

Appendix – A



Interview with Sri. Satya Narayan Singh, a former N.F Railways employee who participated in May 1974 Railway Strike, on 8th January 2017.



Interview with Sri. Pallab Kumar Majumdar, a former N.F Railways employee and a leader of Casual Staff Association affiliated under Mazdoor Union in Thaurganj who participated in May 1974 Railway Strike, on 23rd December 2016.



Interview with Sri. Druba Lal Bannerjee, a former N.F. Railways staff who participated in May 1974 Railway Strike and a member of local Action committee NJP, on 9th January 2017.



Interview with Sri. Bimalendu Chakraborty, a former N.F Railways employee and convenor of the local Action Committee, Pandu, who participated in May 1974 Railway Strike , on 24th December 2016.



Interview with Sri. Subrato Dutta Roy, a former Eastern Railways employee who participated in May 1974 Railway Strike, on 2nd January 2017.



Interview with Sri. Abhiram Sarkar, a former N.F. Railways employee who participated in May 1974 Railway Strike, on 9th January 2017.



Interview with Sri. Ajit Km. Saha, a former N.F Railways employee and a member of UCR who participated in May 1974 Railway Strike, on 4th January 2017.



Interview with Sri. Malay Chandra Das, a former N.F Railways employee and a Secretary of the Action Committee, Siliguri Junction Unit who participated in May 1974 Railway Strike, on 4th January 2017.

Section III

Documents

Two letters to the Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister,

On May 3, I had addressed you a letter from prison requesting you to intervene in the railwaymen's dispute and help us secure a just and honourable settlement in the very legitimate demands of the railwaymen.

From newspaper reports it appears that my request has not moved you a bit.

If anything, the campaign of lies and slander against me and against the railwaymen, in Parliament and outside, had been intensified by Shri L.N. Mishra, the Railway Board Chairman, Shri M.N. Bery and the members of the Government party. New firmans are also being issued in their dozens by the satraps of Rail Bhavan with the sole object of bullying the railwaymen into submission.

You will excuse my saying this, but your Railway Minister and his Railway Board are obviously not giving you a true picture of the situation on the Railways nor of the mood and temper of the railwaymen.

The Railway Minister is blissfully ignorant of the issues involved. Even as late as April 30, when he briefly put in his appearance at the discussion table, and I protested at his repeated statement that our demands would cost Rs. 500 crores when their actual cost was less than Rs. 300 crores, he said that Rs. 500 crores included the amount the government would have to spend for employees in all services including railwaymen. Both Shri Qureshi and Shri Bery had a few anxious and embarrassing moments in bringing Shri Mishra back on the rails.

As for the Railway Board, most of its members are completely oblivious of the changes that have taken place in this country since 1947, to speak nothing of what is happening in the world outside. I am not being rhetorical when I say that they look to the railwaymen as slave labour. They with their airconditioned offices and their air-

conditioned saloons will never understand the hunger and the poverty of the gangmen and khalasies or the sweat and blood poured out by the drivers and firmen.

Everyone calls the Railways the "life line" of the country. But, do you know that two railwaymen die of tuberculosis every day? And there are tens of thousands of railwaymen lying in hospitals afflicted by this dreadful disease, and with no hope of recovery?

And the men who man this "life line" work round-the-clock to keep the wheels of industry moving are among the worst paid employees in the public sector. Is the work of the railwaymen less arduous, less hazardous, less important than the work done by the employees in LIC, State Bank, Reserve Bank, Nationalised Banks, HMT, HSL, BHEL, ITI, STC, Modern Bakeries to name a few public owned undertakings?

In October last year, the Union Labour Minister settled the wage dispute in the cement industry. Is what is right for the cement workers of the country not right for the railwaymen?

Madam Prime Minister, these questions cannot be brushed aside any more. They cannot be answered by the BSF Territorial Army, CRP, SRP, not even by the Indian Army.

I note from the newspapers that according to sources close to members of Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet, my letter to you dated May 3, did not contain any fresh proposals for a settlement. What proposals can we make if the Government position is "no" to our demands for interim parity with public sector and for bonus? We have justified our demands. Any impartial person will concede the justice of our demands.

It is for the Railway Ministry to make proposal to settle the dispute. I have always said so, and I repeat again that if any reasonable proposals are made, we shall not be found wanting in our response.

But if the idea is to have a trial of strength, then, this time, I hope, the railwaymen will not be found wanting in proving their mettle.

The spontaneous action by railwaymen on all railways is already on. The Southern Railway workers have now formally launched the strike. On other railways, formal strike action will be launched in the next 36 hours. You can still avert the catastrophe, if you wish.

With regards,
Tihar Jail,
Delhi
May 6, 1974

Yours sincerely,
George Fernandes
Convener, NCCRS

Dear Prime Minister,

I had not anticipated that I would have to write to you on the railwaymen's problems from the prison, though I knew that I would have to seek your intervention to resolve the current dispute between the Railway Ministry and two million railwaymen.

During our talks which, as you know, have had a chequered course, the Railway Ministry has totally rejected all the vital issues on which we seek a settlement. Consequently, we have been pushed to a point where a general strike on the Railways has become inevitable.

Even now, I want to reiterate, with all the emphasis at my command that we do not want a strike. We are fully aware of the implications and consequences of a railway strike. But what are we to do when our most reasonable and legitimate demands are rejected?

The principal point which the Railway Ministry has made with us during our talks is paucity of funds to meet our demands. But you will appreciate that nowhere in the world has this argument been accepted as a valid reason to deny what is fair and reasonable to the workers.

Furthermore, we do not believe that there is any substance in the Railway Ministry's position on the finances as is evident from the following points:

1. During the last 19 years, the Railways have given to the Central exchequer about Rs. 2,000 crores as their contribution to the General Revenue.

2. Sixty per cent of the revenue earning tonnage on the Railways does not pay at all. Certain commodities are carried even below cost. In simple language, this means that the railways are carrying 60 per cent of freight at below even the present low cost of operation.

3. During the current year, the railways are underwriting "social burdens" to the tune of Rs. 225 crores. This is on account of the maintenance of uneconomic lines, loss on suburban services, other losses on coaching services and losses on freight carried at below the actual cost.

According to the Railway Ministry's own admission, railways in many countries such as Britain, West Germany, France, Italy, Canada and Japan are compensated for the loss sustained by them on account of social burdens by grants-in-aid from the Central or State Governments or local bodies.

Only twelve days back, the railways started work on a 24.7 kms. railway line between Dalmau and Daryapur, in your Rai Bareilly constituency, at an estimated cost of Rs. 1.40 crores. (The cost of the line could reach twice that figure by the time the work is completed.) Thousands of copies of a souvenir printed on art paper with pictures of Shri Lalit Narain Mishra, Shri H. N. Bahuguna and Shri Mohammed Shafi Qureshi and other photographs were distributed on the occasion. In justifying this patently uneconomic line, the Railway Board states in this souvenir "laying of a new line or restoration of a line, cannot be reviewed on the basis of financial return alone." Which is as it should be. But should the railwaymen bear the cost of it all? That question is at the root of our dispute.

4. The railways are required to pay a dividend of 5.5 per cent and 6 per cent on the capital-at-charge. Whereas most public sector undertakings in India have been making losses and yet paying fairly decent wages to their workmen, the railways are paying a dividend of Rs. 185 crores during the current year and yet are refusing to pay wages, at least on par with those of public sector undertakings which are making colossal losses.

5. The railways have been recently financing a lot of their developmental programmes from their own internal resources and thus expanding their capital base. The total amount so utilised is over Rs. 1,000 crores during the last seven or eight years.

6. Between the reserves used for developmental activities and the dividends paid to the Government in the last 19 years the railways have produced a surplus of over Rs. 3,000 crores.

While the public sector undertakings continue to make losses, this amount of Rs. 3,000 crores is the nett contribution by the railways to the capital formation in the country. This does not include social burdens borne by the railways which in the last two and a half decades would have amounted to an astronomical figure.

7. Between 1950-51 and 1972-73, labour productivity on the open lines of the Indian Railways increased by 64 per cent. Between 1957-58 and 1972-73 labour productivity in the railway workshops increased by 54 per cent.

It may surprise you but it is true that the railwaymen's wages were last revised in 1959-60 on the basis of the recommendation of the Second Pay Commission. The railwaymen have not been given any share of their productivity through increased wages.

8. Measured with any yardstick, the work of the railwaymen is no

less arduous and hazardous than that of workmen engaged in the public sector undertakings including the Modern Bakeries Ltd., which produces bread.

Yet while the average *annual pay* per employee in the public sector undertakings was Rs 6,313 in 1972-73, the average per capita *annual cost* of a railway worker in 1972-73 was only Rs 3,714.

This most unjustified and wide disparity in the emolument of the railwaymen and of workers in the public sector undertakings owned by the Government of India has had a devastating effect on the morale of railwaymen. It is but natural that they should resent and oppose this step-motherly treatment meted out to them.

It has been alleged that the railwaymen's agitation for better working and living condition is politically motivated. This is a preposterous charge, to say the least. What is the politics involved in the railwaymen's agitation to secure wages, dearness allowance, bonus, hours of work and other conditions of service available to workmen in Hindusthan Steel, Hindusthan Antibiotics, Hindusthan Machine Tools, Indian Telephone Industries, Hindusthan Aeronautics, Bharat Heavy Electricals, Modern Bakeries, Indian Airlines and other Government-owned undertakings?

I am approaching you with a request that you intervene and help us secure a just and honourable settlement on the very legitimate demands of the railwaymen. It is my deep conviction that only such a settlement of their demands will create among the railwaymen a sense of belonging, restore their morale and make them give of their best to make the railways run more efficiently. In any other course, lies only disaster, not only to the railways but also to the nation.

