

Transcription of Velanki Subba Roa

(Interviewed by Anil Rajinwale on 5.11.2000, Vijaywada)

Q. Date of birth?

A : 10th November 1926

Q : At Vijaywada?

A : No, at a nearby village, Kalva...(?) Krishna district, Gannararam Talnga. Primary education in that village. Later on, I studied my 8th and 9th standards, that is 3rd form and 4th form then, at Chellapally. There, I joined the student movement. Because, there was a lodge in which I used to live. Besides that in AISF office. That is why I used to I there and they used to... I have participated first January 26th Independence Day in those day every year...

Q.: Year which?

A : '39 or '40. I was very young, 13 or 14 years of age. There, after that year, I came over were, '39 or something like that, to Vijaywada. And in Vijaywada, after, '39, when education is over, in '40] I went to Banaras for education.

Q : You went to Banaras?

A : Banaras. I studied intermediate there.

Q : Intermediate there?

A : I intermediate there. Then I came back.

Q : Rajeswara Rao, others were there...?

A : That is '30s. So, I came back. No job. I could not continue my studies further.

Q : In those days, lot of people used to go to Banaras...why? Because it was University, and education was also well-reputed.

Q : Lot of people from Andhra....yes, yes, almost all the Communist leaders from this state have studied there, and came back : Rajeswara Rao, Venkataramaiah, Basarpunaiah, Rajsekhara Reddy, All these people, C.R., and all these people.

Q. Facilities here were not enough?

A : No, they were not enough. Then, So, I have joined in a company called Indian Canning Industries for exports,...? Juice, orange juice, all this juice, for military. That was Second World War. So, I joined there.

Q : That company was here?

A : Yes, in Vijaywada. So one own family shifted to Vijaywada, because the elder brother was a teacher here; so in order to, that the whole family was shifted earlier here. There, I have worked as some coolie at half-a-rupee per day. So then I thought, there some eight hundred workers used to work there.

Q : Eight hundred?

A : Eight hundred workers, eight hundred workers; it was the only canning industry in Andhra Pradesh at that time. It exports all these things to military. So, most of them, about 75% are women; 75%, and all of them are Harijans.

Q : All of them are Harijans?

A : Yes, all of them are Harijans. So, I organised a Union. I don't know how to organise, how, what to, all those basic principles I do not know. So, just we called a meeting of all the workers, and set up committee. This news came to the proprietor, that these people have organised a union, and this is the bellow, important one. They called me, asked me, you have done it, why? Because of their meagre wage. They slapped me; so all the eight hundred workers came out (oh!) All the eight hundred workers came out. Just say apology; unless you do that we won't go back. Then he said alright, he is my relative, so that is why, because of that independence, slopped him! (laugh...). It is fact; we are relatives. In that way he respects me. Then the town committee came to know, this Vijaywada Town Committee, that this thing has taken place. Then they recruited me, as a party member. Important decision.

Q : How these all 800 workers were Harijans? Only.....

A : That is situated in that area. It is a dominantly Harijan area, dominating Harijans area. Then I was taken as a party member I was given party work. After sometime I was recruited as a party wholetimer.

After the Second World War was over, the factory was also closed. So, I was then asked to work in the municipal workers.... for one year I worked there.

Q : Which Year?

A : '43-'44, I think I remember, at the time of Kisan Conference, one year this way or that way, All India Kisan Conference. .. at that time, P.C. Joshi was also coming; Swami

Sahajanand Saraswati was the president and Bankim Mukherjee was the general secretary, at that time; as volunteer.

Q : O, you were there as volunteer...?

A : Yes, a number of comrades were allotted that work, because it was held in Vijaywada. So we had taken more responsibilities than any other committees volunteers. So, 1943, it was Second World War time, this along with trade union work also, see, that is the period the policy of AITUC changed. Why? Just before, upto the, upto the date of invasion by Hitler of Soviet Union, we call it a imperialist war. The moment Soviet Union in attacked we call if a people's war. So that there is difference between these two periods. Before the at the time of imperialist war, we used to go on strikes. During this period, till the Second World War is over, there is no strike, since it is a people's war. Number two; these three continents; England, America and Soviet Union, together fighting against fascism and also Japan. So we have to save Soviet Union. That is why..... so change of policy in AITUC.

Q : AITUC formally took this position, was it decided?

A : It is not; It is decided by the party, so that AITUC has said that, the policy of the AITUC the policy of the party also used to say, we should not go on strike, we produced more, why? Because in order to save Soviet Union, we should not hinder anything of the British govt. No doubt it is imperialist govt, but unless we save that, future we may not be... After that....

