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Union Recognition At Last!

NEW AGE

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It was in July last year that the two-million Central Government employees were forced into the most serious action of their life—a General Strike. In spite of rising prices, Government for years had refused to revise wages. Then in 1957, faced with an adamant employer, the National Federation of P & T Employees decided to strike. A compromise, however, emerged by the Government agreeing to appoint a Pay Commission. The crisis was averted.

THE Pay Commission worked merrily and took its own time to make recommendations, which gave very little relief in the face of prices which, in the meanwhile, had risen still further. The most reasonable cure to the ills of the rising cost of living was either to give a sliding scale of D.A. linked to cost of living or freeze prices. Government would do neither. Even the recommendations of the Pay Commission which were somewhat beneficial were kept aside and those, which worsened the employees' position in matters of hours of work, leave, etc., were immediately enforced.

exasperated employees

This naturally exasperated even the most sedate section of the employees and even the most slow-moving and "reasonable" section of the leadership of the Government employees' unions. All opted for the strike slogan, in July 1960.

The strike was broken with the use of most savage repression and blatant falsification of the standpoint of the strikers. They were accused of treason, a desire to paralyse and overthrow the State, a thing not dreamt of even by the most fire-eating revolutionary that may be roaming in the country.

Thousands of employees were dragged to prisons and sentenced. Then they were released and many were restored to work.

But still hundreds were dismissed, suspended, demoted or disciplined under this rule or that.

All the unions that supported the strike were de-recognised.

The INTUC acted as the usual strike-breaker, in company with the police and Government bosses. It enjoyed its role and got its reward from the Government; it remained the sole recognised body in many services.

Unfortunately for it, the workers from whose "revolution", it claimed to have saved the Government and the country, did not follow this "saviour of the country". They preferred to remain loyal to their de-recognised unions and "un-recognised" leaders.

The movement for restoring the recognition of the unions and for reinstatement and relief of the victimised was slowly built in the country.

Some sections of the leadership thought that reasonable elements in the Government and the employing ministries would soon forget the past and restore recognition, that the cases of the victimised would be reviewed in terms of the Government's policy circular, which was not altogether bad.

But vindictive bureaucrats goaded and aided by police informers and trade-union rivals, kept out many an honest worker, who, even in terms of the Government circular should have been back in his job. The unions could

not fight back as they were not recognised and some like the AIRF were too disorganised to fight back. Things remained stagnant and in a stalemate.

Then E. X. Joseph, leader of the Audit & Accounts employees, whose Auditor General behaves like a Czar and claims a status for himself beyond the purview of the Constitution or the Government of India, proposed to stir the placid situation by a protest hungerstrike, as the employees there were the hardest hit.

Then some of the P & T union leaders proposed to join in and make the protest wider.

The hunger-strike proposal threw some union leaders in a paroxysm of rage, some in confusion of principles and tactics, some in personal difficulties. Time was wasted in argument and the movement faced disruption. In the meanwhile, the late Home Minister, Pandit Pant, fell seriously ill and the hunger-strike was postponed for the time being.

It was said that the Government was going to restore recognition to the unions "shortly". No one knew the definition of this "shortly". As far back as March 1961, when the first hunger-strike proposal was mooted, the same story was being retailed out. So naturally, the workers were not prepared to believe vague references and phrases.

government acts

The hunger-strike was to commence on September 15, as decided.

Fortunately, the Government this time came out with their resolution in time. On the morning of September 14,

tions hope that the various ministries concerned will follow the spirit of the decision and that each ministry will not follow its own interpretation and create further difficulties. That is sure to hold up progress and once again lead to differences and bitterness. The behaviour of each ministry is going to be one of the key factors in future developments.

So, at last, after a year of protests and waiting, recognition to the unions has come. Of course, the Government says that they are not doing this because of the hunger-strike. Not at all. Who says so? Let us then put it this way. The leaders of the Government employees decided to hunger-strike on Sep-

cent trade unionism must be the slogan, if the employees are to enjoy even the limited rights that they have.

The Confederation must be made a live body of all the Federations.

build united confederation

The leaderships of all the unions must be made to function actively and democratically. Rivalry of unions and leaders has harmed the cause of the workers many a time, the AIRF being particularly susceptible to this, though others are not altogether free.