With best regards,

Tihar Jail
Delhi,
May 3, 1974

Yours sincerely,
George Fernandes
Convener, NCCRS

A letter to the Railway Minister

Dear Lalit,

I have just seen your letter of May 1, delivered at my residence at 1 a.m. on May 2. I have also seen in the newspapers the various statements made by you in the Lok Sabha yesterday.

I cannot say I am shocked by your words or by your actions. You

All India Railwaymen's Federation

B.P. Roy Chowdhury
Asstt. General Secy.

(Estd. 1924)

125/E, BABAR ROAD, NEW DELHI-1.

5th March, 1974.

AIR/12(142)

Dear Shri Chakraborty,

Re : Case of Shri V.B.Mahadeshwar, Sr. Time-Keeper,
Time Office, Central Railway, Parel.

...

A reference is invited to the discussions held on 2.3.74 vide item No.32 of the statement, dated 26.2.74, indicating action taken on the minutes of the previous PNM meeting. It concerns review of cases of Railway employees who were punished for participation in the Strike of July, 1960 - Treatment of period of suspension "Item No. III(29) of 20/21-12-72". During the course of discussion an individual case requiring fresh opportunity to opt for authorised scales of pay w.e.f. 1.7.59 was raised by the AIRF's representatives. It was stated on behalf of the Railway Board that the particulars of individual case should be forwarded to them.

I have to write for your information that the case belongs to Shri V.B.Mahadeshwar, Sr. Time-Keeper, Parel Workshop, Central Railway. Shri Mahadeshwar was under suspension during the period from 12.7.60 to 18.11.61. He was asked to exercise option while he was under suspension and taking into consideration the then prevailing situation he opted to elect authorised scale of pay from the date of his next increment. The date of his next increment fell some time in the month of December, 1962. Now that the suspension period has been treated as duty for purposes of increment, it is advantageous to him to elect the authorised scale of pay from 1.7.59. Shri Mahadeshwar had submitted his representation, requesting for fresh opportunity to exercise his option from 1.7.59 and the same has been referred to the Railway Board by the Central Railway Administration.

It is, therefore, requested to kindly look into the matter and do the needful at an early date.

Yours sincerely,

B.P. Roy Chowdhury
(B.P. Roy Chowdhury)

Shri A.K.Chakraborty,
Director, Establishment,
Railway Board,
New Delhi



TELEPHONE 40947

URGENT 80

TELEGRAM RAILWAYMEN

All India Railwaymen's Federation

(Estd. 1924)

123/E, BABAR ROAD, NEW DELHI-1.

AIRF/160-B(A4)

10th March, 1975.

From: Priya Gupta,
General Secretary,
All India Railwaymen's Federation,
125/E, Babar Road, New Delhi-1



To
S hri Kamlapati Tripathiji,
Minister for Railways,
Rail Bhavan,
New Delhi.

MR 329
TR-3-75

19/3

Respected Shri Kamlapatiiji,

Sub: May, 1974, Railway General Strike -
Rehabilitation and normalisation -
Commence of the PNM and other channels
of negotiations.

...

I would draw your kind attention to the discussions I had with you when I met you in the Central Hall on 3rd March, 1975, and I submitted to you about the hardships and difficulties of the railwaymen arising out of the delay in implementation of the decision on the May 1974 Railway General Strike Victims.

I shall be very grateful if you could kindly consider sympathetically the cases of the railwaymen as assured.

I for myself can vouchsafe that the railwaymen will leave no stone unturned to see that the ideal conditions be fulfilled.

I am enclosing details of the points for favour of your kind consideration.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Priya Gupta
(Priya Gupta)
General Secretary/AIRF.

Encl: as above.

DE MY
AMS 12/3
MR. desires to have a draft reply put up commenting on the points raised by Shri Priya Gupta

S.A. to M.R
10.3.75

DDSK
GK 15/3

MS Secy
17/3



All India Railwaymen's Federation

(Estd. 1924)

123/E, BABAR ROAD, NEW DELHI-1.

AIRF/1604b (4)

10th March, 1975.

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS SUBMITTED TO
SHRI KAMLAPATI TRIPATHIJI,
MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS,
FOR HIS KIND AND SYMPATHETIC
CONSIDERATION -
MAY 1974 RAILWAY GENERAL STRIKE -
REHABILITATION AND NORMALISATION-
COMMENCEMENT OF THE P.N.M. & OTHER
CHANNELS OF NEGOTIATIONS.

1. Refusal to take back to duties on flimsy charges of intimidation.

Of late the Railway Administration has started a new slogan that intimidation is a charge for which so many railwaymen are to be kept back in addition to those cases of sabotage and violence. We have submitted categorically that intimidation is a criminal offence and that it must have to be established in the Court of Law and mere statement of railway officials and that too at this delayed hours,- stating that so and so employees have also charges against them of intimidation is not sufficient and refusal to put back to duty on this flimsy ground is malicious. You will kindly recall for the papers in such cases and find that even for those who had court cases against them (now acquitted, convicted or court cases withdrawn or pending) there having been no mention of charge of intimidation, are also being implicated now by a mere fresh statement by his concerned railway officials.

I solicit your kindly making sympathetic consideration to these crucial points and see that only for this whimsical attitude of a particular Railway Official the poor railwaymen may not be implicated and victimised by keeping them away from service on this pretext.

2. Railwaymen removed from service in May '74 Strike - Not allowed in P.N.M. & C.

On the question of introducing PNM and other machineries after long days in connection with May, 1974 Railway General Strike,- we are glad that the Railway Board's Office and the Zonal Railway Offices at G.M.'s, Divn.'s workshop(s) and local levels,- the meetings and channels of negotiations are being opened, and all privileges and facilities restored.

Cont d.....2/

It is painful to note that the Railway Admn. is refusing to allow in the PNM meeting and other meetings, the railwaymen who are our office bearers, active workers and members on the plea that they were out of service either having been dismissed or removed or terminated or discharged in connection with May, 1974 Railway General Strike.

Then in that case what is the position - we cannot all of a sudden pick up anybody else as office bearers at the Divisional and Branch levels in a democratic organisation as ours, where it is the general body who elect the office bearers at Branch, Divisional or Central levels, etc. Moreover, to attend to a negotiating committee meeting, PNM or otherwise, when you are allowing the same dismissed/removed discharged/terminated ex-employees if he is a central office bearer or as honorary member (outsider), I do not understand as to why in the same PNM and other meetings the similar set up of persons even they are out of jobs cannot be allowed to participate, by attending the PNM meetings.

3. Delay in taking back to service

I shall once again draw your kind attention to the cases which are pending for being taken back to jobs and they have no charges against them of violence or sabotage, and therefore, an early action for issuing directives to take them back to jobs be taken.

4. Transfers on Re-instatement

While on the subject the hardships caused to the employees on transfers from one place to another, when they are put back to service, have many times put up to Rly. Board the Member (Staff) Railway Board that the transfer should be cancelled and no further transfer should be made while taking back the employees to service.

5. Withdrawal of Court Cases - In spite of Home Ministry's Circular -

The local Railway offices at divisional & branch levels are in most of the cases putting objections, for which the District Magistrates and other judiciaries cannot withdraw the court cases. - Even of similar FIR's there are discriminations.

6. Regarding D.L.W. Railway

None of the 11 cases of DLW have been put back. I hope you will kindly consider the above points and do the needful at an early date.

Yours sincerely,

Priya Gupta
(Priya Gupta)
General Secretary/A.I.R.F.

rn*

EXPRESS

STATE

TELEGRAM

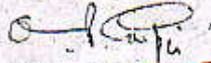
Small

CHIEF MINISTERS
(All State Governments): By name.

IN VIEW OF THE THREATENED RAILWAY STRIKE FROM
MORNING OF 8TH MAY, REQUEST THAT ADEQUATE BUS
SERVICES ARE ORGANISED SO AS TO RELIEVE PRESSURE
ON RAILWAYS AND SERVE IMPORTANT CENTRES, ESPECIALLY
INTER-CITY AND SUBURBAN(.) IF POSSIBLE KINDLY PERMIT
TRUCK AND TRACTORS WITH TROLLEY OWNED ALSO TO CARRY
SHORT DISTANCE PASSENGERS IN VIEW OF THE SPECIAL
SITUATION(.)

L. N. MISHRA
MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(N. T. T.)



(O.P. GUPTA)

PRIVATE SECRETARY TO MINISTER FOR RLYS.
5-5-1974.

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY.

ORDER

Sub : Revocation of removal order.

Ref : DS's Order No. ~~E/SEC/strike/PI/APDJ/74~~ 27.5.74

~~K~~ ~~S.C.P.S./PNO~~ has carefully considered the appeal dated ~~3.6.74~~ preferred by ~~Sri Kailash Lala, Ex: ASM'B/KMG~~ and he is pleased to decide that the order for removal from service in question may be revoked.

He will be allowed to join duty in his former post. He will not be entitled to any pay and allowances for the period of his absence from duty during the illegal strike as also between the date of removal from service and resumption of duty. The consequences of break in service for participation in the illegal strike will, however, operate in his case.

S.K. Suden
(S.K.Suden.)
Divisional Superintendent,
N.F.Rly./Alipurduar Junction.

Memo No. E/SEC/Strike/PI/APDJ/74 Dated 17.6.74

Copy to :-

1. Sri ~~Kailash Lala, Ex: ASM'B/KMG.~~
2. ~~S.M./KMG~~ for information and display on the Notice Board.
3. ~~D.C.P./APDJ~~ for information and necessary action.
4. P/Case of Sri ~~Kailash Lala, Ex: ASM'B/KMG.~~
5. CPO/PNO for information and necessary action please.

scd
for Divisional Supdt. (P),
N.F.Rly./Alipurduar Jn.

