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A POLITICAL WEEKLY

Editor :—SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

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CALCUTTA, SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 30, 1939

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

National Demand

The interview that Mahatma Gandhi had with the Viceroy a few days ago, coupled with the invitation of the latter to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Rashtrapati Rajendra Prasad to meet him on October 3, have a significance that is too great to be missed by anybody. It is said that other prominent names too, figure in the list and one by one a few more will be called by Lord Linlithgow for talks in connection with the grave situation that now confronts both Britain and India. It is not possible to forecast the outcome of these parleys. Mahatma Gandhi's pithy observation after his last meeting with the Viceroy that "he shall get something" has naturally raised some hope in the country. At any rate, it has provided evidence to the fact that India's demand—to use a much misunderstood expression—for democracy has not peremptorily been turned down by Britain and that it is at least being given some consideration by Simla and Whitehall. Unhappily, Lord Zetland has struck a rather discordant note by characterising the demand as "ill-timed". Need we repeat to his lordship what has been made so abundantly clear in the statement of the Working Committee that India has not pressed her claims in a spirit of base bargaining at this critical hour in Britain's history?

The issue, as it appears to us, is quite straight and simple. It need not be loaded and clouded with useless verbiage. Britain has declared in solemn terms her anxiety to preserve democracy from the onslaught of aggressive Fascism that has already become more than a menace to the peace and progress of humanity. If this country is to be a proud co-sharer in the preservation of that invaluable treasure for coming generations of mankind, she must be in possession of it first so that she may be inspired to put forth her best in this noble endeavour. India must be free before she takes a plunge in the struggle in the best interests

of humanity at large. The freedom that she wants for herself must be full and unqualified, not a iota less than what is her inherent birthright. We do not know if Mahatma's "something" is just a form of expression or anything else. But it requires to be made clear beyond all doubts that the Indian nation, the teeming millions that comprise it, will not be satisfied with anything less than the complete fulfilment of the National Demand on which the Congress has taken its definite and unswerving stand.

In this connection it may be noted that the Muslim League's recent performance at Delhi has come upon us as a sore disappointment. Not that we did not apprehend as much from a body of the nature of the League, but still the flickering hope did not forsake us that at this crucial hour in national history, it would be able to cast off all prejudices and false fears and rise to the full height of the occasion. That hope has unfortunately been belied by the League. It is evident that the bogey of Hindu domination has been pressing on that body like a veritable nightmare—a fact that has induced it to commit itself to the ridiculous anomaly of demanding *freedom hedged in with various safeguards*. We emphatically repudiate the claim of the League to speak on behalf of the entire Muslim community. We hold with Mahatma Gandhi that "the Congress is an all-inclusive body. It can be said of it that it is the one body that has represented for over half a century, without a rival, the vast masses of India, irrespective of class or creed." We believe that the heart of the Muslim masses is sound, that they will not be led astray by the separatist moves of the communal leaders to whom politics is no more than a comfortable highway for self-aggrandisement. We believe, further, that if a referendum is taken, the truth of our assertion will be amply borne out. Similarly, with regard to the Native states—the strongholds of mediaeval autocracy—which are so thoroughly out of tune with the progressive life of modern times. We hold that if a referendum is taken in those states, the awakened people there will emphatically declare themselves for full democratic rights within the framework of a national constitution. We would

ask Simla and Whitehall to take note of these facts and proceed accordingly. The common people should have the most predominant voice in the determination of the form of Government in which they are to make overwhelmingly major constituents. To put the whole matter summarily: if Britain is really desirous of striking up a settlement with India and secure her friendly co-operation in the present crisis, let her ask the latter to frame a constitution through a Constituent Assembly based on full adult franchise and then declare its acceptance by a Royal Proclamation in order to avoid tediously long-drawn legislative process for the present. Let her thus establish her *bonafides* as a real votary of democracy. It is a golden opportunity for Britain which her statesmanship should utilise both for her own benefit as well as that of India. Let her not seek to meet the grave situation by temporary make-shifts or half-measures. Let her not propose something that will be unworthy for her to offer and unworthier for India to accept.