Let all leaders and groups sit together, irrespective of their political differences

What Next After Victory?

by S. A. DANGE

Again months rolled by and nothing was moving.

Then Ramachandran of the Central Railway and Samuel Augustine of the Defence Federation sat down for a hunger-strike in Bombay on their own. Workers moved. Assurances to review cases were given once again. More time passed and once again, there was stagnation.

decision for hunger-strike

So the proposal for a protest hunger-strike was revived. The All-India Defence Employees Federation decided to launch a hunger-strike. S. M. Joshi, K. G. Sriwastava, Gopalakrishnan of the Defence unions decided to start on September 15, a hunger-strike to get restoration of recognition of unions and the review of the victimised.

Leaders of other service unions like O. P. Gupta of P & T Federation, N. N. Manna of CPWD Workers Union, Samuel Augustine in Bombay and a few others declared their intention to join on the same day.

Some of the top leaders of the AIRF and the Confederation like Peter Alvarez, Nath Pai and K. Ramamurthi of the P & T Federation were not in favour of the hunger-strike. That was the weakness of the situation, because the reservations of these big leaders detracted from the unity and solidarity of the movement as a whole.

But one could not wait with folded hands indefinitely for the manna to fall from the heavens of New Delhi.

a news item was released to the press by a "spokesman of Government" that recognition of unions was restored.

In between, Government had thought of a Bill prohibiting strikes, banning outsiders from unions and so on. But the Bill had disappeared. Then there were rumours that only unions who would abjure the right to strike and debar ex-employees from their leadership would be given recognition.

So, even an elected Member of Parliament like S. M. Banerjee, who is a victimised defence worker, would have to leave the Defence Federation! It was not possible to call off a hunger-strike decision on the basis of a mere "spokesman's" report in the Press. One had to be careful in such matters.

So, on September 14, in company with S. M. Banerjee and K. G. Sriwastava, I sought an interview with the Labour Minister, G. L. Nanda and the Home Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri.

Both received us promptly and told us that it was the Government of India's decision (a Cabinet decision) to restore recognition to the unions as it was before the strike, that no preconditions were attached to this. When asked about the cases of the victimised, they said that the unions could take up that question with the employing ministries concerned.

All the unions and federa-

tember 15. The Government of India decided to re-recognise the unions on the evening of September 13. A happy coincidence let us call it and let us have more of such. Thanks all round.

cent percent unionisation

All the same, one must congratulate those who had decided to go on hunger-strike on September 15, without knowing that Government was also going to act on the eve of that day.

It is now for the unions to be up and active. All Government employees now should be in the unions. Cent per

and build unitedly a powerful mass Confederation of Government Employees' Unions. Let the rank and file workers call the leaderships to account and discipline themselves and their leaders.

Unity on the Railways is the key to the situation among the Government employees' This was demonstrated in the last strike and now.

Let all the unions rally behind the Audit employees, who are not governed by any ministry. We would request the Government to pull up the authorities of the Audit and Accounts and make them observe the line that is now adopted by the Government of India.

Unity and active democratic functioning is the need of the hour. Then alone will this victory bring its fruits to all employees.

(September 15)

Central Executive Committee CPI, In Session

The Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of India has been in session since September 11. It has already adopted two resolutions on September 13— on the repression in the Punjab and the earlier decision to hunger-strike of the Central Government employees. These resolutions are published on the back page.

The General Secretary of the Communist Party of India, Ajoy Ghosh has returned from Moscow after completing his course of medical treatment and is attending the deliberations of the Central Executive Committee. — EDITOR

Nehru's Soviet Visit

by Mohit Sen

A Soviet mountain bears the name of Jawaharlal Nehru—christened while the Indian Prime Minister was in the thick of friendly discussions with Nikita Khrushchov. The visit itself represented the peak of the friendship between our two peoples and Governments.

THE warmth of the welcome and the generous response to that welcome were a tribute to the mutual upholding of reason in international relations and the common desire for peace. Indo-Soviet friendship now becomes one of the dominant themes of the history of our times.

It was a sombre setting for a friendship visit. The imperialist frenzy, the mad provocations had compelled grave and stern Soviet counter-measures. The world was on the brink again and the hearts of all who love the human race were filled with unease.