N. E. Railway.

Office of the
Divl: Superintendent (P)
N. F. Rly: / All purduar Jnc.

No. 7/STC/APDJ/Strike/74(T)

Dt. 1st June, 1975.

To: Shri

Shri. Lal Bahadur Shastri

Through: SGM/SM/

Subject - Regularisation of period of absence
from the date of removal from service
to the date of re-joining.

You are requested to submit a declaration in duplicate to the effect that you did not take any employment or part-time employment during the period of your absence from the date of your removal from service to the date of re-joining and did not receive any pay or honorarium during the period.

for Divl: Superintendent (P)
N. F. Rly: / All purduar Junction.

20.6.75.

N. F. Railway.

Office of the
Divl. Supt. (P) / APDJ
N. F. Rly.

M e m o r a n d u m .

In terms of GM(P) / MCG's letter No. B/201/SEC/74 Pt. VIII dated 31/5/75, the period of absence in connection with strike in May/74 of the following staff who were removed from service under order of various authorities and have been ordered to be allowed to rejoin duties, with or without imposition of a reduced penalty according to the orders issued from time to time are regularised as indicated against each name.

No. payment is to be made to the staff for the period of their absence due to participation in strike up to the date of proceeding the date of removal from service.

The period of participation in strike is treated as 'Dies-non' and the period of unemployment due to removal from service for which pay and allowances equivalent to subsistence allowance is being paid, now will be treated as "Non-duty". The payment at the above rate will be subject to adjustment and production of a certificate by the staff concerned as in Sl. No. 15 to Cf to the effect that they did not take any employment or part time employment during the period of their absence from the date of their removal from service up to the date of rejoining, and did not receive any pay or honorarium during the period.

The amount, if any earned by the staff concerned between the date of removal and the date of rejoining duty will be adjusted from the amount to be paid and where the emoluments are equal to or less than the amount earned during the employment elsewhere, nothing is to be paid.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
S. No.	Name of the staff	Designation.	The period of participation in strike treated as 'Dies-non'	The period of unemployment due to removal from service treated as 'non-duty' but will get pay and allowance to the extent of subsistence and other allowance.
			From To	From To

D/Chri

1. U. Dasgupta, S.M./AMG 8.5.74 26.5.74 27.5.74 18.6.74
2. J. C. Nath, S.M./AGF 8.5.74 21.5.74 22.5.74 10.9.74
3. K. D. Banerjee, S.M./MTA 8.5.74 21.5.74 22.5.74 10.9.74

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
		Pr. T.	Pr. T.	Pr. T.
9/0/81				
4. P. K. Mitra,	D/ADM/APDJ	8.5.74	26.5.74	27.5.74 24.6.75
5. M. N. Banerjee	n/ADM/ACB	8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74 21.5.74
6. Kailash Datta	ADM(B)/KAMG	8.5.74	20.5.74	27.5.74 18.5.74
7. B. N. Singh,	n/ADM/AMZ	8.5.74	28.5.74	29.5.74 10.2.75
8. Jugal Kishore Singh,	ADM/ACF	8.5.74	27.5.74	28.5.74 18.5.74
9. B. N. Sinha,	or INC/NBQ	8.5.74	20.5.74	27.5.74 5.8.74
10. Sunil Ch. Paul,	G/C/APDJ	8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74 20.9.74
11. Suresh Ch. Kar	L/Man/KAMG	8.5.74	20.5.74	27.5.74 19.5.74
12. Ambrich Singh,	n/ADM/AMZ	8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74 28.6.74
13. S. S. Narayana Nath	Hd Clerk/	8.5.74	17.5.74	18.5.74 18.5.74
Bhowmick.	DO's office.			
14. S. S. Narayana Nath	Man/B/KAMG	8.5.74	20.5.74	27.5.74 19.5.74
Bhowmick.				
15. (a) Sachinara Nath		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74 5.9.74
Bhattacharjee.	TL/Safety/ APDJ.			
16. K. R. Das	n/ADM/AMZ	8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74 2.7.74
17. K. Chatterjee	ADM/ACF	8.5.74	20.5.74	27.5.74 18.5.74
18. K. Panikar,	n/ADM(B)/	8.5.74	17.5.74	18.5.74 29.10.74
(deceased)	APDJ.			date of death.
19. N. K. Das Gupta,	ADM(B)/FLK	8.5.74	20.5.74	27.5.74 20.5.74
20. S. S. Narayana Nath	ADM/AMZ	8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74 21.9.74
	ADM/AMZ	8.5.74	20.5.74	27.5.74 17.3.75
	MJB			
21. Vinay Gopal Ram	ADM/AMZ now	8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74 28.5.74
	at FGN.			
22. S. S. Narayana Nath	n/ADM/AMZ	8.5.74	19.5.74	20.5.74 10.1.74
23. P. Singh,	ADM/AMZ now	8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74 22.9.74
	at G.M.			
24. Sunil Kr. Ghose,	ADM/AMZ now	8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74 24.6.74
	at KTC.			
25. S. S. Narayana Nath	ADM(B)/APDJ	8.5.74	17.5.74	18.5.74 18.3.75
Bhattacharjee.	now at LMC.			
26. Dilip Kr. Das,	n/ADM/AMZ	8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74 24.6.74
27. Sarin Kumar Das,	n/ADM/AMZ	8.5.74	24.5.74	25.5.74 9.1.74
	now TL.			
28. Rajeswar Prasad,	n/ADM/AMZ	8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74 22.5.74
29. Amir Ganguly,	ADM(B)/DPO	8.5.74	20.5.74	27.5.74 20.5.74
30. Anil Kr. Goswami,	ADM/AMZ now	8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74 20.6.74
	ADM/ACB			
31. N. S. Ghosh,	or INC/NBQ	8.5.74	20.5.74	27.5.74 2.8.74
32. N. C. Dhar,	Clerk/DO's	8.5.74	24.5.74	25.5.74 20.5.74
	office.			
33. R. M. Sanyal,	G/C/NBQ	8.5.74	19.5.74	20.5.74 22.9.74
34. D. K. Achary,	G/C/ACB	8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74 19.5.74

Contd.....

[Handwritten signature]
25/7

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
			From	To	From	To
35. D J Bagchi,	Ga/G/APDJ		8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74	5.8.74
36. T K Ghose,	- do -		8.5.74	17.5.74	18.5.74	20.9.74
37. Sayed Ali Safaer,	- do -		8.5.74	27.5.74	28.5.74	1.3.75
38. A B Banerjee,	- do -		8.5.74	17.5.74	18.5.74	24.2.75
39. Bhupendra Nath Ghosh	C Man I/ACF		8.5.74	27.5.74	28.5.74	18.6.74
40. Hariadas Dey,	C Man I/AVK		8.5.74	27.5.74	28.5.74	25.2.75
41. N. C. Sarkar,	- do -		8.5.74	27.5.74	28.5.74	6.11.74
42. Anil K. Biswas,	- do -/AMX		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	27.5.74
43. Debi Prasad Barua,	- do -		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	26.5.74
44. Bhupendra Nath Saha,	- do -		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	25.5.74
45. Jagannath Teraary,	- do -		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	26.5.74
46. Bree Ram Gupta,	- do -		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	26.5.74
47. Rajnarayan Mallick,	C Man II / DKJH		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	28.5.74
48. Ram Nareish Singh,	- do -		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	20.9.74
49. Santialo	- do -		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	20.9.74
50. Sudeb Biswas,	L Man/BOGN		8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74	continuing
51. Puresh Bhownick,	P Man(A) /NGB		8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74	25.5.74
52. Sitaram Singh,	P Man/C /MBQ		8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74	5.7.74
53. Nabindra Nath Paul,	P Man/B /ADA		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	26.5.74
54. xxxxxx	xxxxxx		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	20.6.74
54. Kacha Manuall,	- do -		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	20.6.74
55. Suchit Mahato,	P Man/B /DKJH		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	21.9.74
56. Keshwar Sahani	- do -/DKJH		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	29.5.74
57. Guraku Jaswari,	- do -/APDJ		8.5.74	17.5.74	18.5.74	31.10.74
58. J. L. Buggi,	P Man/A /APDJ		8.5.74	17.5.74	18.5.74	25.2.75
59. Sarju Mandal,	P Man/B /DKJH		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	25.6.74
60. Ratan Lal Monuall,	P Man/B /DKJH		8.5.74	20.5.74	21.5.74	25.1.75
61. Anik Ghosal,	P Man'B' /AIM		8.5.74	21.5.74	22.5.74	2.6.74

/ Divl. Supat. (P) / APDJ

No. 2/Sec/APDJ/Strike/74(I)

dated 21-7-75

Copy forwarded for information & action to :-
 1) HC/BI/Bill (2) staff concerned through
 respective subordinate in-charges.
 3) DAO/APDJ (4) P/Case.

