), he did make sectarian and adventurist mistakes in the former period and could not continue as the General Secretary. But he was self-critical and accepted his mistakes as a true Communist. Later when the CPI(M) was formed through a fight against revisionism, his contribution in the theoretical and practical spheres was outstanding. Our Party underlined its independent stand and pledged to apply our Marxist understanding to the concrete situation in India. In the fight against the naxalites and their anti-Marxist and adventerous theories and practices, he, along with the CPI(M) leadership, underlined their grave mistakes long before the CPC understood its mistake in supporting them.

I also remember the discussions we had in regard to the emasculation of the working class movement by the then dominant leadership of the AITUC led by the CPI, and the decision finally taken to set up the CITU while giving a fervent call for united movements of the workers and their trade unions irrespective of their organ-

(Cont'd on Page 16)



With Com. Muzaffar Ahmad, Jyoti Basu and other leaders of the CPI(M) at Burdwan Plenum

THE VOID THAT CANNOT BE FILLED UP IN THE NEAR FUTURE

E. BALANANDAN

My association with Comrade B. T. Ranadive covers a period of more than 25 years. In many respects he happened to be my guide and teacher, especially with regard to my work on the trade union front. We at the Party headquarters knew that he was seriously ill, but we did not expect him to leave us so soon. I was scheduled to meet him on April 8 at Bombay to discuss matters regarding the CITU centre. Unfortunately, the meeting could not take place. It was in the early hours of April 6 that I received a phone call from the AKG Centre, Trivandrum, conveying the sad news. I got my ticket preponed and reached Bombay the same day and left after the funeral was over.

The void that has been created with the departure of Comrade BTR cannot be easily filled in the near future. For me personally, it is a great loss which can never be made up.

Comrade BTR was one of the greatest Marxist-Leninist thinkers of the world. One cannot forget his brilliant methodical thinking and deliberation. His writings and speeches are a class in itself. His contribution to building the Party and mass organisations, especially the trade union movement, are equally incomparable. His

active political career spans over 65 years and his association with the trade union movement dates to the early days of the trade union movement in the country.

Confining myself to the trade union front which he was guiding I am giving below certain points which he used to especially emphasise and to which he always drew attention of the cadre engaged on the trade union front.

We had decided to break away from the AITUC as the then dominant leadership of the organisation persistently denied democratic functioning and tried to keep it as an appendage of the ruling classes. When the CITU was formed in 1970 BTR became its founder-President a post he continued to hold till his death.

At the time of the CITU's formation we were termed as 'splitters' by the AITUC leadership. But the working class of the country has come to place its faith in the CITU and brought it to the forefront of the trade union movement, as one of the strongest contingents of the trade union movement in the country. Today it has become the main centre mobilising trade unions on common issues affecting the working class and people in general. Industrial federations were organised in many



At a Left Parties' rally at Delhi

sectors and, with the initiative of the CITU, the National Campaign Committee came into existence, which embraces all trade union centres and federations in the country excluding the INTUC, which too is sometimes forced by the surge of the united movement to join with the NCC on certain issues. The slogan coined by the CITU for a confederation of trade unions in the country has also attracted all the trade union centres and now many trade union centres are proposing collective discussion for the formation of such a confederation.

The CITU today has directly-affiliated trade unions in the essential sectors of industry as well as independent trade unions which are working in association with the CITU. Thus the work done by the CITU in the trade union movement under the guidance of Comrade BTR, has become the unifier of the class not only in its fight for its own immediate interests but also for the interests of the nation as a whole, that is, for their long-term interests also. This was the change brought about by Comrade BTR by his persistent work on the trade union front.

He was always forthright in pointing to the deficiencies and weaknesses of the trade union movement. In the meetings of the General Council and the Working Committee and even in public meetings, he made it a point to self-critically analyse these deficiencies. He always, pointed out that the employed workers and the organised workers are better off than the poor peasants and agricultural workers and the unemployed millions of the country. Therefore it is the bounden duty of the working class to take up the cause of the peasantry, the rural labour and the unemployed without which the working class cannot emancipate itself.

With the vestiges of feudalism yet to be eradicated, women are yet to receive an equal status in society. They are discriminated against, both in regard to employment and wages. BTR time and again pointed out that the trade union movement in the country was not giving proper attention to the problem of women workers. He wanted the trade unions to devote more time to taking up the issue affecting the women workers and the women in general.

The crisis of the economy is reflected in the traditional industries facing ruination and many factories getting closed which all increase unemployment. The organised trade union movement which was fighting for their cause, could not do much in the prevailing circumstances in many sectors since the crisis was very serious and many sectors could not be easily revived. The trade union leaders often lost contact with the mood of the workers, and over the head of the unions they entered into agreements with managements sometimes sacrificing the interests of the workers, the rights which the workers had acquired after fierce battles and enormous sacrifices.

Comrade BTR used to say that leading a trade union is a specialised job, and for that one has to study the economics of industry and the economy in general of the country, and properly assess the situation in each industry and formulate slogans accordingly from time to time. Secondly, the trade union functionaries must be one with the workers and they must be always in contact with them so that they could understand, assess their mood and gauge it and on its basis evolve correct tactics.

He was very much concerned with the young workers,. In many industries these young workers were not getting their full rights and kept purely on temporary basis, and many were even being denied all rights, taking advantage of the ever increasing unemployment in the country. It is unfortunate he used to say, that proper attention to their problems is not being given by the trade unions and organised workers. This negligence on the part of the organised trade unions and its leadership, forces these young workers to seek the help of so-called militant trade union leaders who exploit their difficulties; sometimes these workers are even swept away from the parent unions.

Another aspect which he used to point to was the change that was slowly taking place in the composition of the working class. Modern industry needs workers with specialised training and education. Such workers are being employed in sophisticated industries and some of them are well paid too. The scientific and technological revolution is entering in the Indian industry too, and requires these kinds of workers. The trade unions should properly study and understand the changes taking place in these sectors and try to organise these workers with care accordingly.

The public sector in India has a special and vital role to play in our development. Comrade BTR used to emphasise that while organising these workers and fighting for their interests, the national interests, i.e., the tasks of developing indigenous technology, protecting these industries and making them stand in competition against the private sector, should not be undermined. The privatisation plea, among other things, is made on the basis of the so-called inefficiency of the public sector concerns. The comprehensive understanding is yet to be grasped by many trade union leaders.

The twin responsibility of the Communist-led trade unions, he used to say, is to organise the workers into the broad unions and effectively carry on the fight for their demands. Secondly, see that the consciousness of the workers is developed and their advanced sections are organised in the advanced political party of the working class. Many trade union activists do not give much emphasis on the latter aspect. They fail in raising the level of consciousness of the workers. Trade union leaders have to find time not only to formulate demands



of the workers but also to choose and pick the best cadre, train them with the help of the Party and organise them into Party units. He also pinpointed many a time that the influence of the CITU amongst the workers is not getting translated into CITU membership.

He also used to point out that the consciousness of the trade unions is often narrow, confined to the particular industry or even one factory, at times confined only to the craft. He emphasised that the workers' consciousness has to be raised from this narrow outlook to the national and international plane. This requires, strenuous efforts. This, he said, could only be done through persistent work of the trade union leaders with the active guidance of the Party.

The rising danger to national unity from the forces of religious fundamentalism, communalism and separatism has put the country in a perilous position. He used to emphasise on the mobilisation of the working class to fight against fundamentalism of various shades and against obscurantism, in defence of national unity and integrity.

The trade unions must be in the forefront of the fight for democracy and in defending the gains achieved by the democratic movement, in which task, in his opinion, the trade unions are lagging behind today. While taking note of the fact that the people have defeated the Congress(I) party in the last elections, which is a democratic advance though a limited one, he wanted that the working class must also come forward to protect the Left Front Government of West Bengal and the Left and Democratic Front Government of Kerala

which are the advance outposts of democracy in the country.

The contributions of Comrade BTR in building the trade union movement are immeasurable. The loss that the trade movement has suffered in his passing away is irreparable. The void that has been created is difficult to fill. The best tribute to BTR would be to follow the revolutionary path pointed out by him, to dedicate ourselves to the cause for which he stood, build a revolutionary party and mass movement, and complete the unfinished task which he cherished.

(Cont'd from Page 13)

isational affiliations. It was under his guidance that several all-India federations were formed and coordination of trade unions of various persuasions established. Again and again, I remember, he criticised the comrades on the trade union front for neglecting the cause of the working women. In regard to West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura where there was the rule of the Left and democratic parties, he had a clear understanding of our tasks.

In political and theoretical discussions within the Party, BTR played a significant role. Whenever problems arose in one State unit or another within the Party. Comrade BTR showed utmost keenness in attending to the problems. Because of age and failing health, I asked him on several occasions to desist from personally attending too many T. U. conferences, Party meetings and election rallies. But he refused to listen. Even during the last months of his grave illness and even when he understood that his end was near, I was astounded to find his amazing spirit. The last time I saw him at his son's house in Bombay after his release from the Tata Memorial Hospital, he told me that he wanted to engage himself in writing and shift to Delhi. He did go to Delhi for a while and wrote important articles and, during his illness, completed a document on the developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. But his health deteriorated and he had to re-enter the Tata Memorial Hospital.

I recall that people outside the Party who met him were full of praise for his behaviour. I also remember an incident which speaks volumes for him. Once when Comrade Saroj Mukherjee was in hospital and could not attend the Polit Bureau meeting, he was outraged that no health report of Comrade Saroj Mukherjee was placed at the Polit Bureau meeting or circulated to Polit Bureau members. These few thoughts which I have jotted down, I do realise, cannot do justice to his life and work, nor are they meant to do so. His memory will live with us and we shall carry on the unfinished work to reach our objective.

A TITAN

N. PRASADARAO

What is in a name, said Shakespeare I say, much. There is only one Alexander, one Monalisa, one Marx — there may be thousand others of the same name. BTR is one such.

B.T.R. are three letters, but in these three letters is embodied the communist and revolutionary working class movement in India.

My acquaintance with BTR is five decades old. He was always an inspiration to me and those that came in to the communist movement in the early thirties of this century. I was in jail when Comrade Ranadive was elected in the Calcutta Congress of the CPI as the General Secretary, but it gave us a great hope that the path of struggle that was taken up in Telengana would grow and envelop the whole area. We could not forget that he was the General Secretary of the party when the Telengana armed peasant struggle was at its zenith.

Even a donkey kicks a dead lion. Some poisonous arrows may be shot at him, but history proved that he is one of the true, staunch Marxists that India has produced.

He was one of the most disciplined soldiers of the party, he lived true to the organisational principle of iron discipline. I will recall one incident with which I am associated. After the Telangana struggle was withdrawn the charioteers of the party during that struggle were dishonoured, ripped of all elective posts, and Comrades BTR and Adhikari were two of them. They were ordinary members of the party at the time of Madurai party congress. Some of us who were dubbed as belonging to FOUR Ts (Trotskyist, Titoist, Turkist, Terrorist) wanted the restoration of the demoted leaders to their rightful place in the party. We wanted to see that they are elected to the Central Committee and I was entrusted to mobilise delegates for this. Dr. Adhikari assented to stand as a contestant but BTR stubbornly refused. He said that he would not contest so long as the ban of the Central Committee is there. There was every chance of his getting elected with a thumping majority but he stuck to the party discipline and refused to contest. The panel proposed by the Central Committee did not contain the name of Dr. Adhikari, but we proposed his name and he won with a good majority. BTR opted to remain as an ordinary soldier till redeemed of the ban.

That is iron discipline.

BTR was a great patriot, but his patriotism transcends lip faith to the country which cohabitates with transnational companies and transnational banks to loot their motherland. He wanted the country to be free from foreign loot and native monopoly loot and wanted the development of native industry and increase of production. When the public sector was threatened by the Cong (I) policies of winding up, Comrade Ranadive gave the

clarion call from the rostrum of the CITU that it is the patriotic duty of the working class to save public sector and prevent the further entry of and driving out foreign monopoly capital from the country. This is patriotism of the highest order in contrast to the subservience of Cong (I) rulers who accept all conditionalities of the World Bank and IMF which put shackles on the independent industrial development of our country.

His greatest contribution to the revolutionary working class movement is the formation of CITU. The trade union movement by the sixties was emaciated, disunited and mostly confined to day-to-day demands. It went to the extent of laying down as primary tasks of the trade union movement the successful completion of the Five Year Plans of the Government of India, and to confine to economic demands, leaving political issues. In 1962 a call was given to the working class by the revisionist leadership in the trade union movement to join hands with the ruling classes and the capitalists to fight against socialist China. So, the time had come to form a revolutionary militant, politicalised trade union movement and trade union organisation, and it is to the credit of Comrade B. T. Ranadive that such a militant working class organisation was formed in 1970. From that time, a metamorphosis has come about and militant all India, industrywise working class struggles started, participated by all the Central Trade Unions and Federations. The working class began playing a significant role in the political struggles raging all over the country. The country will be grateful to BTR for this transformation of the national movement into a struggle for the defence of the sovereignty and integrity of the country, for industrialisation, for working class championing the cause of the peasantry and for social emancipation.

BTR was conscious that a movement in which women, who form half of the population, do not participate can never be successful and can never be called a movement for social emancipation. That is why he was laying more stress upon bringing more and more women into the leading positions in the party and the trade union movement. A Working Women's Coordination Committee was formed as a corollary to the CITU to concentrate on the problems facing the working women. Comrade Vimal Ranadive is the Secretary of the committee, and this shows the interest that CITU, under the dynamic leadership of BTR is championing the cause of one of the most socially downtrodden sections of the society.

It is very difficult to write everything about BTR, such are his multi-faceted activities. So, I close.

Comrade B.T.Ranadive is dead ; Long live B. T. Ranadive.

COMRADE B.T. RANADIVE

MANORANJAN ROY

Comrade B. T. Ranadive is no more with us. He died in the early morning at 3.10 a. m. of 6th April, 1990. He has left a vacuum which is almost impossible to fill up. He was born in 1904 in Bombay. A brilliant student in his college education, standing first in the Masters Degree in Economics from Bombay University, he joined the national movement and from the beginning of his political life he associated himself with the working class movement of Bombay City in the 1920's. Since then he had the unbroken record of continuous association with the working class struggles and in building the communist movement in the country. He joined the Communist Party of India in 1928 and in 1934 he was elected a member of the Central Committee and since 1943 he was a member of the Polit Bureau of the CPI and later the CPI(M).

An outstanding personality, his vast knowledge about Marxism-Leninism, and their application in day to day movement of the working class and in building the Party and communist movement in the country for the last seventy years, Comrade BTR not only was a teacher, guide of the working class in India but himself participated, developed and led innumerable political and working class struggles in the country.

I had the privilege of meeting him in a general body meeting of the Party members and sympathisers working in the AITUC, till then the only Central Trade Union organisation of the working class in the country. The general body meeting was in connection with the 22nd session of the AITUC held in Calcutta from 13-19 February 1947. His eloquent speech in the G. B. meeting, his arguments, analysis of the perspective of the conferences, the political situation and the role of the working class during the pre-independence days and the future tasks of the working class, kept the audience spell-bound. He also emphasised the role we were asked to play in the session.

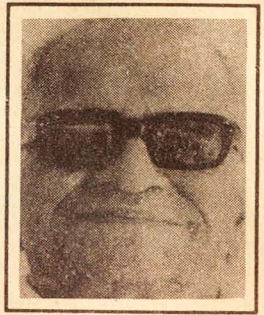
In the Second Congress of the Communist Party of India he was elected the General Secretary of the Party, the Congress was held at the end of February and beginning of March, 1948. Only a few days after the Second Congress, the Party was declared illegal on 25th March in West Bengal, Madras Presidency and Travancore Cochin. Tremendous repression was let loose by the Congress Government on the workers, peasants, youth, students and women. A number of Communist cadres were killed in the wake of the democratic movement. Despite

all these repressions and number of splits in the AITUC led by the Congress, Socialists and other elements during the period 1947-48, that the AITUC was still the biggest organisation of the working class was proved during the 23rd session of the AITUC held in the middle of 1949. There was no doubt that there were some sectarian mistakes during the period 1948-49, but nonetheless it could not be challenged that the party and the working class movement further advanced during this period.

The Communist Party could form United Front in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madras and Travancore-Cochin and came out with big success in the 1952 General Election in those States.

Since 1967 when the CPI(M) Central Committee office was shifted to 49, Lake Place in Calcutta, I had the opportunity to come close to Comrade BTR. I had to go to him very often to discuss and take his advice about the problems in the Trade Union movement in the State. He was a fervent protagonist of trade union unity of the country. In 1966 a meeting of the all India trade union leaders was called by Com. BTR in Delhi to discuss about the various problems in trade union movement. He drafted the most important document "Our Tasks on Trade Union Front". In 1967 after discussion with the trade union leaders it was placed before the then Central Committee and published as a Party Guideline in the trade union front. Till then emphasis was given on the question of trade union unity and remaining inside the AITUC and not a word was there in the said document encouraging split with the AITUC. All emphasis was for unity.

Even in May 1970 when we were forced to form a separate trade union organisation of our own, namely Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), of which he was elected as its President, in which post he continued till his death, he from the platform of this organisation thus formed, gave a clarion call for unity and united action. A unanimous resolution on unity and united action was passed by the first meeting of the working committee, elected by the conference. A call was also given to observe a fortnight on unity and united action of all trade unions, irrespective of their political affiliations. This was Comrade BTR's views on trade union unity and the importance he gave on this question was again expressed in his last Presidential address at the 6th All India Conference of CITU held in Bombay in May 1987, where he gave a call to form a Confederation of all the Central Trade Unions and all India Federations in the country irrespective of their political affiliations.



(Cont'd on Page 31)

MAY DAY MANIFESTO
on Page 34

YOU ARE A COMMUNIST, CONTINUE TO WORK FOR THE PARTY

VIMAL RANADIVE

Com. BTR is no more. He breathed his last on 6th April, 1990, early morning at 3.10. Myself, Ahilya and Uday were at his bedside the whole night, hoping he would survive, but realising more and more that it was impossible. He was responding to the call till 3.00 o'clock, after which he lost his consciousness. In his death, the Party, CITU and other mass organisations lost "our father". This was the feeling of most of the comrades when they heard about his death. They told me "we have become orphans". In the loss of Com. BTR, I lost my life companion, close friend and a comrade. He inspired me to work for the party, for the working class, for emancipation of women and for CITU. This loss for the party and the trade union is something irreparable.

When we left Delhi on 21st March, I never imagined that I would return without him. He was in the hospital for barely 15 days. He did respond to the treatment in the beginning. Unfortunately, the pain in the legs, hands and in the back got worse day by day, but he never refused any treatment. Congestion in the chest could not be cleared, breathing became more and more difficult, pain unbearable and on the last day he was not able to speak due to chest congestion. Earlier he repeatedly told us "I can't bear the pain, let me die, do not torture me....". He knew quite well his end was near and he was prepared for it.

On 2nd April, he conveyed to Com. EMS when he came to see him in the hospital, very calmly, "I do not want to live. My pains are unbearable. I am crippled and I will not be able to work for the party anymore.....Please convey this to the P.B...." He had prepared himself for the last voyage. However we tried to intervene when he was speaking to Com. EMS when he said, "Do not interrupt me. Let me say what I want to...". I could not face him for a long time being terribly upset over his utterances. He asked later about me. Uday told him that I was very upset. He called me and reprimanded "Don't get upset. We are communists, and we will continue to work for our Party till the end...." But I could not wait there and ran broken down. I was afraid to show him that I was crying!

The press reporters started telephoning us, inquiring about his health. After we failed to satisfy their anxious inquiries, they directly got information from the "hospital sources". Com. BTR heard our conversation about the press reporters etc. He quietly told Uday ironically though, that "they must be writing my obituary now. Tell them the truth....." During such a serious illness, his humour never left him. Till last day his memory was

sharp. He wanted to hear about the news and asked me to read headlines in the paper. The night nurse, Padma told him one day earlier that she was praying for him and he should recover fast. He asked her whether she was praying to god. Surprisingly for all of us he recited the verse in the prayer in the Church. The nurse too got surprised. She asked Com. BTR "Uncle how do you know this was our prayer? She asked him, "You give me blessings" and he told her he already blessed her.

On the 5th, his chest congestion became worst. The doctor tried to clear the congestion so that he could talk at least. But that was not to be. He could not express what he wanted to. That was the tragedy for me and others. It is true, very few people have such courage to face death, to think rationally at the last moment. He knew well that he would not survive from his illness and was prepared for this.

Devotion to the Party — Working Class

His whole life, personal and public was for the party. Com. BTR will first think about the party whenever he used to act. Sometimes it surprised me that he could do so many things for the comrades, they would come with their grievances, demands or for consultations. He would listen to them patiently and try to solve them. If any comrade went against the principle of the party he would not tolerate. He was very cautious about spending the funds of the Party or CITU or mass organisations. CITU comrades were afraid while utilising money as he would not allow them to spend till it was passed in the Secretariat meeting. He was particular that the accounts are presented in every meeting of CITU and the balances are recovered from the comrades in the State. Com. BTR was very much concerned about the well being of the comrades especially under the present conditions of rising prices. He himself was particular not to spend party's money unnecessarily.

Recently, wages of wholetimers were increased by the party. The increased amount was sent to us. I did not know about it. On inquiry I was told about it. Com. BTR asked me whether we require extra money. When I said no, he asked to return the money to the party. His life was so simple and requirements very few. With a great insistence from the office comrades he agreed to set the cooler and fridge at our place which would help him and me at this age.

Com. BTR was very particular about the time he was to attend any meeting or any conference. I remember

once our neighbour MP said "We know the exact time 9 am for his office". His routine, unless elsewhere in the State, was very hectic. Many younger people used to wonder as to how he could manage to visit three States and hold conferences or State Committee meetings at the age of 84-85. Despite his failing health he attended the marriage ceremony of the son of Com. Randhawa, Secretary of Punjab Party. The reason was that he had promised Com. Randhawa that he would definitely attend. He kept his promise because Com. Randhawa was on the death bed. I still remember when he returned from Punjab he was shattered completely and could not stand the strain. The same night he left for Bombay to attend the State Committee Meeting. It appears to me now that his bones were already affected by Cancer then.

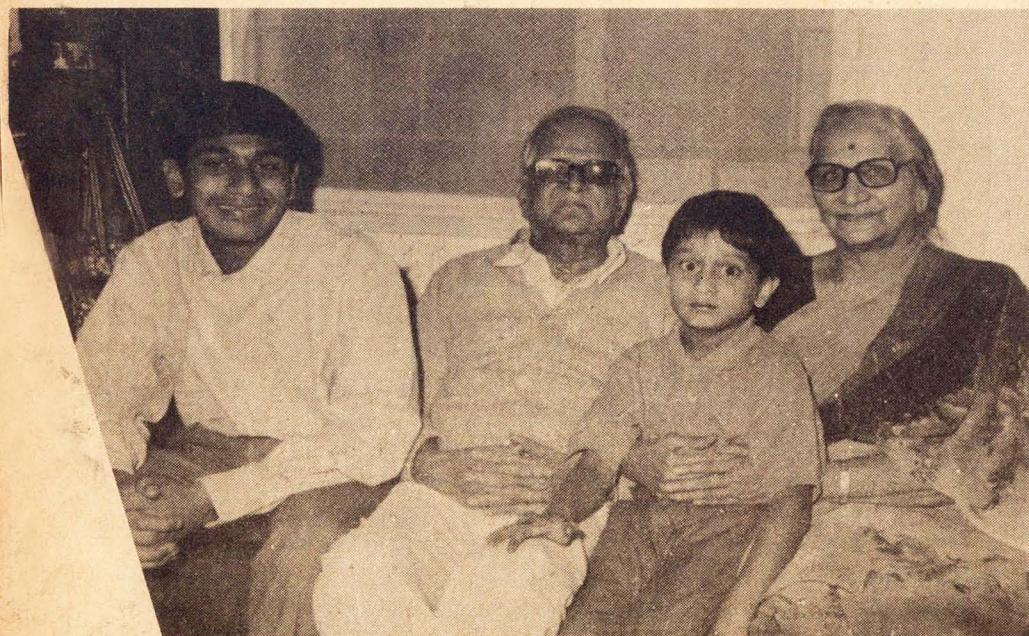
Com. BTR used to write or read late at night sometimes as late as 2 am if a particular article for PD, Marxist or Working Class had to be finished within the time limit. During his illness, in the month of March he completed the document "Right to Work". There were controversies, discussions as to how to apply this right to work principle in various states including West Bengal or Kerala. In the Secretariat meetings held at our place, he briefed us, explained the points and demands to be put forward in the conference. This was his last contribution to trade union movement. The docu-

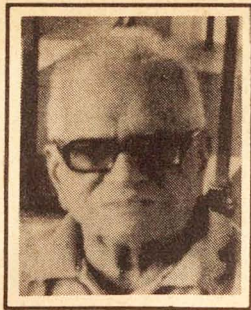


ment was placed and discussed in the conference held on 2-3 April. Com. BTR could not attend and the document was circulated.

