Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

This chapter is followed by a SUMMARY of the contents of the thesis, APPENDICES and a SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.
CONCLUSION

The overall picture of a trade union leader that emerges out of the previous discussion shows a politically linked, consciously or subconsciously ideologically motivated, fairly militant and committed individual with a better than average education. He is 'working class' in origin or consciously identifies himself with it, is prepared to undergo some hardships (incurring, for instance, the risk of losing his job or being imprisoned) in the interest of the movement, makes efforts to extend its sweep, and reveals even in his responses to seemingly irrelevant queries a preoccupation with his leadership role. He has been quite stable in his commitment to the movement and fairly stable in his loyalty towards the political grouping with which he has been aligned. He still has many more years of the leadership role in front of him, but his continued presence in the movement has not deterred the emergence of a still younger leadership. He considers negotiations to be the best method of resolving industrial disputes (a sizeable proportion of the time spent in union work is, in fact, devoted to negotiations), but is willing to resort to demonstrations, dharnas, gheraoos, hunger strikes, strikes and other agitational devices, if negotiations fail to produce the desired results. He helps members in resolving their individual problems and is, in turn, trusted by them, particularly when he is also militant.

And, yet, he is only human. Belief in a particular ideology is a factor which has motivated a few individuals to
join the movement, but the major factors have been personal and situational: prior union sympathy due to family socialisation and other forms of social conditioning, informal group pressures, personal experiences of injustice. Along with a desire to serve the community in which he lives and operates, he is not unmindful, in his assumption of the leadership role, that the possible rewards also include an increase in his own social prestige and influence.

Thus, he is also worldly-wise. He admits unhesitatingly his political links, is prepared to reveal openly his electoral preference in a secret ballot, does not shrink from taking part in politically sponsored movements, sometimes uses his influence in the union to advance political consciousness (a euphemism for propagating his political line), is prepared to describe as desirable the necessity of political links in relation to the characteristics of a good leader, believes that he can serve the movement better by contesting elections in which only the support of a political party can give him any chance of success, but he is not over-anxious to emphasise the political goals of the movement (whether he perceives them as a transformation of the society in the Marxian mould, or as a revivalist vision of a traditional political ideology), just because it does not pay to emphasise them in the face of the prevalent public mood. And, yet, wherever the immediate interests of his union are concerned, he is prepared to go against the prevalent mood. So, for instance, he advocates the retention of 'outsiders' in the leadership of the movement, because he finds them necessary.
as well as useful, even though, in the popular estimate, they exploit unions.

Similarly, though he is no believer in fatalism (as he shows by his militancy and his arduous efforts to strengthen the movement), he is wise enough to accept that he cannot get all that he wants and must make do with whatever the near future offers as a feasible alternative. Thus it is that he is 'satisfied' with the attitude of the general public and the intelligentsia (which is not ready to accept that 'pure union goals' include a structural transformation of the society), with the attitude of the ordinary workers towards the movement (many of whom are still to be unionised), with the extent of the participation of the union members (though quite a few of them only pay their dues), with the attitudes of the political governments (accusing them at the same time of not actively trying to change the anti-union attitudes at the executive level). In spite of the victimisation and harassment about which he complains, he is even 'satisfied' with his job in the factory or the office, except when he is much too qualified for it (thus showing again that he is more concerned with the immediate possibilities in assessing the level of his satisfaction).

His pet aversions are rooted in the collective experience of the trade union movement which has always regarded employers and managements as its traditional enemies. The local bureaucracy is little praised but gets off lightly in comparison
to the dreaded police which is perceived as extremely hostile. Corrupt union leaders are seen as damaging the movement. Intra-union factionalism is frowned upon. Political parties are liked or detested according to one's own political inclinations: A majority of the AITUC and 'independent' leaders have a liking for the CPI, INTUC leaders mostly prefer the Congress Party. The EMS leaders are mostly averse to the Congress Party and show maximum preference for the Jana Sangh - which is the party least liked by the majorities in AITUC, INTUC and 'independent' unions. The CPI(M) is, in all cases, the third in the popularity list of these four parties.