/ Divl. Supat. (P) / APDJ

1) 2) 3) 4) 5) 6) 7)

- 3. Samir Kumar Ganguly, ASM(B)/NMX. Rs. 625-640 8.5.74 to 26.5.74 27.5.74 to 20.6.74 Increments already granted are in order.
- 4. Shyamal Kr. Bhatta-Cherjee, ASM(B)/GOGH. Rs. 425-640 8.5.74 to 11.5.74 18.5.74 to 17.3.75 Rs. 500/- w.e.f. 1/1/74
Rs. 500/- w.e.f. 1-1-74.
Rs. 515/- w.e.f. 1-1-75.
Rs. 530/- w.e.f. 1-1-76.
Rs. 545/- w.e.f. 1-1-77.
- 5. Surendra Nath, ASM/FGN. 930-560 8.5.74 to 16.5.74 17/5/74 to 17.3.75 Rs. 404/- w.e.f. 1-4-74.
Rs. 416/- w.e.f. 1-4-75.
Rs. 428/- w.e.f. 1-4-76.
Rs. 440/- w.e.f. 1-4-77.
- 6. Sunil Kumar Ghosh, ASM/KTCH. -do- 8.5.74 to 21.5.74 22.5.74 to 24.6.74 Rs. 392 w.e.f. 1/4/74
Rs. 404 w.e.f. 1/5/75
Rs. 416/w.e.f. 1/8/76
(Effective from 1/8/76 due to WIT for 3 months)
- 7. Vijoy Bahadur Singh, ASM/THU. -do- 8.5.74 to 20.5.74 21.5.74 to 21.9.74. Rs. 404 w.e.f. 1/4/74
Rs. 416/- " 1/8/75
Rs. 428/- " 1/8/76
Rs. 440/- w.e.f. 1/4/77.
- 8. Lalan Prasad Singh, ASM/GOM. -do- 8.5.74 to 20/5/74. 20.5.74 to 22/9/74. Rs. 380 w.e.f. 8/11/73
Rs. 392 w.e.f. 1/3/75
Rs. 404 w.e.f. 1/3/76
Rs. 416 w.e.f. 1/3/77

contd...3...

Sum 12/4/77

NORTH-EAST FRONTIER RAILWAY.

Office of the
Divl. Supdt. (P)/APDJ.

OFFICE ORDER NO: 317.

Dated: 19-4-77.
and subsequently *reinstated*
in *service*

The following SMS/ASMs were removed from service in the context of May/74 strike. In terms of Rly. Board's letter No.E(LR)II 77-ST I/K7 dtd. 6.4.77 the period from the date of their removal to the date preceding the date of reinstatement as shown against each is treated as duty for the purpose of drawal of increments, retirement benefits etc. and the punishment of stoppage of increment imposed on some of them is treated as if the same was not imposed. So, their annual increments are regularised as indicated against each.

The monetary benefit due to regularisation of increments is admissible w.e.f. 1-4-1977.

S/No.	Name & Designation	Scale of pay.	The period of participation in strike treated as 'dies - non'	The period of removal now treated as duty for the purpose of increment and retirement benefit.	Increments previously granted.	Increments now regularised.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>Sarvasri.</u>						
1)	Nirmal Kr. Dasgupta, ASM(B)/FLK.	Rs. 425-640/-	8.5.74 to 26.5.74	27.5.74 to 20.6.74	Increments already granted are in order.	
2)	Kailash Laha, ASM(B)/KAMG.	Rs. 425-640/-	-do-	27.5.74 to 18.6.74	Rs. 515/- w.e.f 1-3-75	Rs. 515/- w.e.f. 1.2.76
					Rs. 530/- w.e.f. 1-3-76	Rs. 530/- w.e.f. 1.2.77
					Rs. 545/- w.e.f 1.3.77	Rs. 545/- w.e.f 1.2.77

911 102 3 4 5 6 7

9. Paritosh Kr. Mitra, R. 330-560 8/5/74 to 27/5/74 to
LR. ASM/APDJ. 26/5/74. 24/6/75.

R. 380/-+R. 12/-PP- R. 380/-+R. 12/-PP
for passing Hind. w.e.f. 1-1-74 for
Pragya Examination passing Hind. Pragya
w.e.f. 1-1-74 Pragya Examination.
R. 392/-w.e.f. 1/2/76 R. 392/-w.e.f. 1-1-75
R. 404/-w.e.f. 1/2/77. R. 404/-w.e.f. 1/1/76.
R. 416/-w.e.f. 1/1/77.

10. Manindra Nath, -do- 8/5/74 to 22/5/74 to
Lalit, ASM/GDX. 21/5/74. 21/6/74.

R. 38C/-+R. 12/-PP- R. 380/-+R. 12/-PP
w.e.f. 27-11-73. w.e.f. 1-11-73 for
for passing Hind. passing Hind. Pragya
Pragya Examination Examination
R. 392/-w.e.f. 1-1-75. R. 392/- w.e.f. 1-11-74.
R. 404/-w.e.f. 1-1-76. R. 404/-w.e.f. 1-11-75.
R. 416/-w.e.f. 1-1-77. R. 416/-w.e.f. 1-11-76.

11. Barin Kumar Das, -do- 8/5/74 to 25/5/74 to
Ex. ASM/NMZ (Now traffic 24/5/74. 9/11/74.
Apprentice at KIR.)

R. 380/-w.e.f. 1-4-74
(Effective from 10-11-74 due to WIT for 3 months dies non and re-moved from service.)

12. Badan Lal Singh, R. 330-560 8/5/74 to 29/5/74 to
ASM/KOKN. 28/5/74. 10/2/75.

R. 380/-w.e.f. 1/3/74 R. 380/-w.e.f. 1/3/74.
R. 392/-w.e.f. 1/3/75.

13. Subrata Roy, -do- 8/5/74 to 20/5/74 to
ASM/SVQ. 19/5/74. 10/1/74.
(10-1-74)

R. 370/-w.e.f. 27/11/73 R. 370/-w.e.f. 1/11/73.
R. 380/-w.e.f. 1/6/75. R. 380/-w.e.f. 1/11/74.

14. M'khil Ch:Das, R. 425- 8/5/74 to 26/5/74 to
Ex. ASM(B)/MLDT. 640. 24/5/74. 23/2/75.
Now ASM(B)/MLP.

R. 485/-w.e.f. 1/4/75. R. 485/-w.e.f. 1/4/75.
R. 500/-w.e.f. 1/4/76. R. 500/-w.e.f. 1/4/76.
R. 515/-w.e.f. 1/4/77. R. 515/-w.e.f. 1/4/77.

contd....4...

Signature

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

15.	K.R. Deb, SM/TQM.	425-64C/-	8.5.74 to 20.5.74 = 13 days.	21.5.74 to 27.7.74	R.500/- on 1.2.74 R.515/- on 1.3.75 R.530/- on 1.3.76 R.545/- on 1.3.77	R.500/- on 1.2.74 R.515/- on 1.2.75 R.530/- on 1.2.76 R.545/- on 1.2.77
16.	J.C. Math, SM/AGT	425-640/-	8.5.74 to 21.5.74 = 14 days.	22.5.74 to 10.9.74.	R.515/- on 1.4.74 R.530/- on 1.8.75 R.545/- on 1.8.76	R.515/- on 1.4.74 R.530/- on 1.4.75 R.545/- on 1.4.76 R.560/- on 1.4.77
17.	R.D. Banerjee, SM/APDJ. now	425-640/- 455-700/-	8.5.74 to 21.5.74 = 14 days.	22.5.74 to 10.9.74	R.530/- on 1.1.74 R.545/- on 1.5.75 R.560/- on 1.5.76	R.530/- on 1.1.74 R.545/- on 1.1.75 R.560/- on 1.1.76 Pay fixed on R.600/- w.e.f. 15-11-76 in promotion to SM in scale R.455-700/-.
18.	U. Dasgupta, RG, SM/CQB. now	425-64C/- 455-700/-	8.5.74 to 26.5.74 = 19 days.	27.5.74 to 18.6.74	R.470/- on 21.12.73 R.485/- on 1.2.75 R.500/- on 1.2.76	R.470/- on 21.12.73 R.485/- on 21.12.74 R.500/- on 21.12.75 R.515/- on 21.12.76 Pay fixed on R.545/- w.e.f. 7.1.77 in promotion to SM in scale R.455-700/-.
19.	A.K. Goswami, R. SM/DQG. now	330-560/- ASM 425-64C/- SM	8.5.74 to 20.5.74 = 13 days.	21.5.74 to 26.6.74	R.404/- on 1.4.74 as ASM. Pay fixed on R.425/- w.e.f. 4.7.74 on promotion to SM in scale R.425-640/-.	R.404/- on 1.4.74 as ASM. Pay fixed on R.425/- w.e.f. 4.7.74 on promotion to SM in scale R.425-640/-. R.440/- on 1.7.75. R.455/- on 1.7.76.

contd....5...

Singhania (4/1)

S No 21/1

NATIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE FOR RAILWAYMEN'S STRUGGLE

125B Babar Road,
New Delhi
May 27, 1974

Press Release

Text of Resolution recieved from Tihar Jail :

The Action Committee of the NCCRS salutes the railwaymen for their glorious struggle waged with such courage and determination braving a government onslaught the like of which has never before been experienced by the Indian working class. More than 50000 workers have been illegally arrested and detained without trial; over 10000 men already served with dismissals orders; nearly 30000 thrown out of their houses with bag and baggage and with their helpless wives and innocent children; women raped by the minions of law and order; a Goebblian propaganda war against railway men carried through the state-owned radio, and television network; newspaper advertisements inserted with money from the public exchequer to defame and deride the railwaymen and their leadership; lies slander and perfidy of an unprecedented low level; use of the Army, Border Security Force, Territorial Army, Special Reserve Police, Central Reserve Police and other organs of state power butteressed with the most indiscriminate use of the draconian laws like Maintenance of Internal Security Act and the war-time Defence of India Rules; marching the workers to their work places at bayonet point; marching the workers to their work places at bayonet point; nonpayment of their earned wages in order to literally starve the workers into submission - these were the methods used by the Government to meet the just and legitimate demands of the railwaymen. The ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ resoluteness with which the railwaymen and their wives and children faced this terror and fought for their rights is a saga that must have few parallels in the annals of the working class and democratic movements anywhere in the world.