It was surprising for me sometimes that many

people, outsiders and sympathisers used to send their documents, such as "Stalin" or "International Situation" or on "Religion" for his remarks. Many times he used to go through the documents and send his remarks. Sometimes, he used to give to some other capable comrade to read it when it was not possible for him. His hunger for knowledge was unprecedented. The recent article on Jawaharlal Nehru centenary in Marxist took him days to





read the material. He asked Com. Saha to bring the necessary books from the library. He made plenty of notes and wrote such a lengthy article. He was very much worried whether it would be completed within the time limit. Again it was corrected and given to Com. Rajan.

During his illness, once in January 1990 he asked for the typewriter and got the matter typed for the Party in the hospital. People around wondered whether there was a patient in the next room or an office.

There was no wonder, therefore, he wrote on "International Situation" during this period which was to be his last document. During his illness in Tata hospital he used to think about the events in East Europe. He discussed with many comrades when they met him in the hospital about the present international situation. One could see his agony when principles of Marxism-Leninism were being discarded, when Communist Parties were being disbanded.

Com. BTR never wavered or denied what he said earlier. For instance his views on International situation at the time of India-China war in 1962-64. He gave his views to one of the local dailies saying there was no aggression by China and India-China issue should be settled peacefully. One can remember those days when we were all arrested and the public opinion was against the Party. The local press published the views of Com. BTR. After such a hullabaloo the particular daily thought that Com. BTR would repudiate it. But he stood to his words and he was put under arrest and released only in 1966.

For downtrodden people in Kerala, his name Com. BTR was everywhere. Nobody knows 'B.T. Ranadive' as person. But Com. BTR, yes. He loved the people of Kerala. He was proud of the politically conscious agricultural workers, their simple living and love for the party to which AKG belonged. In his last illness he suddenly inquired about Com. Susheela's health. Everybody knew how much BTR loved AKG.

Since many months Com. BTR was very much concerned about increasing parliamentarianism in our party work. He was angry when nobody spoke about the attacks on Tripura in the last elections in Parliament house while rigging in Amethi was condemned. He used to welcome criticism on the party work or on trade union. He used to criticise our articles, writings, severely when he found deviations from the party line. He did his best to save the party cadres from going in wilderness. He wanted the discipline in the party, and to adopt democratic norms in the mass movement, which were not

always cared for. Many of our comrades in CITU or trade unions used to forget about the line of class struggle and party, and he rebuked.

The way he loved the cadres of the working class is something to be remembered. Therefore, many comrades wept at the bed side in the hospital. Those who loved the party, he had tremendous respect for them and he would do anything for them, but deviation from the party line he would not tolerate.

Being born in the Prarthana Samajist family, Com. BTR always held progressive and modern views. He used to scold those senior comrades who adopted the old ideas like shaving of their heads after their father's death or wearing sacred threads etc, while always making the difference between the workers and party leaders.

CITU AND COM. BTR

What CITU is today is due to the work and guidance of Com. BTR. On account of his persistent guidance, correct line of class struggle, tactics of united front of the working class, the CITU became one of the foremost trade unions in the country. Not only CITU but other Federations guided by Com. BTR also made their impact on the movement. One is still unable to understand as to how many Federations and unions he was guiding besides CITU. He used to handle a number of complicated problems of the unions. The more difficult and complicated the problems the more he was interested to tackle it as a challenge and tried to solve it. His great authority and understanding of the problems made the solution satisfactory for those who were involved in it.

DEFENDER OF THE WOMEN'S CAUSE

Com. BTR was defender of the women's cause. Those of our women comrades who have listened to him in the conferences, conventions, meetings, etc. will know how he used to appeal and rebuke to the Party comrades and leaders for not sending their women folk and women in general for the meetings. The party and CITU do not pay attention to their political education, and political consciousness. He used to lash at the feudal tendencies existing in the party and trade unions towards women. At every conference he addressed in any state he would question as to why only a few women were attending. The leaders used to come to me and say apologetically, "We tried to bring women. We were afraid of Com. BTR's remarks....." Even the politically advanced states such as Bengal and Kerala, he used to question the comrades about their inactivity, towards women. Suddenly he used to ask the leader in the conference, "Why there is not a single woman here?" The leader had no proper answer.

For the political understanding about the role of

women and working women in the trade unions, the CITU decided to have working women's wing under CITU. It was a great relief for working women in Federations, unions, like LIC, Banks, that their specific problems were taken up by the unions. It was Com. BTR's persistent efforts and guidance that the All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women was formed and he asked me to take up the whole responsibility. The journal "Voice of the Working Women" was started in 1978-79. It was on his insistence that "Kamkaji Mahila" in Hindi was started for Hindi speaking areas. I still remember how Com. BTR scolded our comrades in CITU when some women leaders from other countries were left to entertain by me only. All other secretaries left the room. Com. BTR was very much interested and anxious to organise the working women in trade unions. He used to guide the work of AIDWA. Many a time he guided us on various issues.

BTR LIVED A SIMPLE LIFE

I came into contact with Com. BTR during the period of the 40 days general strike of Textile Workers in Bombay in 1939-40. I was asked to write a diary on the day to day activities of the workers after visiting them at the mill gates and chauls. Com. BTR used to work for "Girni Kamgar Union, Lal Bawata". After a few days, we got married in 1939. The same day he had to go underground because the Second World War had been declared.

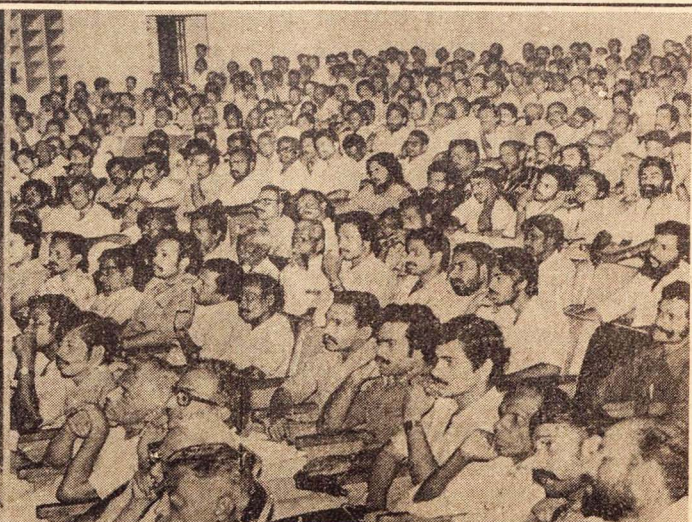
Com. BTR lived a very simple life. We had to stay in one room at Rangnekar's place, who looked after Uday when we got arrested. During the period 1951-52, he could not do much work because of political differences in CPI. As he had no work he used to sit and read alone in the room. He helped me and Uday when I had to go to job and maintain ourselves. It was the Rangnekar's family who helped us all the time in our bad days.

Many comrades were astonished to hear the Kailidas or Mahabharat in the meetings he addressed. His memory was very sharp even in the hospital.

Com. BTR was a firm believer in science. If no scientific answer to his illness was given by the doctor, he would not be satisfied. Many times he used to ask Nilu, his daughter-in-law, who is a doctor, about his illness. Uday who was all the time at the bedside during his last days made his life bearable. He used to inquire about Uday whether he was there or not. He reminded him of many incidents in the past when he was a school boy which made him laugh. In fact he became a friend and Com. BTR confided in him, told him about his past life, how many times he went to jail and how he was treated. He called me and told, "Tell Uday that he had to go to Delhi again, because he had some appointments". This had a reference because Uday was prevailing upon him not to leave Bombay for some more days. Com. BTR must have felt it that he did not listen to Uday. Unfortunately, he had come back to Bombay to be admitted directly to the hospital and till last he could not come home.

Such a selfless and devoted party leader, a man of principles, is very rarely found. This loss is a very big loss for the Party and working class and created a vacuum in the party. He used to love those comrades who read Marxism-Leninism, the basic principles of the party of Lenin. He wrote on "Stalin" in Ganashakti. That showed his love for the man who saved mankind by winning the Second World War despite criticism on him.

Com. BTR tried to keep the purity of Marxism-Leninism. Those principles are being eroded at present and he felt very unhappy when he was alive. He died while thinking about the future of the party. Let us try to build the Party and keep the red banner high for which he fought and gave his life.



B. T. RANADIVE — AN OUTSTANDING REVOLUTIONARY

M.K. PANDHE

The name of B. T. Ranadive and his over six decades of revolutionary activities will no doubt get a significant place in the annals of the revolutionary movement in India. He devoted his entire life for the cause of the liberation of the working class and the toiling people of India. He could not pay proper attention to himself or his family members. Though he breathed his last in the early hours of 6th April 1990 he left behind a rich heritage which will always be cherished by generation after generation in our country and outside.

I had an occasion to meet Com. B.T.Ranadive in the year 1945 when he came to Sholapur for the meeting of the Maharashtra Provincial Committee of the undivided Communist Party of India. I had occasion to attend the meeting as an invitee. In the meeting Com. BTR explained the national and international situation which created a deep impact on my mind. He spoke for 3 hours and gave a clear cut analysis of the situation. His concluding speech in the meeting clarified all the points raised by comrades during the discussion.

I requested Com. BTR to address a meeting of party members working on the students' front in Sholapur to which he readily agreed. As soon as he took his seat in the meeting the first question he asked was why there was not a single girl student in the party. "Are we building the movement of only male students?" he commented. In the meeting he explained at length the task before the student movement and called upon the party members to join as full timers in the mass organisation and not to be in search for lucrative jobs. Later I told Com. BTR that after graduation I would become a full timer in the trade union movement. He put his warm hand on my shoulder by way of appreciation. I became a full timer in the trade union of textile workers in 1948 which was incidentally founded in 1934 by Com. BTR himself. When I saw him lying in state in Janashakti in Bombay on 7th April suddenly I remembered the episode with tearful eyes.

MOST FAVOURITE LEADER

As a delegate to the Maharashtra Conference of the CPI in 1947 I had an opportunity to hear BTR's brilliant analysis of the situation then prevailing in the country. He very sharply criticised in his speech the short-comings in the party organisation and emphasising the need for ideological development of party cadres. In 1948, I had pleasure of hearing BTR's speech before party comrades who were delegates to the conference of the All India Students Federation held in Bombay wherein

BTR explained the rising people's struggles and need for party to adopt a militant line. His capacity to marshal facts and cogently present convincing arguments was clearly seen in his speech. BTR was indeed the most favourite party leader at the time.

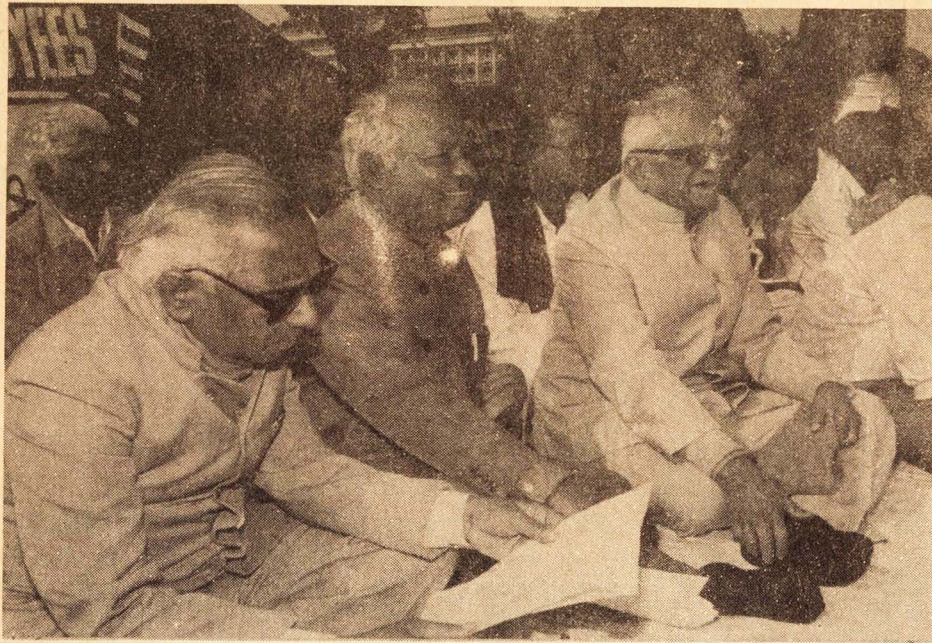
Later I had no occasion to meet him till 1951 since he had to go underground after becoming the General Secretary of the Party. During this period the party committed sectarian and adventurist mistakes. However, he admitted these errors and corrected them subsequently. In my association with him I found he was very cautious about these errors and was always emphasising the need to consult the masses before launching any struggle.

BTR's critics only harp on the mistakes and failed to emphasise his spectacular contributions to the revolutionary movement in India — objective assessment of his entire active life clearly indicate that these errors pale into insignificance considering his profound contribution to the revolutionary theory and practice in India.

CAMPAIGN OF DENIGRATION

Since 1951 a campaign of outright denigration of BTR was started by Dange and his supporters in the party. I was among those who were dubbed as BTR's supporters and a campaign of vindictiveness was initiated against BTR and others. I must say that BTR faced the campaign with extreme calmness and behaved like a disciplined soldier in the revolutionary movement. While admitting errors of the sectarian period he was fully supporting the party and his mass organisations. In this period he contributed several articles and written studied books which clearly pointed out that he was still the tallest contemporary Marxist-Leninist in the country. Whenever I used to go to Bombay I used to meet Com. BTR and he was always in his jovial mood. He was not speaking much about the vilification campaign against him launched by Dange and others. The campaign failed to cut much ice and BTR continued to become more and more popular among the rank and file workers. He was accessible to all and stream of visitors were calling on him regularly. His intellectual capacities were known even to Stalin and when the 4 member undivided party delegation met him he told them that the party should not be vindictive to Ranadive since his intellectual abilities would be a great asset to the party. Dange and his group however thought this was a threat to their leadership.

BTR was elected as a Secretary of the Maharashtra Committee of the Party despite the vilification campaign by those who wanted to take the party on the



reformist line. As a Secretary of the Provincial unit of the party he made important contributions during the Samyukta Maharashtra agitation and Goa liberation struggle. In Samyukta Maharashtra agitation he led the struggle for a separate linguistic province of Maharashtra but he always fought the chauvinist elements in the movement. Dange was advocating a line of full co-operation with the chauvinist elements. BTR's warning proved to be correct in view of the rise of Shiv Sena in Maharashtra whose leadership was a constituent of Samyukta Maharashtra movement and was dragging the movement on chauvinist lines.

AGAIN IN THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP

I had some difficulty in getting permission to undertake research for Ph.D. It was through BTR's help as Secretary of the Provincial Committee that I could get the required permission. When I was in Gokhale Institute in Poona BTR stayed with me on two occasions and gave me suggestions about my doctoral thesis. I am still proudly keeping with me a message of greetings sent by BTR on the occasion of my marriage in 1957. Incidentally, he was present during the marriage of my son and daughter. In personal matters he was very keen in observation of normal relations.

The undivided party realised that BTR should be given higher responsibility and he was called to work in the party centre at Delhi in 1957. I also joined the party centre in 1958 in the Central headquarters of the AITUC. I had frequent opportunities to meet him. He was then editor of theoretical monthly of the party New Age and I used to write in it from time to time. I was hesitating to

write but BTR encouraged and guided me in writing articles. Dange was not happy about my association with BTR and he expressed this on one or two occasions.

In 1961 Vithal Chowdhury of Bombay organised a TU class of engineering workers in which BTR and myself were invited as speakers. Dange did not allow me to go to the class. However, BTR's writings in New Age weekly and monthly continued to attract more and more readers and he ranked among the most outstanding thinkers in India. He was regularly invited for party and TU classes all over India.

BTR played a very important role in upholding the 1957 and 1960 documents of the International Communist movement and fought against the revisionist deviations. During the India-China war he boldly came forward to say that a socialist country would not commit aggression and advocated the settlement of India-China border dispute through peaceful negotiations.

INDIA-CHINA DISPUTE

I used to regularly meet BTR and get clarifications on various ideological issues. I was convinced by the arguments advanced by him. His uncompromising stand against all deviations from Marxism and his merciless criticism against all bourgeois ideologies within the working class movement made him extremely popular among the rank and file party members. During the India-China war several party leaders openly demanded expulsion of BTR from the party only to appease the Indian bourgeoisie. However BTR remained firm and did not budge an inch from his stand.

Indian bourgeoisie know who was theoretically guiding the revolutionary elements in the party. Ranadive's arrest and keeping him under detention for a long time only shows the keenness of the bourgeoisie to suppress the revolutionary section in the Communist movement.

I had an occasion to meet BTR when he came for the Habeas Corpus petition in Supreme Court along with S. V. Parntekar and others. I was surprised to see that BTR was well acquainted with all the developments outside. He enquired about the well being of several comrades outside and was happy to know that over-

whelming majority of the comrades in the party were adhering to a revolutionary line within the party.

Even though BTR was in jail Dange showed vindictiveness. In September 1963 March to Parliament, release of political prisoners was not demanded. Some comrades in the procession shouted slogans demanding release of BTR but had to face charge sheets. Among them was P. R. Krishnan of Bombay.

BTR continued to be under detention till 1966 but he used to write his opinions on various national and international issues. After the split in the party a question of formation of another T. U. centre came to the fore front. Though in jail, BTR gave the opinion that we should continue to work in the AITUC and fight for united movements.

FORCEFUL APPEAL FOR UNITY

In the 1966 AITUC conference in Bombay BTR made a forceful appeal for unity within the AITUC but Dange ignored this appeal. In the conference he was elected as a member of the General Council of the AITUC. After the Conference BTR functioned from Calcutta and I was in Delhi in the Central Head Quarters of AITUC. However, BTR gave me regular guidance on all the issues. Periodically I used to meet him for detailed guidance. Without his guidance it would have been difficult to fight the disruptive role of Dange within AITUC head quarters. Between 1966 and 1970 BTR gave a militant leadership to the revolutionary elements within the AITUC and resolutely fought class collaborationist policies of Dange leadership.

When it became extremely difficult to work unitedly within the AITUC an all India meeting of T. U. activists was called in Calcutta in 1969 to assess the situation. BTR presented an exhaustive report in the meeting and explained the situation in the T. U. movement. He advocated a policy of continuation in AITUC and fight for united movement. The meeting approved its stand.

BTR was the author of the document on Tasks on the Trade Union Front which guided the ranks with a revolutionary perspective. It gave call for a determined struggle against alien class ideology.

STRUGGLE AGAINST ADVENTURISM

BTR's contribution against adventurist and Naxalite deviation armed the ranks with a clear cut perspective of a revolutionary movement. He was in the forefront in explaining both the deviations to the ranks which played a notable role in unifying the revolutionary movement. I periodically used to discuss my doubts with BTR and he was always prepared to explain the stand point. It was a rare quality in BTR that even if one differed with him it was a pleasure to argue with him and understand the logic

behind his arguments.

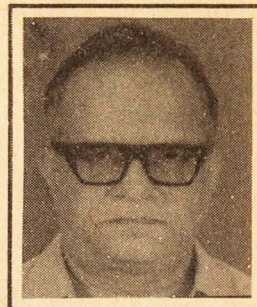
Despite repeated efforts to preserve unity of the AITUC Dange was out to destroy its unity. During the beginning of 1970 when it became clear that it was impossible to function within the AITUC due to undemocratic style of functioning of Dange and his determination to impose class collaborationist policies on the AITUC, BTR took initiative in calling a convention in Goa in April 1970 and he played a leading role in taking a decision to break from the AITUC and calling an All India T.U. Convention at Calcutta in May 1970. BTR gave detailed guidance in preparing all the documents of the convention. Even personally he had gone through all the resolutions. The resolution on United Action of the working class was completely redrafted by him.

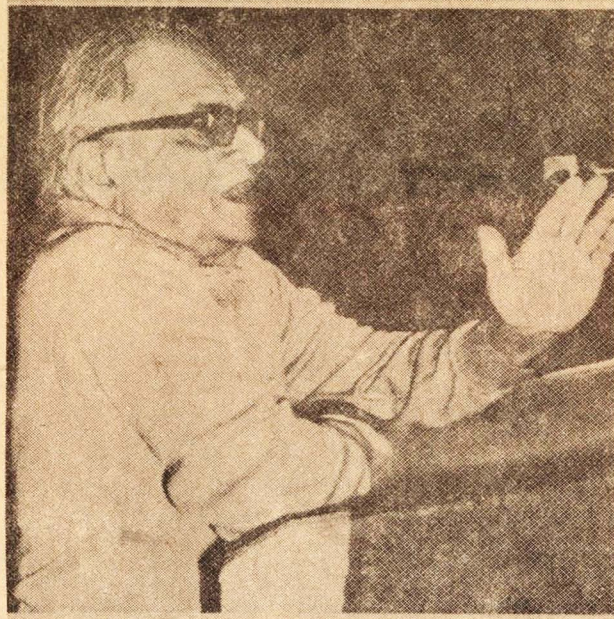
FOUNDER OF CITU

I shifted to Calcutta in 1969 and had occasion to work closely with him. We were staying together and I had a magnificent opportunity to discuss with him almost daily, sometime extending upto 3 hours various problems in the working class and the trade union movement. I could learn several things concerning strategy and tactics of the trade union movement during these discussions. I would also learn much about the T.U. movement in early stages and could greatly benefit from his vast experience. Despite his other political commitments he could find time to go into details of all aspects of CITU activities. He always used to emphasise to develop link between the day to day T.U. activities and the final goal of establishment of socialism.

He wrote extensively on almost every problem facing the working class during the last 20 years. His speeches before the CITU conferences, working committee and General Council meetings, conferences of industrywise federations, his articles in CITU journal, The Working Class, his messages and articles of hundreds of souvenirs brought out by CITU and non-CITU Unions, booklets he wrote on several materials will be an encyclopaedia of the T.U. movement. This does not include his other political writings which may be of the same size or even more. The decision of the CITU secretariat to publish his writings will be greatly welcomed by the T.U. activists of all affiliations.

Ranadive has been regularly guiding us in the united movement of the working class. In the formation of the United Council of Trade Unions (UCTU), The National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions (NCC) and the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions





(CPSTU) BTR has played a noteworthy role. He repeatedly gave suggestions to improve their functioning and build common programme.

CRITIQUE OF SHORTCOMINGS

BTR was always forthright in criticising the weakness of the T. U. movement, particularly about the undemocratic functioning of the T. U. , neglect of the problem of unorganised workers, unemployed workforce, working women. He was never afraid of publicly criticising certain wrong practices in the T. U. movement. He openly criticised the working class for not sufficiently coming forward against national emergency during 1975. On the question of worker-peasant alliance and on the need for working class and peasant alliance he was strongly critical of the trade unions about their failure to understand their importance.

Despite his busy schedule he was always finding time to give lectures in T. U. and party classes. He personally knew several thousands of T. U. comrades and could talk to them about the problems of their industry. His memory was so sharp that he could quite often remember his earlier conversation with comrades.

