

## **Ajoy Dasgupta, Calcutta**

His mother was a Congress leader. Besides, the Akharas those days were the revolutionary centers. In the 1930 con-cooperation movement, his house was a store-house of Khadi cloths. He used to work as a volunteer. He came in contact with the communists in 1937 while in Jadavpur College. His elder brother had Marxist literature.

### Into Trade Union work

When in engineering college, Ajoy along with two others, began doing TU work simply to 'declass' themselves. They used to go to the nearby factories and used to talk to the workers regarding their problems, about factories, world situation, etc.

There was already a union led by the famous TU leader Ranen Sen, who was its president. Ajoy and his associates were given some responsibilities: to sit in the office, and to go to the Bastees.

At the same time, Ajoy was active among the students, he was the secretary in his college. There was a 3-month long strike in Scottish Church College. He refused to sign a bond, and as a result, was expelled.

When P.C. Joshi came to Bengal in 1943 during the famine, Ajoy became his typist.

Workers had to work almost 24 hours and under excessive stress during the second World War. Due to extreme pressure in TU work, Md. Ismail suggested Ajoy's name for day to day work, almost like an independent charge.

While working among city transport workers, Ajoy created a big impact. Most of the conductors and drivers were Sikhs. They were facing several cases. They organised a 4-day strike. But due to struggle, all the cases were withdrawn. So the Union became strong. A big TU conference in Calcutta in 1945; it created big impact upon the Sikhs.

He also worked for Satyajit Ray's Painters' Union. Ajoy worked several months organising the Jute workers in the 40s. He worked actively among the Tramway workers. He became one of the founder members of the Bank Staff Union. In Budge-Budge the jute workers union became one of the strongest due to Ajoy's efforts. He was on the provincial level jute fraction.

The failed railway strike of 1949 provided enough lessons to learn for him. He was removed from the Budge-Budge by the TU leadership, and sent to Metia-Burj. Here too he organised the jute workers. He was arrested and kept in police station but got bail as they could not recognise him.

In the consequence of disintegration of TU movement, he was sent to Dalhousie Square area to re-organise the TUs. He organised bank, insurance, etc. workers, was arrested in Sept. 1951. Released in mid-'52. Again began working in the middle class

employees. He tried to bring about unity among insurance union. Attended Delhi conference that year. A bank employees' conference was also held in UP; he went as a delegate in 1954 to the Bank employees' conference in Madras, and also attended their general council in Hyderabad around that time.

Banking sector employees began organising on a big scale. Sen tribunal introduced pay scale for insurance, forming a basis for demand in other sectors. But V.V. Giri nullified the Sen Tribunal Award.

Nationalisation of Insurance came suddenly. Its main reason was to utilise the funds on long term basis. Long-drawn negotiations on demands followed, though there were no strikes. Then came the issue of bonus in LIC; GIC was not yet nationalised. Ajoy Dasgupta sent a long letter to the Chairman pressing for this demand. Morarji Desai refused to consider it. There followed 3 years' prolonged negotiations. Ajoy began a nation-wide tour to organise insurance employees.

Then there were struggles against computerisation in 1959-61 because of the fear of mass unemployment. But the computers were installed step by step and the agitation died down.

The split in the TU movement in the '60s led to serious situation in it, and Ajoy Dasgutra had to work hard to rebuild several TUs including in banks, insurance, govt. employees, etc.