

## Comments on Anwesha Sengupta's paper

Anwesha Sengupta's proposal is interesting and important. The teachers' movement and the anti tram fare hike movement have been little explored until now and therefore I look forward to her research. Having said that I would like her to consider the following comments:

- In the paragraph 2 of the first section (the section on tram movement), Sengupta has said that the older fare was reintroduced after the movement. This is not correct. As a result of the movement a Tribunal was set up to decide on the tram fare. It gave its decision after a couple of years in favour of fare hike. Till then the passengers continued to pay the older fare.
- A key feature of tram movement was that it could be divided into several distinct phases. Initially people boarded the trams in huge numbers and paid the exact old fare. Then their "new tactics" was that of direct confrontation with the police and boycotting the trams altogether. After that the movement became somewhat slow for a while. But the 5 July Burnpur incident once more instilled a new life to the movement. With the general strike of July 15 a new and most violent phase of the movement began. In this phase, the movement was no longer under the control of the political leaders but the anti-socials had taken a hold of it.
- The role of the media in both the teachers' movement and the tram fare movement need to be looked at separately and in great details. Anwesha has mentioned the importance of looking at the attacks on journalists in the course of these movements. I request her to dedicate a separate section in her paper on this.
- Regarding teachers' movement I have a question. Why did All Bengal Teachers' Association mobilize the secondary teachers only? The primary school teachers were kept outside the movement though their salary was even less. I do not know the answer and I would ask Anwesha to keep this question in mind.
- I think Anwesha puts too much emphasis on the role of refugees in the popular movements of 1950s. The refugees were important. But they were not the only population group that participated or led the movements. Prafulla Chakrabarty, the author of *The Marginal Men*, has also given too much emphasis on the role of refugees. But, Bhowanipore, an area with very little refugee population, witnessed massive participation in tram movement. How can this be explained? There are other such examples to show that refugees were not the only protesters.
- Regarding the violent nature of both these movements: in my opinion, these movements turned unnecessarily violent and the anti-social, goonda elements of the city were to be blamed for this. As these movements progressed, the leaders of the left parties had very little control over them. Properties were looted, civilians were attacked, cases of arsons were reported and in the name of a political movement, Calcutta witnessed hooliganism. Various political leaders, protesting teachers and city intellectuals had voiced their reservation about these movements because of its violent nature.