Q : How was it received by the workers?

A : Well, well

Q : Nobody objected?

A : Yes, nobody objected. Then after '45, at the end of the period of Second World War, or '44-end, I left Vijaywada. We claim because through the Party's, I am working as wholetimer, I am not able to feed the family or something like that, though I am second son to my parents. So, I left for Bombay. There I joined Directorate General Aircraft, in the office, as a clerk, till the end of the Second World War, or something like that....

Q : Civilian?

A : Civilian, after the war is over, and the office is also closed... so, I have joined in the British India Navigation Company as a clerk, in Bombay. Then I have taken my party card to Bombay, and they asked me to stay in Bidi Kamgar Union Office.

Q : Bidi Kamgar Union Office? That office was already there?

A : Yes, Bidi Kamgar Union Office, and work among them, also, along with the job, because the Bidi Kamgar Workers are mostly Telugu People.

Q : Mostly Telugu people? From where?

A : From Karimnagar, other districts; where the over is situated, I was asked to work among all the workers. So, there I started my continuous trade union program.

Q : In Bombay?

A : In Bombay, upto '48. While doing work among the bidi workers, I organised Telugu group affiliated to Indian People's Theatre Association, then in the Gujarat, Maharashtra, three group.

Q : They were separate group?

A : Yes, separate groups from several languages; three languages we used to produce some dramas, etc. cultural items. Similarly..... (Amar Sheikh ?) was there, Balraj Sahani was there, along with then I used to producer some...

As far as this trade union is concerned, I used to work with B.D. Pawar, B.S. Vaidya, S.G. Patkar, R.K. Darle, they are all committee members.....S.G. Patkar was the general secretary, I remember and Dorle was the president, president of the textile union, Kamgar.....

Q : Bombay Girmi Kamgar Union....

A : Girmi Kamgar Union... than Party congress

Q : No, there is one question before..... Bidi workers : was there an all India organisation?

A : No.

Q : This office.....?

A : AITUC, city, only city, Hyderabad.....

Q : I mean Bombay office....?

A : Yes, yes, Bombay bidi workers (Q : There were lot of bidi workers in Bombay?), Yes, yes more or less it is, shops, women go to buy tobacco, sit at home and do the bidi's. That is what, and work in the shops also.

Q : I am asking also because there were many many bidi workers...)

A : Some thousands of bidi workers are there, women are more than men, because it is like cottage industry, there are both men and women, they prepare bidies, and working in the shops also. That is why, they are being Telugu people, and I am a Telugu.....

Q : Most of them are Telugu people....?

A : Yes, of course, Maharashtra people are also there , but 2 or 3 districts Telugu people..... Karimnagar and some other districts also. People have gone there decades ago (Oh! Q), Yes, decades ago... So the language which I speak and they speak, there is difference (VSR demonstrates the difference by speaking different ?Telugues-AR). So they are completely, they cannot write also. They can only speak, not write, because there are no schools. My grandfather had gone there when I was there.

Q : What organisation, what work you did among the bidi workers?

A : Bidi workers, I used to sit among.... I used to tell them what is trade union, what to work, how to work, what are their rights, higher wages, all these were....

Q : you took up various cases also?

A : Yes; so there I learn trade union work, how to manage, and all those things, in Bombay. Though I started a union here, all by myself, without assistance of anybody, and later on communist party came to know.... I was put to work.... this is much experience, Bombay workers much experience.....

So, second party congress took place. Party was banned. So I was asked.... or I requested the Party to relieve me, allow me to go to my native place. So because I am tacked of knowledge in Hindi or....., only Telugu; it will be difficult to remain underground and participate. The decision was correct; contacted local party comrades and secretary of Vijaywada, and I was asked to work among the motor transport workers. Then started a Motor Workers' Union, district-wise.

Q : How did you start?

A : Which

Q : This Motor Work Union?

A : Oh, it was already there, before; it was the same single union. I came here and work over to organise this, then it has developed district -wise and; then,and also before the party ban town unit several unions, several factory unions municipal workers union, shop

establishment, factory workers union, now they... because of ban on the party; there is no union. So I asked them joint together on one platform; the condition of the committee, I started organising Moor Transport Union (along with others) I also contacted the local comrades, formed into a council all the trade unions, so that...some activity must go, otherwise nobody knows when the govt. Lifts the ban, all these things will have to work; we do not know. So why not we see that the trade unions organise.... So, I started a trade union council, through that all the old comrades, old comrades not by age, who are working earlier to me in respective trade unions, to become part of trade union council... That council also used to... later on district transport workers unions also affiliated to Madras State Transport Workers; Federation also. Then we were in Madras state. Whole Andhra including part of Rayalseema was part of Madras state. Then this Rajagopalachari.