It was an amazing experience for me that he was extremely keen to go into each and every detail during his discussions with me on public sector wage negotiations. His guidance and advice helped us immensely to know how long to fight and when to settle. He was consistently advising us to combine negotiations round the table with

mass movements at the grass root level.

BTR was indeed a confirmed internationalist and was always advocating friendship with socialist countries, solidarity with the working class of advanced capitalist countries and firm support to all anti-imperialist and anti-racist movements of the third world countries. He was however extremely concerned about the recent developments in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union but was confident that ultimately scientific socialism would triumph in the world. Even when his health was deteriorating he was always enquiring about these developments.

BTR had no interest in his life except the task of achieving revolutionary transformation of the society. He was reluctant to go abroad since he had so much to do in India., "We have not achieved socialism in our country - what we can tell others about our achievements". Despite successes achieved by our movements his attention was always directed to the fact that we were far away from our cherished goal.

The passing away of BTR is a loss which is irreparable. However, he has left a legacy of several thousands of young and middle level and senior leadership trained by him. The task before us is to follow the guidelines given by him. His writing is the living memory of BTR which will always show us light during difficult period.

BTR's call for the formation of Confederation of Trade Unions is now welcomed by several other national centres including the INTUC. This is positive development. Formation of such a Confederation of Trade Unions will be an ideal monument for him.

Let us pledge to carry forward the struggle initiated by BTR so that the working class of India will achieve its final objective. By building a collective leadership of CITU, development of active cadres in all corners of the country, the CITU will be able to carry forward the behest of the great leader and teacher. The grief of his passing away is no doubt difficult to overcome. But the remarkable guidance given by him will continue to show us the path in future.

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COMRADE B.T. RANADIVE—SOME REMINISCENCES

MOHAMMED AMIN

I saw comrade B.T. Ranadive in 1946 for the first time on the occasion of Silver Jubilee session of the All India Trade Union Congress in November at Wellington Square. I was elected a delegate from the jute union. Comrade BTR met all the communist delegates at night in the palace of Maharaja of Mymen Singh in South Calcutta.

He was a member of the Polit Bureau of the party at that time. He explained the decision of the party to us. His speech inspired all the delegates very much. It was the beginning.

I saw him second time in 1948 on the occasion of the 2nd Party Congress at Mohammed Ali Park. From this party congress he was elected General Secretary of the CPI.

Thereafter our party was declared illegal and most of our leaders were detained. In 1950 a large scale communal riot took place in and around Calcutta. A good number of Muslim jute workers were compelled to leave for East Pakistan as the Congress government refused to protect them. Their houses were looted and burnt and many were killed.

All the muslims of Alambazar were forcibly driven out. I was among them. I went to East Pakistan and started political work first among the refugees and then among the railway workers of Saidpur. I was arrested on 19th September 1951 and was kept in jail without trial under section 7/3 of the Public Safety Act till the end of 1953, and after the introduction of passport and visa system I was released and repatriated on the basis of Indian nationality.

Therefore, during this period, I could not meet him.

My third meeting with Com. BTR took place in 1959. On 31st August several thousand people assembled in front of the Calcutta Raj Bhawan in support of the demand of food. There was a brutal lathi charge by the police in which 80 persons died. Most of the leaders including Comrade Jyoti Basu were in jail. A call was issued for a Bengal Bandh on 3rd September 1959. This bundh was unprecedentedly successful. At that time a meeting of the Central Committee took place in Calcutta. As all mills of Titagarh observed the bundh on 3rd September, the party decided that a workers meeting should be addressed by Comrade BTR at Titagarh. He was taken to Titagarh two hours before the schedule time of the meeting and therefore he could not address the meeting.

After than there was another gap of about 9 years. In 1968 our Calcutta comrades brought out the

Urdu weekly "Kisan Mazdoor" and I was appointed its editor. At that time the office of the Central Committee of our Party was in Calcutta and therefore it became a routine work for me to meet Comrade BTR on every Monday to discuss the items to be published in the paper. BTR attached much importance to this paper and told me on many occasions that this is the only source for our party to reach the Muslim masses.

He discussed with me in detail the editorial policy of the paper. The arrangement was made that Comrade Desh Raj Chadha will read out all the captions to him and on his advice read the details also. He invariably used to listen to it attentively and in the next meeting he promptly used to make comments. Some times I used to discuss important editorials before publishing it and he used to make valuable suggestions to improve it further. Some times he used to tell me that one or two paragraphs should be re-written enunciating such and such points. This association continued till 1977 and was discontinued only after the Central Committee Office was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi.

There was another source of my intimacy with Comrade BTR—"The Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union". As this union was the biggest union affiliated to CITU, Comrade BTR used to inaugurate its annual conferences almost invariably from 1974 to 1989. Only this year he could not go. It so happened that our conference was scheduled to be held on 6th April and the news of his death was broadcast by the radio in its morning bulletin. We had to adjourn the conference for two days after paying homage to Comrade BTR.

His speeches were liked by the workers because of his simplicity of expression alongwith humours and castigations against the exploiters. In private conversations also he never missed any chance of satire and humour, sometimes he used to laugh at himself.

During the last Assembly elections in Tripura, I returned with comrade BTR by the same flight from Agartala to Calcutta. He had to wait for sometime to catch the evening flight the same day in the reserve lounge of the Calcutta Airport. I also stayed there to see him off. On such occasions BTR becomes eloquent. He talked with me on various political issues and all of a sudden he told me Comrade Amin, "Everything in the world is replaceable except our leaders" and laughed as his habit was.

My last meeting with BTR took place in March when he came back to Delhi from Bombay after some treatment. I saw that he was seated in a position of

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I cannot believe that I have lost my brother Comrade B.T.R. (Babu). He has gone but the treasure he left behind of idealism, fighting spirit, sacrifice, love for the party, for working class and for the country cannot be and will never be lost.

From his school days he had some principles. My father was a social reformer, Prarthana Samajist and hence since 1920s we had scheduled caste people at our house and they used to serve the family with water etc. and our family was boycotted by the society. I was not even born at that time. But my brothers and sisters told me how B.T. reacted to this. In his school he developed friendship with Scheduled Caste boys and being a scholar taught them and helped them in studies. Whatever money he was given as present by relatives was spent on helping three boys in school. Some of the high class boys attacked him once for this but he replied in such a way that they never dared to touch him.

He always accepted challenges. When he was in school he was challenged that he was only reading books and have no guts to play cricket or any game. He accepted the challenge and played cricket so well that he was taken in the school cricket team in N.M. Vidyalaya, Pune.

In 1923 there was a symposium on "Widow Marriage" and college students were invited to the symposium when fundamentalists said, "It is against religion and Manusmriti". He asked permission to speak and spoke for seven minutes asking the speakers about their respect to their mothers and on what is religion, looting money in the name of God and quoted in Sanskrit how woman is considered a Goddess. Immediately two speakers went away from the symposium.

There are several instances in his life where he has fought for some principles even in his school and college days.

Our cousin brother Dr. Babasahib Samarth was closely associated with Dr. Ambedkar. BTR was influenced by Marxist books given to him by Dr. Adhikari, our other cousin, and when he finished his education he immediately joined the Communist movement.

In 1928 and 30s there were English revolutionary songs, "Arise the Prisoners of Starvation etc". BTR wrote a Marathi song "Raise the Flag of Revolution". They used to sing it and then address the meeting.

In 1934 our father died. We were waiting for BT to come for funeral but since the strike of textile workers was going on he could not come. When he met my mother afterwards she said, "You have no humanity, you did not come to console me". He asked my mother, "Mother, there were thousands of people, their wives, their children fighting for food and their children crying. Then what



would my father and you have expected me to do. I know the heritage of my father was 'humanity' and I followed it, are you angry now"? My mother could not say a word.

After that all my brothers and sisters were in the young Communist League. In every action or work he did, there was a principled stand and we were all influenced by it.

Even during our Party life he was very strict. In 1948 when all of us were in jail, where facilities were not given to the working class and they were given Class II status, we had to fight. In 1950s and afterwards, when we were made ordinary members of the party, we cannot ever forget the discipline he asked us to follow.

His speeches during Samyukta Maharashtra movement, Goa Mukti movement are unforgettable.

In 1963 we were in jail and our mother died. I was taken under police guard to see her only five minutes before she died and BT was brought there after she died. I was furious with the authorities and BT took me aside and told, "This is the way the Government will behave and be prepared for many shocks".

He considered the Party as his life. In the hospital he said, "I do not want to live as I am of no use to the Party". He said "Please inform the PB that mercy killing should be there". Every time he was talking about the young cadres that they will lead the party. His only consideration was Party and we never forget that. His approach to women workers also has played a role in recognition of the place of women in the movement.

If we go on writing about his memoirs they will never end.

He was critical about the international situation and said, "Marxism-Leninism will never die. Deviations will be there but basic principles are the only basis". Many visitors asked about the international situation and he replied "Communism will not be finished".

We pledge that all the principles that he fought for and the faith he had in Communist Party of India (Marxist) will be renewed and carried forward.

COMRADE BTR — A COMMUNIST IN THE TRUEST SENSE

SUKOMAL SEN

I came in personal contact with Com B.T.Ranadive after the Central Committee Office of the CPI(M) was set up at Calcutta subsequent to the Party Congress in 1964. Since then my relation with him grew closer and closer and in every details of my party and trade union work I used to get sympathetic guidance from him.

Our country has given birth to a number of talented communist leaders with great virtues who immensely contributed to the Communist movement in the country. But, today after the expiry of Comrade BTR, a great void has been created in the Party. There is no use lamenting. Through collective work, the party will have to bridge that void to the extent that is possible. Even then, the void that has been created in me by his absence is haunting me day and night and personally I feel a state of sudden helplessness in the conduct of my day to day party and trade union work. I don't know how to overcome this situation.

Though personally I came to know Com BTR only during his stay at Central Committee Office of Calcutta after his release from jail, from my very boyhood Com. BTR's image started influencing my political life and thinking. I got my party membership in 1952 when I was quite young and a student in the college. But I was influenced by the party even during my school days and after the Second Party Congress in Calcutta in 1948, when BTR became the General Secretary of the party, I started admiring the Party and Com. BTR. Though the party at that time was following a left-sectarian political line, which was rejected later on, yet the self-sacrificing and heroic conduct of the party at that time left deep imprint in me. Not personally, but politically I became associated with Com BTR and the party from that very period when I was a school boy.

Later on, after 1964, when I came in personal contact with Com. BTR, I felt really thrilled. At last I could meet and come nearer to a party leader whom I have admired from my very boyhood. Thereafter, as days passed by, my admiration grew deeper. At every stage I used to seek his guidance and I got it. I never had any hesitation to approach him, whether in the Party Office, or at his residence, in the morning, evening or in the noon. I found to my surprise that even when he was deeply engrossed in writing some vital political documents on the eve of the PB or CC meeting or during the meeting, whenever I entered his room for consulting him on any trade union or political problem, he used to stop writing and then rendered his advice. I used to come out of his room with refreshing experience.

He is no more now. Man is mortal and he has

passed away at matured age. Yet my heart is filled with inconsolable sadness when I see, that comrade is no more to whom my access was free at any time, at any moment and at any stage, and who could understand the problem in details and could give suitable guidance.

I work in state government employees front. Today whatever development we find in state employees' movement in the country and whatever advance we find on its organisational aspect, particularly in the growth of All India State Government Employees' Federation, I have to candidly admit that much of this advance, progress and growth is due to Com. BTR's guidance and the political interest he took in it. It is true that the working class and the peasantry are the two basic classes on whom the party should concentrate its efforts from its revolutionary perspective. But in the present stage of development of our country as well as other countries, the white collar employees, whose number is in an increasing order, are also playing an important role which is conducive and helpful for the growth of working class struggle and general democratic movement. Com BTR very well evaluated the significance that the white collar employees can play in the general democratic movement of the country. Com BTR's perception in this regard was very clear. And the political guidance emanating from this clear perception was of immense help to us who are engaged in organising the trade union struggles of the state employees. He knew every details of our movement and organisation. Not only of ours, he had detailed knowledge of all the trade union fronts of the country and capably guided them. Com BTR was a great champion of women's emancipation. Frequently he used to take us to task for not seriously taking up the women's issue and for neglecting the task of organising the working women. He sharply criticised us for not promoting the women union activists to the position of higher leadership. Really, it is from him that we got the inspiration of attaching importance to the women's question in the trade unions.

I used to get guidance from Com. BTR not only in respect of my trade union work. The true communist in him was a constant source of inspiration to me in my day to day political career. His profound knowledge of Marxism, Marxist philosophy and economics and his clarity of vision not only put him as one of the strongest pillars of the party, to individual comrades also who were in touch with him, he was like a fountain of Marxian knowledge. Every body who came in contact with and who wanted to know something from him returned with an exhilarating experience. It is not only in Marxist philosophy and economics, but in philosophy as such particularly in



Upanishadic and Vedantic philosophy, in art and culture, in literature Com BTR possessed an admiring knowledge. His knowledge in Sanskrit gave him full access to Indian philosophy and traditional thoughts. I had the opportunity of discussing with him a variety of subjects and when engrossed in these discussions, I found him

even putting aside, for the time being, other immediately important work of drafting political reports etc.

Com. BTR used to emphasise on basic studies in Marxism and theoretical writings. And he was a communist who matched every word of his practice. He himself was a voracious reader and a prolific writer. Depth of his theoretical writings was a constant source of inspiration to me. He urged me also for theoretical and serious writing. When my book "Working Class of India" was published in 1978, he was very glad to read it. Soon, he made a detailed review of the book in Peoples' Democracy. But his review itself became a self contained treatise in itself on the ideology and history of the working class movement. I found him equally happy when I handed over to him my other book 'May Day and Eight Hours' Struggle in India'. But he wanted me to write more. Sometimes he used to rebuke me for not doing enough theoretical work. One day he scolded me saying 'Comrade you will soon go out of circulation if you don't write'. This scolding did not dampen me, on the contrary it inspired me for reading and writing.

I found his knowledge and understanding on the international situation of immense dimension. He was a senior member of the Polit Bureau of the party and President of CITU. He had ample scope for foreign travel. But he disliked it. Perhaps during his life he visited two or three countries only. He refused to go abroad unlike others. He was totally averse to publicity and prone to simplicity. But his knowledge of international affairs was more profound than many comrades who are or were very well travelled. The latest developments in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union were extremely shocking and painful to him. In personal discussion I found him revolting at what is happening in those countries. Even while at death bed and while writhing with unbearable pains he delved himself into studying and evaluating these international developments. This is an unusual trait of character. Not at all fearing death, the revolutionary communist in him, till he breathed his last, kept himself engrossed with political thinking. How amazing it is that while counting days and hours for the final moment, afflicted as he was with a terminal disease, he could not afford to miss a single minute which he used for his last political and trade union contributions.

Com. BTR was an unusually large-hearted communist leader and hardly I found in him any personal bias or prejudice against any comrade. He used to bitterly criticise comrades for their mistakes and slips, but that did not lead him to any biased attitude against that or those comrades. His candid temperament and deep sense of humour were particularly pleasing. Sometimes I found, even at the next moment of bitter criticism against any comrade or group of comrades in any meeting, he made humorous and witty remarks and burst into laughter heartily and made laugh every one including those rebuked and criticised by him. This is possible only for a generous and large hearted communist free from any trace of vanity.

His deep personal affection for the comrades was another rare quality. He proved by his own nature that disinterestedness and indifference to comrades' personal problems, their health, their family conditions and all other personal issues are not a necessary quality for the comrades irrespective of their nearness or distance from him was another soothing experience. Comrades' illness and personal difficulties deeply moved this great communist. Particularly I cannot forget this quality in him. I would like to mention here one of my personal experiences. Few years back my wife was attacked with a difficult type of ailment and I was a little anxious for her. Com. BTR came to know about her ailments. Since then, for the next few years he never forgot to ask me about my wife's health. Where and how she was being treated. I found in him a constant anxiety for her although Com. BTR did not know her personally. I simply admire how it was possible for a top-most party leader like him even to remember such petty personal problems of a comrade like me!

Today when I think and think about him I recall some other personal experiences which left deep imprint in me. I remember that whenever I went to meet him at his residence at Delhi in the morning, instead of asking me to wait, he used to invite me to his break-fast table and then start discussing the problem I raised. Comrade Vimal served me tea and food and if I felt reluctant to take any thing Com. BTR pressed me to eat. Then I ate and discussed.

With his passing away, we will also miss this unusual affection of a top leader for the cadres of the party! I would like to cite another instance of his extremely courteous and vanity-free behaviour. One of my younger brothers, who is a scientist in Calcutta and also a party member came to Delhi for his visa for attending an International conference on Nuclear Physics at Beijing. He expressed to me his desire to be personally introduced to Com. BTR. I told Com. BTR about the same. He readily agreed. One day I took my brother to Com. BTR in his room at CC office. To my utter surprise as soon as my brother entered Com. BTR's room, Com.

BTR who was writing something, stood up from his seat and warmly shook hands with my brother and then asked him to be seated. Then for a few minutes there was some interesting conversation and my brother left with an unusual impression about the man whom he met. The manner and courtesy with which he received my brother, even now I cannot forget. A rare quality which I found in him was simply overwhelming.

Another incident moved me deeply and deeply and still I think how it was possible? One day Com. BTR was attending party fraction meeting of ours. The meeting was being held in BTR's room in CC Office. In the meeting Com. BTR was speaking on a very serious subject. One of the comrades in the meeting became a little inattentive and was glancing over a newspaper. Com. BTR took him to task for his inattentiveness. I was writing the minutes of the meeting. Suddenly I got a little diverted for a few seconds only when my attention fell on a book lying in BTR's table. Com. BTR marked it and severely chided me. I personally felt that it was too much for Com. BTR and the chiding was disproportionate to my fault, because I was very attentive and writing minutes and only for a few seconds the book diverted my attention. After the meeting was over, when all comrades left Com. BTR asked me to stay. Then to my utter embarrassment he pleaded guilty and said, "Com. Sukomal I beg to be excused, actually I did not mean you, I was angry with that comrade who was reading newspaper". I could not answer, my voice was choked with emotion, not for the earlier chiding but for Com. BTR's pleading to be excused and that too to a comrade of my status !

The question that is posed before me now is what is a communist quality ? Disinterestedness, indifference, intolerance, feeling no concern for the comrades, no personal affection, rudeness, conceited and haughty behaviour, treating the comrades lower in rank with some sort of indifference verging on contempt and always keeping a distance from them or the vice-versa, tolerance, deep concern, personal affection, courteous, amiable and frank behaviour, respecting the dignity and sentiment of the comrades and understanding their difficulties — whichever rank he may belong to and always keeping closer to the comrades? If the latter ones are true and definitely those are true, Com. B.T.Ranadive was indeed a communist leader of exemplary nature, a genuine revolutionary and a true disciple of Marx, Engles, Lenin !

Today he is no more. But he has left for us lofty tradition—great tasks unfinished. We will be able to pay genuine respect to him if we make our best efforts to emulate his great communist virtues, his revolutionary fervour, and try to proceed with the tasks began by him and other illustrious communist leaders of our country. Red Salute to Com. BTR!

Long Live Com. B.T.R.!

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His views about relation between the Party and Trade Union, and his stress on the importance of recruiting large number of workers in the party was expressed again and again. In the booklet on Tasks on T. U. Front, he criticised the callousness on the part of our trade union leaders with regard to recruitment of workers as party members in the following words, "There are instances of trade unions where we have been working for more than a decade and where we are not having even ten party members, not one party member per year" (Tasks on Trade Union Front" - 1967-P/52).

This was according to Comrade BTR due to reformist understanding of the trade union movement.

Again in September 1983 the Central Committee amended the 1967 resolution on "Tasks on Trade Union Front", where he again emphasised on the development of the party among the working class in the following words : "It is clear beyond doubt that any trade union activity, whatever may be its pretensions to be revolutionary, is purely reformist activity if it does not lead to rapid expansion of the party among the workers..... After all we want a mass Party and it can arise only in the course of the struggle. But it does not arise spontaneously, it has to be organised consciously through the lever of trade union struggle".

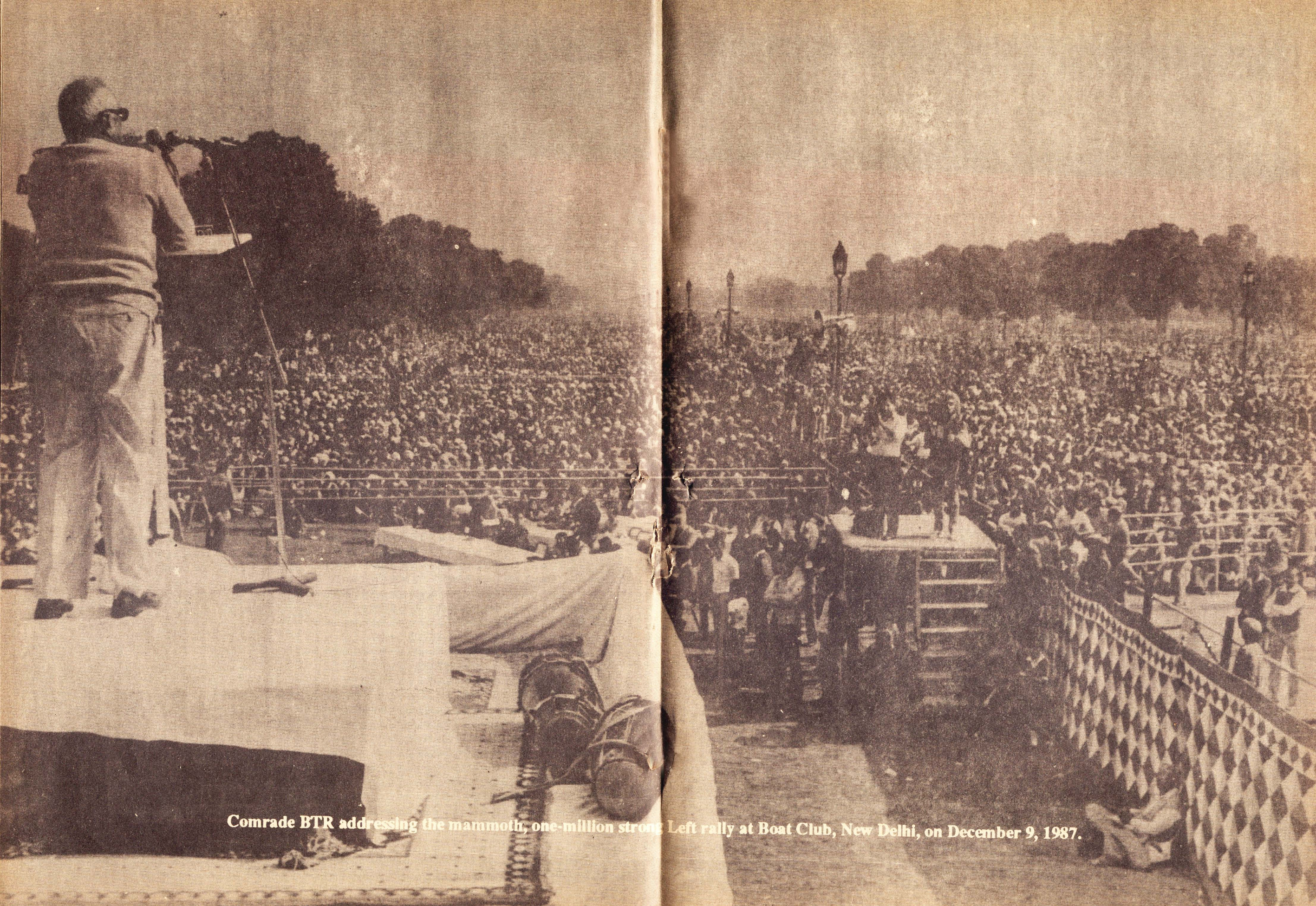
In the same book he again and again emphasised on the question of working class-peasant unity and its importance for the development of revolutionary struggle.