The Committee notes that the Government has not responded to the requests of the organised trade union movement both in India and abroad to settle the just and fair demands of the railwaymen and to end the repression against them. All the entreaties of the opposition political parties in the country - without any exception - to the Government not to pursue its antiworker course have also fallen on deaf ears. The constant persuasion by the country's newspapers traditionally friendly to the Government to adopt a reasonable and conciliatory attitude to the railwaymen's demands failed to impress the government. The appeals of men of goodwill like Jayaprakash Narayan and others to settle the dispute also failed to evoke any response from an adamant government. And most shocking of all, even the advice of the President of India conveyed so unequivocally and forcefully to come to terms with the railwaymen was spurned by the government most unceremoniously.

The Action Committee once again emphasises the fact that the railwaymen never wanted a strike.

More than anyone else they are aware of the disastrous economic consequences of a railway strike. What we sought and fought for was a negotiated settlement on our legitimate demands. It was the Government that forced the strike on the railwaymen by taking steps that are too recent ~~xxx kkkxrxikwaykxnxhyxikkkkxgkxkxpsxkxk~~ to be recounted here. But even while the railwaymen were fighting what was purely and simply an industrial action, the government fought a mini-war from the pre-emptive arrests to the final combing operations in the workers housing colonies. In a confrontation of that nature, the odds cannot but be against the workers. The course of the strike has, if anything vindicated our repeated declaration that our action had no motivation other than securing the just and reasonable demands of the railwaymen.

The Committee notes with deep concern that the government has refused to enable the members of the NCCRS to meet either inside or outside the prison to take a decision on how to end the strike. This has created an extraordinary situation before the Action Committee which was charged with the conduct of the negotiations and the subsequent conduct of the strike. All decisions of calling for or withdrawal of the strike can be constitutionally taken only by "the full body of the NCCRS most of whose members are in prison in different parts of the country or are fugitives from the law.

6 a.m.
on

The Action Committee having given deep consideration to the strike situation on all the zonal railways and in other railway establishments, and aware of the economic consequences of further prolonging the action, and conscious of the responsibility thrust on it in the circumstances, hereby resolves to unilaterally call off the strike with effect from Tuesday May 28, 6 a.m. The committee calls upon all railwaymen to return to work from that hour and do everything within their power to bring normalcy into the movement of trains.

At the same time the Action Committee calls upon the Government to immediately release all those railwaymen and others arrested on account of the strike; reinstate all ~~workmen~~ whose services have been terminated during and in the weeks preceding the strike; withdraw all penal action taken against the railwaymen and others; restore to the workmen their living quarters; and take all other necessary steps to restore normalcy on the railways.

Simultaneously, the Action Committee calls upon the Railway Ministry to resume negotiations with the Negotiating Committee of the NCCRS on the outstanding demands of the railwaymen in order to arrive at an amicable settlement on these demands.

The Action Committee assures the railwaymen that it stands united as ever in its resolve to secure their just and fair demands. The unity of purpose and action, cemented by the blood and sacrifice of lakhs of railwaymen from all over the country will not be allowed to be weakened under any circumstances till the railwaymen secure their demands. It calls upon the railwaymen to stand steadfast in the firm conviction that even now there is only one force that can defeat them and that is the enemy within their own ranks. The lessons of the last few weeks must be learnt by everyone and immediate steps taken to further close the ranks.

The Action Committee pays its homage to the martyrs of the railwaymen's struggle, Com: V.S. Mhalgi Comrade Sripal Dwivedy and Comrade Ramaswamy. The supreme sacrifice by Comrade Ramaswamy who was killed in cold blood by running over a railway engine on his person will forever inspire the railwaymen and other working people in the country to heroic deeds and total sacrifice in man's perpetual struggle against injustice.

The Action Committee expresses its heartfelt gratitude to all trade unions, youth organisations, political parties, women's organisations, newspapers and journalists and all others who stood by the railwaymen in their trials and tribulations. It assures the working classes and toiling masses that the railwaymen will always be in the forefront of people's struggles for a better and happier tomorrow.

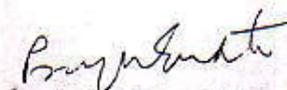
The Committee resolves to convene the meeting of the NCCRS as soon as conditions for the convening of such a meeting appear propitious.

Sd/- H.S. Chaudhary
J.P. Choubey
Parvathi Krishnan
Srikrishna
George Fernandes

(Members of
Action
Committee)
in the jail

D.D. Vashisht (Members of NCCRS - not a member
of the Action Committee -
in jail)

Outside: Sd/- Samar Mukherji, M.P. (disagreed)
G.S. Gokhale
M.M. Phatak
Priya Gupta (Disagreed)


For Action Committee

ORDER

No. DCM.46/75/5-A.

Dated, August 21, 1975

In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (3) of Section 16A of the Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971, as amended by the Maintenance of Internal Security (Amendment) Act, 1975 (No. 39 of 1975), I, Shri B.C.Gogoi, A.C.S., District Magistrate, Dibrugarh District, after considering the relevant records am satisfied that it is necessary to detain Shri Himalendu Chakraborty, son of Shri B.K.Chakraborty, of Chringgaon Railway Colony, P.S.Dibrugarh, District Dibrugarh, under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971, for dealing effectively with the Emergency.



B.C.
21/8/75
(B.C.Gogoi)
District Magistrate, Dibrugarh.

Home. No. DCM.46/75/5-A.

Dated, August 21, 1975.

Copy forwarded to:-

- 1) The Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, Political (A) Department, Dispur.
 - 2) The Superintendent of District Jail, Dibrugarh.
- Three copies are sent herewith, one for service on the detenu, one for return with the signature of the detenu in token of receipt of the order and one for his record.

B.C.
21/8/75
(B.C.Gogoi)
District Magistrate, Dibrugarh.

*Received copy
for upgrada*

ISSN 2278-4039

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Soumitra De

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

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TrivikramTiwari

Workers' Resistances in the Indian Railways and the General Strike of May 1974

Sanghamitra Choudhury

Abstract

Indian Railways has always been a significant factor in regulating the economic and political life of the Indians. Indian Railways might not have any revolutionary effect on people's life but since independence it has become an enormously big industrial sector and popularly is branded as heart and life blood of the nation. Therefore, a strike of long twenty days in May 1974 halted the economic, social and political pace of the country.

This study is an attempt to examine the reasons behind the grievances and resentments of the railwaymen in India. It observes the preparation of the trade unions for launching an indefinite strike and the situation existed during the days of the struggle. It also intends to enquire the attitude of the State in dealing with the railway workers' movement in 1974.

Keywords: Indian railways, Trade unionism, working class, grievances, struggle, railway workers movement

1. Introduction

Indian Railways was the single largest nationalized undertaking with a separate ministry and railway workers were a significant component of the organized working class in India employing nearly 15 lakh regular and approximately 2.8 lakh casual labourers in the year 1974. It employed numerous kinds of labourers ranging from skilled to unskilled, literate to illiterate workers. Ironically however this large section of the workers of the Indian Railway industry had never been able to persuade the authority in their favour. Since its inception during the colonial period the workers had to fight with the management to get their demands fulfilled and the situation remained almost the same even after independence. Indian Railways workers were well known for their innumerable struggles since its establishment. But the Railways workers' strike in May 1974 might be considered as an unprecedented event in the history of labour movement in India. The workers made a history by waging the longest strike in the Indian Railways.

The political and economic situation of India from the early 1960s up to 1974 was marked by crisis. There were numerous strikes, go slow, mass sick leave, lockouts etc. during this period which indicated the unharmonious relationship in the industrial front. There were several reasons behind the strained relationship between the employers and the employees in the Indian industries. The industrial workers specially the railway workers were aggrieved because of the failure of the negotiating machinery due to the emerging situations such as the inflation or the price rise of daily commodities, decline in real earnings, and absence of wage link with Dearness Allowance, non- payment of Bonus, absence of leave with pay etc. Workers disappointments grew up from late 1972 and touched the sky in early 1974. Thus the relations between the two had deteriorated and shown a breakdown of socio-economic equilibrium. However, the May 1974 Strike was a united struggle of more than two million workers of the Government of India and it was such an outstanding event that no one could dare to disregard it. The determination and the unity achieved by the railway workers were unparalleled in the history of Indian working class movement.

The objective of the study is to find out the reasons behind the strike of the railway men in 1974 and to find out their grievances which compelled the railwaymen to go for an indefinite general strike throughout the country. This study also attempts to analyze the preparations and activities of the railway trade unions for launching an all India indefinite general strike. It also looks at the situation in the different railway Zones during the days of the struggle. The present study seeks to measure the intensity of the strike action led by the Indian railwaymen in May 1974. It tries to examine the reaction of the Union Government towards the demands and the agitations of the railway workers. The study reviews the role of the railway trade unions and their performance during the strike of May 1974. We also make an investigation of the impact of the indefinite strike of the Indian railway men in May 1974. Keeping the objectives in mind the paper has been arranged in the following manner. The first section of the study enquires the reasons behind the grievances of the railway men which caused the strike of 1974. In the second section we discuss the nature of the preparations by the railway trade unions and their members. The third section focuses on the situation of the struggle in the various railway zones of the country. Then we analyse the response of the State towards the strike. We conclude the paper by assessing the impact of the struggle.