There are many other variations, - too numerous to be mentioned again in their entirety, - from individual to individual, among leaders of different organisations, between key office-bearers and other leaders, between full-time union officials and part-time leaders, among leaders of different age groups and religions with different levels of education and doing different kinds of jobs, after having arisen out of widely different backgrounds. There are also significant variations between local-level leaders and their State-level counterparts, the most glaring example being the sharp divergence of opinion in the EMS leaders at the two levels about their willingness to contest parliamentary elections: at the local level, 69 per cent are in favour but, at the State level, 8 out of 9 are against and refer to the national policy of their organisation in this regard.

Some other important variations are the greater attraction of EMS for Hindus and the greater attraction of AITUC for Sikhs;
an almost parallel attraction of BMS for urban bred individuals and of AITUC for rural bred ones; the comparatively greater attraction of BMS for immigrants; the comparatively higher educational background of the State-level leaders and of the leaders of the white collar employees; the greater subjective identification of the AITUC leaders with the working class and their greater militancy; the more militant attitudes of the leaders of manual workers; the middle-maximum pattern of militancy in relation to the educational level; the greater willingness to suffer hardships exhibited by full-time professional leaders and key office-bearers; differences in the perception of long term goals and even short term aims of the movement; differences in the perception of the strength of the movement; different perceptions of the attitudes of the organs of state power, political parties, ordinary workers, and employers and managements; different explanations of the reasons which motivate workers to join, or not to join, the movement; different motivations which led the leaders to join the movement and to later become activists and assume their present role; and, finally, various differences in the nature and extent of their participation and in the multiplicity of the problems which they face in union work. This list can be extended manifold, but must suffice to provide some typical examples of the variations which were noticed during the survey.

Most of the hypotheses framed at the earliest stage of this work are shown as proven or unproven in various chapters of this study; it only remains to restate explicitly our
conclusions about the main hypothesis about political linkages and their influence. It is clear from the above discussion that the hypothesised linkages between unions and political parent organisations exist: the reasons for this conclusion need not be stated anew. As regards their influence, our data show that the national policies of the political parties find an echo in the policies of their associates in the trade union field: a good example is the manner in which the trade union leadership of INTUC at all levels tried to adjust itself to the diktats of the ruling Congress Party on the bonus and CDS issues. Another example is the way in which various trade union organisations reacted to the promulgation of the State of Emergency: the Congress Party and the CPI welcomed the declaration of the 'Emergency', and so did INTUC and AITUC in terms closely paralleling the statements of their respective parent organisations and, what is more significant, toned down their militant struggles; the Jana Sangh was violently opposed to the declaration, and so was BMS. The leaders of the latter became special targets of the state machinery for their continued militancy.

The discernment of the political goals of the trade union movement also follows the party lines fairly closely, at least at the State level. The role perception of the leaders of various organisations, too, is affected by their political linkages: AITUC leaders perceive their political roles much more clearly because of the specific guidelines of the CPI about
the need to create political consciousness in the working class. The rift between the CPI and the CPI(M) at the political level finds its extreme expression in the rivalry between AITUC and CITU at the union level, and the performance of their role by the AITUC leaders at the plant level is certainly affected by their antipathy towards the 'disruptionist' CITU. Both the Jana Sangh and the CPI(M) were loud in their denunciation of the 'Emergency'; our detailed data show that, despite their being poles apart in political ideology, the EMS leaders gave a higher rating to CPI(M) than was given by the AITUC and INTUC leaders.

As far as the limited degree of local autonomy which forms part of the hypothesis is concerned, we have already referred to the significant variations in attitudes and perceptions at the local and State levels.

Thus all the major elements of the hypothesis are verified. In retrospect it appears that we could have established the hypothesis on an even more sound footing by asking some more detailed questions, independently verifying the veracity of the responses, and correlating the verified answers with other external data. However, the purpose of the investigation was not merely to verify this hypothesis; it was to obtain an overall picture of the trade union leader in Punjab, particularly the trade union leader as a political being. We believe that we have succeeded in drawing at least the major outlines of this picture.
From the benefit of hindsight since the completion of the survey, we see that the expectations of the labour leaders of Punjab have not been all in vain: the movement is stronger today, more workers are unionised, some demands (e.g., about bonus, minimum wages) have been at least partly met, there is a greater degree of politicalisation. Though the basic perceptions have not altered, the scene is not static. BMS is now far stronger, CITU is no longer treated as a pariah. The exact extent of the change is, however, a matter for future studies.