

15. A short transcriptive note on Man Singh Walia, Jagadhari (Haryana)

I was born on December 1, 1931 at Shiropura now in Pakista. I studied upto fourth standard in the village itself and afterwards joined Shiropura High school and passed matriculation. After partition my family came to India. I joined Railways in 1950 and became a union member in 1955.

In childhood, I used to read about national leaders and used to keep their photographs in my room against the wishes of my family members. I supported the Congress then while my family was staunchly anti-Congress.

I was from a rich landlord family and was the only male child. As in British days, voting rights were given according to the land revenue paid by a family, my two uncles and father had voting rights as we had three votes in the family. I used to persuade my uncles to vote for the Congress.

In 1955, when I joined Northern Railway Workers Union, INTUC, HMS and AITUC used to work together in it. Later when the INTUC captured the union, AITUC and HMS came out and formed their own union. Soon after in 1969, AITUC formed Northern Railways Workers Union because it was no more possible to work with HMS who used to dominate and get the AITUC workers victimised. However, AITUC union could not get recognised and attacks continued. Finally they had to merge with HMS led All India Railwaymen's Federation in 1992.

The AITUC led NRWU was very powerful in Jagadhari, Kalka, Ambala, Delhi and Ghaziabad. It was also strong in Southern and Eastern regions. In 1985-86, there was a powerful movement led by Shanti Swaroop, Gitaram, me and others. There was massive agitation led by these leaders especially in Ambala where massive repression followed. Along with several others I was also transferred.

There was also the incident at Kalka in 1956 where five workers were killed in the police firing. East Punjab Railway section that used to cover from Amritsar to

Date: 7th Nov. 2002

Time: Afternoons

Venue: Jagadhari Union Office

Interviewers: Krishna Thakur.

Context:

15. A short biographical note on Man Singh Walia, Jagadhari (Haryana)

Comrade Man Singh Walia was born on December 1, 1931 at Shiropura now in Pakista. He studied upto fourth standard in the village itself. Then He joined Shiropura High school and passed matriculation. After partition he came to India with his family. He joined Railways in 1950 and joined the union in 1955.

In childhood, he used to read about national leaders and used to keep their photographs in his room against the wishes of his family members. He supported the Congress then while his family was staunchly anti-Congress.

He was from a rich landlord family and was the only male child. As in British days, voting rights were given according to the land revenue paid by a family, Walias had three votes for three brothers including Walia's father. Walia used to persuade his uncles to vote for the Congress.

In 1955, when he joined Northern Railway Workers Union, INTUC, HMS and AITUC used to work together in it. Later when the INTUC captured the union, AITUC and HMS came out and formed their own union. Soon after in 1969, AITUC formed Northern Railways Workers Union because it was no more possible to work with HMS who used to dominate and get the AITUC workers victimised. However, AITUC union could not get recognised and attacks continued. Finally they had to merge with HMS led All India Railwaymen's Federation in 1992.

The AITUC led NRWU was very powerful in Jagadhari, Kalka, Ambala, Delhi and Ghaziabad. It was also strong in Southern and Eastern regions. In 1985-86, there was a powerful movement led by Man Singh Walia, Shanti Swaroop, Gitaram and others. There was massive agitation led by these leaders especially in Ambala where massive repression followed. Man Singh Walia and several others were transferred.

There was also the incident at Kalka in 1956 where five workers were killed in the police firing. East Punjab Railway section that used to cover from Amritsar to Delhi went on hundred percent strike which continued for 72 hours. Feroze Gandhi intervened and all five demands were accepted except the one on Hill Allowance. In all these activities, Man Singh Walia was a leading figure and AITUC workers were at the forefront.

In 1960 strike, though not considered to be very effective, at least 40 percent workers took part under his leadership. Man Singh Walia was arrested and sent to jail with 80 workers. He was in jail for a month and was suspended for a year which ended only after the intervention made by Jagjivan Ram, the then Railway minister. Later he was transferred to Kalka from Jagadhari in 1961.

In 1968 strike, there was hundred percent strike in this region due to an effective planning. Even the accounts branch joined the strike. Man Singh was by now divisional president of the union of seven workshops. Mass arrests took place. Later they were all released except five including Man Singh Walia. As part of punishment, he was transferred to Bikaneer workshop from where he was shifted to Saharanpur. In 1968 strike, only AITUC workers had been victimised in large numbers. The HMS cadres remained unaffected. Therefore a decision was taken by the AITUC to form its own union.