Then came Belgrade and the non-aligned call for peace. Followed the first indications that the signs of Soviet preparedness to meet strength with greater strength and the non-aligned refusal to heed imperialist siren-songs had been read aright by the madmen. And while Nehru was still on Soviet soil Khrushchov declared that "encouraging rays of hope have now appeared". Similarly India's Premier stated on return that though the tension was still acute, it had abated somewhat and the possibility of avoiding war was real.

This then was the drama of memorable weeks, which gave a message to a peace-hungry world. Socialist strength, its constant increase and its constant modernisation are the sine qua non for some measure of sanity on the part of the imperialists. Socialist and non-aligned friendship and cooperation, the moral-political isolation of the imperialists is equally necessary for the stabilisation and manifestation of that sanity. Such is the message.

Thus, the festival of friendship, which was Nehru's Soviet stay, was good not only for our two countries. It was good for peace. It was the assertion of an anti-imperialist alliance for the preservation of the world's security.

After all, it was not out of formal politeness that Khrushchov said to Nehru that the Soviet Government and people "highly appreciate the peaceful policy of your country and the efforts of your Government towards improving the international situation, settling the problem of general and complete disarmament and liquidating the disgraceful colonial system".

Nor was it mere reciprocal courtesy that drove Nehru to declare his conviction that Khrushchov was "devoted to peace" and that "the Soviet Union for many years had been working for peace".

It was this same trust in each other's bona fides with regard to the supreme issue confronting humanity—war or peace—that prevented disagreement on the question of the resumption of nuclear tests from developing into rancour or suspicion. On return to India the Prime Minister not only reiterated that "Khrushchov fully realised the dangers and horrors of a nuclear war" but that the Soviet Premier "would like to give up nuclear tests if conditions were favourable."

It is precisely such mutual trust between the leader of

the vanguard and mightiest socialist state and the leader of the biggest and foremost non-aligned state that sends shivers down the imperialists' spines.

On the German problem, too, there are all the signs of close approximation of views. Both in the joint communique and in Nehru's remarks to pressmen as well as the Congress Parliamentary Party, stress is laid "on the fact of the existence of two German States" and on the fact "that any attempt to change the frontiers could have dangerous consequences."

In his report to the Congress Parliamentary Party Nehru also stressed his conviction that "the question of safeguarding Western access to West Berlin should present no insuperable difficulty at the Conference table". It only remains for India to proclaim de jure recognition of the German Democratic Republic.

It is necessary to under-

Festival Of Friendship

line—in view of the inspired rumours to the contrary—the fact that the joint communique plainly states that the Soviet Premier agreed with Nehru that "colonialism in all its shapes and manifestations, and specifically the actions of the Portuguese colonial authorities in Angola and elsewhere must be emphatically denounced. He also declared that he had profound understanding and sympathy for the Indian people's desire to achieve the immediate liberation of Goa, Daman and Diu from Portuguese colonialism".

The Algerian war for freedom and the struggle against apartheid also found significant mention in the communique. Nehru on return has more or less announced that the recognition by India of the Algerian Provisional Government is in the offing—"He felt that it was not advisable to recognise the Algerian Government at a conference since such recognition should be announced from the capitals of the respec-

tive countries" (Statesman, September 13).

Of great interest to note, in the context of the so-called controversy over "priorities," the following sentence in the communique: "Prime Minister Nehru agreed with Nikita Khrushchov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR that general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control was the most important question now confronting the world".

Satisfaction was expressed with the "considerable progress made" in the sphere of India-Soviet economic and technical cooperation but it is not clear what happened following Nehru's declaration that his "appetite had been whetted" by Soviet aid and that he was "greedy for more".

Finally, attention needs to be drawn to two of Nehru's statements which go to show that he has not altogether lost his historical approach to pro-

blems. Paying a fulsome tribute to Soviet progress he said "successfully building up a new society, the Soviet people are presenting a model to the peoples of other countries".

And in Uzbekistan he made the following noteworthy comment on the Draft Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: "This is undoubtedly a great programme. Its implementation will be a tremendous advance for all mankind".

It was no wonder then that as he soared away from the Soviet Union, Nehru cabled to Khrushchov: "words fail to express how deeply I appreciate your friendship. Although my visit was very brief, I am carrying away impressions of great progress achieved by the Soviet people in every field". A tribute this message was, indeed, to the Soviet people but it was no less a testimony to the love of India for peace and for progress symbolised by the Soviet Union, sensitively expressed by its leader.