Q : It was Madras presidency...), yes, yes, Madras Presidency. This Transport Workers' Federation agreed over. Like that upto '52. Not underground, overground, taking the advice and instructions from the local party and trade unions. Also, I used to... then also I used to wage struggles, small struggles, wage negotiations some regained. After '52....

Q : Well, basically there were no major movements during this...?

A : Small.... you see underground period. That is underground period....

Q : Not big movement...?

Q : No, not big movements. We are not, CPI is not there; it is underground. Then congress is, you see, cannot organise; then who is going to organise?

Q : But di not this affect the trade union and working class activities?

A : No, they did not; did not affect means, they did not work, could not work. The trade unions were not able to organise activities as they were. Because no leadership is there.

Q : This did not cause any harm to the movement...?

A : Movement means you can say, it is, means organisations did not grow, it did not grow, and we were not able to fight on wage increase and (so on). That is there....

I think after '52, I became the member of the local committee...

Q : Vijaywada? Vijaywada, then a district committee. Later on in or something 70s, as city, as I was tolling CPM to CPI; they sell it; the stand has gone to CPM; we were all together, all together, upto '60, '62 up the split of the Communist Party, we were all

together, all together; after split, they went to...a big group has gone to CPM, and they remained in CPM.

So that is the thing : 52 to 64. So many trade unions; I used to work as a trade union council general secretary, AITUC one of the secretaries, and vice-president, now vice-president. And I went to Moscow for one year training 72 September to 73 June, one year, and continued the studies.

Q : Let us first finish the reminiscences part, the earlier part. You have to go more into details....

A : Ask me questions.....

Q : Yes ; what was the extent and influence of transport workers' movement, and what was your role and experience in that movement?

A : See, when I started organising the transport workers, there were companies, limited companies, private, limited companies. So, whenever any issue concerning wage or disciplinary action, used to go to the management directly, and had some discussions, and solve this. If it is not possible, then we used to go to the labour department. There the issue would be solved. After 50s the companies have been divided, companies have dissolved, and single operators came into picture.

Q : Who?....

A : No, any bus operator was entitled to go... see some people have come together to form a limited company, that they have divided, according to rules, transport rules it self, because before the end of the second world war, before the 48 and '50s, limited companies must be there. This is a rule. After that, three buses' fleet, system has come, and then single member system.

Q : There were three buses'....?

A : First about 12 or 14 or 15, it is limited. From that limited, it shifted to three or four buses' fleet. And then it down to one single ownership. So then it became very difficult to organise or to fight it our also, because every single owner has a b... suppose a bus route has thirty buses, so it has thirty owners. From here to Masuli (?), thirty buses our there; thirty owners are there. So it is difficult to fight against a single owner or single.... So but anyway we can see to it that our union is there. We are just slowly and surely advancing our wage increase. And we have been fighting for separate negotiation of the transport



workers. Motor Wages Act is there, Vehicle Act is there... yes Motor Vehicles' Act, is there, long back, when the motor vehicles came into being, the Act is also there. How to run the vehicle, what spare parts, etc. all these are there... that is separate. We are fighting for the Motor Workers' Act, just like payment of wages Act,... separately; this is a big industry, and concerns the people, half of the people, and we are starting struggle, hunger strikes, not general strikes, apart from general strikes, we have been doing other.... And I think, during '62 or something like that, we got Motor Act.

Q : Motor Act?

Transport workers' Act, working hours, discipline, all these things are there. Just like other acts. T.B. Vithal Rao, M.P. from Kothagudam, was M.P. then, and Bhupesh Gupta was in Rajya Sabha, So at that time we got that Act

And it is in force today, So when that Act, it was useful for struggles.

Q: When the change took place from companies to individual owners, how did it..?

A: It is a Rule by the govt, the individuals did not do it themselves. The govt. allowed that, to separate..

(Q: to become owners...) yes, to become owner of single bus.