SOVIET RIDDLE

Somewhere in Euripides we vaguely remember to have read, "Things that must happen are so beyond all our imaginings." The incalculable in life upsets all our petty plans; its elemental quality defies all our schemes and designs. But the uncertain game of politics by its very nature so amorophous that in it there is nothing that can be a really incalculable. But the Soviet Russia is a new factor in world politics. It attained its majority sometime ago; but it has not sobered into the time of respectability as it was supposed sometime ago. The Soviet still possesses something of the elemental quality that signified its birth and vigorous early days. Is it because of this that, all our international calculations are upset, all our accounts cast with elaborate care of a wordly minded idiot appear to be the poor play of fossilised wisdom? For, such at least appear today the politics of Eastern Europe—which have been changing with a rapidity and in a way that the world can hardly anticipate or grasp. For, the politics of Europe, or more

frankly speaking, the politics of entire Europe, have passed into the hands of Moscow; and unless the rest of Europe Unites to snatch it back, Moscow becomes the master and decides the politics of the Balkan and the Baltic at this hour. Politicians and students of politics never were prepared for this emergence of the Soviet in the master role, and, their reaction has been wild and conflicting as a result. The incalculable has burst upon their world of petty details and narrow visions. They do not know—and we cannot foretell—what the Soviet intends. *Quo, idis, Domini*, questions the bewildered political journalists.

It is not difficult, however, to know where the Soviet goes if we know what the Soviet stands for, and, how the Soviet was pushed out of its positions by the Powers. Alone against the world, Russia had to yield to Poland the vast lands and smaller nationalities, the Poles to lord it over. Under the inspiration from the Western Powers, the Baltic sea-board was studded with new states, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and lastly Finland, which practically shut out the Baltic way for the Soviet Russia. Never could Russia emerge into a warm sea port,—never could it play any worthy part as a sea power. The Arctic ways and the Pacific sea-coast were tried—the one was developed and provided with a canal to prove considerable triumph of Soviet science, engineering and organisation. The other was menaced by Japan and therefore, admitted of no reasonable development. The Soviet with the little coast line on the West was condemned to an inland existence. And the states on the Baltic served as good footholds for the Western Powers to strike at Petrograd, if necessary. Moscow realised her position, and, realised quite well as the Nazis rose to power in Central Europe and Eastern Europe was allowed thoroughly masterly inactivity to pass into the politico-economic hegemony of the Nazis. So, the Baltic Powers were practically handed over to Hitler and, Nazi shadow approached the very threshold of the Soviet and Nazi influences set them to the new key, so much so that these Powers were not willing to accept any 'Peace Front' to guarantee their life against possible aggression from any quarters.

The Moscow Pact with Germany came, therefore, to them as perhaps a rude shock. Germany had realised that she was incapable of confronting the Soviet. Poland was to be a prize, that could not be let slip. The Baltic powers thought they would be allowed to enjoy their immunity. Slowly, the mystery was clarified. Poland was over-run only to allow the Soviet to cut off Germany from her long cherished ambitions. Thus the White Russians and Little Russians are unified into their Soviet Republics, a Polish Soviet is born to serve to Sovietize its other half, under the Hitlerian heels, while the German domination of the Balkans and beyond the Danubian basis and the Black Sea coast, is become a fond illusion of the past by the posting of the Soviet troops on the borders of Rutenia and Hungary and Soviet talks with Turkey and Bulgaria. It is not difficult to see who would play now the dominating role in the Balkans. Germany has to yield; for the Western Front calls for all her energy to defend herself, and the Soviet is her possible vendor for the precious supplies. Great Britain and France find the Soviet unjustified, but would not at this hour challenge the iniquity to multiply the number of enemies. Still significantly France dissolves the Communist Party of France. The Soviet approaches the Baltic now to take up the positions she was made to yield. The allied Powers are out of the picture in the area. It interests only Germany, the fleet of which utilises the harbours. This must be ended now when the Nazis can hardly contend with the Soviet. The Estonian Minister M. Selter is called to Moscow; Herr Von Ribbentrop is again invited there for a decision—apparently of the Polish question and the Baltic problem. Plainly, Herr Von Ribbentrop must agree—Estonia is to yield the islands of Dagoe and Oast to the Soviet; and "the rest would follow suit" until on the Baltic the Soviet emerges as the liberator of the world.