2. Grievances of the Railway Workers

End of the Second World War and the end of colonial rule in India required a speedy growth of industries for the purpose of all round socio-economic development of the country. Railways played a vital role in this sphere by ensuring a rapid growth in the transportation industry. But the employees of the public utility department remained lowly paid thus their resentment and annoyance revolved around the pay structure. The rise in prices of basic commodities made the situation worse for them. In this situation the ineffectiveness of the trade unions aggrieved the railwaymen. It was true that the workers in all the industries especially in the railways had been suffering from relative decline in real wage since the past two decades. But in the year of 1960-61 the gross traffic receipts increased from 1950-51 by 73.68% which indicated an improvement of Railway revenues. The central government employees including the railway workforce had abided by the recommendation of the Central Pay Commissions. Therefore they were not in a position to bargain with their authorities on the matter of payment. During the years 1970-73 when the Commission deliberated and the government dithered, India experienced its worst inflation since independence, under the impact of drought and oil price increases, wholesale prices increased by 70% between 1968-69 and 1973-74, with a 30 % increase being recorded in 1973-74.¹ The Times of India analysed that the price of the consumer goods in fact, had climbed steadily in the last few months and the latest budget levies had given the price curve rather a sharp swing (Times of India, 28th March, 1974; p.1).

Minimum Monthly wages in comparable Public Sector Undertakings and Industries

Sl. No.	Industry/ Sector	Minimum Monthly Wages (in Rs.)		
		Basic	D.A.	Total
1.	Central Government (including Railways)	196.00	112.60	308.60
2.	Life Insurance Corporation	125.00	285.00	410.00

¹ Sherlock, S., Economic and Political Weekly, 1989; p.2312.

3.	General Insurance Corporation	125.00	285.00	410.00
4.	Nationalized Bank	116.00	260.00	376.00
5.	Coal	286.00	131.00	417.00
6.	Iron & Steel (Hindustan Steel Ltd.)	300.00	129.00	429.00

[Source: Indian Railwaymen: official periodical of AIRF; Vol.14; No. 6; 1978.]

Rising prices, shortages, corruption, parallel black money economy and incompetence have come to reinforce one another in such a manner that it has become extremely difficult to break the vicious circle (Jain, 8th May, 1974; Times of India). The prices of edible oils, food grains, Kerosene etc. augmented by 23% in 1973 but the Third Pay Commission had increased the wages very meagerly from Rs 170 per month to Rs 196 per month and Government declared that D.A would be disbursed in installments and the workers became furious when they found an absolute decline in their real income. The living conditions of the railway workers were so unhygienic and poor that the railwaymen's discontentment had increased a lot. In Lumding the workers were aggrieved because of the poor condition of the quarters, specially the quarters of the 'Group D' staff known as 'gang hut' had only one room with one kitchen and a separate bathroom. Nikhil Bhattacharjee a Guard in Badarpur, Lumding Division of Northeast Frontier Railways, member of United Committee for Railwaymen, and the convenor of Local Action Committee of NCCRS corroborated that the quarters of the gang man were poorly ventilated and rooms were so small that it was impossible to stay there for a family of five or six members, some of them did not have even electricity. He added that the quarters in which they lived, were very old thus required urgent renovation, but the authority did not pay any attention to the minimum requirements of the workers.² This was more or less a common scenario that prevailed in almost all the railway zones. Shuvendu Mukherjee, a technician in Kanchrapara Loco Workshop and the member of Eastern Railwaymen's Union, informed that the workers were disappointed on the issue of frequent disciplinary

²Interview with Nikhil Bhattacharjee on 22nd December, 2016 in the Office of the Pensioners' Association, Siliguri Town Station at 11.30 am.

actions taken against them by the authority on small and insignificant matters. Authority resorted to penal transfer, retrenchment, disapproving the promotions etc.³

Another reason of workers' grievances was related with the dual role played by the recognized unions in the Railway industries; the Unions were AIRF (All India Railwaymen's Federation) and NFIR (National Federation of Indian Railwaymen). It was alleged that they developed an alliance with the bureaucrats which brought a halt to trade union activity specially in ventilating the grievances of the workers in the industry. By the end of 1960s a new trend had emerged in this industry, several categorical associations were formed, such as Fireman's Council, Guards' Association and finally All India Loco Running Staff Association (AILRSA) had appeared in August 1970. The life of the loco men became miserable; a large number of loco running staff had to work for long hours, fourteen to sixteen hours per day. They had to work under sun and rain, dirt and grease which led them to disease stricken life. In the month of May 1973 AILRSA had agitated against the long hour of work, harsh working and living conditions, poor quality of uniform provided by the authority etc. Majority of the drivers struck against the authority, not only that more than 50,000 of the loco running staff joined hands for their demands which forced the management to bow down. As a result of the prolonged talks, a settlement was finally reached on the night of the Sunday 12 August 1973 between the railway minister and the striking workers' action committee in the presence of the labour minister (Siddhanta, 1974; pp. 9-10). Railway Minister L. N. Mishra talked with the AILRSA members and agreed at ten hours of duty and assured that no victimisation would take place.

Indian Railways was the largest employer of casual workers. More than two lakhs workers were being exploited by the authority and deprived of minimum rights of the workers. A casual worker was employed for 119 days, purely on temporary basis and paid only Rs 3.5 per day. They were not entitled to get any facilities and benefits from the industry. They were usually termed as "Murgir deem", it meant that if any mishap took place like accidents or sickness, they were simply terminated from their services

³ Interview with Shuvendu Mukherjee on 19th January, 2018 in his Kanchrapara Residence at 2.30 pm).

and got no benefits from the authority.⁴Therefore, the casual workers were extremely annoyed with the authority and had demanded for security of their jobs.

Disappointments also grew among the workers relating to the question of promotion. Skilled workers with long years of experience were only promoted to the posts of Supervisors or Foreman and ended their carrier up to the local levels only, never reached the posts of Divisional or Zonal management. Apart from these issues, bonus was considered as another cause of workers' resentment. Along with several other reasons which led the railwaymen to revolt against their authority, the financial crisis in regular life played a vital role. The overall crisis in the economy marked by shortage of food grains and domestic fuel, charges of corruption against members of the ruling establishment and the rising tide of militancy in the trade union movement laid the basis for a strike (Ananth, 2016; p. 17). AIRF leadership in this situation was forced to launch any movement to regain its lost legacy of militant unionism and also to retain in power. The potentialities of the workers as an instrument of revolutionary social change remained untapped, what was accomplished by the moderate leadership was promotion of trade union consciousness but not revolutionary class consciousness (Krishna, 1980; p. 22).

3. The Preparation of the Railwaymen for the Strike of May 1974

Industrial relations in India from 1965 to 1975 had lost all its past dignity and glory. The situation and the industrial relation in the railways became so poor and workers' grievances had touched the sky and their life became intolerable due to the economic hardship. The success of AILRSA movement revitalized the recognized unions. NFIR though always remained loyal to the ruling government, AIRF declared to go on direct action because it realised that the workers had lost their faith and conceived the unions as impotent. AIRF had a tradition of militant activities and ability to mobilize the workers. But during the entire 1960s the AIRF had suffered from indecision and self-contradiction. Therefore it faced tremendous erosion in its membership and support base. In the early 1970s the AIRF understood that to retain in power, they needed to lead a mass movement in the industry. It initiated a change in its leadership

⁴ Interview with Pallab Kumar Majumder, a casual labour (construction of bridge and signalling system under Northeast Frontier Railways) and a member of Casual workers' Association affiliated with Majdoor Union under AIRF on 23rd December 2016 at 6.30 pm at Pensioners' Association Siliguri Junction Unit.

and George Fernandez became the President of AIRF. Fernandez, a stormy petrel trade unionist in and around Bombay and Chairman of the Socialist Party, was brought into AIRF by the sections that were desperate to reinvent the federation as a fighting organization (Ananth, 2016; p.17). In October 1973 at the Secunderabad Annual Convention the delegates took the decision of organizing a nationwide strike without considering the strength of the union. He said “Taking the platform at the conference I pleaded with the delegates not to take a decision without first possessing the requisite the organizational strength to go into action, but my appeal was in vain” (Fernandez, 1984; p.29). Then he decided to build a broad based unity and tried to strengthen the financial position of the union. On November 24th and 25th 1973 Fernandez convened a special loco running staff conference under the auspices of the AIRF to focus on the special problems of loco men and mobilize them in view of the possibility of the current agitation, culminating in a strike of railway men on February 27th (Sherlock, 1989; p.2318).

Meanwhile, in January, 1974 in South Central Railway all the class II and III staff of the Headquarter, Divisional and Accounts Department demonstrated in the General Manager’s Office, Secunderabad for almost three hours in protest of the discriminating attitude of the Railway Ministry in the matter of up grading the posts. In the month of February, 1974 in South Eastern Railways the movement of trains was heavily disrupted when the carriage and wagon staff went on ‘work to rule’ and Assistant Station Masters on ‘mass absenteeism’ in Adra Division. Sporadic agitations continued to take place in different zones with full of unity and enthusiasm. Therefore on 27th February, 1974 in New Delhi a National Convention was held which was attended by the representatives of one hundred and ten recognized and unrecognized unions except the members of NFIR. Nearly two thousand delegates participated in the conference. For the first time in the past few years, AIRF was able to provide a sense of unity, solidarity and determination among the railway men. The Convention had ended with the decision that if the Railway Ministry did not negotiate with the unions by 10th of April 1974, the unions would go for an indefinite general strike. The National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen’s Struggle (NCCRS) was formed with one representative from each of the participating organisations while Comrade George Fernandez was elected its Convenor; an Action Committee was also

formed to conduct negotiations (Chakroborty, 1975; pp.8). This Action Committee consisted of thirteen members. Following were the members:

George Fernandez	Convenor
J.P Choubey	AIRF
Priya Gupta	AIRF
Parvati Krishnan	AITUC
Sri Krishna	AITUC
N.S Bhangoo	All India Railway Employees' Confederation
K.P Ramaswamy	All India Railway Employees' Confederation
H.S Chowdhury	AILRSA
S.K. Dhar	AILRSA
Samar Mukherjee	CITU
N.N.Chakroborty	CITU
G.S Gokhale	B.M.S
N.M Pathak	B.M.S

[Siddhanta, 1974; p.30]

The Convention had appealed to the Railway Ministry to accept the following demands of the railway men:

1. a) All Railway men should be treated as industrial workers with full trade union rights including the right to negotiate.
- b) The working hours of the Railway men shall not exceed 8 hour.
- c) There shall be job evaluation of all the railway men through a scientific system to be followed by their reclassification and re-gradation with the need based minimum wage for the lowest paid workers.
- d) Pending the completion of job evaluation and reclassification, immediate parity in wages with those of the workers in the central undertakings, viz. H.M.T, BHEL, HSL, HAL etc.