That is the....and then experience in municipal workers also. I remember in 1970, before '70s, their wages including 42.50; I was telling the municipal workers were out, the people used to treat them. The important thing wages were consolidated: 60/-, 55/-, 40/- So we fought for, I think, 14 days straightway strike and regular scale, and we got it. Municipal workers got regular pay-scale, as transport, as the govt. employees are getting class IV wages, these people are getting, same. See, in 1980s, '82 or '83, I have participated in a strike in NGOs' including municipal workers, why? The main demand was: the govt. had decided to reduce the age of retirement from 58 to 56. Earlier, it was 58. Now it is 56, as against that. It was the main demand and we changed it also we achieved it also. Now it is 58. Retirement. See, that is the struggles we participated in Vijaywada.

Q: Movements onwards the early '50s, you started Transport workers'....?

A: Movements means?.....

Q: movements means strikes, movements, important events...?)

A: No, No, only after '70s that I directly participated in strike movement, 70's and... of course, you see, it is local strikes. For example, factory, factory workers, gates, 14 day strike, going to jail, and there remand, bail petition, 14 days, 16 days, it is the decision of the Party...

Q: No, but at local level, there are many movements keep on going; what were some of those...?

A: For example, factory workers. They want wage demands. We went on strike.

(Q: Which strike?) General, factory workers.

(Q: which year?) which year.. that is '54 or '55, and '55 there is a big strike in Vijaywada city, of rickshaw workers. It was 4000.

(Q: Four thousand?), yes, four thousand workers. You know, they were on strike for 35 (thirtyfive) days.

(Q: thirtyfive days?), yes. You know the demand? The demand was so peculiar. The driver used to pay one rupee fifty paise for eight hours, I mean morning to evening. So, we asked them to reduce the 50 paise rate to 30 paise. Instead of paying one rupee fifty paise, our demand is we only pay one rupee thirty paise. To reduce... we are paying more (Q: to the owner...) yes, to the owner; our demand is to reduce the rent of the rickshaw, per day, from one fifty paise to one thirty paise. Along with there fellows we were kept in jail for 14 (fourteen) days.

(Q: for fourteen days?), yes, the strike went on, strike went on though we are not there. The junior leadership has taken it up, and senior leadership including the Party secretary also taken to jail. All those things are there. In spite of that, the workers are so anxious and, and so, what do we call it, yes, in (Q: in fighting mood), yes, fighting mood. You got it.

(Q: Regardless of the situation...) yes, you got it. Elderly negotiation, some cinema owners and some rickshaw owners come together and true negotiations after 15 days of strike..

(Q: The whole city must have been...because of rickshaw...), yes, yes,

And another strike in the city, cement factory workers. Cement Factory workers' strike, other.

(Q: Cement factory...?) yes, cement factory workers, now it is closed, few years back. It was also a strike for thirty days, (three zero), thirty days, yes.

(Q: which year?) same year, six months this way or that way, same year. And also... big strikes like this going on, three days, four days...

(Q: Municipal workers going in any movement?) Haan. Later on '92 railway strike, '94 there is a strike for wage increase and other amenities to give stove and oil. After the work they should wash their hands with oil and all that, oil soaps, all these things we got it. 9 days', 10 days' strike, state-wide, state-wide. There are about 82 municipalites now six corporations, then one corporation: Hyderabad, those days; of course, those days till we get Visaalandhra, it is separate, Telangana is separate later merged, remaining Andhra Pradesh Secured Promotions from sleeper, if he is living a drivers' during licence... he should be permitted to....and like their and if the fellow retired, my son, my daughter, should be given job in my place, in my place, not others, that also we all achieved.

(Q: That is also achieved...?) Haan, (yes) those days... all those things are achieved. And now there is a difference, now the present govt. has taken the for giving the job for retired people. No new recruitment, no recruitment, everything is on contract. Suppose now municipal workers ten or twenty are retired; no replacement through employment exchange or anything. This is the state of affairs in Andhra Pradesh today.

These are the two big strikes I have so far remembered, before '55 upto '52 there are no strikes as far as my knowledge goes, because Party is not there and movement is not so vigilant, forced to go.. After '52 again Party is mending the mistakes.

(Q: When you were in Bombay, there is a mention of Cine Workers' Association, Cinema workers or employees..

A: I don't remember, I was only connected with bidi workers as well as surrounding Girmi workers, textile workers. I remember one incident there. There is a strike in one mill and some demands were there. I remember it went on fourteen days, fourteen days. It has come to, so it appears agreement will arrive. So the workers were disgusted and they were prepared to go. All the workers came to the gate to go. I have never seen (such as incident) at any time. One woman worker came to the gate, took out her jacket. And put it at the gate. If you are male, if you are a woman you go in, if you are woman you go to the taxi. If you are woman you go to the taxi. If you are male you go to the factory. It stopped

for another week, days? If you are a man, you take this and go in (laugh...) and work. This incident.

