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Sunil Janah on his Communist Party days in Bombay 1943-1947

In the party headquarters in Bombay, we had an assorted lot of interesting people from all over the country to work with, and many others engaged in various, journalistic, artistic, educational, artistic - in some connection or other. The party had its own cultural front - The People's Theatre, The Progressive Writers and Artists Association, The Friends of the Soviet Union, and its own "cultural squad" of dancers, musicians, actors and singers who gave performances at worker and peasant rallies and on stage to the public in the cities.

The editorial offices of our paper were on the first floor of a building at the corner of Keshavnagar Road and Southend Road. Several editions of the People's War were published every week from their respective cities at the party headquarters in Bombay - in English, in Hindi and Urdu, together by large numbers of people in Northern India, and in Marathi and Gujarati, languages spoken in Bombay and the two provinces around it, which were not called "native" ones. Dr. Ganapathi Ashutosh was the chief editor. His lead articles, and all other important matters, appeared translated in all these editions. The respective editors looked after the rest of each edition's contents. All the other editions, in various Indian provincial languages, were published independently from the provinces. The party headquarters in Bombay had to do all the political diversity of the country. The men and women working in it were from all our provinces, and others came and went back to connection with party work all the time.

We lived in three different houses. The premises on Southend Road had all the four editorial offices, rooms for the three top party leaders, Jashu, Ashutosh and B. T. Ranadive and their families and a few other senior comrades who lived and worked there. It also had a kitchen, a garage, a large dining hall, and a lounge hall for meetings. This had being generally used as a common room.

The people working on the editorial and organizational side of our paper and publications were housed in another building, which we had experimentally named the Red Flag Hall and located some two hundred yards down the road. The third building, a dilapidated mansion of a house, on its own spacious grounds, was rented in suburban Bandra to accommodate our cultural squad. There was some uncertainty about where the actor Chittagond and I should be put. We opted to move to the latter place. Here I could stay immersed in music, using and reuse material. A room was hired for Chitra to work, undisturbed, in a house on the road to the railway station just a few minutes walk away.

Nothing very extraordinary or unusual happened during day to day routine, but we were not, all of us, mere grass-roots revolutionaries. Although not all were party workers, we bonded enough in each other and in our world to keep ourselves amused. Among the leaders only Ranadive did not indulge in idleness, although he was capable of it. Jashu and Ashutosh indulged fully and too.

Source: Sunil Janah. Photographing India. Oxford University Press, 2013.



From left, Margaret Bourke-White and Sunil Janah, Bombay, 1946.



**Sunil Janah on his Communist Party days
in Bombay 1943-1947**

In the party headquarters in Bombay, we had an excellent lot of interesting people from all over the country to work with, and many others dropped in on occasion, sometimes at the museum, others in great numbers on other days. The party had its own cultural centre, the People's Theatre, the Progressive Writers and Artists Association, the People's Book House, and the most cultured group of dancers, musicians, actors and actresses who gave performances at regular intervals and on special occasions in the city.

The editorial offices of our paper were on the top floor of a building at the corner of Khambhatji Street and Dadabhai Road. Several editions of the People's Paper were published every month from their respective offices in the city headquarters in Bombay in English, in Hindi and the various regional languages of Gujarat and Maharashtra. In the Hindi and Gujarati, long-time members in Bombay and the rest of Maharashtra had to work with a staff of about 200. In Gujarati, Hindi and Marathi editions, all other regional editions, were published in the city offices. The Hindi edition, in various Indian provincial languages, were published in the cities. The party headquarters in Bombay had all the printing facilities of the country. The news and current affairs section had all the facilities of a newspaper and was headed by a senior party member. The news and current affairs section had all the facilities of a newspaper and was headed by a senior party member. The news and current affairs section had all the facilities of a newspaper and was headed by a senior party member.