Posterity will remember him as one of the great teachers and guides of Marxism-Leninism, an organiser of a revolutionary Party and the mass organisation. We can show our real respect to his memory if we can follow his teachings and guidance he gave to the Party and the working class till the last days of his life. CITU should print the collected volumes of his writings which will help the new generation to know the real application of Marxism-Leninism in the given conditions and circumstances prevailing in our country.

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relaxation. Shaking hand with me he asked, "What is happening in Kashmir?" I was surprised that being gravely ill he does not think about himself but was anxious about Kashmir?

A determined fighter against imperialism and capitalism throughout his life, Comrade BTR could not be subdued by death as well. We have much to learn from him. We hope that his writings will be collected and published in major Indian languages so that millions of new party and trade union workers are benefitted and inspired to work more effectively to take our working people forward in the struggle for peace, democracy and socialism.



Comrade BTR addressing the mammoth, one-million strong Left rally at Boat Club, New Delhi, on December 9, 1987.

MAY DAY MANIFESTO OF THE CITU, 1990

On the centenary of the observance of May Day, 1990 the Centre of Indian Trade Union renews its pledge to hold high the banner of proletarian internationalism and sends its warm revolutionary greetings to the international working class fighting against capitalism and imperialism, for world peace, democracy and socialism. It greets the working class of the capitalist countries struggling against growing unemployment and deteriorating economic conditions. It greets the working class and people of the third world countries fighting against poverty, backwardness and imperialist threat to subvert their independence. It extends unqualified support to the national liberation movements fighting against the fascist cliques supported by imperialism.

The centenary year of the May Day has come in the wake of a marked sharpening of contradictions between imperialism and socialism. The imperialist intervention in China to subvert the socialist state by boosting the counter-revolutionary forces marked the beginning of the onslaught of the internal reactionary forces helped by imperialism on the socialist states. The CITU warmly greets the People's Republic of China for successfully fighting down the counter revolutionaries and safeguarding the socialist state under the leading role of the Communist Party.

But since then the developments in the Eastern European countries have caused deep concern to the international working class. The socialist states in Eastern Europe got completely overwhelmed by the internal reactionaries. Deviations from the revolutionary traditions of the May Day, the reformist trend and the prolonged violation of the Marxist-Leninist norms in the functioning of the working class states alienated the Communist Parties from the people and allowed the growth of internal reactionaries to destabilise the socialist states with the help of imperialism. Under the garb of reforming socialism, these forces are trying to restore capitalism in these countries. With an anti-communist frenzy, world imperialism, taking advantage of these deviations is propagating the demise of socialism and the triumph of capitalism. By distorting history, it wants the working class to forget the mighty achievements of socialism. In India too the enemies of socialism are echoing the imperialist propaganda to denigrate socialism and the revolutionary pledge of the May Day to confuse the working class.

The Centenary May Day has come to give a fresh call to the international working class to carry forward a militant course of movement on the revolutionary path based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism which

cannot be subverted by world reaction.

On this May Day the CITU calls upon the trade unions to come out sharply in defence of socialism and recall the triumph of the great October Revolution, the tremendous advance of human progress under socialist system and the deepening in-built crisis of capitalism. The foundation of the first socialist state based on socialised means of production abolished exploitation of man by man — the pledge of May Day. It gave right to work and solved the problem of unemployment. All round socio-economic development by socialist planning turned the Soviet Union into a most developed country in the world out of a scratch. The mighty victory of the Soviet Union over fascism led to the emergence of the socialist camp liberating millions from the yoke of imperialism and colonialism and changing the correlation of class forces in favour of the working class, pushing world capitalism into a phase of general crisis. On the question of world peace, the records of the two systems have shown that while socialism thrived on peace and development, imperialism thrived on war and destruction.

The CITU asserts that this massive transformation could be achieved in such a short time because the revolutionary section of the working class movement continued to abide by the revolutionary traditions of the earlier May Day. The earlier May Day was not only devoted to the defence of the immediate interests of the working class, but it also inscribed on its banner the slogan of international unity of the working class and capture of political power by the working class to end the capitalist system and its exploitation.

On this centenary day the CITU further asserts that the difficulties that have cropped up and the mistakes that have been caused by the socialist countries can be rectified by remaining faithful to the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. The set back is temporary. But capitalism is bound to meet its doom due to its inherent contradictions. The crisis in the capitalist countries is still deepening with rising unemployment. The reforms imposed in the Eastern European countries have sparked the growth of unemployment and inflation. The imperialist countries are unable to survive without militarising their economy. The U. S. imperialists have refused to abandon the Star War Project. They have not given up their drive for world domination and military superiority over the Soviet Union. On this May Day, the CITU calls for carrying forward the struggle for peace as an integral part of struggle against imperialism. It further calls for extending full support to the non-aligned movement to strengthen the struggle for

peace and safeguard the sovereignty of India and the third world countries against imperialist intervention.

On this May Day the CITU greets the struggling people of the Soviet Union and wishes them success in surmounting all the problems to develop socialism on the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism. It expresses deep concern over the ethnic problems and is confident that the Soviet Union will successfully solve them adhering to the Leninist principles.

The CITU warmly greets Cuba, DPRK and Vietnam for their steadfast adherence to the path of Marxism-Leninism and fight against imperialism for the protection of the socialist states and to the leading role of the working class.

The CITU extends full solidarity with People's Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in its grim struggle to safeguard the sovereignty and integrity of the country against the counter revolutionaries being supported by the U. S. imperialism and Pakistan in total violation of the Afghan accord.

The CITU extends full support to the Intifada and the valiant struggle of the Palestinian people under the leadership of PLO against the imperialist backed Israeli Zionists, for their own homeland.

On this centenary the CITU hails the independence of Namibia which brought to an end the last vestige of colonial rule in Africa after one of the bitterest struggles of the freedom loving people under the leadership of SWAPO against the abominable apartheid, against the successors of Hitlerite fascism and against imperialism and world reaction.

The CITU hails the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela, the legendary leader of the South African people, and extends full support to their continued struggle to dismantle apartheid in its entirety and establish a free, democratic and non-racial South Africa in pursuance of the Freedom Charter of the ANC.

The CITU extends full support to the Sandinistas and the people of Nicaragua in their resolve to defend and carry forward the Nicaraguan revolution despite the electoral reverses.

The CITU warmly greets the people of Nepal for their successful united struggle under the leadership of the Nepali Congress and the United Left Front against the autocratic rule of the monarchy for the establishment of a democratic political system. It greets the people of Bangladesh and wishes success in their struggle against the military rule for the restoration of democracy. It expresses concern over the situation in Sri Lanka following the collapse of the North East Council and the EPRLF getting defunct. The CITU wishes success to the struggle of the working class and the people of Sri Lanka to safeguard the rights of the ethnic Tamils and the unity and

integrity of the country against imperialist conspiracies.

On this centenary of the May Day the working class and the people are in an absolutely new situation in India. The ouster of the authoritarian, anti-people and corrupt Congress(I) regime and installation of the new National Front Government with the support of the left is an outstanding political event. The CITU warmly congratulates the working class for their massive participation in the 30th August Bharat Bandh and their determined united struggle to dethrone the Congress(I) Government and increasing the strength of the Left forces.

However, the objective of isolating the imperialist backed communal and secessionist forces has not been achieved. The country continues to be plagued by these forces and the situation continues to deteriorate. The CITU draws the attention of the workers to the nefarious game of the U. S. imperialists to utilise Pakistan as the base to train the secessionists and the terrorists to destabilise India. The situation in Punjab continues to deteriorate. A number of cadres of the CITU and AITUC and the CPI(M) and CPI have sacrificed their lives to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country. The CITU congratulates the State Committee for carrying forward the valiant struggle against the Khalistanis. The situation in Kashmir has become extremely dangerous due to the most organised attacks launched by the secessionists based and trained in Pakistan with American support. The CITU assures the people of Kashmir that their identity will be preserved and the special position occupied by the state under Article 370 of the Constitution will continue to be in force. It calls upon the working class to counter the agitation carried on by the BJP and other Hindu organisations for abrogation of the Article, which will further alienate the people and help the secessionist forces. The CITU urges upon the workers and people of India and Pakistan and fervently hopes that through their unity in understanding and struggle they will be able to make the Benazir Government uphold the spirit of the Simla agreement leading to new understanding and friendship between the two countries and frustrate the designs of the U. S. imperialists to create hostilities between them for its imperial interest of domination over the sub-continent. The separatist agitation launched by the United Liberation Front of Assam has again plunged the state into a state of disruption, disconnecting the entire North East region from the country.

The Ramjanam Bhoomi-Babri Masjid issue is still threatening to cause a volcanic eruption with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the RSS, BJP, Shiv Sena etc. brewing the issue and provoking the Muslim fundamentalists to confrontation. The challenge from the imperi-

alist backed divisive forces is more pronounced on this centenary May Day. The CITU calls upon all the trade unions to come together with the left, democratic, secular and patriotic forces to stand as the most organised force to counter these divisive forces, isolate them from the people and defeat the imperialist designs to dismember the country.

The CITU notes that the National Front Govt has announced a series of new measures in pursuance of the long standing demands of the working class, like the secret ballot for union recognition and workers' participation in management, central laws for the construction workers and agricultural labour and the Right to Work to be incorporated as a Fundamental Right in the Constitution.

The CITU welcomes the measures and calls upon the unions to pursue the demand for early introduction of the respective Bills and to gear up their organisational machinery to involve the workers in the process of their implementations. The CITU however draws the attention of the working class that during the last four decades though right to work is included in the Directive Principles of the Constitution, the laws of capitalist path could not be checked and unemployment continued to penetrate all walks of life both in the urban and rural population. With each five year plans embarking upon the capitalist path of development, unemployment increased and now has reached the colossal figure of over 100 millions.

On this May Day the CITU draws the attention of all sections of the workforce, both employed and unemployed in the urban and the rural sectors that the right to work is ensured only by removing all means of production from the ownership and control of private owners and putting them under social ownership. It is therefore guaranteed only in the Constitutions of the Socialist States. The struggle for right to work has to be directed with this objective concurrently demanding for reorientation of the economic policies of the government for generation of employment.

The economic policy as enunciated by the National Front Government has not given any indication to break away from that of the Congress Government. On this May Day, the working class must demand for building up a self-reliant economy free from the dictates of the World Bank and the IMF. The path of privatisation must be stopped and the public sector must be given the leading role. Steps must be taken to open the locked out and closed mills and factories and to check the growth of industrial sickness. The government must review the erstwhile policy of non-nationalisation. To begin with, the cotton textile, jute and sugar industry and the multinationals in the drugs and pharmaceutical industry must

be nationalised. The entry of multinationals, unhindered modernisation and computerisation damaging the employment potential and import liberalisation must be stopped. Indigenous technology and the process of indigenisation must be developed. The traditional industries must be given protection. The Government must lift the ban on recruitment. The possibility of reduction of hours of work with a view to additional employment should be examined. Thorough land reforms must be taken up. Small scale and rural industries should be developed to generate more employment. The principle of unemployment allowance should be accepted. Specific programmes for employment to women should be taken up. For helping the educated unemployed a massive programme for eradication of illiteracy should be undertaken.

On this centenary day, apart from the demand for reorientation of the economic policy, the working class and the people who were subjected to growing authoritarianism by the previous regime, must demand expansion of democratic rights. Expansion of democratic rights must necessarily be accompanied by greater respect for trade union rights. The CITU recalls that the ILO had indicted the Congress(I) Govt for violation of trade union rights in Tripura. The CITU experienced similar violations in other parts of the country. The working class must demand ratification of the ILO Convention 87 and 98 on Freedom of Association and Right to Collective Bargaining. The Government must withdraw the erstwhile Industrial Relations Bill and introduce a new one in consultation with the trade unions guaranteeing full trade union rights and the right to strike. The trade unions must also raise the demand for repeal of the ESMA and NSA and Article 311 (2) of the Constitution which gives the right to the authorities to dismiss government employees without giving any reasons.

On the Centenary May Day the CITU calls upon its unions to put in its regular agenda the problems of working women, form coordination committees and mobilise them in the union struggles championing their cause and against discriminations.

On this May Day the CITU warmly congratulates the Delhi State and other committees for their glorious struggle for minimum wage and calls upon all CITU unions to launch special efforts to organise the workers of the unorganised sector and build up movements on all India level on their demands for higher minimum wage and other demands.

The Congress Government arbitrarily imposed the new series of Consumer Price Index on the workers depriving them of huge amounts in Dearness Allowance. The CITU calls upon the working class to unitedly raise the demand for scrapping the new 1982 series and introduce a new series in full consultation with and involve-

ment of the trade unions so that correct indices are reflected and the workers get full compensation for price rise.

On this centenary May Day the CITU extends full support to the militant struggles of the peasants and agricultural workers, their growing unity and their demand for land reforms. It calls upon the workers to build up a strong worker-peasant alliance championing the cause of the peasants and agricultural workers.

During the Congress(I) regime, the Left Front governments of West Bengal and Kerala were under constant attacks. The Congress(I) in collaboration with the TUJS removed the left front government in Tripura under a falsified election and unleashed a terror regime against the CPI(M), the CITU and other left forces. On this May Day the CITU sends warm greetings to the workers and people of Tripura for their valiant struggle against the terror regime. It calls upon the trade unions to extend support to the workers of Tripura demanding ouster of the Congress(I) - TUJS terror regime. The CITU further calls upon the working class to extend unqualified support and safeguard the Left Front Governments of West Bengal and Kerala which are unremittingly working in the interest of the people despite all limitations and serving as beacon lights for the consolidation of the Left, democratic and secular forces in the country.

On this May Day, the CITU warmly greets the State Committees, the unions and all sections of workers for their unremitting struggle to defend the interests of the working class and the common people braving all police repression and gangster attacks. It calls upon the CITU unions to step up their independent activities and stimulate united activities by the working class building up trade union unity on all issues vital to the working class.

The CITU congratulates the National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions for their continued struggle in the interest of the working class. It calls for further cementing the trade union unity and broaden its scope to bring in the national federations in the process of decision making. It is time that all the central trade unions and the federations should look into the possibility to form a Confederation to launch all India united movement on common agreed issues to defend the interest of the working class.

In keeping with the revolutionary traditions of the May Day, the CITU reminds the working class of India on this centenary, of its historic task and come out from the ruts of exclusiveness and combine the daily practical struggles on partial demands with those having political significance with the basic objective of establishing a socialist state upholding the banner of proletarian internationalism.

CITU Flag Goes to Cuba

The Cuban Trade Union Council invited the CITU to participate in the May Day Centenary Celebrations being organised by it at Havana. However, due to shortage of time the CITU could not attend it.

On request from the Cuban Trade Union Council the CITU has sent its flag to Cuba through the Cuban Embassy. The CITU flag will be taken in the procession and rally to be held on May 1 in Havana as a mark of international solidarity of the working class and the pledge to carry forward the revolutionary traditions of the May Day for peace, democracy and socialism.

Alongwith the flag, the CITU sent the following message:

Message of CITU

April 26, 1990

Secretary
Central De Trabajadores De Cuba
Workers' Central Union of Cuba
Habana, Cuba

Dear Comrade,

We are extremely happy to learn that the Central De Trabajadores De Cuba is going to observe the centenary of the May Day celebrations, 1990 in a befitting manner.

Cuba is one country where the working class and the socialist state under the leadership of Com. Fidel Castro have been celebrating the May Day in keeping with its revolutionary pledge to safeguard the socialist state from the attacks of imperialism led by the USA.

In India, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) is carrying forward the revolutionary traditions of the May Day as against all tendencies of reformism, as a part of our struggle against imperialism, with the objective to establish a socialist state.

The May Day centenary celebrations this year have come to uphold the banner of proletarian internationalism and give a fresh call to the international working class to recall the great achievements of socialism and intensify the struggle against imperialism and the counter-revolutionary forces helped by it, for the safeguard of peace, democracy and socialism.

We very much regret that we are unable to avail of the privilege to participate in your May Day Centenary Celebrations. As requested we are sending our flag for the occasion as a mark of our international working class solidarity. We look forward towards further consolidation of the fraternal bond between our two trade union centres and the two countries to fight for the common cause of socialism and against imperialism.

Please convey our revolutionary greetings to the working class of Cuba on the occasion of the May Day.

With warm fraternal greetings,

Yours comradely,
P. K. Ganguly
Secretary

COMRADE RANADIVE, WE BADLY NEED YOU EVEN NOW

KAMAL SARKAR

Only a few days back on 6th April, 1990, Comrade B.T. Ranadive breathed his last after a severe attack of cancer. Till his death he exerted his entire brain power in the service of the working class. He used his powerful pen in support of the inclusion of the right to work in India's Constitution in his written address, which was read out at the All India Convention on Right to Work held at Durgapur only a few days before his death. This was his last written work. His address to the Convention will show the path of future movements to the working people. Only days before his death, he also engaged himself in the preparation of a document for the discussion in the party, regarding the steps taken by President Mikhail Gorbachev as head of the newly formed Presidential form of Government in the Soviet Union, as well as the collapse of the socialist system in the Eastern Europe like a house of cards, which has led the bourgeois world and the anti-communists to raise the hue and cry that this is the end of Marxism. We have not seen that document. But we realise that in the face of this crisis, for which this document was prepared, we badly needed the presence of Comrade Ranadive.

When in 1964, the Communist Party of India faced a division of opinion on the question of application of Marxism in Indian conditions, those who without any reservations and hesitations built up the Communist Party of India (Marxist) included Comrade Sundaraiya, Comrade Promode Dasgupta and ofcourse Comrade Ranadive. From behind the prison bars he conducted a vertiable crusade against the compromising line of the Dangeites. After his release from prison, the advice and deep well of Marxist theoretical knowledge of Comrade Ranadive, a member of the Polit Bureau, helped the others at every step in following a correct path in a practical application of Marxism in the concrete situation of India. Not only in the matter of guiding party activities but in all spheres, his clear vision, depth of thought and the capacity to give instant decision in even most complex situations, which later proved to be correct, made Comrade Ranadive a respected leader in the hearts of all comrades.

It is true that in the past history of the party we took many wrong decisions in determining strategy and tactics, but nevertheless we have successfully passed the ordeal through self-criticism. Tempered through many experiences, the party, its trade union front, student, youth and women's fronts have always found Comrade BTR with them in their struggle for advance. The greatest contribution of Comrade BTR in present times is the

organisation of working women. He laid great stress on organising the working women. He derived his strength from the teachings of Lenin. He used to say, half the population of the world comprise of women. Unless we can organise the women workers, employees and teachers, that is all working women, the movements of male workers can only hobble along. It is bound to remain crippled.

In Indian politics, whenever we faced serious situations and impediments, whenever the country faced a crisis, the Polit Bureau showed us the correct path of overcoming the situation through concrete application of Marxian theory and principles. At the time of the division of the Party, when the Dangeites aligned themselves with the rulers of the country, when they were beating the drum of class collaboration in the name of India-China war and was abandoning all pretences of class struggle, when in 1970 it became impossible for us to remain with them inside the AITUC, it was the leadership of Comrade BTR which enabled us to raise the slogan of unity and struggle, to blunt the obstacle of class collaboration and build up a parallel militant organisation in the form of CITU. The path was shown by Com. BTR. Comrade BTR not only was the guiding spirit behind the CITU and gave leadership to the working class of India, in every struggle of the workers he spent hours in discussing with them in minutest detail, the tactics to be adopted, who will take part in the negotiations with the employers, when should the workers go in for strike or when other methods are to be adopted for the sake of unity. As the President of the CITU, he used to keep close watch on the members of each union and the different committees. He would never tolerate any breach in organisational discipline. He could be strict and hard on any deviation or lapse, on the other hand he was effusive in his congratulations on the victory of their struggle.

His understanding of the problems of all industrial workers was vast, at the same time he kept detailed information about the industry. He also tried to understand the problems resulting from technological changes, as well as how to tackle them. In his early youth he was connected with the jute textile industry, the industry with which we are also connected. The strong leadership of Girni Kamgar Mazdoor Union, Bombay was manifested in the Bombay textile workers strike of 1928. Com. BTR was one of the leaders of the strike. At about the same time, there was general strike of the workers of the jute belt centering around Calcutta. These two strikes of cotton and jute textile workers struck terror in the hearts

of the then British rulers.

Even after numerous strikes on various issues, the jute workers could not realise their demand for wage rise. The average monthly wage of jute workers in 1969 was only Rs. 142.40. The argument of the mill owners stood to gain if the wages could be kept depressed. Refuting this argument of the mill owners, the workers declared that they are undergoing untold sufferings because of the low wages and it was essential to make the wage rise inevitable in the interest of all-round development of workers. Comrade Promode Dasgupta the CPI(M) leader, realised that further advance of the trade union movement was not possible unless this barrier of low wages, persisting even after century-old movements, could be broken. It was, therefore, imperative not only to unite the jute workers but also to build up a strong leadership. Accordingly, the CPI(M) undertook the task of revitalising the organisation in this industry at a time when the CPI leadership had lost all hope about the organisation. In this task we gained success within a short time.

At that time, in 1969, the Polit Bureau leadership of the party was in Calcutta. Comrade BTR used to receive the report of the day to day activities of the union and we had the privilege of getting his advice and opinion on the functioning of the union. We took the decision for an united strike to achieve the demand of the wage rise. The task of building up unity was a complex and tough struggle, but we succeeded in our efforts. Something hitherto unimaginable in history happened. All the unions jointly gave strike notice. The mill owners thought that the workers had never before fought unitedly and therefore this time too they would not be able to fight unitedly. This proved to be the undoing of the owners. The workers of all the mills started the strike unitedly. There was no black-leg anywhere to break the strike. The police also remained a silent spectator on the instruction of the United Front Government. Comrade Jyoti Basu, the Police Minister, had informed the mill-owners in advance that the police will not be used to break the strike. The mill owners were not prepared for this eventuality.

Ultimately the mill-owners, who had earlier refused to increase wage by a single paise, had to settle by agreeing to a monthly wage rise of Rs. 30 and compensation for the period of strike to every worker another Rs. 30 lumpsum.

After this victory and till 1984, almost every year we could realise our demands for Night Allowance, Gratuity, P. F., Bonus, D.A. on the basis of consumer price index, etc. The tripartite agreement achieved after 84 days strike in 1984 was a victory for the workers struggle. At that time the number of workers in jute industry was determined at 2.5 lakhs and it was decided that this number would be maintained. It was a victory of the



T.U.line that Comrade B. T. Ranadive asked us to follow.

But afterwards the jute mill owners did not honour this agreement. After this victory of the united movement the jute mill owners launched an offensive on the workers. The mill owners organisation IJMA faced a split. Big millowners started siphoning off capital from the jute industry and invested them in other industries outside West Bengal. Newspaper reports exposed the fact that some mill-owners have deposited this capital in Swiss Bank accounts. They are out to destroy this industry. They are trying to introduce synthetics in place of jute. The jute-brokers have now become millowners and they are violating the agreement. In this crisis, we need guidance on the path to follow, we need the leadership of Comrade BTR.

But we cannot bring him back to life. We must, therefore, follow the path shown by him. We must advance following his clarion call of 'unity and struggle' which he gave to the working class.

In the meantime, as a result of the nationalisation of some of the mills all the conditions of the agreement have been implemented. Therefore, the only way to save this industry and its workers is nationalisation of the entire jute industry. We can pay real homage to the memory of Comrade BTR by putting his teachings into practice.

Long Live Comrade B. T. Ranadive.

IN MEMORIAM OF COMRADE B. T. RANADIVE

NIREN GHOSH

Comrade B. T. Ranadive was a many splendoured personality. He was very closely and intimately linked to the working class from the very start of his political career as a communist. He never had any doubt about the ideology of the working class in Marxism-Leninism, about world wide victory of socialism which is to be constructed by the dictatorship of the proletariat in respective countries, about socialism being a viable and workable system compared to capitalism which is bound to go under and be ultimately doomed.