2. Dearness Allowance linked to cost of living index with full neutralisation for every rise of four points in six months period.
3. Bonus at the rate of one month wage for the years 1971-72 and 1972-73.
4. Decasualization of all casual Railway men and their confirmation in service with all benefits given to them with retrospective effect.
5. Adequate and subsidised food grains and other essential commodities through departmentally run shops.
6. All victimization cases should be withdrawn

(Indian Railwaymen, 1974; pp.14-15)

For launching any mass movement Fernandez emphasised on certain issues like fund raising and capacity building of the railway workers. He gave thrust on the building of unity and solidarity of the workers at all levels. Inter union rivalry; lobbying and the hierarchical system were the main constraints in building unity among the trade unions in the railway industry. Fernandez directed all the unions and their affiliates to form Action Committees in all the railway zones to lead the strike. Interestingly, the decision of united struggle brought several differences of opinions among the union leaders at every level. The leaders of the loco running associations were divided on the question of reliance on the national leadership of the AIRF and the unity under the same umbrella. Sabapathy, the President of AILRSA; MewaLal and R.P Sharma of Northern Railway etc. went openly against the decision of united struggle under the banner of NCCRS on the one hand and on the other, S.K. Dhar, the Secretary and H.S.Chowdhury, Joint Secretary of the Association attended all the meetings of the Action Committee. According to S.K Dhar when the preparation for the united struggle was “advancing in full swing”, “a small section of leadership of AILRSA” opposed the movement and “engaged in disruptive activities” simply because of “their anti AIRF stand” (Dhar, 1999; p.20). A section in these category wise associations did however realised the deficiencies and they made strenuous efforts first to stop the category-wise associations to move away from the path of united struggle of railwaymen (Chakroborty, 1987; p.79).

The NCCRS had decided to go on strike from 8th of May 1974 and the strike notice was to be served on 23rd of April if the Government didn't express its willingness to talk with the trade unions. The Railway Minister showed firmness to deal with the workers and tried to resist any kind of opposition to the government. Interestingly, both the parties – the ruling party and the trade unions aimed at examining their own power and strength. However in the midst of negotiation, treacherously the national leaders like Fernandez, P.K Barua, Srikrishna etc. were arrested on 2nd of May. In this situation, on 3rd May in Delhi and Bombay a 'bandh' was observed in protest of the arrest. Life in these two cities became standstill as the train in Central and Western Railways didn't move. As a result of this bandh, the establishments like banks, insurance companies, central and state government offices including Post and Telegraph, Port and dock, textile mills etc. had become paralysed. The Action Committee of National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle has in a statement declared that as all attempts for a negotiated settlement of their demands having been frustrated by the 'adamant attitude' of the Government, the strike shall begin at 6.am on May 8 (Hindu, 7th May; 1974). NCCRS announced that all the works from the I.R would stop, no wheels would move and the trains would terminate at the next station at 6 a.m. on 8th May. All the important leaders of AIRF went underground in order to avoid arrest. The situation became so unfavourable and disagreeable that the railway Trade Unions had no other option but to go on a strike though Mishra warned that the striking workers might lose their jobs if they joined the illegal strike.

4. Situations during the Strike Days and its Impact

The struggle of the Indian railway workers began from 6 am morning on 8th May 1974. But the decisions and measures taken by the Government had ignited the flame of the agitation among the workers. The provocative arrests in the midst of the negotiations throwing to the winds all norms of democratic behaviour incensed the workers (Siddhanta, 1974; p.63). According to the 'Times of India' the arrests 'showed that the Government has made up its mind to have a showdown with the railway unions' and that the timing of the arrests has been somewhat unfortunate (Siddhanta, 1974; p.64).

Before the strike started, the Government deployed armed forces to handle the situation. Day by day the police and paramilitary forces made it difficult for the railway workers to stick to their strike decision. Nevertheless, the largest railway system of the world spreading almost every corner of the country was paralysed. By the united action of the four million ‘hands’, bringing to a halt the life line of the Indian capitalist system, cutting across at the appointed hour all the barriers of geography, state, language, caste, religion and their own internal job competition, has shown to the capitalist - land lord exploiters what working class power is – when it becomes united and acts for its common class interests (Dange, 1974; p.1). During the first few days of the strike in almost all the zones of the IR, the strike was intense and complete. In the main railway centres of the country like Bombay, Central Madras, New Delhi, in Calcutta both the Howrah and Sealdah, Gorakhpur, Mugholsarai, Guwahati etc. no train had moved and services were almost motionless. The entire Southern region had exhibited similar picture. In the railway workshops such as Kanchrapara, Jamalpur, Perumbur, Golden Rock near Tiruchirapally, Chittaranjan locomotives etc. remained deserted. The ‘Times of India’ of 11th May printed the Railways’ claim of “major breakthrough” in running trains through Mugholsarai, while at the same time reporting that the “nerve- centres” of the railway system in the state of Uttarpradesh, Mugholsarai, Izatnagar and Gorakhpur, were “virtually paralysed” and railway workers in the whole state remained “defiant” (Sherlock, 2001; p.365).

The Railway Board Chairman M.N. Berry claimed that normal situation persisted in all the nine zones of the railways throughout the country except minor disruptions in few major stations. ‘Times of India’ of 9th May reported that railway officials claimed that there was no impact of the strike on the train services at all, and they released a press notice that only 8% of the total train services were affected. Nearly 70% of the already cancelled passenger trains and 65% of goods trains had been running (Times of India, 9th May, 1974; p.1). But the fact was not all the same. Workers in Delhi Main station and other offices including the Northern Railway Headquarters, the Divisional Superintendent’s office and the office of the Commercial Superintendent joined the Strike (The Statesman, 9th May, 1974). Hindustan Times reported that at Tughlakabad Yard ‘A loco inspector’ told that ‘not a single diesel engine had gone to the shed for check or servicing (New Age, 1974; p.4). Mugholsarai which was

considered as the nerve centre of the railways in North India, during the first week of the strike had been deserted and the train movements in the directions towards east-west and north-south have been very much restricted. The areas covered by the railways in Mugholsarai, was near about 15 km. spread, were completely seized by police and Central Police Force. The family members of the striking workers especially the women were threatened and sometimes beaten up badly by the police force. The reason behind this action was to create an indirect pressure on the railway men who fled away from their quarters in order to avoid arrest. The Ananda Bazar Patrika on 27.5.74 calculated that an estimation of rupees of 75 crores was spent on the "running of train by T.A and Patrolling by State Government Police" and the total "expenses to break the strike" was approximately "187 crores". The Statesman reported on 25.7.74 that it used "20 lakhs" as an "advertisement cost on Radio and T.V" and "79 lakhs" as an "advance increment to the Loyal Staff" and 12 crores as a "cash rewards to the Loyal Staff" (Chatterjee, 1988; p.112). Therefore it can be said that the government preferred to exhaust hundreds of crores to crush the railway workers' struggle instead of paying the amount of only "9 crores" to the railway men as the "staff wages".

In Bombay on the first day of the strike, the workers of both the Central and Western Railways had immobilised the normal activities of the regions. In the first week, the entire Southern Railways was shut down. Even one day before the strike started the fear of disruption of train services, hundreds of commuters travelled even on the roof of the trains to reach their destination, several hundreds of employees of the Western Railways walked out of their workshops at different places in the city, hours before the scheduled strike; the loco shed staff and the yard staff at Bandra Marshalling Yard conducted their agitation at the noon while the car shed staff at Mahalaxmi began their strike at the mid night last night (Times of India, 8th May 1974). In the south, the strike was more intense and the workers' participation was massive. The booking counters both at Madras Central and Egmore were open but only a handful of persons were seen standing there mostly seeking refunds on their tickets (The Hindu, 9th May, 1974). In the agricultural states like Punjab or Haryana or Orissa the problem of disordering of train services did not affect much but in the industrialised areas especially in the south it hampered a lot.

In the Union Parliament the Opposition leaders walked out from the Lok Sabha in protest because the matter had already been discussed and was of “continuing nature” (Times of India, 9th May, 1974). The Opposition asked some clarification from the Government regarding the turmoil circumstances throughout the country created due to railway workers’ agitation. Mr. Berry was very careful in the choice of his words: At Mughalsarai the “recovery” he stated; at Tughlakabad, the yard was getting back to its feet; in Delhi the situation was “back in trains” and at Jolarpet the situation was “getting into swing” (Statesman, 10th May, 74; pp.1). The Action Committee of NCCRS demanded that the strike was to be nearly complete and 98% of railway men participated in the strike all over the country. The suburban train in Kharagpur area came to a halt; coal movement had been affected heavily. Meanwhile the NCCRS convenor George Fernandez has proposed the resumption of the talks of the railwaymen’s demands with the railway minister L.N. Mishra, if necessary in the prison itself (Times of India, 9th May, 1974).

