

Abstract

The Crisis of 1974, the Railway Strike, and the Rank and File

One of the most distinctive aspects of the Great Railway Strike of 1974 was the autonomy of the rank and file. Yet the significance of the struggle had much to do with the nature of the time. The country was in the midst of a general crisis. Despite the favourable circumstances and the expression of solidarity from other sections of the working class, the National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle (NCCRS) was not resolute and decisive enough, as much as the situation demanded, and in this respect it failed the rank and file. In the absence of a political vanguard, the uprising was left without a determined subject. The paper will discuss in this context the specific nature of the crisis of 1974, the response in the form of a general strike, and the role the rank and file. Both supporters and foes of the Railway strike of 1974 agreed after the strike was over that it had taken the form of a general strike. As possibly the last of its genre in the post-independent life of the country it has now passed into history and lives as myth. No one wants to dissect the myth. We want to treasure it. We must therefore pause and think, what gives the general strike its particular nature that is to say its manifold nature as action.