Com. BTR's immense contribution to the communist and trade union movement in India will be cherished and remembered. He has made his place in history in this respect.

I do not want to elaborate on those aspects of his life. But I want to recall certain specific contacts that I had with him at different points of time. Only some of them I touch on. I remember I went to Delhi in November 4, 1962. The National Council meeting was dispersed in pandemonium, because police might swoop down on the meeting, with an announcement that a resolution has been passed pledging full fealty to and faith in the Nehru Government, after denouncing China. All the leaders had departed from Delhi and at 20, Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi only Com. Abdul Halim remained. He called me aside and told me that 32 members of the Council had met separately and would not accept the resolution of the National Council making the party lie prostrate at the feet of Nehru and would act accordingly and I am to represent West Bengal Party in Delhi and that Com. Ramdas would act as a liaison man with the Socialist Embassies and in other matters also.

On 6th November, 1962, I went to meet Com. BTR along with Com. Ramdas. Amongst other things Comrade BTR told us that he had information that CPC has thrown open the ideological debate to its ranks. These words stuck in my memory and this information was fully correct as we found in a few days time, when we listened to Peking Radio broadside against CPSU. Com. BTR was arrested next day and taken away to Bombay in a plane and detained there in jail for over 3 years.

In 1968, 15th Session of BPTUC conference was held at Ranji Stadium in Calcutta on September 22-24 under very strained circumstances, i.e. relations with CPI reached nadir point almost. The Central Committee Office was located at Lake Place in Calcutta at that time. CPI almost torpedoed the conference. Patiently we manoeuvred tactfully and correctly and brought the conference to a successful conclusion. Therefore, I went to C. C.

office and reported to Com. BTR the entire matter. I remember how warmly he congratulated us for doing a successfully party job because even at that time West Bengal Committee was the dominant unit of AITUC and we were in control of the committee. We succeeded in retaining full and overwhelming control of West Bengal Committee of AITUC. All experience of working within AITUC for long 5 years demonstrated that there was no possibility of the democratic functioning of AITUC and the Dange leadership was determined to follow a class collaborationist line in trade union also. Under these circumstances the CITU was launched in 1970 on 30th May in Calcutta.

In Bombay conference of AITUC in 1967-68 also in which we participated along with Com. BTR and found that there was no scope for any change in the anti-democratic line and class-collaborationist policy of AITUC. They tried by all possible means even to bar Com. BTR's entry to the delegate session. We fought back and succeeded in foiling their nefarious game. Ultimately BTR could make a speech in the conference and that speech was memorable one. The experience of this conference and many other things convinced us that the time has come to establish and set up a new all-India Trade Union Centre to carry forward the revolutionary tradition of the working class in India. Before the launching the CITU in 1970 we met in a conclave in Goa in April 1970 as preparatory to the foundation conference. There Com. BTR was supremely confident. In addressing us he said that we have talent and expertise to run a couple of such all-India Trade Union Centres, so nobody should fill defiance in going ahead with the work of launching the new trade union centre. He told me at Goa that he had waited patiently for the situation to ripen for the setting up of a new trade union centre and that was perfectly true. We worked patiently within the AITUC since 1964 split of the party and found that all the doors of AITUC were closed for us though in West Bengal they did not succeed in capturing the State Committee of AITUC. Foundation Conference of CITU at Calcutta was extremely well-organised, and Com. BTR was overjoyed at the spectacle of million strong mammoth rally held at the Brigade Parade Ground to mark the open session of the foundation conference.

In 1971, began the semi-fascist terror in West Bengal. It continued upto 1977. During this period the Congress(I) Central leadership tried to wipe out CPI(M) and the CITU in West Bengal - the most powerful

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COMRADE B.T. R. ON TRADE UNIONS

P. K. GANGULY

The decisive role of the masses in the development of society occupies an important place in the Marxist theory. An equally important place is occupied in the theory by the role of outstanding leaders and organisers of mass and class movements. The leaders work out and formulate the policy of a class or party, organise its practical execution and direct the activities of millions of people. Leaders are essential to the classes that are coming to the fore, that are waging a revolutionary struggle for power. As Lenin said, "No class in history has achieved supremacy without producing its own political leaders, its own advanced revolutionaries, capable of organising the movement and directing it". And what is required for an oppressed class to counterpose the state organisation of the ruling class is a revolutionary organisation. But a revolutionary organisation is inconceivable without experienced, skilled and dedicated leaders. Com. BTR was such a leader that the country had produced, the oppressed classes of India had produced in the historical process as an objective necessity.

His outstanding role as a revolutionary leader was established through his activities in relation to the class struggle of the working class. Having profound knowledge and understanding of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, he never went against the objective laws of history, correctly recognised the tasks, what the society needs, what the working class needs in its fight for progress. And his deft expertise in implementing these principles according to the conditions and quick turn of events attracted support from the working masses, which gave him the source of his strength to further awaken the consciousness of the working people to a profound feeling of responsibility for the fate of the society.

With this revolutionary zeal Com. BTR worked untiringly to organise the trade unions that made him the great leader of the working class and communist movement in the country. Being a true Marxist-Leninist, he was organically incapable of tolerating flattery and adulations and fought against all manifestations of the cult of the individual, which is alien to and incompatible with the spirit of Marxism-Leninism. In fact, in keeping with the Leninist principles he kept close ties with the trade unions and all sections of the workers at grass root levels, successfully directed their struggles for their vital interests and earned their unqualified love, prestige and popularity in a natural process.

His teaching was that resistance to the exploiters, the class struggle was the only means of influencing politics at the disposal of the masses. The working class must be armed with politics, as it was only politics that

would determine their fate. He explained that although all sections of the working people have to be mobilised on their immediate economic demands, yet their basic economic welfare can be met only with the change of the social system. In a class based society, therefore, they must shun reformism, revisionism and collaborationist outlook and wage intense class struggle for the establishment of a socialist state. With this objective he took the leading role to form the CITU, the trade union organ of class struggle and became the natural choice for its presidentship.

Immediately with the formation of the CITU, he called for trade union unity with the purpose of bringing the entire working class on to the point of class struggle and not class collaboration. He called upon the working class to realise its historic task, to enter the class struggle fully armed with a scientific world outlook—not only on the national scene, but on the international arena too with the principle of proletarian internationalism. He enunciated the tasks on the trade union front to be directly linked with the political objective for the struggle for People's Democracy in India paving the way for a socialist revolution. All this was bound to make workers' class struggle powerful and enable it to have a growing influence in the political life of the country. Therefore it was not accidental that the struggle of the trade unions contributed immensely to the ouster of the Rajiv Government and installation of the National Front Government with the support of the left. Com. BTR's foresight and direct political guidance was responsible for this outstanding political event in the country.

But he was not satisfied, and warned against any complacency and beating its own drums by the CITU. It is not an exaggeration, but a fact that with an amazing capacity and political acumen he went deep into the day to day problems of all the trade unions and national federations and pointed out the mistakes, the weaknesses, the negative traits and gave the guidance to plug the loopholes. He called upon the workers to come out from the State exclusiveness and factory exclusiveness and encouraged the formation of all India federations to enable the workers to unite industrywise and wage struggles on all India level. He laid great importance to these points, viz organisation, unity and struggle and explained in a lucid manner how the three were interlinked with each other. It is only through militant struggles he explained that you can forge the unity of the workers and the trade unions. There must be unity in action and only through united struggles a strong organisation can be built up. But it is not simply militant struggle ; the militant



struggle has to be armed with political ideology. Then only a rock like unity can be built up and the class based organisation can pose a challenge to the ruling classes. The infrastructures for such an organisation, as BTR said, has to be built up on the basis of democratic functioning, strict discipline and continuous efforts

to raise the consciousness of the workers to socialist consciousness. Democratic functioning, as he explained was not merely to fulfil the Constitutional obligation of convening the conferences and Working Committee meetings of the unions periodically. But it implied consultations, sharing of information at all levels. He said, everybody in the union had the right to know and give opinions. The unions belonged to the workers and not merely to the leaders. The unions must function under collective leadership on the basis of the principle of democratic centralism and from the masses to the masses, take the opinions and their experiences, synthesise them under collective leadership and throw the decisions and programmes to the masses again for implementation. He said it is not done and the leaders instead of practising proletarian democracy, indulge in petty bourgeois bureaucratism.

He repeatedly hammered that each leader, cadre and others must take the Tasks on the Trade Union Front as a Bible just like the Party Programme. Otherwise, the consciousness level of the workers cannot be raised to socialist consciousness. It is a painfully laborious and non-stop process. But there is just no short cut. It is too not done. Therefore the trade union movement remains bogged down in economism.

He said, "Look! the Constitution of the CITU has asked you to establish a Socialist State. You are happy that the CITU has become a militant trade union centre in the country. But look at the void that is still there. The trade union movement as a whole embraces only a part of the workers in the organised sector. The vast multitude of 80 to 90 percent of the workforce in the unorganised sector are mostly out of your fold. the organised force is also distributed in so many other central organisations. Your movement is circling around the employed workers only. You have just started thinking about yet another vast multitude of the unemployed workforce. Your feudalistic male chauvinism is still standing as an obstacle to bring in still another vast multitude of the women workforce. You have not yet thought about the other have-nots in the workforce—the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes, adivasis, the muslims and other minorities, the various ethnic groups, etc. All these sections are worst exploited and have their specific problems and demands apart from

the general working class demands. He said, you are giving the slogan—Long live worker-peasant alliance. But how much thought you are giving to know the real problems of the vast agrarian section, which is to be your class ally in the struggle for the Peoples' Democratic Front? Can you achieve socialism without an agrarian revolution? How much cooperation you have developed with your other allies like students, youth and other mass organisations? So you have to go deep into the various problems of these have-nots and allies, take them in the same stride with you and fight for their cause, because you have to lead them in the struggle for socialism. And then only you can say that you are developing socialist consciousness.

"But that is still not enough. The workers and their leaders must know the industries. You are now fighting for workers' participation in management with equal rights in all matters. But how can you participate without having indepth knowledge of the industries, the various intricacies, the question of technology, the effect of monopolisation and bringing in the multinationals as against strengthening the public sector and so on. It all requires inculcating deep knowledge, education and politicalisation of workers".

On the question of peace he used to say—"Everybody shouts for peace—from Reagan-Bush to Gorbachev. But we do not shout for peace in a pacifist manner. Our struggle for peace is a part of our struggle against imperialism. You must remember Lenin and Stalin. World peace can be achieved only by rooting out imperialism and achieving world socialism and safeguard of socialism. This is the demand of proletarian internationalism. This is at a very low ebb now. The CITU must perform its international task". He called for explicit support to the Non-Aligned Movement.

Like this he pointed out the weaknesses in the trade union movement, the CITU not excepted, whenever I had the occasion to talk to him during the day to day activities. While talking about all these points very seriously with deep political thinking, he had the keen sense of humour, but that too punched with seriousness. He said once—"Oh! you are getting demoralised? No, you can't be; because you are trying to be a good communist. What can you do? You have taken the pill of Marxism-Leninism. There is no escape. The CITU is bound to do it. It is wedded to these principles. The stage has been set. The struggles on these issues have begun. Some states are coming forward, the other states are picking up. The independent activities of CITU are gearing up. Efforts for trade union unity are on. And here lies the qualitative difference between the CITU and other unions".

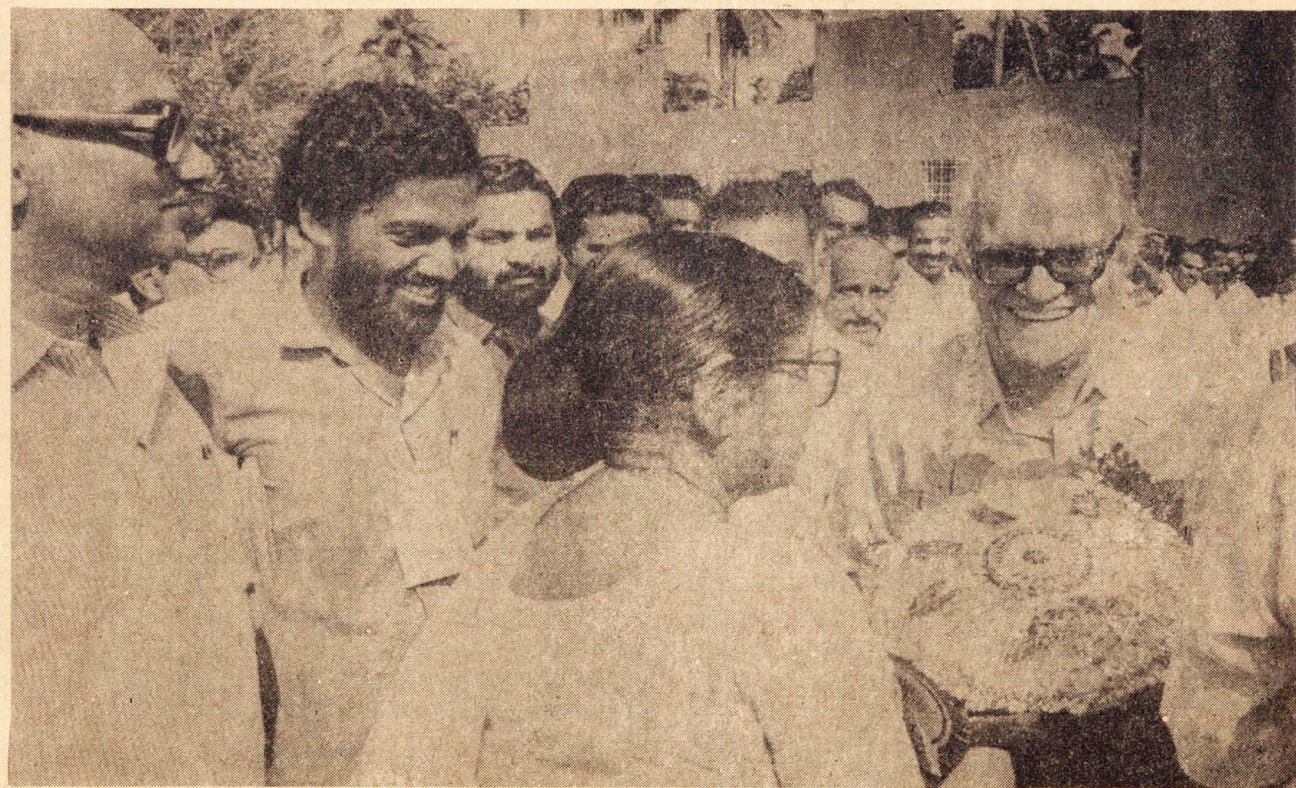
But Com. BTR was always very serious and critical on one issue—on the question of fighting the

divisive, secessionist and communal forces and safeguarding the unity and integrity of the country. He said, "If you cannot safeguard the unity and integrity of the country, you cannot achieve a single demand of the working class, not to speak of socialism". He said, "What is the use of militant struggle if it cannot intervene against the divisive forces?" "Nero fiddles while Rome burns", he remarked once. "When the country is being plagued by the communal forces, our trade unions are engaged in militant struggles on their economic demands, and the RSS and Shiv Senas enter your trade unions and disrupt your class unity". He gave the example of W. Bengal and Kerala which stood as the beacon lights for communal harmony maintained by the working class and left governments. He praised Punjab where our comrades are martyred to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country. He said, "Of course the CITU and the CPI(M) can wage the struggle, because they know that these forces are backed by the imperialists who are out to destabilise the country. Imperialism is not there in the heads of others".

He was visibly moved when Com. Safdar Hashmi was murdered by the Cong. (I) gangsters. In his last presidential address at Kalyani Working Committee (September 4-6, 1989), which was read out, as he could not attend it, he quoted from Mayakovsky's "Order of the Day to Army of Arts" to pay homage to Com. Safdar.

So this was BTR. He was too big for anybody to get appreciation. He made ceaseless and untiring efforts to develop the Party and the CITU all round to meet the demands of the developing situations both on the national and the international arena. No loopholes, no weak points should be there, whether in relation to struggles, or in relation to organisation, or in relation to even accounts—all must be within the frame work of the principles of Marxism-Leninism. It was astounding how he could manage to go deep into everything. Nothing went unnoticed from him, his amazing power to grasp the problems and give the correct guidelines forthwith, his astonishingly sharp memory and his great power to unify all and utilise the qualities of all for the development of the organisation—all these point to his versatility as a great communist, a Marxist-Leninist and a commanding leader working and thinking for the Party and CITU till the last days of his life. Therefore, everybody wanted him in all meetings, conferences, conventions, party meetings and what not. He became a legend in his life time.

He is no longer with us. A big void ! The question arises repeatedly, what is to be done now? But as communists we have to accept the reality. As BTR himself said, "You have taken the pill of Marxism-Leninism ; There is no escape". The void has to be filled up by collective leadership. We have to pick up the red flag and carry forward the unfinished task following the Marxist-Leninist guidelines which he so laboriously tried to instil into all.



AN IRREPARABLE LOSS

SURYANARAYANA RAO

Com. BTR is no more. But Com. BTR is alive in the hearts of lakhs of workers, Marxist Party leaders and cadres. In the last week of December 1947 the All India Students Federation was holding its conference. Congress Government had banned the conference. Sheikh Abdullah who was invited to inaugurate the conference could not come.

Though the conference was banned, we did hold our conference in the Khalsa college premises in Bombay. It was a hide and seek delegates' session. When Police came to the premises we were pretending playing cards. They used to be disappointed. For the first time I heard Com. BTR addressing party members working in the Student Front. Com. BTR while addressing stressed the importance of militant struggle and danger of revisionism.

His lucid political talk and his approach towards problems attracted me. I was very much enthused. We had decided to break the ban and hold public meeting near Kamgar Maidan after our deliberations. This was publicised under his guidance. Every arrangement including stretchers, doctors had been done. There was police firing, tear gas shells etc. But students braved it boldly and entered Kamgar Maidan. I was one amongst them. Meeting was conducted before we were chased out. Com. BTR visited the hospital where students were hospitalised for bullet injuries etc.

Com. BTR as I could see from my own experience was a very good organiser and a forcible speaker and at times used to be sarcastic. He was humourous also. He was a great disciplinarian. He proved it in practice. When he was relieved from the post of General Secretary in the party he took it sportively and continued his work as a disciplined member of the party.

There was no vacillation, which we could find when issues like internationalism, parochialism was concerned. He firmly upheld the banner of proletarian internationalism. He was very vehement in opposing imperialism and their manoeuvres. He attached great importance to non-alignment and self reliance and for world peace. He was a defender of public sector. He admonished trade union leaders for not taking up the cause of peasantry, working women, etc.

At his instance and persistence the working women's movement came into being. He used to ask in all conferences how many women are there in the leadership at various levels. Because of his insistence we could find a few women in various states and at the centre. He used to conduct trade union conferences business like and he was strict in adhering to time schedule. Except for

calls of nature he used to sit throughout and hear what the delegates spoke. He was warning the trade union leaders regarding the danger of divisive forces and necessity to fight them.

He was against trade union fighting only for economic demands and neglecting political work. He advocated Confederation of Central Trade Unions. He also advocated enlarging NCC of trade unions to bring into its fold national federations to be effective.

Com. BTR's contribution is very great in building CITU and for adopting correct strategy and tactics in uniting workers for all India struggles. Even on the reservation question, Com. BTR was very clear. He stressed the need to educate the workers that they should not oppose reservation. At the same time to keep the unity of the working class and to tell them that reservation is not a panacea for removing unemployment.

On the issue of Belgaum he did not join the band wagon of all political parties on chauvinistic basis (Congress, BJP, CPI, Janata Dal, Shivsena).

Whether it be a conference, working committee meetings or general council meetings whenever Com. BTR spoke, he was heard with rapt attention and detailed notes taken. His analysis on international and national situation used to be superb. While addressing the mammoth rally of Mazdoor Kisan Jatha he gave a clarion call for Bharat Bandh against the policies of Rajiv Gandhi Govt. He used to stress the need to take up the issues affecting scheduled caste, tribes and minorities with a view to bring them to the main stream for fighting unitedly for the change of bourgeois land lord system and to preserve the unity of working people.

The toiling masses have lost their beloved leader and a great revolutionary. Let us pledge to carry forward the unfinished task by striving for the unity of the working class and united struggles for achieving the just demands of the working people. Taking up the cause of unorganised workers, agricultural labourers, working women and for preserving the unity and integrity of the country. His note on Right to Work is an important document to be studied, understood, and campaigned to achieve Right to Work implemented.

Whenever he used to come to Karnataka for trade union work or party work he would listen to us and then give his suggestions. He would always talk about democratic functioning, getting rid of subjectiveness, to be strict on money matters and to have interaction with workers in taking upon their problems like housing, education, price rise, etc in addition to union demands. He was against compromising on the question of computerisation, high technology which may render workmen surplus. It is his encouragement that helped me to fight

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COMRADE BTR AND RAILWAY WORKERS' MOVEMENT

KANAI BANERJEE

When one ponders over the void created by the death of Comrade B. T. Ranadive, one cannot help recalling at once what Frederick Engels said about the death of Karl Marx. In a letter addressed to a comrade after Marx's death he wrote "Mankind is shorter by a head, that the greatest head of our time". Indeed at the death of Com. BTR, Indian working class is poorer by one head, the greatest that ever was in their possession. He was the greatest leader of the contemporary working class movement of India.

No doubt he was the founder President of CITU and remained its supreme leader till the last breath of his life. As the Polit Bureau member of CPI(M) he was one of the tallest leaders of the Party. But in both capacities he played a historically unique role in the country's working class movement the significance of which transcended the bounds of the organisations - the trade union and the party - which he led along with others. It fell to his lot to carry out the historic task of leading the fierce battle that had been raging in our country against economism, trade unionism, against all manifestations of reformism and revisionism in the working class movement, both on trade union and political ideological fronts, particularly at a time when these trends in our country were immensely reinforced by a strong wave of international revisionism which swept over a large part of the globe. Thanks to the relentless struggle led by Com. BTR along with other outstanding leaders, reformism and revisionism failed to completely dominate our working class movement and its revolutionary essence of the Indian working class movement, and to represent in his person a historical force which is determining the course to development of the contemporary working class movement in the country as a whole. It is in this historical sense that Comrade BTR's leadership had transcended the bounds of the trade union and the Party which he had built and led along with others.

But it is not reformism alone that had to be fought to keep the working class movement on the right track and leading it in the right direction. It is a law of historical development of working class movement that a wave of sectarianism and adventurism almost always tends to accompany or closely follow a wave of reformism - revisionism. With equal vigour Com. BTR along with others had waged persistent struggle against sectarian - adventurist menace that developed in our country, drawing strength from the same trend which emerged as an international phenomenon as well.

We will of course be mistaken if we think that

struggle against these deviations were fought and defeated once for all in a general way thereby ensuring uninterrupted future advance of the working class movement along correct path. Far from it, while struggle 'in a general way' is of course an aspect of this struggle, more arduous struggle has to be fought against every manifestation of these harmful trends in every individual sector in specific ways. Of the many traits which distinguish Com. BTR as a great leader of the working class movement was his unique and almost superhuman capacity of keeping track of the developments in every individual sector in all their details. This gave him what Engels called the "consummate knowledge of the situation" (in the case of Marx) which added to his profound understanding of an steadfast adherence to the fundamental principle of Marxism-Leninism, gave him power to impart "clear indisputable counsel" at "decisive moments". His precious contribution in the development of working class struggle in many individual sectors remains concealed from the eyes of the people. One such sector is that of railway workers.