5. The State and the Strike: Impact

On the third day of the strike the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi met the Opposition leaders to discuss the strike issue. The meeting concluded by resolving a three point formula which included:

- release of arrested leaders of NCCRS,
- resumption of negotiations,
- withdrawal of the strike.

She stated that for Government it could not be possible to meet all the demands of the railway workers in the perspective of national economic condition. The Action Committee rejected the proposal of calling off the strike. Amrita Bazar Patrika of 11th May 1974 stated that the hope of an early end of three days old nationwide Rail strike “dimmed today” with the National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen’s Struggle as well as its Convenor George Fernandez virtually rejecting the three point formula and urging the workers to ‘continue in a peaceful and determined manner their historic strike’ (Amrita Bazar Patrika, 11th May, 1974; p.1). Instead of taking any constructive decision to an early end of the strike, all the parties - the Railway trade unions, Opposition Parties or the Government, tried to take advantage of the situations in their own favour. The Government had well resorted to various kind of

tortures, repressions, arrests, removal from service, suspensions, so that the workers had surrendered unconditionally. A 'reign of terror' existed in almost every railway station, colony, and office throughout the country. Because the authority considered it as an attack on democratic government and an effort to create anarchy over the country. Goray, Member of the Rajya Sabha and Socialist Party, asked how the railway men had become suddenly enemies and unpatriotic when earlier this railway men braved bullets and artillery fire during Indo-Pak War (Chatterjee, 1988; p.74).⁵

The call for all Central Government Employees' general strike on 15th May 1974 received an undeniable industrial solidarity and encouragement throughout the country as they intended to support the striking railwaymen. The All India Defence Employees' Federation called solidarity tools down strike of civilian defence employees in Ordnance factories and elsewhere, the Banks including State Bank, Life Insurance Corporations and General Insurance employees participated in the solidarity strike action (Siddhanta, 1974; pp.76-77).

By the end of the first week (from 14th May 1974) of the agitation, Northern Railways claimed that there was an improvement in the passenger traffic and enough staff were resuming their duties in the different departments such as booking counters, yards, loco sheds, and other offices, even in the construction sites and food grains and coal movement by this time had stepped up. Railway management demanded that from the mid of second week i.e., 20th May onwards the railway departments offered nearly a pre-strike services. The improvement helped them to withdraw the Territorial Army from several places like Delhi, Kanpur, Baroda etc. Few long distance mail and express trains started moving from Howrah station on 19th May 1974. Different Divisions of Eastern Zone reported gradual increase of the staff in their duties and in movement of trains. Coal rakes proceeded towards steel plants, wagon mobility in Dhanbad Division had increased too. In the three metropolitan cities of Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi the suburban train services began slowly. The 'Times of India'

⁵B.T. Ranadive had put the following as a foreword in NrisinghaChakroborty's book "The great Railway strike and After" that "the brutalities perpetrated against the Railway workers had become an international scandal and a number of workers' organisations in other countries were realising the real character of the Indira Government" because "the Government dared not allow a delegation of transport workers from abroad to visit the country" (Ranadive, 1975; p.2).

reported that though some long distance trains were running far behind the schedule, the railway strike had become “almost ineffective” in Madhya Pradesh (Times of India, 20th May 1974).

The strike started to fizzle out from the beginning of the third week. All the organised actions and unity of the railway working class could not stand before the authoritarian attitude and reaction of the government. The police raided the houses of the railway workers and tortured those who fell into their hands; workers were mercilessly beaten and tortured to go back to their duties, some even at pistol point (Chakroborty, 1975; pp.10-11). A family of a Central Railway employee complained that the police continuously coming and threatening them for the male members who participated in the indefinite strike and as the police were not able to find the workers, they started torturing the families of the striking railway men. Many hundreds of trade unionists and railway workers were arrested and removed from their services which inevitably weakened the strength of the struggle. Hindustan Standard reported that six hundred and sixty five employees of the Eastern and South Eastern Railways had been dismissed from service up to 15th May on the charge of indulging in violence and dereliction of duty (Hindustan Standard, 15th May 1974).

The Action Committee of NCCRS intended to continue the strike with ‘full vigour’. But the trade Union leaders like S.M. Joshi, Socialist leader like Madhu Dandavate, Madhu Limaye expressed their desire to end the strike without causing any mark of bitterness among the workers. At the end of the second week the railway authority agreed that serious inconveniences existed in running the trains - both the passenger and goods. In North- East it had been difficult to maintain uninterrupted goods traffic which actually impeded tea trading in this region especially in Assam. As per Hindustan Standard-news reporters, two goods sheds in Eastern Railways Ultadanga and Chitpur faced a serious problem of congestion and a large number of wagons containing rap seed and other oil seeds, grains, pulses and miscellaneous goods were standing unloaded for many days (Hindustan Standard, 21st May 1974). In Calcutta and Bombay the suburban electrical multiple rakes were abandoned and inoperative due to the absence of the maintenance clerk whose duty was to check and repair the coaches in the car sheds. Link reported that prices of edible oil, vegetables, building materials and electrical goods have gone up by thirty percent; cement and sugar have

vanished from market although the sale of cement is regulated by the Government (Link, June, 1974; p.15).

In this critical background the senior trade union leaders discussed with the Public Affair Committee of the Parliament to revise the three point formula and to include modification of wage structure of the railwaymen. They also talked with the Bonus Review Committee to consider the question of the bonus. At this juncture all felt that an amicable settlement was necessary. Brajesh Prasad Choudhury, posted at Ranaghat since 1955 as a Chief Commercial Clerk and a member of Eastern Railwaymen's Union and Zonal NCCRS informed that in this situation the Railway Trade Unions, unanimously decided to contribute their one day's salary to the striking railwaymen. They got massive support from most of the trade unions from all over the country even NFIR members who didn't join the strike, contributed to raise the fund.⁶ Gradually, it had become difficult for the railwaymen to resist the repression and maintain the same morale and strength to pursue the struggle. A war-like atmosphere existed in the country. J.M. Biswas, the Secretary of Eastern Railway Workers' Federation felt that it was fairly natural and normal railway workers to lose heart and spirit at a time when the avenues for negotiation at the Government level seemed to have disappeared, when the majority of the Action Committee members locked up in jail making thereby the possibility of correct and joint decisions for the railway workers practically impossible, when the strike situation itself had been gradually deteriorating since the 15th May, which could not however be resisted (Biswas, 1977; p.19).

In this situation the rail strike was called off unconditionally, on 28th May at 6am in the morning. The decision was taken by the Action Committee unilaterally. The trade unions didn't have any other option other than to withdraw the strike as it was only "on papers". The Defence of India Rule (D.I.R) was designed was applied vengeantly against the railway workers. The use of brute force, immense torture, innumerable repressive measures, terrorisation of the workers and countless cases of victimisation were the factors that led the leaders to take this decision. So far the circumstances were concerned the Action Committee had published a resolution in support of their decision. The resolution said 'The Action Committee having given

⁶Interview with Brajesh Prasad Chowdhury on 19.01.18 at 10:30 am at his Muchipara Lane Residence, Sealdah.

deep consideration to the strike situation on all the Zonal Railways and in other railway establishments and being aware of the economic consequences of the further prolonging the action and conscious of the responsibility thrust on it in the circumstances, hereby resolves to unilaterally call off the strike (Hindustan Standard, 28th May 1974; pp.1 & 4).

The news of the termination of the strike had relieved all the sections of people of the Indian society. The daily wage earners, hawkers, vendors, peasants, small traders, daily commuters etc. became glad and relaxed. According to Fernandez the strike was successful but the greater cause of the nation had compelled them to reach this decision. And at the same time he opined that it was most crucial time to stand united. He greeted the workers for their heroic battle and glorious struggle. Assessing the intensity of the strike Fernandez mentioned that out of fourteen lac permanent employees almost twelve lac faced break-in-service and fifty thousands were dismissed from their jobs.⁷ There was one factor that the Government and the railway bureaucrats had failed to overlook when they set about on their task of beating the railwaymen that was the indomitable courage and determination of the railway workers (Fernandez, 1988; p.31). He analysed the strike as an incident which had provided strength, solidarity, tolerance and experience for future action.

6. Conclusion

However this movement had suffered from some inherent weaknesses. The first and foremost condition of any successful agitation was the unconditional unity on common demands of all categories of workers. The second was that the railway trade unions must be financially strong. The support base of AIRF should be broad and must be strengthened. The railway workers were potentially an important factor in the country's political scenario but they were ignorant of this fact. Even George Fernandez stated that "a large part of the present day leadership on the railways had no commitment to trade unionism, to speak nothing of militant trade-unionism", they were extremely "opportunist" and sought "privileges" for their own benefits (Fernandez, 1988; p.32).

⁷The railway workers were beaten but they were not broken, their will and determination could not be broken. (Fernandez, 1984; p.31).

Thus the biggest ever action of the Indian working class - the twenty days long strike by the two million railwaymen ended in an apparent defeat but to many it yielded invaluable insight into the present political situation (Marxist Review; June 1974). It is felt particularly by the leftists that this was the first time the railway workers irrespective of political colours, who were representatives of Indian industrial working class participated in the strike which gave them an extra constitutional strength and self-confidence to face violent repression. Though the withdrawal of the strike marked the victory of the capitalist role of the Congress administration, but the strike shook the root of authoritarianism in India.

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