RESOLUTIONS OF CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, CPI

end repression in punjab

The Central Executive Committee of the National Council of the Communist Party of India currently meeting in Delhi adopted the following resolutions in its session of September 13:

THE Central Executive Committee of the National Council of the Communist Party of India, emphatically protests against total suppression of civil liberties and the large-scale repression let loose by Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon and his Government throughout the Punjab.

The Communist Party has been singled out for the most brutal attack. Most of its leaders and workers, including Harkishen Singh Surjeet and Sohan Singh Josh have already been arrested. The Party press is being sought to be paralysed by the arrest of Arjun Singh, Editor and the sub-editors of the daily Nawan Zamana, as well as of the manager of the press.

For Sardar Kairon and his Government, the rule of law does not seem to exist as far as the Communists are concerned. Its leaders and workers are arrested under Section 107 and 151 Cr.P.C. But when bail is moved, sureties of one lakh rupees are demanded.

If the police do not find a comrade at home when they go to arrest him, his entire property is forthwith attached without any court procedure. In one case, the police arrested the wife of a comrade when they went to his house and did not find him.

Even normal facilities available for undertrial prisoners are denied to Communists. On September 11, when P. Ramamurti, a member of the Central Executive Committee sought an interview with Harkishen Singh Surjeet, Secretary of the Punjab State Committee of the Communist Party in the

Nabha District Jail where he is lodged as an under-trial prisoner under Section 6 of the Punjab Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Superintendent of the jail refused the interview even though Ramamurti told him that he wanted to discuss arrangements for the defence of Surjeet.

The Central Executive Committee emphatically repudiates the wild and baseless accusations of the Punjab Chief Minister against our Party. The Central Executive Committee is confident that such accusa-

tions cannot cut any ice with our people who have known that the Communist Party has always fought against communal forces and have stood firm to prevent communal intrusions even at the cost of their lives.

These accusations are a crude pretext to suppress our Party, the most doughty champion of communal harmony and strongest secular force in the Punjab, because its activities are a hindrance to the game of communal provocation on which Sardar Kairon depends for diverting the mass discontent of the people against his policies.

When the critical situation in the Punjab calls for statesman-

ship, calmness and circumspection, this wanton line of repression cannot but aggravate the situation.

The Central Executive Committee urges on all democrats throughout the country to raise their voice against this mass repression by the Punjab Government. It calls upon all Party units to hold meetings and demonstrations against this brutal repression.

The Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of India urges on the Central Government to intervene in the situation and stop Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon from pursuing the dangerous course he has taken.

government employees' leaders' hunger-strike

THE Central Executive Committee of the National Council of the Communist Party of India strongly disapproves of the policy of the Government of India in relation to the Government employees. After last year's strike, the victimisation of hundreds of employees took place and unions and Federations who supported the strike lost their recognition.

The Government employees and their unions have been agitating for reinstatement of the victimised employees and the restoration of recognition.

It has been found that even the policy of reviewing the cases of the victimised as announced by the Government itself is not being properly carried out.

The Government promised to reconsider the question of recognition of the unions. But reports show that the Government wants to lay down preconditions for recognition which demand that the unions abjure the right to strike and expel all the ex-employees wherever they are from the leaderships of the Unions.

If this rule is applied, many MPs and MLAs who are elected representatives of the people but who once have been Government employees and are in the leadership of the unions will have to leave them if recognition is to be obtained.

Such attitude on the part of the Government has forced the leaders of the unions to resort to hungerstrike in order to protest against such anti-working

class policy and for securing recognition of the unions and relief and reinstatement of the victimised. Several wellknown leaders of the Government employees are commencing their hungerstrike in various centres from September 15.

The Central Executive Committee calls upon all people and workers to mobilise public opinion in support of the hunger-strikers and their demands. Meetings and demonstrations should be held in order to support the demands of the Government employees and their unions.

The Central Executive Committee hopes that all parties and trade union centres who had rallied behind the general strike will unite to support the movement for the recognition of the Government employees' Unions, the relief and reinstatement of the victimised and the democratic and trade union rights of the workers.