Com. BTR attached considerable importance to trade union movement on the railways, he took keen interest in the detailed developments that took place from time to time in this sphere, although CITU has no unions on the railways except one on Southern Railway and another on South Central Railway, the latter being a very small one. For a leader of Com. BTR's stature, who thought not only in terms of working class of the country as a whole but also in terms of class struggle tuned to the ultimate object of capture of state power for social transformation, for building socialism, interest in trade union movement in a vital industry like rail transport which employs the largest contingent of workers under a single management is understandable, as it is understandable why activists of railway trade unions, irrespective of their affiliation, used to turn to this giant of trade union movement for his advice. But those who came to him for advice were intrigued by the amazingly intimate knowledge he possessed of the essential aspects of any problem they raised. Few people today know that in his early years of trade union activity he was directly connected with the process of building up and leading a union on GIP railway. No doubt it is this direct involvement in railway trade union which provided him with the basic frame work of understanding of railway problems. Perhaps this early involvement also provides an additional clue to his sustained interest in railway trade unions.

How did Com. BTR look at the railway workers

and their struggle in retrospect? Naturally enough, he was concerned at the extent of reformist influence on railway trade union movement, and was anxious to see that this influence gets weakened and replaced by healthy, militant trade unionism. We find that in his foreward to Com. Nrisingha Chakraborty's "History of Railway Trade Union Movement", Comrade BTR almost at the outset reminds the railway workers of a point of pride that "The railway workers were the first born among the industrial workers of India. They were therefore the first to use the weapon of modern class struggle — strike". He draws attention to the innumerable struggles heroically fought during the British rule by the workers, either those engaged in railway construction, or those employed in regular railway job, starting from the middle of the 19th century almost simultaneously with the start of construction of railways in India. There developed a sort of spontaneous link between our freedom struggle and the struggles of the railway workers which prevailed during the end years of 19th century and the early decades of the present century. But soon we witnessed the beginning of the end of this chapter of rail trade union history. Com. BTR states regretfully that the link "was not maintained in the subsequent years thanks to the emergence of non-political, non-national, non-fighting reformist leadership of the movement sedulously nurtured by the British authorities. Day by day, the link with the peoples movement for freedom got broken. The link was not strong or conscious at the start. It could have developed had there been conscious militant leadership which properly understood the connection of the railway workers trade union struggle with the freedom struggle".

But the reformist leaders alone were not to blame. Leaders of the national movement also have a large share of responsibility "They did not accept strike and working class action as a legitimate form of national protest and hardly gave a call for strike" writes Com. BTR, "It would have been logical if the railway workers had been in the forefront of struggle against the British, because their direct exploiter and national exploiter was the same British India Government. But by a quirk of fate, thanks to the reformist leadership the railway workers became politically a backward section and therefore were also unable to defend their wages, their D.A., their bonus, etc., always remained behind the emoluments of many other sections who combined their trade union militancy with anti-imperialist consciousness and participated in anti-British protests".

But notwithstanding this delinking and inspite of the reformist leadership the sectional struggles on railways went on. Workers were heroically fighting their battles. Sometimes struggles embracing even an entire railway were imposed on the leadership by the rank and

file while the conduct of the unwilling leadership brought demoralisation "And yet by their heroism the workers won many battles, forced the Govt to withdraw reactionary legislation, make minimum wage concessions, etc."

Com. BTR considers the formation of All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) in 1924 as an important event in the movement of the railway workers. Their movement was passing beyond the state of local struggle. The need for a centre which could coordinate and unite workers activities was arising out of the local struggles and it was being realised by various sections. AIRF for the first time "gave an all-India rallying point of the movement", a centre capable of the most needed coordination and unity.

But this is only one side of the picture. Looking at it from the stand point of developing class struggle of the workers Com. BTR regretfully noted that the Federation and its leaders "failed to meet the growing needs of the movement. They failed to respond to the fighting needs of the struggle, to organise mass actions and give a permanent militant basis to workers unity". On the contrary the formation of AIRF, in effect "signalised a formal establishment of reformist leadership to control the growing isolated struggles breaking out in the wake of post war discontentment. The Federation was to be the instrument of collaboration to curb the strike madness of the workers".

For proper understanding of the condition of railway trade union movement it is essential to pay due attention to the following remark of Com. BTR, "The establishment of federation, its recognition by the Railway Board, the opportunity for negotiations all appeared to be progressive landmarks in a country which was enslaved, where labour had no rights. The appearance deceived many but the reality was soon seen. The Govt. was in need of such leaders". Wrote Com. BTR "By 1927 the post war capitalist stabilisation came to an end and the shadow of deep economic crisis lengthened over the world. The authorities required a sober, loyal leadership of the Federation with its outlook of economism, its non-political outlook and its lack of militancy offered and ideal support to the authorities. The period between 1926 and 1933 was a period of wide spread railway strikes virtually deserved by the Federation leadership."

Delinking of railway workers movement from the country's struggle for freedom was already complete. The railway trade unions were however continuing to maintain link with the All India Trade Union Congress,



the first and at that time the only All India centre of trade unions. But when during late twenties and early thirties, there was wide spread strike struggle on railways as well as in many other industries followed by wild repression, when the left forces, the communists were coming to the forefront in trade union movement and the Govt. started striking hard at them, the Federation leaders "understood the governments mind and dissociated themselves from the All India Trade Union Congress where the leftists were in the majority and there were prospects of linking the trade unions with national struggle". Thus railway trade union movement was driven into a grand isolation, "More and more the struggles became extremely self centered and later on it became sectional".

Com. BTR however took care that we do not identify the leaders of a trade union and its rank and file members and followers. In spite of the line followed by the leadership, he writes "the workers militancy and sacrifice did not abate. They fought on occasions with the same devotion and courage shown by earlier generations. But the effect of their sacrifices was minimal and they were unable to fit their full strength against the authorities "but in the absence of any other viable all-India organisation, workers continued to rally behind the Federation. However, "By independence two or three generations of railway workers were reared in pure economism, abjuration of politics, total lack of sense of responsibility towards the problems of the people and the nation.

Com. BTR draws our attention to the many facts of the history of railway trade union movement during the thirties and onwards when the British Govt. implanted docile and loyal leadership in railway trade unions, with whose help they tried to resist the growing influence of the militant left forces, and the leadership willingly extended a helping hand to the Govt. to suppress and weed out these elements from rail trade unions.

Independence brought no substantial change in the situation in railway trade union movement "The congress government of free India continued the tactics of the British Government and encouraged docile non-political leadership, a reformist leadership" This Govt "discouraged militant leaders and as an insurance for loyalty encouraged another federation manned by its (Congress's) party members and affiliated to INTUC. All this ended in abominable compromises...." Fiasco of both 1960 strike and 1968 token strike exposed the pathetic condition that was prevailing in the railway trade union movement.

And it is in this background that "Dissidence began to grow and attempts started to organise workers on categorywise basis".

The categorywise organisations were a spontaneous growth, resulting from dissatisfaction of the workers

with the "abominable compromises" of the leadership and their poor performance and meagre 'achievements'. But as one after another these organisations were springing up and many local activists of Federation unions were joining these associations a serious controversy was sparked off as to whether it was not a disruptive and retrograde development dividing the workers, weakening the railway trade union movement and taking workers back to the age of craft unions, of craft bias, which the world working class movement has left far behind in its onward march. Serious conscious activists of rail trade union movement with militant outlook were worried about the development. Many were at a loss as to what to do with this new development.

It required a B.T. Ranadive with his enormous experience, his "consummate knowledge of the situation" his profound understanding based on facts on one hand and the outlook of class struggle of proletariat on the other, to realise the real meaning of the emergence of these organisations. He explained it to the many activists of rail trade unions, even such people as did not subscribe to his political views, who came to him for his advice. What he has told them in those days was later expressed by him in writing: "This was really an expression of revolt against Federation leadership, he wrote, "Here was a new awakening which was asserting itself against the undemocratic practices of the Federation leaders and its slothfulness". By way of clarification he said that "though the form of protest appeared to be a return to craft organisation, it was in reality a class protest against the non-militant compromising leadership. Therefore, the protest continued to grow. New organisations continued to be formed".

What was the impact of this development? The impact was significant, "formation of these unions outside the federation and the subsequent activities had broken a stalemate in the movement which had lasted for more than fifty years", wrote Com. BTR in retrospect. Nevertheless the question remained to be answered "Protest against reformist leadership all right. But did not craft bias play its part? Otherwise why should it take the form of craft organisation? And once it has taken this form, will not development along this line further strengthen the craft spirit and perpetuate their disunity?". Besides this there was another question, "Are the craft organisations to be considered as the viable alternative to the reformist led organisations, are these organisations themselves free from reformist influence?"

Answer to these questions could be given only with reference to an over all plan for developing militant trade unionism eradicating reformist influence. In the course of fierce struggle between reformism and revisionism on the one hand and militant trade unionism on the other, that had been raging in Indian trade union movement in general and in side AITUC in particular, shaping

of the over all plan as well as strategy and tactics for defeating reformism-revisionism and developing militant trade unionism was by that time complete. And who else if not Com. BTR could be its main architect?

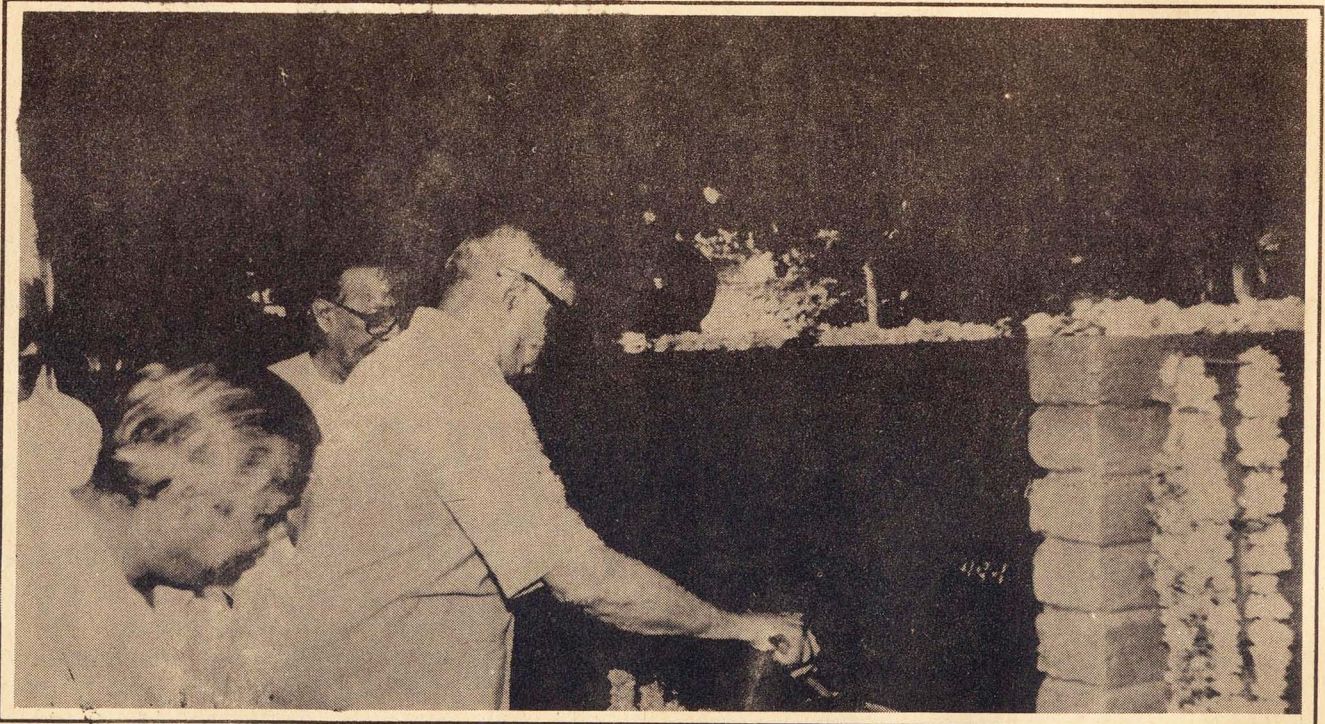
Conscious activists of the railway trade union movement who were groping for the right path for rescuing the rail trade union movement from the quagmire of reformism and whose minds were at the moment infested with many questions like those mentioned above, found in his advice what they needed.

Com. BTR did not envisage in the developments the possibility of creation of so-called "viable alternative rail trade union," he did not think in term of alternative at all, nor did he consider the leadership of these organisation to be completely free from reformist out took, nor even did he overlook their craft bias. What constituted the central point of his advice to railway workers was the idea

cusable, he said. "...the fight against reformist practice in the trade unions has to be combined with the growing struggle for unity in action of the working class.... the more you are able to organise the unity of action and struggle, the more difficult it becomes for the reformists to cheat the working class..."

Further "...our unions, if they are afraid now of bold united front offers to reformist union whenever they have following then we will fail in our efforts for unity".

Comrade BTR's message to the railway workers was this : Do not consider either the AIRF unions or the craft unions as untouchable, build up unity of all the organisations in your struggle to defend the legitimate interest of the railway workers, overcome craft bias in the course of the struggle, break the barrier between railway trade unions and the mainstream of the working class movement of the country.



which formed the basis on which CITU was formed - working class unity to meet the intensifying attack of the exploiting classes and the Government. "T. U. unity, unity for resistance means every worker whether he belongs to some organisation or not, whether he is organised or unorganised, must be rallied on this or that issue, to join the common class struggle. And that is why we must see today that the struggle for unity which we want, becomes the foundation stone, the foundation for our actions", said Comrade BTR in the founding conference of CITU in 1970. Comrade BTR warned that some people in their anger might concentrate fire on reformists and revisionists and forget the main enemies. This will be inex-

And it is the urge of the workers for unity and tireless effort on the part of the conscious activists in AIRF as well in category wise unions to build unity in action, that had created the condition in the railway trade union movement for emergence of the famous NCCRS and for materialisation of the historic railway strike of 1974.

From the moment decision was taken in Secunderabad Convention of AIRF (Oct. 1973) to organise a National Convention with all railway unions as well as Central trade union for launching united struggle, a general strike of railway workers, three months after the first successful strike action by the All India Loco Run-

ning Staff Association in Aug. 1973 which had inspired immense self confidence in the minds of railway workers (which was followed by another successful action in Dec. 1973) - Comrade BTR started to follow the developments on railways with keen interest. Just on the eve of the strike, on 5th May 1974 Comrade BTR in his lead article in People's Democracy put up a powerful defence of the demands of the railway workers, such as no leader of railway trade union was capable of doing, indicted the government for launching inhuman repression instead of trying to settle the workers demands and made passionate appeal to the public to put up with the inconveniences that would be caused by the strike and stand by the workers, support their demands and protest against the heavy repression. "The railway workers" wrote Com. BTR "who themselves are the part of the common people and who have loyally served the community by supplying cheap transport should not be allowed to be penalised by a callous government. They should not be treated as slave of the society without right to decent wage, equal wage and right with others". Comrade BTR continued, "their strike will be a historic step in the trade union movement of our country and its success will enhance the strength of both the democratic and trade union movements immeasurably. It is a part of our people's, struggle".

The 5th June issue of People's Democracy also carried another lead article by Comrade BTR in which he paid glowing tribute to the railway workers. He wrote "Railway workers of India have made history by waging perhaps, the longest railway strike of the world". Describing how the workers continued their strike in the face of brutal repression Com. BTR asked "from whence this courage and determination of the workers"? He gave the answer himself "It was derived from the tremendous sense of unity and oneness developed through the NCCRS which brought together all the central trade union organisations together."

Polit Bureau issued an inspiring statement. No doubt Com. BTR had the main part in its drafting, "We are not vanquished" it read; "We go back at the call of our organisation and not at the dictates of the Indira Govt". In concluding the long statement the Polit Bureau called upon the entire trade union and democratic movement to rally behind the railway workers. "The railway workers stand in need of solidarity from all sections. The workers following all central organisations including AITUC and INTUC must rally in their defence and see that justice is done to them".

One must note "including AITUC and INTUC". Even after the abominable role played by some AITUC leaders and by the INTUC. This is what struggle or workers' unity means. This is what Comrade BTR alongwith the Party and CITU stood for.

Even after a full decade, in the course of a review, Com. BTR remarked with warm admiration that the convention of 27th February 1974, in which the NCCRS was formed and the 20 day long strike carried on by the railwaymen under the banner of NCCRS, were "heroic achievements of the Federation in its fifty years of existence". Once again he drew our attention to the main lesson of the historic developments that had shaken the country ten years back "All this should show that unity among the railway workers is of highest importance for the future of their movement". He had also some friendly advice to give to the AIRF leaders. He wrote "It also shows that AIRF leaders should make a thorough reedamination of their outlook and policy and their trade union tactics. They should realise that the plight of railway workers beggars all description and organisation which is the prisoner of joint negotiating committee cannot deliver the goods. In the present situation of economic crisis every demand of the workers has to be fought for. It cannot be talked out. Leaders also should give proper importance to the new organisations and as a senior organisation seek their cooperation and consent for common action".

Immediately after the strike Com. BTR directed all CITU units to collect fund in aid of the railway workers. He convened a meeting of the CITU workers and activists and democratic lawyers, in which Com. Jyoti Basu was present among others. A legal aid committee was formed which conducted most of the court cases against victimisation in different High Courts in India. CITU collected and spent on legal aid over Rs. 40,000/-. The entire work was personally supervised by Com. BTR.

Once again, since early 1981, a state of stagnation, a condition of stalemate has been prevailing in railway trade union movement. A fear psychosis has developed following the brutal suppression of locomen's struggle which had left over 700 dismissed under Art 311(2) (b) of the Constitution. Com. BTR told the railwaymen not to lose heart. There are ups and downs in trade union movement, he said. The present stagnation is only a temporary phase. Today or tomorrow it will come to an end. Be with the workers, he advised them, maintain unity of the trade union movement join, struggle against all divisive forces, against war and for peace. Pay special attention to the problems of minorities, scheduled castes and tribes, women workers, educate workers politically, inculcate socialist consciousness in them, and patiently prepare for the new wave of struggles which is bound to come.

Com. BTR is no more. But with every advance in the movement of the railway workers the image of Com. BTR will be brighter in every heart.

A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT TEACHER

JIBON ROY

Writing on Comrde BTR by a man like me is bound to prove impetuous, like investigating the unbounded from a bounded line. Com. B. T. Ranadive to me was not a leader alone, but one of the great creators of working class movement and the communist movement in India and one of the tallest interpreters of the contemporary history; greatest strategist in the organisation of the Indian revolution. Interminable feeling for the oppressed people and unflinching faith in the working class as the leader for social transformation has found him to discover the people; and got incarnated an unparallel authority to generalise the things or happening and to rouse the organisation and the masses. Myself alongwith other comrades in Steel Industry came in touch with Com. BTR at my early youth and it was 1969, the year which saw the beginning of the end of monopoly rule of Congress in many parts of the country and a powerful upsurge of Indian working class and mass. The illustrious leader was by then already at the zenith of his height as interpreter of Marxism-Leninism and was occupying the pivotal position in leading the struggle and rebuilding organisation. Such was the tremendous power of attraction and authority of remoulding, myself, like many others started gravitating to him which continued till that fateful day of 6th April when the great pillar collapsed.

On being released from long imprisonment under D. I. R. to which Com. BTR was detained till the middle of 1966 since 1962, time did make no pause for his health recovery. He had to plunge himself into fierce ideological battle against left-sectarianism, once again his pen started roaring like a sword, while the struggle against the revisionism was still in full swing.

We the young comrades who entered the trade union movement during sixties along with huge number of new generation working class attached with the modern industries were immensely influenced by three great ideological struggles of sixties and seventies (i) Ideological struggle to draw new battle line against the Bourgeois-landlord government led by big bourgeoisie; (ii) ideological battle to frustrate the attempt to make the working class a trail of the ruling bourgeoisie (iii) ideological battle to protect the working class movement from the anarchy of petty bourgeois revolutionism.

Since all the three struggles had direct bearing over the working class movement concerning its unity, isolation of ruling polity and unity of the class with its allies, almost the entire young new generation working class who joined the struggle with substantial educational background came closer with the movement which had

since been led by the glittering leadership of the Polit Bureau of CPI(M). It is needless to mention that our leaders had to pay unprecedented sacrifices in the process of consolidating the working class and the democratic movement against all ideological deviations and perversions. The almost entire leadership had been arrested in November 1962 and the detention continued till end of 1965 with a spell of release in 1964. Com. BTR's detention was extended till the middle of 1966 uninterrupted.

The working class in the modern industries which started emerging after adoption of 1956 industrial policy resolution since second five year plan, were plunged into great struggles in sixties. It was a time when a great economic crisis started chasing the country towards the current socio-economic disaster. The spells of strikes continued till seventies. The long drawn strike in Jaya Engg. Works, 1966 August strike and police massacre at Durgapur Steel, Jute Workers' in different spells, contemporary BHEL workers movement in Bhopal etc. would speak about the intensity of the struggles. The strike had been the result of the crisis and also a determined class resistance to break the imperialist legacy over the wage and service condition. Service condition in public sector was not less than unalloyed slavery being tied with the Govt. service rule. And in the midst of such struggles of the working class during sixties, manifesting the determined refusal to shoulder the burden of economic crisis sought to be thrust on it, were consolidated the force within the working class movement - militant class force to fight for greater consolidation of the class as a whole against the revisionist disruption of ideology and against left sectarianism in early seventies. And in this process of fierce battle against ideological deviation on the one hand and oppression of the ruling class on the other was born the CITU, a symbol of struggle against revisionist degeneration of militant-working class movement, and against the attempt to divert the movement from its class movement, and against the attempt to divert the movement from its class task. Com. BTR alongwith other comrades in the leadership played the pivotal role in pioneering this all round struggle culminating in formation of CITU as a powerful lighthouse to the movement.

The workers of Steel Industry and Durgapur workers in particular owe every drop of blood to Com. BTR as he has been the tallest figure to guide the movement ideologically and organisationally at that critical period. Right from the the time of AITUC leadership's complicity with that of INTUC during sixties in getting

the militant trade unionism slid and their connivance with the managements to bely the steel workers expectations in first bi-partite wage negotiations Com. BTR had always been available to extend guidelines to overcome the anti-working class forces till the day he got into the flame. It may either be the case of wage negotiation, organisational complications he used to personally hear every detail and then he made the necessary advice. It was to our great amazement that inspite of his physical detachment from the Shop floor level, so profound and deep was his updated knowledge regarding the latest changes in the technological and other aspects of the system of production in the industries and concurrent problems that he could extend so effective guidance even in regard to intricate socio-technological problems emanating at the shoplevel of the industry. To talk about the relations between the ranks and him it was of great teacher and his disciples, when the teacher would keep no stone unturned to enrich his vast vault of experience and knowledge also from the experience of the students. There is no end of learning, he often used to say.

In the expansion and consolidation of our Durgapur union we necessarily got continuous help and support from the Burdwan District and W. B. state leaderships. Otherwise, the union could not have survived even the initial onslaught of sixties which came simultaneously from the ruling polity and the reformist and revisionist trade union leadership. Personally Com. Jyoti Basu's help and guidance was always available while Com. Benoy Choudhury will always make his personal presence available at the time of crisis. The advancement of seventies, especially after the rigged elections of West Bengal in 1972, brought an unparallel onslaught, over Durgapur. The combination of the management and the reformist and revisionist trade union leadership had been reinforced with the terror organised by the state and the physical liquidation programme both by the Congress(I) hoodlums and naxalites. Between 1970-1973 itself 16 comrades were either gunned down or knifed to death, hundreds were detained behind the bar. Terror made many leading functionaries out of employment. Trade union offices had to be closed under incessant violent attacks. In such a situation, kind of bewilderment sought to infect our organisation as to how to function in the midst of such unprecedented violence perpetrated by the State machineries and the hoodlums and as to what tactics to be adopted. Com. BTR took the command, got into details of the developments, discussed with the leading comrades and equipped them with the best possible tactics to overcome the difficulties. Alongwith the general resistance he asked to take effective tactics in isolating the hoodlum elements of the Cong(I) from the general followers of INTUC. He advised the trade union to take

the command of further popularisation of the slogan of trade union unity. He advised to accept the INTUC and also the AITUC into the collective bargaining agency no matter the fact that the CITU will continue with its recognition status. It had been wrong tactic he said of non-associating the Trade unions having sizeable number of fol-



lowing in the collective bargaining process. The line came out to be a golden directive in reorienting all the trade union tactics in subsequent period and in penetrating into the followings of the reformist leaders.