(Q: Very unusual?...)

yes. She is about forty, (Q: She took out the jacket?) Yes, she took out the jacket and put it at the gate: Come on! That inspired me, that incident inspired me and worked more and more. Since then so many meetings and strikes we were conducting, I used to say this: a lady has got the strike.. What do you think?

Q: What was your experience with Bombay workers?

A: Experience is good; see, very helpful, very disciplined, no... though they are different in politics. That is why I have got some experience . Bombay; I used to work in the, immediately on coming back I contacted the local committee, what should I do, which trade union I should work?... I always sometimes, I was asked to be as one of the secretaries of the town committee, city committee, I refused, I want to work among the workers only, trade union movement only, because I started my work in that, in forming a union in canning industries.

(Q. So you were naturally interested...), yes, where I have led some results, later on I was asked to work in the municipality; I had some... unfortunately, I had to leave Vijaywada for Bombay, for financial conditions were not allowing. So, I wanted to work only among trade unions.

Q: In Second World War, some outside workers were also brought here? From other states like U.P. and other... (VSR: To...?) to there areas(VRS: for what?) for special work, for additional recruitment, from Gorakhpur and other places?...No...? Gorakhpur Labour Agency and all that?)

A: No, may be in.... That period...I don't remember.

Q: About this '48'-52 period, even though you were overgrown and working openly, what did you feel and what was the condition of general working class, because of 4 years or 3 years....?

A: no, no wage increase, all those four years, there is anybody on earth to start a struggle that is why no.... except the transport, because they are working openly and at that time the struggle taking away the right to police station, all that, that was the period, whether the govt. or the local administration of police will, if that belongs to that political party,

used to be taken to the police station. I told him, I told him, after one hour or forty-five minutes.

Also another point is that was also a period of armed struggle. I did not participate in the armed struggle.. Police suspects that I belong to that taken to the police station, keeping they're for days together, without any means of anything.

That is why people kept quiet. No movements.

Q: Were people taken from here?

A: So many people were taken, yes.

Q: Who, who were taken..?

A: He is to be called Palani, appan the S.P., Palani appan, specially appointed by the govt., by the govt. due to 48-52 movement. He was here and I mean, and arrested.....100 people, and during that period only, some comrades were shot dead, because of armed was going on. In the same period, it period, some of our comrades shot dead in Vijaywada, Vijaywada means not Vijaywada comrades but who were come from...

(Q: other places, and they were shot dead (VSR: yes) by the police.....), yes. I cannot explain, I have no language to tell; you, express the nature of repression they committed.

Q: What was the nature of repression?

A: Arresting, taking to the jails, husband and wife both of them separate them and arresting the couriers, suppress the struggles...

Q: Did you also do any work?

A: See, I was arrested one time during that period. Since I was the general secretary of the district transport workers, in Guntur district some weapons were taken away from Police station. So how do they take away? They must have been taken by lorry.

(Q: by lorry?) by lorry, transported by lorry from this place to that. So, that thing shall not be done without knowing this man that is myself. So, I am being general secretary of the transport, both buses and lorries.... And another.... was Subba Rao, he was my uncle, and he was a communist, and he owns a bus and two lorries. I, those weapons must have gone through these two people. So, he was also taken to join, and he was beaten left and right lathi-charge (to me), after two days they left me, and I was taken, I was kept for ten days.

(Q: ten days?), ten days. Later on, they could not find anything, because we do not know. Actually we do not know. Actually... there is a place in Guntur district, these weapons were taken there.

During that struggle period, only once during that repression period I was taken to police station and kept for three days. And another thing is that tactical line, with permission of the Party. I was the general secretary and a Congressman is the President of that union, Congressman is the president.

(Q: During that period), yes during that period. He went to Police Station: what nonsense are you talking? He is my man, He argued in the Police Station.

(Q: He argued there?), yes, he argued. No, no, I don't believe him, sir, you are elderly man, we know you very well sir. We are enquiring it, if he doesn't (have) any role in that, we will definitely (leave) him. But only thing, we do not beat him, because you have come. They replied to that gentleman, the President of the union.

(Q: You are not beaten because...), because of him.

(Q: because you have come) yes.

Q: Any active or direct involvement with Telangana movement? Through Unions....?

A: No, direct or indirect, no involvement.

Q: Railway?

A: Railway you see, I used to go to their offices and all. I never worked in that organisation.