The Moscow Pact was characterised as signifying the Soviet joining "the Anti-Comintern Pact." It was a riddle which the world can read now as the situation develops. The Soviet has come of age in world politics—and, come of age shedding none of its incalculable policies and professions.

Current Comments

Britain's War Budget

Britain is mobilising her financial resources for a long war. According to Sir John Simon's own figures he proposes to take well over a quarter of the national income in taxation. The British Official Press is of opinion that there will be no complaint about the heavy increase in taxation, because, these resources will be utilised in defence of international law and justice. Quite a noble idea. But why the budget does not follow the fundamental canon of taxation that the incidence may be shared by all proportionally? Why the budget lets off the very rich lightly? Men and women with small or middle incomes will get hit the hardest and why? While Mr. Attlee would gladly welcome the attempt to raise three large sums by taxation, Mr. Gallachier would call the budget a most terrible commentary on the capitalist system. There would have been a fair deal if the wealthy had contributed a very considerable share. But as it has been arranged, the budget would make the wealthy wealthier at the end of the war. Hence, as Mr. Gallachier rightly says, "There is no question of a fair deal all round" and the budget is really the "saddest" commentary on the capitalist system.

Non-violent and truthful anger

In a leaderette of the 27th September the *Searchlight* (Gandhian organ of Behar) has indulged in an orgy of non-violent ire at the cost of Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose. The head and tail of Mr. Bose's offence is that he could not approve of Gandhiji's offer of unconditional co-operation with Britain as it ran counter to all the Congress resolutions about war. Evidently, according to the *Searchlight*, Congress resolutions are not meant for being acted up to, but for being preserved in a gaudy show-case for exhibition before the public. The paper's insinuation about Mr. Bose's irreverence towards Gandhiji is to be treated with the contempt it deserves; for he yields to none in his respect to the great man although he disdains to make his name a convenient stock-in-trade for base earthly gains. The paper has not stopped even at this; but like a fierce sleuth-hound has chased Mr. Bose still further and has openly charged him with being sympathetic to Nazism and Herr Hitler. One need

not tax one's intelligence too much to understand why the *Searchlight* has allied itself with the *Statesman* in levelling this maliciously false charge against Mr. Bose. The Patna oracle has predicated his "destruction." Is this propaganda a deliberate move to that end?

"Reason to Lament"

There are people who seem to think that appreciation of Mahatma Gandhi derives an added flavour from depreciation of S. J. Subhas Chandra Bose. Shri Kripalani is one of them. He cannot praise Mahatma Gandhi without a dig at S. J. Bose. Since January last when S. J. Bose's re-election was signal enough for Shri Kripalani to scamper away from his post, he has transformed himself into a sort of scuttle-fish emitting ink and ink, smelly and venomous and spiteful. He has hardly issued any public statement of importance wherein he has not tried to blacken S. J. Bose. He repeated his familiar trick in a speech at a meeting of the students of the Lucknow University on the 26th Sept. and of course he was subjected to a lot of heckling. This Shri Kripalani claims to be a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi and a servant of non-violence and truth. And not alone Shri Kripalani. The public have seen statements and heard speeches by other hawkers of holy saws too, wherein the crunching of teeth against the Bloc and its founder equally drowned the voice of reason. Indeed, if such be the apostles' holy plan, have we not reason to lament what they have made of non-violence and truth?

Students' Duties

Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose was to have presided over the Tamil Nadu Students' Conference. Being unable to attend the Conference he sent a message to it to which we invite the attention of the entire student community of India. "The Conference," so ran the message, "was meeting at a critical juncture in the history of the country. Students, therefore, had to ponder over their duties as citizens of a great country and prepare for them. Their duty as students would naturally have to give precedence to their duty as citizens." The Rt. Hon. Srinivas Sastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Annamalai University, warned the students against joining the Conference as "things would be said there with which the students

should not be associated." But in disregard of this inane advice of a retired politician and at considerable risks to themselves, the students of the University attended the Conference in large numbers and made it a complete success. All glory to them.