Com. BTR whenever meeting the comrades either in formal meetings or informal talks used to pose two pertinent questions CITU is facing today:

- i) Why the union membership is not commensurating with our influence?
- ii) What is the way to advance the influence further on the organisation?

He had his own answer. Still it had been the art of the great organiser to get the comrades involved themselves into introspection. While emphasising the supreme importance of Trade Union unity guided towards militant movement, he asked to give more and more importance of linking the movement with the general democratic struggle and with the struggle for expanding the internationalism. More there would be success in this direction, the correlation of forces would move towards socialism, national unity and peace; all the patriotic forces including CITU would get strengthened. He again and again advised that the CITU cannot grow unless it makes consistent efforts to champion the causes of working women, oppressed minority and the backward communities. Our weakness in working with the linguistic minorities has been pointed out by him a number of times. He advised, not the wage alone, trade union movement should endeavour to touch the life of workers to its entirety, social and cultural, problems of youth and other social problems.

Com. BTR was concerned to integrate industrial unions into National Federation since the formation of the CITU and to coordinate the activities of these federations to lead nationwide struggle of working class alongwith the National Centres of trade unions. Without this integration, he pointed out no nationwide struggle can either get accelerated into all pervasiveness, nor the trade union movement can achieve competence of developing hundreds of leaders with all India consciousness. It was at the initiative of Com. BTR Steel Workers Federation was formed in the year 1982 and he took keen interest

over its functioning. It will not be out of place to reminisce here that it took more than a decade's continuous process to form the Steel Workers Federation of India, the process having started with the formation of a kind of co-ordinating platform of like minded unions in all the Steel Centres in the name of 26th July Committee in 1970 and the presence of Com. BTR and also Com. Jyoti Basu throughout the entire decade long process in guiding us in our effort to effectively penetrate in other steel centres all over the country and in clinching various organisational complications was invaluable in shaping such endeavours in the form of a federation. Simultaneously with the Steel, Federation and Coordinations were formed in Coal and number of other industries. Some other federations were formed earlier to Steel.

During the small span of our association we have seen Com. BTR as master strategist to combine number of objectives into a common slogan or common action. We may take for example the last programme the National Federation and Confederation have jointly organised under his guidance—the Right to Work Convention in Durgapur. He has not only extended the ideological platform to guide the movement but also had put forward a proposal of a special type of organisational platform to fight for right to work and immediate economic measures. Again this process has allowed the middle rank leadership to come in the focus of the national platform.

Com. BTR will generally not miss important trade union conferences. So far Durgapur union is concerned except for two occasions, to which includes the last one of November '89, he attended all the conferences. Due to deteriorating health though he could not attend the last conference he sent a warm message urging the class to attain capability to discharge its international responsibilities. He used to undergo extensive travelling all around the country to meet the organisational requirement, till recently. I feel today extremely distressed that we have exploited our aging leader to the extreme. On number of occasions he would keep sitting all the conference days in hearing the speeches. The great teacher used to say, 'I do go to the sessions not to address alone, but also to learn'. Com. BTR's teachings on the observance of democratic functioning in the organisation dredged into the depth of our feeling with the golden touch acquiring a new meaning. It is the advancement of scope of opportunities to get all the inherent faculties in all concerned blossomed into full bloom to contribute and enrich most.

In December '87 Com. BTR was taken to Durgapur to sum up a seminar which had been organised by party members and addressed by them alone. The subject was—contradiction in contemporary society. Com. BTR continued replying all the questions relating to national

and international contradictions till dusk though he was supposed to leave by afternoon so that he can take rest before the next scheduled meeting he was supposed to address—that of the intellectuals on the topic -- religion and national unity. I found Com. BTR got warmth of the programme. He expressed, this type of programme should be organised all over the country. He commented, we are lacking of these exercises. In May '88, I shifted to New Delhi. During mid '89 Com. BTR asked me to organise a similar programme. But, his health started deteriorating getting the programme postponed. I am proud that Com. B.T.R. himself has picked me up for working in CITU Centre. I pay my gratitude to him that he has allowed me to work atleast two years under his direct supervision.

Man made the history. But death do not allow any individual man, however great he may be, to serve humanity always to the fullest exhaustion of his faculties. Com. B.T.R. has passed us away with his faculties remaining sound till the last days alongwith the beaming humourous soul. It is a great irreparable loss to the working class, who probably do not know fully what a great loss has come to them. Com. Vimaldi told me that even the day before the final bell tolled, he took report of the international situation and did not forget to hear the newspaper report on right to work convention which had taken place at Durgapur on 2nd and 3rd April last.

Com. BTR is no more. I can foresee the feeling of the members of the General Council of CITU or the prospective delegates of ensuing Calcutta Conference which is scheduled to take place this year end. The chair from which Com. B. T. Ranadive has conducted the deliberations for the last two decades may not spring up again with the strong authority with which he controlled, will not be beamed with loud laughter integrating the podium and the hall with an affectionate warmth. The special appeal of the CITU sessions, the opening and the concluding speeches, which on one end used to tune up the direction of the deliberations and on the other to advance the main ideological and organisational thrust after due generalisation of CITU functioning in the context of national and international situation will lose intensity.

Com. B.T.R. has been so long shouldering the leading responsibility of combining the experiences and in drawing conclusions in line with Marxist-Leninist philosophy and organisational principles. His all addresses would invariably be in writing.

A great void has already been created. The sooner it can be filled up the better. But in the present circumstances, it is most difficult to fill up unless the effort of leadership is vigorously reinforced by the entire ranks, specially the middle ranked youth to whom Com. BTR has given maximum free time and also the warmth to get

SYMBOL OF REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT

RANJIT BASU

The communist movement lost one of its tallest leaders when Comrade B. T. Ranadive, succumbed to cancer in the early hours of 6th April, 1990 at Bombay.

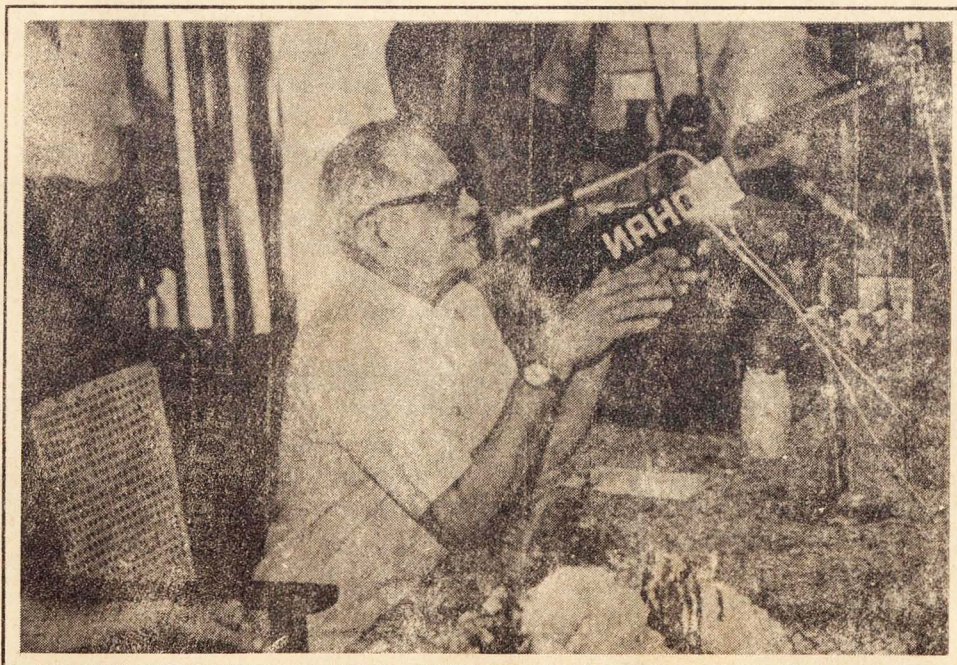
Com. BTR who symbolised the revolutionary spirit of the working class movement was a model of courage and sacrifice. An outstanding political thinker, Com. BTR was a model of discipline and dedication. Brilliant Marxist-Leninist leader Com. BTR was the architect of the working class movement in India. Foremost Marxist scholar, Com. BTR was also the chief architect of the communist movement in India. This is how one and all who knew him, described the legendary figure Com. BTR. It is difficult for me to describe the illustrious figure. Words are too small to describe such a tall personality. Strict disciplinarian that he was Com. BTR to us was a soft spoken overtly humourous and very much our own. We loved, we respected and we were afraid of him. We were afraid not because of anything else but because we were too concerned not to falter in giving our very best to the cause we have dedicated ourselves to and in that we should never be failing - this is what Com. BTR wanted. Indiscipline in any form was, to my mind, the thing BTR disliked most. Those of us who had the opportunity to be close to Com. BTR know how much concerned he was about everything. Apart from serious discussions on matters of political and trade union problems and developments, he was equally alert to what we thought was less important an aspect for Com.

BTR. He would suddenly ask about say outstanding payments of CITU publications, and would send out a circular for clearance of the same under his signature. No matter was less important to him. Naturally, this made each one of us, who had the opportunity of working closely under his guidance, alert and pay attention to all aspects.

He always expressed his concern and repeatedly emphasised on democratic functioning of the unions, sharing informations and inculcating the spirit of collective leadership. While pointing out the weakness of trade union movement he would always stress upon the need to raise the trade union movement above economism. Question of unemployment, cause of working women, problems of unorganised labour, issue of the minorities in trade unions and above all the defence of unity and integrity of the country and fighting the imperialist backed divisive and secessionist forces were the issues of foremost and oft repeated concern of Com. BTR. Equally concerned was he about the international task of the Indian working class. While ensuring advancement of CITU through independent activities on the above issues Com. BTR would always emphasise the need to develop a countrywide united struggle by all trade unions in the interest of the toiling masses of this country and propounded the idea of the formation of a confederation.

In his death, not only CITU, but the entire working class of this country has lost a true philosopher and

guide. On hearing the news of his passing away a tremendous sense of void and deprivation gripped me. It was impossible to believe that we would never see him again, nor listen to his voice. I could not control my emotions at the Bombay cremation grounds when I saw his body consumed by flames. I saluted his remains and said "All these years we have been selfishly taking away everything from you our Dear Comrade. Probably this was the only way you could have taken rest. Rest in peace beloved comrade and be assured that we shall translate all your thoughts and fulfil your dream".



organised base of working class movement in India. I have never found Com. BTR to be despondent though extremely anxious as to how to put an end to this situation which was further accentuated with the declaration of Emergency.

It is well known that how Com. BTR cared for the minute details about the working of CITU and about all the important trade unions affiliated to CITU, how he used to guide the CITU conferences presiding over conferences from the beginning to end. He was of course the sheet anchor of all the All India CITU conferences.

Finally during clearly the last days in Delhi in March, 1990 he was extremely ill, yet at his residence, one of the most important Secretariat meetings of the CITU Secretariat was held consecutively for 2 days under his direct guidance yet throughout each and every-day he remained so busy with many other things. At this Secretariat meeting the All India Right to Work Convention in Durgapur, Industrial Relation Bills, Trade Union Recognition by Secret Ballot, Workers Participation in the Management, ensuing Indian Labour Conference and many other issues were disposed of and decisions taken therein. All comrades found that during his last days, though he was seriously ill, his brain was fully functioning and was wonderfully alert. He hoped to attend the eventful meetings of P. B. and C. C. on the current crisis in the International Communist Movement and fully prepared himself for that. I met him by appointment on March 13, 1990 and amongst many other things he told me that had China gone under in June 1989, there would have been no Socialist country surviving in the world. This, it means to me, is a pregnant utterance. Its full implications are there for all to see. I need not add to that.

We pledge that we will uphold the banner of Marxism-Leninism, the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat and internationalism and never let down the working class under any circumstances.

(Cont'd from Page 44)

the multinational companies like MICO, ITC by conducting long drawn struggles.

He appreciated MICO workers going on strike in support of peasantry. He always used to tell us to beware of infiltration by CIA agents. He had scant respect for opportunists in trade union movement, but that did not come in the way of adopting united struggles.

Whenever I used to go to Delhi I never failed to meet him and to take his advice. Now that cannot be done. This is an irreparable loss, which we have to bear with for a long time.

(Contd. from Page 59)

creased their activities. The situation in Kashmir, and Punjab are grave. The question of Ram Janam Bhoomi-Babri Masjid is there. This government has inherited mountains of problems from the previous government.

On all these issues, as well on the problem of unemployment, rising prices, basic land reforms and other economic issues, all sections of the organised and unorganised workers, women and youth must be mobilised for united struggles. This year's May Day has come with these calls.

While celebrating May Day this year the absence of Comrade B. T. Ranadive is being felt by all of us.

(Cont'd from Page 52)

them developed into the leadership position in leading and consolidating the movement. The passing away of Com. BTR to speak selfishly, is the greatest loss to the middle rank comrades who will now find very difficult to find such a place of total free access both physically and psychologically as it was to Com. BTR in getting the clarity of ideology and organisational problem. I personally remember, on many occasions of my long association with the great leader I never hesitated to express myself frankly to him and sometimes even debate on various issues and as such it was his tolerant dealing with a cadre of our level much below from his stature, that never allowed such hesitation to crop up.

In paying homage at the demise of Com. P. Ramamurthy, the great Founder General Secretary of CITU in Delhi meeting on 18th December '87 Com. BTR while concluding his address had recited a sloka from Kalidas and said—even after much has been said much remained to be said. Now, at the passing away of the great Teacher and the revolutionary, the responsibility to keep the memory alive of Com. B. T. Ranadive and other legendary leaders who have passed us away is thrust over us which we must fulfil with all sincerity and devotion. At the same time we should always remember that the greatest memorial tomb is the incarnation of the ideology and preaching in the organic body of the entire movement and to get it transferred from generation to generation.

**"Let the celebration of May Day win
thousands of new fighters to our cause
and swell our forces in the great struggle for
the freedom of all the people, for the liberation
of all who toil from the yoke of capitalism".**

(Page 202, Vol. 7 Lenin Collected Works
quoted by B.T.R. in The Working Class April' 86)

100 YEARS OF MAY DAY AS INTERNATIONAL DAY

SAMAR MUKHERJEE

This year is the centenary year of May Day observed as International Day of working class solidarity. Observance of May Day this year enables the participants to have review of hundred years developments in the world situation since the workers of the world expressed their international solidarity by observing 1st of May in 1890 at the call of the Second International. Since then this is being observed each year as a day of working class solidarity in various forms either through strikes, or through demonstrations and mobilisations or through festive programmes according to the specific conditions of each country and each region. But the origin of May Day was the struggle of the workers of Chicago in America for enforcing the capitalist government and the employers to pass a law restricting the hours of work a day to 8 hours by resorting to strike actions. But the government and the employers took it as a serious challenge and resorted to nefarious and brutal device to suppress it. Four leaders were executed by hanging. Some workers were killed by police firings and some other leaders had long-term imprisonment, all these done on false charges. The impact of these brutal actions was so great that it roused wide spread indignation among the working class not only in America and Europe but also in other parts of the world. The demand for 8 hours work a day to be fixed by law was also a common demand for the entire working class which created sympathetic response in support of the struggle started by the Chicago workers. But till 1890 May Day was not considered as an International Day because there was no such international forum with required authority to galvanise this discontent into international solidarity action.

PRELIMINARY BACKGROUND

There were some other preliminary backgrounds which helped to turn 1st May as the day for international solidarity of the working class. It was in 1848 the Communist Manifesto was published where the famous call was issued by Comrades Karl Marx and Federick Engles to the workers of the world to unite. Then on 28th September 1864 the International Workingmen's Association - the First International - came into existence to develop international solidarity among the workers. The Association popularised the ideas of Marx and Engels to the advanced sections of the workers who were under the influence of the Association thereby gradually developing scientific and international outlook among them.

In 1871 the revolutionary workers of Paris re-

volted and established their rule in the form of Paris Commune. Though shortlived the Commune demonstrated the basic differences between a bourgeois rule and a proletarian rule. The terrified bourgeoisie in a mad frenzy suppressed the Commune with such brutality which evoked wide sympathy for the Commune and the Communards among the workers of different countries. The working class movement became the target of new round of attacks in other countries particularly in Europe. This made the functions of the First International very difficult. So it was dissolved from Europe in 1872 and later on from America in 1876. Karl Marx analysed scientifically the main causes of the failure of the Paris Commune and drew appropriate lessons to guide the working class for future revolutionary struggles.

It was in 1889 the bourgeois ruling class of France made a grand preparation to observe the Centenary celebration of Great French Revolution which took place hundred years before and through which bourgeoisie came into power with the slogans of "Liberty, equality and fraternity". This was a revolution against feudalism and the working class also supported it. July 14th 1789 was the day when the fall of Bastille took place. This day is called Bastille Day.

Though the bourgeois government of France invited the representatives of the ruling class parties of Europe and other countries to a gala festival, the socialist parties decided to assemble at Paris on the Bastille Day in a Congress. The decision to hold this Congress was taken in a conference held at Hague in February 1889. The appeal which was issued from the conference contains the following passages: "The capitalist class has invited the rich and the powerful to the International Exhibition to admire the fruits of the working men's labour, while the latter, being in the centre of the greatest wealth mankind has ever possessed, are doomed to misery. We socialists whose goal is the emancipation of labour, the abolition of the existing wage system and the establishment of such a social order under which the working men will have a right to wealth created by their common labour, invite the true producers to meet in the Paris on July 14.

"We invite you to consolidate the fraternal union, a union which will give new strength to the proletarians of all countries in their struggle and will hasten the establishment of a new world" ("May Day Traditions" by Alexander Kramtsov, p. 6 - 7).

Among the delegates who participated in the Paris

Congress the names of following leaders are to be mentioned: Wilhelm Liebknecht, August Bebel, Eleanor Aveling-Marx, Clara Zetkin, Jules Guesde, Edouard Vaillant, Georgi Plekhanov and Paul Lafargue. This Congress declared First of May, 1890 as a day for international solidarity of the working class throughout the world. The Congress passed the following resolution.

"On the fixed day, a large international demonstration will take place in all countries and cities in which the working people will simultaneously demand of the authority the legal reduction of the working day to 8 hours and the implementation of the other decisions of the Paris International Congress.

"Taking into account that the American Federation of Labour has, at its Congress in St. Louis in December 1888, already adopted a decision to conduct such a demonstration on May 1st, 1890, this date is hereby approved.

"Working men in various countries must carry out this demonstration in accordance with the specific conditions of their country" (Ibid P. 8).

This is the background of the May Day as the day of international working class solidarity. The Paris Congress gave birth to Second International Organisation. Comrade Engels wrote: "The 1st May resolution was the best our congress took. It proves our power all over the world, is a better revival of the International than all formal attempts at reorganisation". (Letter to Laura Lafargue - Ibid P. 9). "The first session was attended by Frederich Engels who was all along guiding these parties to give a correct political and organisational form to the new international union of workers.

"The parties and leaders who met in First Congress were all influenced in a large measure by Marxist teachings and while deciding to internationalise the May Day they applied the Marxist understanding to the current situation". (From special article written by Com. BTR "Working Class" P. 4 Vol. 15 No. 8 1986).

DEVELOPMENTS OF 100YEARS

How big and fundamental were the changes in the developments of the world situation since the internationalisation of May Day can be seen from the facts that the struggles for 8 hours duty and other partial demands were gradually transformed in some countries into the revolutionary struggles for overthrowing the system of capitalism and build socialism. The strength of the working class movement in Russia under the guidance of Lenin and Bolshevik Party reached such a high level that in course of the first war the conditions for a successful revolution matured. It was through this revolution in the month of November, 1917 the working class of Russia captured State power and built a new social system called

socialism free from exploitation and social oppression. This November Revolution ushered in a new era in the world situation, attracting millions of toiling masses from different countries towards socialism and Marxism-Leninism.

The history and experiences of subsequent years proved beyond doubt that Soviet Russia became the main centre of inspiration to the working class and oppressed masses of not only the capitalist countries but also the colonial and under-developed countries. This intensified the contradictions on a world scale between the two social systems. Socialism and capitalism, between the imperialists and their colonies, between the imperialists themselves on the question of capturing markets and between working class and the capitalists in the capitalist countries themselves.

May Day observed after the November Revolution reflected the revolutionary mood and enthusiasm of the masses. Stricken by panic on the success of November Revolution the capitalist countries of Europe started armed intervention against the new government but ultimately they had to retreat because the International solidarity movement under the slogan "Hands off Soviet Russia" joined by hundreds of thousands of working people served as a powerful backing for the Russian revolution.

When Anglo-French internationalists began withdrawing their troops from North and South of Russia, Lenin was justified saying that it was "our first and chief victory because, it was not only a military victory, it was not really a military victory at all - it was acutally a victory of that international solidarity of the working people for which we began the whole revolution" (V. I Lenin - Collected works. Vol. 32. P. 275). The proletariat of the capitalist countries expressed its full solidarity with Soviet Russia in the May Day demonstrations of 1919 and 1920).

After the fascists came to power in Italy in 1922 May Day celebrations were still held for 3 years but with passing of years the repressions were harsher. It became impossible to hold any May Day demonstration after 1925.

In Germany when fascism triumphed in January, 1933 a law was passed proclaiming May Day to be a holiday of national labour "a German peoples holiday" under the banner of honour to labour. This is only to hoodwink the workers. Actually on 2nd May units of storm troopers raided the trade union headquarters, arrested the functionaries and confiscated the trade union properties. But against this a united movement against war and fascism was launched by the working people of various political convictions according to the guidance given by Seventh Congress of the Comintern held in 1935.

In 1936 there was a fascist putsch in Spain. The need for solidarity against fascism and war became more urgent. The May Day demonstrations raised the slogans supporting Republican forces in Spain.

The international solidarity in support of Republican forces in Spain got wide response from radical and democratic forces throughout the world. But fascism under Hitler was preparing for world domination. This led to conflict not only with Soviet Russia but with other imperialist countries. The imperialists took the policy of appeasement to Hitler to divert his attack on the Soviet Union but without getting over control of man power and resources of other Western countries Hitler did not dare to attack Soviet Union. So the Second war passed through two phases, one inter-imperialist and the other anti-fascist when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union.

The outcome of the Second World War has radically changed the face of the world. Not only fascism has been defeated but a large number of countries under fascist occupation have been liberated and taken to the path of socialism. At the same time imperialism has been further weakened by the post war upsurge of the national liberation movements. There has been the people's democratic revolution in China under the banner of Marxism-Leninism and Mao-Tse Tung thought. Vietnam and North Korea have been liberated and taken the path of socialism.

India achieved independence as a result of a compromise between British Govt, Congress and Muslim League on the basis of partition of India into Hindustan and Pakistan.

In Latin America there was a revolution in Cuba and Cuba adopted the path of socialism. In other Latin American countries fight against the puppet governments of American imperialism got tremendously strengthened and in Nicaragua a progressive government came into existence.

In Africa, Angola, Mosambique, Zimbabwe, Tanzania etc., got independence. Fight for the independence of Namibia has ultimately succeeded. The fight against South African apartheid has assumed an international character and the racist government has been forced to release Nelson Mandela from jail after 25 years. The fight for a homeland for the Palestinians has also turned to be a powerful international movement.

The movement for world peace to save the world from nuclear holocaust has already exerted a powerful impact under Soviet initiative on American imperialism whereby a process for reduction of nuclear arms of small and medium range has started from Europe. Of course this does not mean that the threat to nuclear war is already over. The emergence of non-alignment movement consisting of more than 100 developing countries is strength-

ening the movement for world peace and the drive to make the world completely free from nuclear war by the end of the 20th century.

NEW BACKGROUND OF MAY DAY.

May Day this year is coming in a new background. This year we see a big set-back in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and a reverse process towards liberal democracy and private market economy.