Q: Any unusual, rare moments or organisations, unions, movements, very rare or spontaneous movements?

A: No.

Q: All organised. Now coming to this question of trade union history and, why could trade union and labour unification not be achieved in independent India despite so many efforts? At that time there was one AITUC, (yes, yes), what were the reasons (for divisions)?

A: You see, there was only one organisation before 30s, All India, of course, Ahmedabad Textile Mill Workers is different. That period also, because of Gandhiji and all that. 30s first break in AITUC, end of '29 or '30. The reason for that you see, the AITUC decided to boycott Royal Commission and ILO also. This N.M. Joshi and V.V. Giri opposed it.

So there is a lesson past. They walked out and formed another All India national or something like that, an All India National or something like that in the 30s. And also there is another split, one or two years later. There was a resolution. 'This AITUC' to be affiliated to International Labour organisation. On that the resolution put forward was defeated; so we came out and formed a Red Trade Union. So because of ideological and political reasons, the split occurred. And again, first of all in National Trade Union N.M. Joshi and Giri teamed together to, in 1947 or something, on some resolution, the political resolution must be adopted and passed through three-fourth majority of the

(End of the Tape I)

(beginning of Tape-II)

.... In Bombay, new union HMS (Hind Mazdoor Sabha), from AITUC because of political ideological, they say democratic socialism is our aim. They say, SP says, our political this thing is democratic socialism. So, similarly, like this later on left parties, this RSP, so many others; one thing: though there are so many splits, like this, industry-wise unions and Federations have been formed: not only state, all India too, Industrial Federations of the same thing (industry): suppose factory - all India factory, like that. All India Federations have been formed. Though they are affiliated to two different organisations: AITUC, CITU, etc. Though they may be affiliated to all India organisations, independently they are independent federations. To that extent some closer thing has come in that particular industry.

(Q: Some kind of unity is there....) Some kind of unity is there.

A: Later on as you know that this CITU..

(Q: No, how much these divisions....?) It happened the workers' benefits like anything. Very difficult, unless you are united, it does not take much time to achieve them. Because we are divided, I go on strike, you do not; so what the employees will say? All right, let us wait, how many days you will feed? How many days you will starve? We will wait. And he has bought time to create between both of us, both of us. In that way, it will not be in the interest of the working class to change the colors, as they like.

(Q: Did you face these concrete problems in Vijaywada, T.U. splits and all that, early 50s etc?)

A: Before 50s we were cent-percent AITUC.

Q: After that?

A: After that, you see, CITU was formed, and after that HMS in railways only. Because of "we also made a mistake. We split from AIRF and formed Railway Workers' Federation. Then they also we dissolved it and joined the organisation again. There was no such a thing in '42 to '52...of course now there is likelihood of meeting together the workers in organisations also. Unless we try together and form one single this thing, it is the govt. which is hampering the workers' wages and all that.

Anyway, I remember that it is the end of '80s that the sessions at Bangalore, we had given a call: One industry, one union. It has not materialised.

(Q: Why?) Because of state of organisation, political and all that. See, politics is different. I should see that politics is different from workers' interest, though political platform is a different question. So far as the workers' interests are concerned, we must unite. I can see, in an union there are congressmen, there are BJP men, these are some other people, but when I give a call for hunger strike on behalf of AITUC, they do not come. But if I give a call to go on strike for wage increase or other benefits or and other thing is, these unions affiliated to belongs to other parties, local areas. So the workmen are having both trade union likings one way, political likings another way.

(Q: How to overcome this problem.?)

A: I will tell you, I can gradually educating them in practical life how uses are divided. It takes lot of...

Q: All these divisions, why....?

A: I tell you, my experience is all these are political, why INTUC is here? Because those aligned with congress politics are in it; source in BJP. Of course, all of them are not. Though they are in AITUC they does Congress work. They vote for Congress. They canvass for Congress. But when the work of wage increase is there, we want only AITUC, we want only AITUC, we want only AITUC. That sort of thing is their now. Of course, recently, organisations recently formed National Campaign Committee, '98 general strike, this year February general strike. All such things are taking place. I do not know what happened, at what point it stood: HMS and AITUC likely to merge, some talks have taken place. And what would be the name of the organisation, what would be the flag, how to corporate during election period, who will be the president, who will be

the secretary; (but) slowly it has gone. I do not know what happened. If it comes, then interestedly the other people also will come; this would have become bigger and stronger HMS and ATTUC. The other organisations will help.