Forward Bloc and Pandit Nehru

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has for some time been the most amusing political riddle in the country. From Karachi where he came red-hot from the Moscow furnace more than a decade ago, upto Faizpur, he strutted the stage as a Leftist fire-brand. Then he began to cool down, under what influence it is hardly necessary to point out here. Not that he does not profess leftism still; but it has been conveniently twisted to cover up his shameful vacillations. From the very inception of the *Forward Bloc* he has been looking on it with green eyes and with its increasing success they have become greener. It may be remembered that some time ago he characterised the Bloc "as a group of opportunists and disgruntled elements" and on Mr. Subhas Bose's demanding substantiation of this mischievous statement, the valiant Pandit could only save his face by a thoroughly unconvincing quibble. Undeterred by that experience, he has now given his pithy judgment of the Bloc as "an evil." But he has not cared to oblige the public by explaining how it is so. A pseudo-leftist as Panditji is, possibly he has been prompted to this estimate of the Bloc by the fact that it has come to offer a counter-blast to the policy of constitutional drift pursued by the present leadership. But whatever Panditji may think and say of it, there is no denying the fact that the *Forward Bloc* has been daily growing from strength to strength; and it will have its mission fulfilled only when it will be able to deal a knock-down blow to the prevalent "evil" of reaction-aryism in the Congress.

A. R. P. Scheme

India is still far, far away from the scene of active warfare but signs are clear that panic has got heavily on her nerves. The elaborate A. R. P. Scheme that has been set on foot for the protection of vulnerable cities like Bombay, Karachi and Calcutta has served to put a further premium on the sense of panic. In this city the Corporation is even organising training classes in which a series of lectures on A.R.P. work will be delivered. People in dismay are naturally wondering as to what the exact situation is. The buzzing sound of the aces make them look up to ascertain if these are going to drop some havoc-dealing bombs. The occasional vague statements of some experts here and there do not appear to

NEW GERMAN- SOVIET PACT

(Latest News From London)

The terms of the German-Russian Agreement were received in London in the early hours of this morning and the necessary time has not elapsed for any authoritative reaction from London. It is understood, says the Ministry of Information, that the Agreement is being considered by the Cabinet and until that meeting has been held and there has been consultation with the French no statement of policy is likely.

All interest concentrates on how far the new Russo-German Agreement with the promised supply of Russian raw materials against German manufactures may affect the progress of war. The question of transporting huge quantities of Russian raw material over the long distances they must travel overland presents one difficulty. Another is Russia's own internal requirements, particularly in oil, the increased output of which in the past eight years has been fully absorbed by home demand.

Soviet trap for Germany

Apart from practical considerations the view is widely held that Russia expects the war to culminate in a revolution in Germany on which she may rear a Communist State. The question then is whether Russia will deem best to Germany collapse quickly or by partially feeding Germany with supplies will prolong the agony with a view to making the crash worse when it comes.

Well-informed quarters recall Mr. Chamberlain's statement in Parliament last week and the situation, it is considered, has in no way altered from what it was a month ago, nor is the German-Russian statement likely to change the policy of the British Government.

It is recalled Mr. Chamberlain's statement of last week was stressed during the last week-end in a broad-cast comment on Sgr. Mussolini's speech, reading "Our general purpose is well-known. That is to redeem Europe from the perpetual fear of German aggression."

them to be particularly assuring. Thus only about a week ago Mr. Harold Graham, Chairman of the A.R.P. Committee, in the course of an address to the councillors of the Corporation, made the following intriguing observation, "While emphasising that there is no occasion whatsoever for panic, I do assert there can be no excuse for apathy or for a false sense of security." The new Russo-Japanese *entente* has of course made things worse for the country; and it is urgently and immediately necessary that people here should be allowed to know more exactly where they stand. For an apparition, it has been well said, looks deadlier in the dark.

FORWARD BLOC

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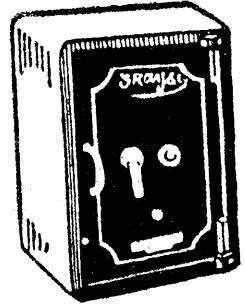
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