FORWARD BLOC
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1939-40

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I'm much thrilled with the moment when this historical document will be handed over to the thousands of our countrymen, and they will certainly feel a deep presence of Netaji Subhas Ch. Bose in front of them, on the other side of the table. Subhas Ch. Bose, even being vowed as the 'patriot of all patriots', no doubt to say, has not received proper respect, proper chair, proper research on his political and economic thought and his social conviction due to various political and diplomatic parochialism, even after 60 years of the 'transfer of power'. The right-wingers of the freedom movement of our country headed by Gandhi-Nehru combine opposed Subhas in all possible means, heckled him after their abject defeat in Tripuri Congress in 1939, where Subhas was re-elected as Congress President despite of treamendous opposition from Gandhi and his followers. In that context, it was not possible for them to allow Subhas to go further, who was then trying hard for consolidating all the left forces of the country to start an uncompromising struggle against Imperialism. Subhas was expelled from the Congress Party, but received a great ovation from the deep of the heart of the Indian people, who was ready for an all-out anti-imperialist war. In May 1939 Subhas Chandra Bose formed Forward Bloc, and the First Conference of his Party was held on 22 June 1940. For a Party, a political mouthpiece is a virtual necessity. This necessity tended him for a news weekly, and thus the first issue of Forward Bloc appeared on 5 August, 1939, with the editorship of Subhas Ch. Bose. Under his direct supervision and editorship, so far I think, it was continued upto 1 June 1940.

I was quite younger one in my party circle at that time. But I collected and preserved the issues of 'Forward Bloc' safely. During the period of Netaji Centenary, i.e. 1998-99, I
first got an urge to republish the documents for the interest of
the people of the country, for the interest of the nation,
because of it that, we cannot ignore the documents if we
unfraudently deserve to rebuild and remember our history. But
when I went to the my collection I found some issues were
missing. I was halted, but not stopped. Then, few years after,
in a fine morning Mrs. Ramen Dey phoned me and said, there
were some issues of ‘Forward Bloc’ in her custody, which
were actually a collection of her late husband Ramen Dey. I
know, Ramen Dey was a member of Bengal Volunteers, the
youth organisation formed by Subhas Chandra which was a
militant one. I urnestly paid great curiosity, for which Mrs.
Dey handed the documents over me on great faith. But I again
was to say sorry when I found that, some missing issues of
mine was covered, but four issues— 38, 39, 40, 41 was
absolutely out of our hand, both Ramen and mine. Perhaps
these are lost for ever, because, there are hardly three or four
sets alive, throughout the country now. Other than Ramen and
myself, probably there is another set of copies in National
Library, Kolkata, surely in a mutilated condition. When police
raided number of offices of Forward Bloc party in different
states, ransacked houses of Forward Bloc party workers during
1942-43 and even in 1947-49, they did not spare the news
weekly ‘Forward Bloc’, as they considered it of same danger
like the Party, and like the anti-imperialist war. They put these
journals into ashes. But surely they were not aware that gold
ever bows to fire. Therefore, ‘Forward Bloc’ now reappeared
before the whole country.

The journal ‘Forward Bloc’ under Subhas’ editorship
concluded its journey on 1 June 1940. And till 3 August 1940
the publication remained silent, the causes I cannot remember.
But the issue of 3 August 1940 was marked as the starting
point of Volume 2. Originally the journal carried the name of
Subhas Ch. Bose in its first page. But in 1 to 8 issues of this
series did not present it, instead, in the printers line Shanti Ranjan Chatterjee was named as editor of it. He was that Shanti Ranjan, I must note it, who went to Kabul when Netaji Subhas Ch. Bose had been absencing there, after his ‘Great Escape’ on 17 January 1941. Shanti Ranjan met him and returned with a great document written by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, which is known as ‘Kabul Thesis’. The title of the thesis was: ‘The Justification of Forward Bloc’, the most glaring political and philosophical note he had ever written. From issue No. 9, Leela Roy became the Editor of the journal, and in the first page Subhas Chandra was remembered in words as the ‘Founder’. My concern was definitely with Volume 1, with which everybody will like to be curious.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is the first Indian political thinker who sought to build up Left unity, and thereby Left and Democratic unity in our country. At the end of 1930s he formed Left Consolidation Committee, the first of its kind in Indian sub-continent, which had turned, even after seven decades, as a mass-demand and mass-cry for the present day India. This is why Netaji alives with full flame and fire, and going undiscardable, unchallengeable. Left Consolidation Committee got disintegrated, with the treachery of a portion of left. But the thought and idea did not. The journal ‘Forward Bloc’, everybody could see, became another Left Consolidation Committee. It was a combine of all the left intellectuals, left writers, left political thinkers, and all that.

All the brilliant personalities gathered here in response to the golden invitation of Subhas Chandra Bose. He tried to convert all the intellectual fits into a power, which will help our countrymen to think, to observe, to motivate and to put steps into struggle. Such type of combination was possible for once, and will never be repeated there. For this reason also ‘Forward Bloc’ had made a history. If my this endeavour, my dream, the dream of a 84 year old political worker receives any space in the mind and consideration of my beloved countrymen, I shall remain ever and ever grateful.

Ashok Ghosh
General Secretary
All India Forward Bloc. Bengal Committee

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