

Interview Summary & Biographical Sketch

Name of person interviewed:- C.R. Bakshi, Iron & Steel Industry, SKMS, AITUC.

Date:- 19 June 2003.

Time:- 8.00 am to 9.15 am & 9.15 am to 10.00 am.

Venue:- Kirandul, Dantewara District, Bastar

Interviewer:- Bobby Poulouse.

Context:- C.R. Bakshi comes across as a calm and quiet revolutionary. He seems such a peaceful man in his whole persona that it is difficult to believe that this man was into politics from the time he was 12-14 years. His contribution to founding of the SKMS along with others in Chattisgarh in the 60s is really historic and he is a committed person.

Summary of Interview:- C.R. Bakshi began his interview by talking of his younger days. He said he was born in Sherpur town of Mymensing district in present day Bangladesh. In his school days when he was then in class 10 and about 16 years old he was involved in the Bengali language movement just prior to partition and independence of E. Pakistan from India. It was due to his involvement in that struggle for making Bengali the official language of E. Pakistan he was arrested just prior to independence when all his family migrated to India. He was released from jail only in July 1951 in E. Pakistan after which he came to India. In Mymensing what was happening was that one comrade Moni Singh was leading the struggle for giving lands to the tribals in the Garo Hill tracks of Mymensing district of Bangladesh. In 1943 there was a peasant's conference in Mymensing which was attended by C.R. Bakshi, he was just a young man then and was a member of the cultural troop. C.R. Bakshi's whole relatives and family were with the left movement. It was his uncle Poolin Behari Bakshi who introduced Marxism into his house. In those days when just prior to independence after his arrest he was put in children's jail for 5 months as he was just 16 years old then. After his release he came to North Bengal i.e. Cooch Behar and got admitted into 10 class at school. After finishing his schooling from north Bengal he came to Calcutta for a job in 1958 and joined Bengal Potteries, however due to ill-health he left that job and took up a job as a school teacher in a school run by the left party. After a year he left the school and joined Bhilai Steel Plant as a muster roll Drill Assistant in MP. So he moved from Calcutta to MP in 1959 and he was transferred to iron ore mines in Dalli Rajhara mines. In 1961 he came into contact with Prakash Roy who was a leader of the Tebhagha movement. Since C.R. Bakshi says he was already active in political front in those days thus when Prakash Roy told him to join trade union work then he agreed. So he joined SKMS trade union work in 1961 at Dalli Rajhara mines and there he along with others started a struggle for over 1,500 contract workers there. The demands were very small but the management not ready to concede any demands. So C.R. Bakshi was transferred to Nandini mines and there he worked as a Prill Operator. In Nandini mines it was C.R. Bakshi who organised the SKMS union there. There also he took up through SKMS the issue of contract workers who numbered in the thousands and launched many continuous struggles and organised a cooperative which was accepted by the management and finally in 1977 these contractual cooperative workers were made into departmental workers. Thus 3,000 workers were made into permanent in some category. He also constructed a union office in Nandini

mines which is there even today. C.R. Bakshi said his greatest and the union's greatest achievement for which he is proud even today is that he made permanent thousands of workers between 1974 and 1980s. Only in the 1990s after liberalization the situation of workers changed with contractualisation being introduced even among those who have permanent jobs. He cited the case of over 10,000 workers were made permanent in the Dalli Rajharra mines due to their struggles in 1981. He worked at Nandini mines for 12 years and finally in 1973 he was transferred to Bhilai steel plant. There the recognised union was the INTUC union by the Bhilia steel plant management however despite this he was active in organising many struggles there which pressurised both INTUC and the management into signing better wage and other agreements with INTUC. So there they played a good pressure group. Then from 1992-94 C.R. Bakshi was part of the leadership of the historic Bailadila struggle against the sale of the 1 IB mine by the Narsimha Rao govt. to an NRI Mittal. The struggle went on for over 5 years and finally in 2002 they won the legal part of the struggle with the supreme court annulling the sale and giving the mine back to government. In 1987 C.R. Bakshi said he took VRS from service and took up post of secretary MP AITUC and then became Gen-Secretary MP state AITUC. In this capacity he worked with struggles in cement, Beedi, BHEL, textiles etc in MP. There was a struggle in Satna against Birlas and then against Birlas textile plant in Nagda, MP. He held all the important positions and still hold many in MP in those days but now in Chattisgarh. Today after liberalization he says his struggle is on four pillars which is his union's motto also - Defend public sector; Defend rights of workers; Democratise public sector; and Expand public sector. As regards foreign experiences he visited Berlin in 1986 for WFTU conference and then in 1992 went to China to see the Chinese model. He said workers rights were still preserved despite liberalization.

Biographical Sketch

C.R. Bakshi

C.R. Bakshi was born in early 1940s in Mymensing district of present-day Bangladesh. He got involved in politics from his childhood itself when even in his school days he joined the movement for keeping Bengali as the language of E.Pakistan. For that he got arrested in E.Pakistan on the eve of partition and got sent to a juvenile jail for 8 months. As a result he could not leave E.Pakistan in 1947 and reached India later. His involvement in politics was partly due to influence of his family and friends and the general atmosphere in Mymensing district. In 1958 he joined Bhilai steel plant as a muster roll Drill Assistant. In 1959 he was transferred to Dalli Rajhara mines in MP. There he started work among the contract workers and organized constant struggles to get them departmental status with some social security. There he led a struggle for over 1,500 contract workers in that early with this demand. Due to his activities he was transferred to Nandini mines where Bakhiji was responsible for both founding the branch of the union and building the office. There also in 1977 he under his union led a big struggle to regularize contract workers in Nandini mines and finally in 1977 he succeeded in regularizing 3,000 workers. He regularized thousands of mine workers through various struggles throughout 1960s , 70s, and 80s in all the mines in Chattisgarh area where SKMS Was recognized union. He was also involved in the struggles in Bhilia steel plant's contract workers and BALCO. He was also one of the key leaders in the historic Bailadila struggle to prevent the sale of 1 IB iron ore mine at Kirandul.