Split in the works you see, because we are united we got this... Now you see this a very great problem. Big problems, the roles are going to fame. The central govt., about have decided to change the some sections of industrial Disputes Act, Chapter 5, Section 5(?) in which an industry or a shop if it is sold to other industry, the owner should take the permission from the govt. previously... The present central govt. (Without permission) difficult. Similarly, working hours, not 8 hours, 12 hours.

(Q: 12 hrs?) in...

(Q: whose) Everywhere... in future, now it is 8 hrs., in future 12 hrs a workers should work. This amendment they are going to get. And another thing is women should not work after 6 PM. It is going to be lifted. To say is on wond, the central govt. appears to decide that no act shall apply to workman whenever they are working, they are doing, and everything is problem. They want to make the workers should to the arrangements. No recruitment, what did it show? Formerly 100 'why are working, 10 workers have been retired. No. They may be replaced; there is replacement on permanent begin. This is being started. Like this, they are going to get the amendments to the central acts also, trade union act and others. So that is the biggest challenge these workers working in India to fact it and fight it out. Otherwise everything goes and they are slaves to the managements. Working has no wage increase no, everything must be on contract basis, and the contractor wants me to do for day to day if they do not want they can remove me at any time. There is no guarantee to my job.

(Q: Are the trade unions prepared to fight them?)

A: Have to. They have to apply to the situation. That is why I am saying, what I am saying? This national campaign committee, to certain extent, on certain issues, they are getting works together. Only way. No other was except working classes in India unite, they can forego what happened earlier, what they have achieved. They have not achieved simply by work. They have achieved all those things by fighting, going on struggles, days together, months together. You may know, in this context I don't what to say that, 1946 I was in Bombay I told you, can Dange was MLA, in Maharastra Assembly. Another

comrade Vishal Singh, BBCT railways...Bombay Relations Bill, which is against the interests of the works. Banned strikes. And compulsory arbitration or negotiation. Negotiations fail arbitration but not giving on strikes. I remember it was at that time, V...(?) was the labour minister, Morarji Desai was the Home Minister, Prabhat... Or something like that was chief minister. Then we were calling them Prime Minister. Can Dange, because I was there in Bombay, at that time, argued for 4 or 5 by in Assembly. He was only the man. Such bills will come now, that is the very the govt. is going. Denationalisation if we want to leaf our resistance, members or related with fight, we lose everything. We have seen LIC, 40%. Banks are giving compulsory VRS, only thing is useless we open, unite, irrespective of our political creed, of course, it is a national, taking the LIC ineptitude of govt. is a political work, not economic, Banks also the same. Only thing is under works are united throughout India or don't keep the organisations separately, they should unite on one platform, issues and fight against whether govt. all India or the state. The fight against the state govt. also receives here. And against the central, state govts., against WTO would Trade Organisations, World Bank you can say. It is a question.

Receiving

(VSR reads the questionnaire and says)

That is fighting the working class. 1946, February, naval voting's.

(Q: I was about to ask about that), I was there in Bombay. And we gave a call to the working class to support the naval ratings.

(Q: what happened? How it?) They are fighting with weapons. Bombs.. Naval Ratings. So, what the issuing class done, and what do you call that, not only, big weapons.

(Q: armored) tanks! Tanks. The military was running the tanks. You know what the workers done? They cut the trees and make it aerors the road, so that the tanks were not moving.

(Q: In Bombay...) In Bombay. Then these are a fight. Say, earlier about 200 people, don't know exactly the number, some workmen.

(Q: were killed...) and there was a (strike?), it is a, we cannot forget.

(Q: What were you doing?) No, I was with the workers.

(Q: Which ones?) with this bidi, there was a big road, you see, to naval area, so the bidi,(other why) together,

(Q: near that Victoria Terminus?), no,no, area and so many people were killed,

(Q: How did the bidi workers?.....) You see, these people going along with them. Masses and all their you go. Whatever, we gave a call to support the naval struggle against the British govt. So all the workers went a strike, not to go work. And they are in the streets.

(Q: Where were you at that time?) Ath that time in Fort Area.

(Q: What were you doing?) No, I was living among Bidi Workers in ramathipura, This is a distant place.

(Q: Fort?...) The are I was there on that day. I was living here;

(Q: What did you see?) You see, the people are in a, giving slogans and moreching, supplying food to the naval ratings.

(Q: The naval people were in large number?) yes. So it is a big, the last struggle. I think, after that me mere sent to the negotiation committee and better negotiation.

(Q: You were in Bombay or outside Bombay also?)

