

IWA 5/11/66

BRIEF HISTORY OF I. W. A G. B - CP(ML) affiliated.

Indian Workers' Association was established in 1938. Its first aim was to liberate India from British Imperialism. After Independence in 1947, I.W.A became defunct.

Revival of I. W. A

Due to Second World War, the economy of Britain was almost shattered. To revive this, labour force was needed. To overcome the shortage of labour the British government encouraged people from India, Pakistan, West Indies, and African countries. At that time, there was no need for passports. An I. D. was sufficient to prove the citizenship of commonwealth countries.

Most of the Indians who came at that time were from farming community, especially from Punjab. Most of them were not educated; some members of the Communist Party of India also came during the period. Soon the problem cropped up in the immigrant community, such as passports, families, housing, colour bar, discrimination in jobs and loans etc. To solve these problems, some progressive people decided to set up an organisation. Therefore, the I.W.A was revived. Communist party members and other progressive people played a major role to revive the I.W.A. It was re-organised at the national level in 1957-1958. The leadership of the I.W. A started to take up and solve the problems such as passports, colour bar, wages and housing etc. of the Indian community. The organisation became very strong and popular in a very short period.

To re-organise I.W.A the major role was played by comrades. At that time comrades were working under the guidance of International department of C. P. G. B. The branches of the I.W.A were stronger where Indian comrades were active. The first central committee of the I.W. A was broad based, but subsequent committees were mainly dominated by the communists. In 1962 Southall branch of the I. W. A disaffiliated itself from the centre under the leadership of Pandit Vishnu Dutt. In 1967 Naxalite group walked out from the conference and set up a parallel I.W.A. in spite of our best efforts to keep the I.W.A united. In spite of this I.W.A was very strong and popular.

claim CPGB helped in initial period.

Our leadership always took up the issues concerning Indian community such as immigration, fiancée issue, colour bar, trade union etc and achieved great success. Not only in U.K but I.W.A played major role on issues such as release the political prisoners in India (1964) save the Democracy in West Bengal (1970). To oppose emergency (1975) when Mrs. Indira Gandhi came to U.K after emergency, members of I.W.A did not allow her to address the public meeting.

I.W.A played a major role during the terrorist period in Punjab. During this period comrades and I.W.A leadership was under constant threat to their lives from the followers of terrorists in U.K. Reason being that I.W.A was the only organisation to take up a stand against this movement.

Took a stand against Communist ISM & nationalist agendas.

During this period, both the I.W.A.S came close to each other. A co-ordination committee was set up and discussions were held to unify these organisations. After many meetings and discussions, it was agreed upon. In the presence of comrade, Surjeet unification was declared in a public meeting held in Birmingham. New constitution was set up to sort out remaining differences. The differences were resolved.

CO-ORDINATION

First centre committee of the unified I.W.A was elected unanimously for three years and worked smoothly. The committee provided guidance to the branches. After three years the election of the centre committee of I.W.A was held in 1993 in the presence of comrade Surjeet and comrade Pasla. This new committee could not function properly, though the branches Functioned properly with their own initiative.

unity came after 30 years of fraternal struggle.

Reasons of Stagnation

Our leadership took wrong decisions.

- a) To organise a protest march in front of India High Commission on Republic Day. This means that our leadership does not know the importance of Republic Day.

b) To support Socialist Labour Party in general elections in U.K. I.W.A is a broad based organisation. Every Indian who agrees with its constitution can be a member and be elected. Therefore, we cannot tail it to any one party.

c) By hailing nuclear tests, our leadership showed a complete political immaturity.

All above decisions were taken unanimously by the Central Committee of I.W.A. The president of I.W.A is also secretary of the Association of the Indian Communist G.B The policy of CPI (M) on nuclear weapons is crystal clear. The statement had been already released to the press (by CPI M leadership in India).

President of I.W.A(Avtar Sadiq) knew this decision before the I.W.A meeting. The press release was in his pocket during this meeting. In spite of this, resolution was passed unanimously to hail the nuclear test. It would have been better if he had consulted the members of Association of Indian Communists (A.I.C) before going to the meeting. (Centre committee meeting I.W.A.). Hailing of nuclear test was criticised by every member of the Association. Of Indian Communists. He made another mistake by issuing a statement to the press condemning the nuclear test the very next day. This mistake could have been avoided had he consulted the leadership of the Association of Indian Communists. One day he Hails! Hails! Next day condemns! Condemns! By doing so he made a mockery of A.I.C.