This causes deep concern for the progressive sections of the people world over. This sudden turn of events where majority of the masses have rejected the rule of the socialist governments and leadership of the communist parties is due to some deep causes of failures on the part of the leadership to correctly understand the party policies and implement them appropriately in the specific concrete conditions in the country. There may be deviations and distortions in the understanding and implementing the policies, growth of bureaucracy and corruptions leading to isolation and alienation of the party from the masses. All these require deep study to find out the real causes. It is obvious that the leadership failed to develop socialist consciousness and neglected seriously the task of ideological works. The Western media and imperialist forces are actively utilising these developments to denounce the Communist Party and Marxism-Leninism and discredit the socialist system. They are praising the Western way of life and liberal democracy and economy of free market based on private profits. The hand of imperialism was very clear in case of turmoil in China last June in the rally of students, youth and intellectuals who raised slogans against Communist Party, socialist government and demanded liberal democracy. In China the party and the government did not succumb to these counter revolutionary mobilisations and were able to isolate the main mischief mongers from the masses and suppress them. The Communist Party of China firmly upheld the four cardinal fundamental basis of Chinese society : Leadership of the Party, Socialist System, Marxism-Leninism and Mao-Tse Tung thought and dictatorship of workers and peasants. They greatly emphasised on ideological work.

Now after so many years of development of socialist advancement and achievements, the established superiority of Socialist system under the leadership of the Communist Parties the question arises whether the future belongs to capitalism or socialism ? Whether Marxism-Leninism has been out moded or not ? Whether the 100 years advancement of world working class movement with its historic achievements will be a failure or not ?

DEVELOPMENT IN SOVIET RUSSIA

Soviet Union is also passing through a deep crisis of

economic stagnation, serious ethnic and social problems. The reason behind this stagnation is non-correspondence between development of productive forces and existing relations of production. This meant, method of management was falling behind the needs of development of production forces. To tackle these problems the present leadership of the party and the Government are suggesting various measures which require deep study to know their real outcome. All these to be judged from the point of view of Marxism-Leninism, whether these measures strengthen socialism and the role of the party. We must apply our independent judgement.

We have already expressed our general views to all these developments and expressed our full confidence on the theory of Marxism-Leninism which is founded on the scientific analysis of the basic laws of social developments. It is not a dogma but guide to action. More than 100 years developments proved the correctness of Marxism-Leninism. It also has shown the way how to build a society free from any exploitation and oppression and lead a happy and prosperous life for all. Only, the leadership of the party with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism can make the working class capable of playing its leading role through class struggles by uniting the class as a whole and forging alliance with the peasantry and other sections of the toiling masses. We uphold the superiority of the socialist system.

In the changed conditions today all the major contradictions in the society are day by day getting intensified. Of all the contradictions the main contradiction today is between the two social systems—socialism versus capitalism. Though there are temporary set-backs, in some socialist countries the ultimate victory of socialism and the triumph of Marxism-Leninism is inevitable because these are based on the objective laws of social developments.

So it is our supreme duty on this May Day to uphold the revolutionary traditions of May Day and to defend firmly the teachings of Marxism-Leninism, superiority of socialism and the leading role of the party and the working class.

CHANGED NATIONAL SITUATION

This year's May Day has come in the background of a changed national situation. The Congress(I) government headed by Rajiv Gandhi has been thrown out of power through the last parliamentary election. The new National Front Government which has come into power though represents the minority inside the parliament, enjoys the support of the Left Front and other non-congress parties including BJP from outside. The reasons for extending support to this government by the Left Front are that the majority of the voters are opposed to the

Congress(I) because it identified itself with corruption, big monopoly houses, with authoritarianism, with compromise with communal and secessionist forces and with discrimination against left front governments. From the class point of view though the new government is a bourgeois government but it is committed to extend democracy and decentralisation, to fight corruption, to defend secularism and Indian unity which is now in serious threat, to pursue policy to provide job avenues to the unemployed including the "Right to Work as a Fundamental Right", land to the tiller, etc. It has assured workers' participation in management, the recognition of union through secret ballot, setting up of National Integration Council, Council of Chief Ministers and to develop national consensus for tackling Punjab, Kashmir, Assam, Babri Masjid-Ramjanma Bhoomi and similar problems.

The new situation has opened up scopes to the working class, peasantry, the democratic masses and particularly the left front to increase their active role to influence the course of developments towards more self-reliance etc, towards opening of closed factories, more jobs for the unemployed etc. All these require united mobilisations throughout the country not only of the left-forces but also all democratic and secular forces. We require independent initiative to build this unity.

We recall the valuable guidance given by Comrade BTR a few weeks before his death when he reminded the convention held at Durgapur on "The Right to Work should be a Fundamental Right", through the document which he prepared for this—he pointed out that "rising unemployment is the law of capitalism. The socialist society sees to it that economic planning is done in such a way that all are assured of their jobs". He emphasised the need to eliminate the causes. "While propagating the right to work, the entire working class, the unemployed and the rural mass must demand adequate changes in the present economic system. It is obligatory, therefore for the entire working class, employed and unemployed and for the destitute rural masses to join hands and throw the strength of millions in the struggle for the right to work".

On May Day while paying our homage to Com. BTR we keep his guidance in mind and set ourselves to fulfil these tasks.

**"There will come a time when
our silence will be more eloquent
than our words"**

— August Spies

MAY DAY THIS YEAR

Mohammed Amin

This year's May Day has come as the centenary year of the historic struggle of the working class. A close examination of the events will establish that during this centenary that world has changed beyond recognition. Not only from the view point of the development of science and technology but from the fundamental change in the socio-economic condition and correlation of class forces on the global scale as well.

The most important and unique event of the century was the great October Revolution of 1917 in Russia which gave birth to the first socialist state in the world surrounded by imperialist powers all around, successfully overcame all the difficulties through hard struggle and sacrifice under the leadership of the party of the working class led by Lenin and later on under the leadership of Stalin.

The objective revolutionary situation was created in Russia by the first world war and subjective preparation was made by the Bolsheviks and other revolutionary forces in Russia.

The second big event was the second world war started by the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis which enslaved many East European countries and put its main thrust on the Soviet Union.

Because of its inbuilt unimaginable power of resistance and heroic sacrifices of its 20 million people during a period of nearly six years the red army of the Soviet Union was able to defeat the fascist forces and chase them upto Berlin liberating all the countries on the way.

This great event was followed by the revolution in China, Vietnam, Korea and Cuba and Afghanistan.

Simultaneously all colonial countries one after another gained independence and the last one was Namibia which has achieved independence only one month ago. Democracy is being restored in Nepal. Nelson Mandela has been released after 27 years of detention and now the policy of racial discrimination will be defeated and South Africa will gain National independence.

Now the task of the working class in capitalist countries is to fight for socialism and in the Third World countries it has to fight for basic land reforms, democracy, and thus gain strength to fight for socialism.

During the past 77 years the superiority of socialism has been repeatedly established over capitalism in various economic spheres as well as in the noble field of humanism despite grave mistakes in Soviet Union, China and Vietnam.

This idea has proved wrong that once socialism is achieved in one country things will improve automatically. The experience shows that continuous endeavour

is necessary to conduct all aspects of people's life under the leadership of the party of the working class and on the basis of the principle of democratic centralism. Any disbalance between the two lead to chaos and disaster. Perestroika and Glasnost have opened a vast field of controversies. The question of proletarian internationalism is being pushed to the background. Marxism and Leninism is being challenged in the name of greater democracy.

The recent developments in the Soviet Union and other East European countries is causing serious concern to all supporters of Maxism-Leninism and fighters for socialism. Very serious discussions are continuing. It may take some time for many people all over the world to understand that because of its inbuilt system of contradiction and exploitation of man by man capitalism cannot be restored where once socialism has been established in a country, as for example in People's Republic of China which is the largest country in the world in population. The socialist system has provided food, cloth, shelter and education to all citizens. Can any capitalist country claim such achievement ?

Those people who are demanding greater democracy in the socialist countries perhaps have not seen capitalism. How can they know that the question of democracy is not more important than the question of food, cloth, shelter, education and jobs for all.

At the cost of these rights democracy does not have any meaning to any one who cherishes human values.

The reality in the period of transition that should be kept in mind is the nature and capacity of imperialism which has assumed highly destructive proportions because of developments of science and technology in the field of war. The strength of imperialism should never be under estimated. But it should also not be over estimated which may lead to surrender.

After all it is the masses of the working class and the peasantry who have the final say and therefore we have to depend on them, trust and work among them with full determination.

The banner of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism must be kept flying high all over the world.

In India with the change of the Government at the centre new expectations are arising among the people, realignment of forces have taken place. Left forces have got a recognition on the national political scene and at the same time communal and divisive forces have also in-

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Hold Aloft The Revolutionary Tradition of May Day — A Centenary Tribute

Sukomal Sen

The year 1990 will complete the centenary of May Day celebration at international level which began on May 1, 1890 in accordance with the resolution adopted by the International Workingmen's Congress at Paris commencing from 14 July 1889 on the 100th anniversary of Bastille Day. The text of the resolution adopted in the Congress urged, "On the fixed day, a large international demonstration will take place in all countries and cities in which the working people will simultaneously demand of the authorities the legal reduction of the working day to 8 hours and the implementation of the other decisions of the Paris International Congress."

"Taking into account that the American Federation of Labour has, at its congress in St. Louis in December 1888, already adopted a decision to conduct such a demonstration on May 1st 1890, this date is hereby approved".

"Workingmen in various countries must carry out this demonstration in accordance with the specific conditions of their country".

Nobler Vision of the Chicago Martyres :

Thus began the observance of the day of International working class solidarity on May 1 every year in different countries of the world demanding an eight hour day. But the best sons of the American working class who fell before the bullets of the American capitalist class during the Hay Market episode of May 1886 and the leaders of the eight-hours struggle - August Spies, Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer and George Engel - who were subsequently sent to the gallows and heroically embraced martyrdom - had a much wider and nobler vision before them - that of basic transformation of the society and the end of exploitation of man by man once for all.

After all what did it mean by limiting the working hours to eight hour a day ? It meant in essence limiting the appropriation of the fruits of labour of the working class by the capitalists and thus limiting the extent of exploitation of man by man. The vision of the revolutionaries of May Day was not, however, limited to limitation of the working day only, their vision yearned for a revolutionary change of the society - from a exploitative capitalist society to socialism, a higher form of human society. And as Karl Marx pointed out, "A preliminary condition without which all further attempts at improvement and emancipation must prove abortive, is *limitation of working day* (1st International and After - Penguin Books, Pp. 87-88).

True, the heroes of the May Day struggle of

America also suffered from certain lack of clarity of their vision, which was no unusual in those days of human history, but basically they were steadfast for building a society where there would be no class division and hence no class exploitation.

Did not Karl Marx say in *The German Ideology* that - "The stand point of the old materialism is civil society ; the stand point of the new is human society, or social humanity"

The 'human society' the martyrs of Chicago aspired for was a socialist society. Deeply involved in the labour movement, the plight of the workers in the capitalist society of America roused their radicalism to the revolutionary ideas of socialism.

The lofty ideals of the May Day revolutionaries and the tragic events of Chicago in the month of May 1886 did not appear or occur all on a sudden. They were born of harsh class struggles that began intensifying during the previous decades and the experience and class-consciousness that the proletariat gained through it.

May Day Born Out of Fierce Class Struggle :

And now when one hundred years have passed since the bloody May Day struggle in Chicago and its internationalisation since 1890, the working class all over the world cannot forget that their solidarity as well as the international working class movement in general were born of their fierce battle against capitalism and its protagonists. The working class cannot also forget the pernicious role the bourgeois press and the media had played during these hundred years and the campaign of hatred they had unleashed against the working class movement to defame and vulgarise it in the eyes of the people in its desire to serve and promote the capitalist interests. One cannot also be oblivious of the notorious game of the capitalist press in Chicago and in the rest of America against the working class struggle for eight hours day and against the revolutionaries, filled with a vision of a society free from exploitation, who organised and inspired the American working class against human capitalist exploitation. Newspapers with lurid and sensationalism, fabrications, and falsehood had a field day and the American society was sought to be confused by these deliberate lies and the working class movement was sought to be presented before the society as conspiratorial activities of a band of criminals and murderers designed to destabilise the society itself. The heroes and martyrs of Chicago were abused by them as seven "plot-

ters”.

Bourgeois Counter-offensive Continues :

During these hundred years the frenzy and the fury of the capitalist mass media against the working-class movement did not however subside, it has only changed its tactics. The garb has changed from time to time without any sacrifice of the contents.

From 1 May 1890, the first international observance of May Day onwards, the capitalists and the bourgeois governments took vindictive and counter-measures against the participants of May Day demonstrations. In Germany, the Association of the Capitalists threatened the workers observing May Day with dismissal from jobs for absence without permission. The owners also used to conduct “counter-strikes” by closing down their enterprises for weeks together.

The terrified French bourgeoisie, during the first international observance of May Day itself, haunted by the scorching memory of Paris Commune, demanded additional troops to reinforce the already 30,000 strong Paris Garrison, which the French Government easily obliged. Despite these measures, some banks preferred to transfer their assets to La Banque de France in which troops had been stationed converting it into a vertiable fortress. And the French repressive state organs vainly attempted to quell the workers' demonstration just as the Chicago authorities did. Simultaneously, in order to get an excuse for declaring a siege in Paris and in other working class centres, the French Government too began a search for “adventurists”, “anarchists” and “spies”. Amidst the hysteric a most convenient ‘discovery’ of a dynamite cache in Soisy led to a wave of arrests.

Undaunted and United :

But the workers could not be deterred. And the one-million strong demonstration that the French workers organised on 1 May 1890, despite these panicky and atrocious measures resorted to by the French authorities, led Paul Lafargue to comment that, “The social question has gained the attention of the working class. The French socialists now possess mighty means for influencing the working masses and moving them forward”. Frederick Engels was more forthright when on May 1, 1890 while working on the introduction to a new German edition of the Communist Manifesto, he confidently remarked, “Today, as I write these lines, the European and American proletariat is reviewing its fighting force, mobilised for the first time, mobilised as one army under one flag, for one immediate aim : the standard eight-hour working day And today’s spectacle will open the eyes of the capitalists and landlords of all countries to the fact that today the workingmen of all countries are united indeed”. (Marx and Engels, Communist Manifesto, the Preface to the German Edition of 1890).

Internationalisation of May Day thus made immense contributions in uniting the working class the world over for a common cause that of fighting against capitalist exploitation. Frenzied counter-offensives of the bourgeoisie could not, however, prevent the coming together of the working class at international level with the battle cry of ‘workers of the world unite’.

The Rightist Influence :

But as all revolutionary movements of the world, the May Day struggle of the working class also could not escape a pernicious rightist influence, during and in the period just after its birth. The Second International which in its founding Congress was responsible for the resolution internationalising May Day, held a Marxist position, but with the consolidation and development of capitalism and sharpening of class-struggle an opportunists and reformist trend became visible in the Congresses of 1890s. The working class struggle that developed in the various countries were not necessarily, in all cases, led by those who adhered to the principle of scientific socialism. Other alien trends also wielded a powerful influence.

The motley composition of the delegates attending the Congress of the Second International in the 1890s harboured definite dangers to the revolutionary cause and indications became clear that opportunist trend was prepared to sacrifice the movement’s basic aims for transient success and partial reforms. Election gains and parliamentary means of struggle appeared as a strong line of thinking in the Second International. A bitter confrontation followed between the reformists and opportunists on the one side and the revolutionaries on the other in the question of the very spirit and the revolutionary significance of the May Day.

The attempts at gradual subversion and whittling down of the revolutionary temper of the May Day by the German Socialist-Democrats and other reformists was strongly opposed by the French and other socialists, but ultimately reformism could not be resisted. The issue, came to be developed as ‘Reform vs Revolution’ and the capitulationist international leaders increasingly championed petty immediate concessions at the expense of revolutionary ideology. And it took a long time therefore to revive the revolutionary spirit of May Day until the success of October Socialist Revolution and the formation of Third International under Lenin’s leadership which restored the revolutionary glory of May Day and gave it a full play.

In Today’s Context :

Today when the working class movement has grown and matured tremendously, May Day has become the most important and significant occasion for expressing its class solidarity and comradery with the international working class. During this one century, fundamen-

tal changes took place in the balance of class forces in the world. The world has been transformed almost beyond recognition from what it was hundred years before. One third of the world victoriously came out of the shackles of capitalism and built socialist society leaving the rest of the world with a gruelling struggle for the final collapse of capitalism.

But the struggle, "Revolution vs Reformism" has not come to an end. As the revolutionary significance of May Day and the martyrdom of the heroes of the Hay Market affairs were sought to be diluted and blurred in the later years when opportunism and reformism had the field day, of late, a more formidable attempt has come on the surface in maligning all revolutions and the revolutionary sacrifices and to negate and stigmatize all world-shaking revolutionary achievements. Proletarian internationalism and working class solidarity are being sought to be given a go-bye. Undisguised opportunism, capitulationism combined with counter-offensive of the world bourgeoisie and imperialism are making desperate efforts to turn the tide of revolution, and to ideologically disarm the working class. A fanatical attempt at decrying scientific revolution in order to create a hallow around the much despised capitalism is being made, taking advantage of some aberrations and problems in the construction of socialism.

It is at this critical and crucial juncture of world revolutionary history that the significance of the hundred years of May Day has to be realised and the international working class has again to play its historic role to save the world revolutionary movement from the clutches of opportunism and brazen-faced reformism. The restorationist onslaught has to be decisively fought back.

While remembering the Chicago martyrs who valiantly defied and mounted the gallows with erect heads, the working class has to remember that what these martyrs yearned and fought for was not simply a eight hour day — they fought for the ultimate down fall of capitalism. They embraced martyrdom for the most noble and sublime, the humanity as ever aspired for.

The working class of India with its glorious heritage has to hold aloft the banner of this revolutionary traditions of May Day and only thereby they can prove themselves truthful to the revolutionary ideology of scientific socialism as enunciated and put into practice by Marx, Engles, Lenin and other socialist and communist revolutionaries.

Hail the Red Flag !
Long Live May Day !
Up with Proletarian Internationalism !
Down with War Mongering Imperialism !
Long Live Socialism, Peace, Democracy !

Two Lines —

Revolutionary and Reformist

In the course of hundred years one third of the world has gone socialist ; the old imperialist system has been liquidated ; formerly enslaved countries like India have been liberated ; the world has seen the great socialist revolution of Russia led by the Bolshevik Party and Lenin ; it further saw a complete smashing of the fascist force by the Red Army, the working class and the people of the Soviet Union; it saw the success of the great Chinese revolution and grand victories of socialist revolutions in a number of countries in Europe, in Cuba, in Korea, and the unimaginable and unparalleled victory of the working class and the people of Vietnam.

These victories were the direct result of the revolutionary line of the world working class movement which was embodied in Marxism and Leninism. The observance of the first May Day, the economic demands raised and the political demands put forward were all in consonance with what the first International guided by Marx had taught the working class movement. It is no accident that only those parties which remained faithful to the initial ideology proclaimed in relation to the First May Day were the leaders of the successful socialist revolutions; such were the Marxist-Leninist parties.

It is no accident either that those who strayed away from the revolutionary understanding guiding earlier May Day observance never succeeded in organising a socialist revolution or a peaceful transition to socialism in any capitalist country. They mostly functioned as an opposition party under the capitalist framework and when elected to form an government they were unable to change an iota of the exploitative system. The histories of these parties, the reformist socialist democratic parties of Europe and the Labour Party of Europe show that they not only turned a back on revolution but also on international unity of the working class. On all crucial occasions this reformist trend betrayed international solidarity and deserted the banner of proletarian internationalism.

During the first imperialist war, during the anti-fascist war the Labour Party of Britain, the Socialist Democratic Party of Europe betrayed the banner of proletarian unity. They remained with their respective governments and during the anti-fascist war they joined the struggle against Hitler only when their governments desired to join it.

The centenary of May Day comes as a fresh call to us to determinedly pursue the militant course of the movement and take the country out of the perilous situation facing it.

(Revolutionary Traditions of May Day by B. T. Ranadive, Working Class, April 1986).

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW PAYS HOMAGE

Let the death be not so proud

There lived a man so dignified
The flag which he held
Was redder than blood

Let the death be not proud
His heart bore a fire
Stronger than any pyre

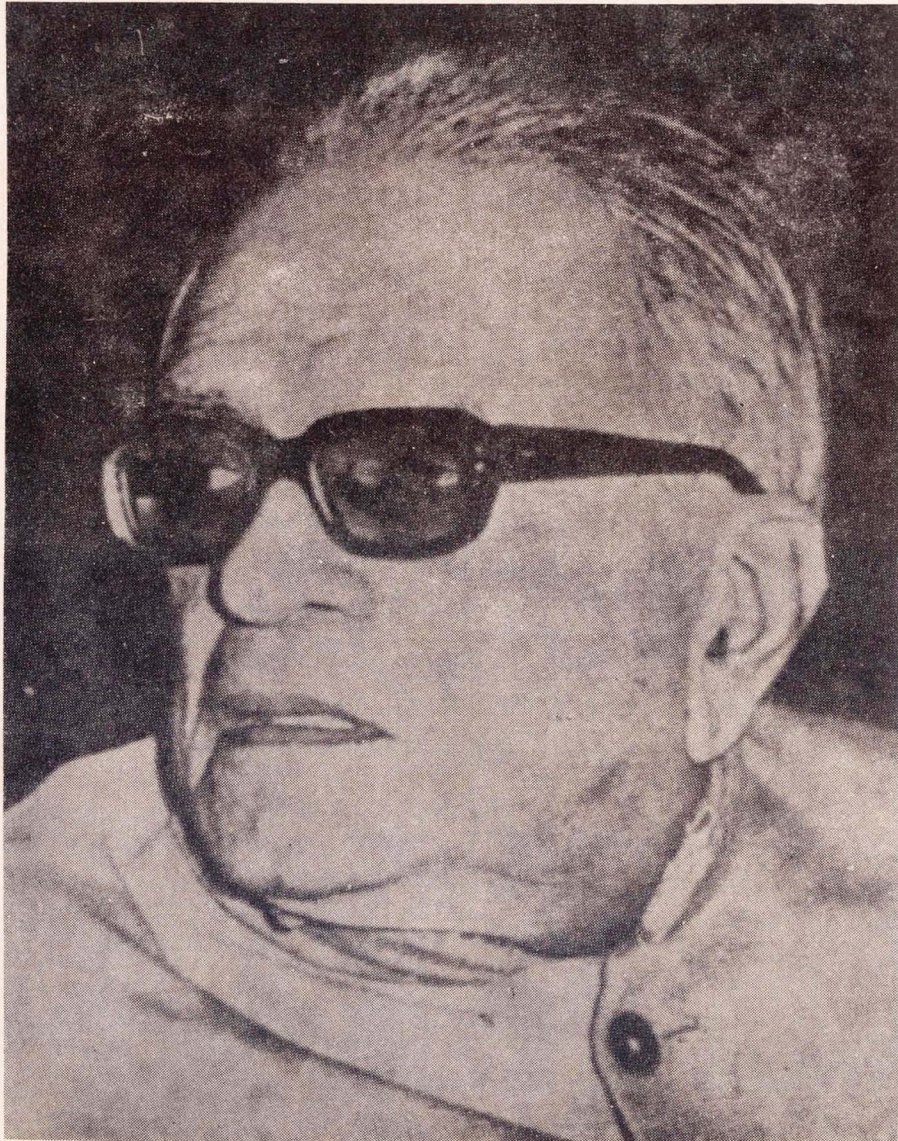
Let the death be not proud
His body though crippled
His morals did never bend

Let the death be not proud
His 'Brain' lived longer
Than his breath could withhold,

Let the death be not proud
There LIVES a man so dignified

Nilu

RED SALUTE TO COM. B. T. RANADIVE



On this Centenary of the May Day celebrations the CITU pledges to fulfil Com. BTR's call to uphold the banner of proletarian internationalism, safeguard the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and carry forward the revolutionary traditions of the May Day to establish a Socialist State.