No, only Bombay.

(Q: You were for sometime in Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Now when you recall, now, today, after the collapse of the Soviet union, can you find reasons, something now can recall point in (he did not hear clearly). Are there any events, incidents, aspects of the Soviet System, workers and people, which you observed at than time, and now you can observe more clearly, which may have contributed to the fall of the socialist system, soviet union?

A. It is a political Education, I mean administration govt., the Prime Minister, the change of policy, the difference, future, but according to me.

(Q: Any discontent among the workers or any.....?) Now, you find a discontent, at that time, no; at the time of falling no.

(Q: When you were there...), No, no. They were....

I have visited some company, big Shoe Company, more companies. But there the who were very much enjoyed. Yes.

(Q: There are so many other questions; you are on the very of going .. So, now generation of workers.)

You see the difference between new and old workers.

(Q: yes, yes); old worker is not so educated and the old worker is a direct fight this thing, and I am some to say that some workmen do not know how much they are drawing because of the old workers' struggles. Now I am earning 100 rupees a day. I did not come at a time, all of a sudden. Through struggles of my precedents, though they are not educated, and they committed to the work, they are committed to fight for achieve their demands. And now the new generation they do not know how much they are drawing, how they are drawing this many amounts.

(Q: why they are not being educated? Why they are not being politicalised?) They have come directly to politics, they are filter, turner.. because if we conduct a struggle there, in those industries or school, they know the previous things they got it, how they have got... That is my opinion, our moments our organisations, not much of that this city, that is what I have, I do not know, whether we are lacking in politicalise...

(Q: How do you address political work, politicalisation was neglected in trade union stream?)

Ans. Yes, yes. See, 50 or 60 why are recruited today, formally, workshop, transport. I was in organisation for so and so. I must brook these 60 workers, what is transport organisation, what is transport work, about politics, problems, how to achieve it, all these things we should explain, should be told. I am, I did not do it. getting 1500/- or 2000/- how I am getting? If the strike comes, he will go to the extent only, of that particular case. But he does not care how he received this. The reason of the achievement, the reason for this wage increases the previous history... that is lacking in us.

(Q: There is a lack of training the workers....)

Ans. Yes.

Q: Now with the coming of new technology, new industries...

VSR: making the unemployment more..

Q: not only making the unemployment more, the place of old industries, neglected to the background, textile and all that, new tech, in fact high-tech industries coming, this needs a different kind of approach or how do you think...?

A: It is a fact, who means going unemployment, because it is machine, now technology; formerly 5 workmen work on a machine, one or two who can be substitute. It is a big

problem now; how to solve it, is a question. The govt. should take over the industries or not and the workmen should also be trained. Technology you see, worker who has just passed the college has got the knowledge, to put it in practice he cannot do it immediately. That is his problem. So, how to overcome is a problem. We cannot, I mean I cannot say how to overcome the unemployment itself. We cannot oppose new technology. At the same time we should see that no unemployment is should allowed. It is a sort of a big question. We, me left (without) a solution.... (laugh....).

(Q: You know the trade union movement here, and their leaders; are they making contacts in new industries?)

A: No, no.

Q: In then case they will be sidelined?

A: Yes, I think...

(The end of the interview)

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(14) VELANKI SUBBA RAO, Vijayawada,(AP)

He is roughly 77 years old. He comes from a middle class educated background. He was employed in clerical staff in a fruit juice canning factory during the Second World War, when he first organised a trade union of the canning workers. It was a spontaneous response, with no connection till then, with any organised TU. The spontaneous strike was very successful, the woman playing a very active role. That is how Vellanki Subba Rao entered the TU movement. Afterwards he shifted to Bombay. There he came into contact with important figures of the working class movement. He was particularly active among the bidi workers and some others like the port and dock workers. There were a large no. of Telugu speaking bidi workers there who were his main center of activities.

He witnessed the Naval Ratings' Revolt of Feb. 1946, and participated in and organised the working class solidarity actions with.

Upon his return to Vijayawada, he renewed his participation in the TU and political activities. He was particularly active among the transport workers and even headed and ran the INTUC union because of his stature and respect, even though he belonged

formally to AITUC. He was arrested during the period when the AITUC was underground.

He was instrumental in reorganizing the workers and also owners of individual trucks when several truck transport companies were disbanded and individual and group registration was allowed. He organised “hamals” union (i.e. loaders) and other workers during this difficult time of transition.

Vellanki Subba Rao has held important posts in the various T.U.s including state TUCs and AITUC.