This meeting (nuclear test) was the last meeting of I.W.A centre committee. After this no meeting was called, though the other group (Teja, Avtar Jouhal group) approached our leaders. This group even suggested to sort out the differences, if there were any, by calling a meeting of the Co-ordination Committee. They even suggested that we all should continue to work on the agreed issues. In spite of this our leadership did not pay any attention to their proposal. Instead of having discussions with them, it seems that our leaders have made up their minds to set up a separate organisation.

Issue of Unity

For the last eight years or so, the issue of unity has been always discussed in the presence of comrade Surjeet, whenever he visited U.K. Comrade Surjeet was always in favour of unity. His advice has always been to keep I.W.A united, if ever the question of disunity arises, it should not come from our side. All comrades agreed on this in his presence, but actually, our leaders are not in favour of unity. In fact, leadership is trying since 1996 to persuade the comrades in the branches to set up a separate I.W.A No issue has been taken up by the centre at the national level since then. However, individual branches have been taking up issues on their own initiative. On the other hand, if centre has taken up the issues concerning Indian community, the organisation would have been in much better shape.

After the merger, there was no problem in other branches except three namely Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Southall. There were equal members in the executive (of both groups) In Wolverhampton the members of the other group became inactive and handed over the organisation to us. In Birmingham, branch the differences cropped up on the decisions taken by the centre committee (unanimously), but we ^{were} able to resolve them on the understanding of party lines. In Southall branch differences also cropped up, instead of resolving them, our comrades made it as personal issues. Even the centre leadership did not try to intervene.

Before we decide to set up a separate I.W.A, we shall have to analyse the political situation among the Indians in U.K.

Political Situation in India

a) The NDA government led by BJP is dominated by RSS and VHP and is promoting its agenda under the umbrella of NDA government. They have managed to penetrate in every field such as, Armed Forces, education, press, and broadcasting media, cultural etc. Even the BJP has managed to control the major constitutional posts.

Disagree with aligning with one party

Imp of Harkish Singh Surjeet.

Still no total Unity.

- b) The understanding of CPI (M) is any anti BJP is welcomed to the people's front, as against the previous understanding of left secular and democratic forces. From this we should be able to conclude how serious the political situation in India is.
- c) Need of the hour is to analyse the political forces among the Indians in U.K. Following are the forces working actively among the Indians:-
- I. Indian Workers' Association.
 - II. CPI (M) Naxalite
 - III. Overseas Congress
 - IV. Akali Dals
 - V. BJP
 - VI. BSP
 - VII. Lok Bhalai Party
 - VIII. Janta Dal

*Diff Pol
affiliations among
UK Indians.*

Out of these only three parties I.W.A, Overseas Congress, and Akali Dal are working more actively. I.W.A is the only organisation that takes up political issues concerning the Indian community. Now the question is if the I.W.A splits up, the forces will become weak. So we should keep the I.W.A united and try to approach the other anti BJP groups to strengthen the moment.

By the time I.W.A was unified, the stage of I.W.A has always been controlled by CPI (M) and policy of the party being popularised. Comrade Surjeet announced the merger in 1998. All the public meeting and functions have been organised by I.W.A and addressed by CPI (M) leaders- Com. Surjeet, Com Shiv Verma, Com Serwan Cheema, Com.Pandy, Mrs Lakshmi Sehgal, Com. Pasla, Mohamad Saleem and Mrs M Hashmi.

Success of the following functions is all due to the unity of I.W.A.

50th Anniversary of India Independence.

To celebrate this a committee was set up by the India House consisting of 50 members, I.W.A had only 2 members in this Mr Avtar S Johal and Mr Sohan S Sandhu. Many names were proposed for the guest but we both were able to persuade the committee for com. Surjeet as chief guest and com Lakshmi Sehgal as distinguished guest. Com.Surjeet spoke for 45 minutes, com. L Sehgal also addressed the meeting. Trade Union delegation on way back from ceba were also present. This celebration of 50th anniversary was the biggest outside India (Media reported in USA and Canada also)

Celebration of 300years Vaisakhi and 80 years of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.

In 1999, we celebrated these two functions. Comrade Surjeet was invited as chief guest, but he could not come due to other important engagements. He sent com. Mohamad Saleem and com. Pasla. Babaji Bilga, Raj Babbar M.P, Balbir Singh M.P were also invited for this function and addressed the gathering. Credit of these functions was all due to the unity of I.W.A.

Split of I.W.A will weaken the left forces and anti unity, elements will have all gains. It will give a chance to set up a parallel centre (which does not exist at present).

Secondly, India House will be very happy as they know that I.W.A is the only force, which is capable to organise people against wrong policies of the government.

Government of U.K will also be pleased, as they are aware that I.W.A is the only organisation, which can take up issues concerning immigrants.

*Politicians in
India recognise
value in prosper
politics*