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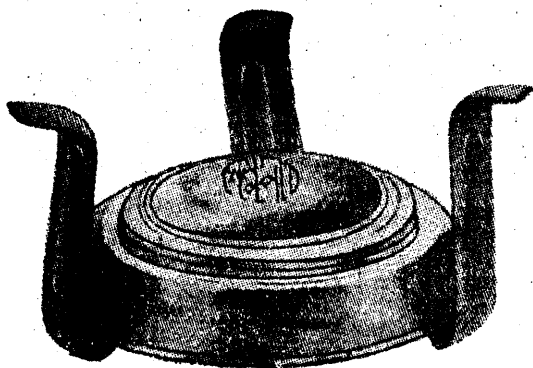
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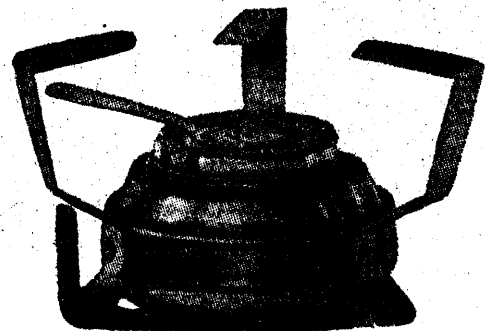
CALCUTTA, SATURDAY NOVEMBER 11, 1939

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FORWARD BLOC

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11

"If Britain
Granted....."

It was reported that the Nazi press and the Nazi propaganda machinery made much of the withdrawal of the Congress Ministries in India. In his latest speech the German Fuehrer has been more outspoken; 'Reuter' adds his speech was "in characteristically vehement terms." It was "a vituperative attack on Britain," we are told, and there was a "sarcastic reference to Britain's war aims." "If Britain started granting her own empire full liberty by restoring the freedom of India," said Hitler, "we should have bowed before her." If Britain did it! History, not only of Asia but also of Europe during the last hundred years, might have been differently written. Democracy, which in the early years of the nineteenth century was regarded as a kind of religion, would not have fallen into disgrace and disrepute. In the intervening years, by what they have made of democracy, it has inwardly rotted and has undergone self-poisoning. Vulgarly and commercialism have made of it a mis-shapen thing.

It may be easy to confound Hitler by an angry retort. It is conceded he does not write on a cleaner slate. And his aims certainly are not purer than Britain's. But no retort, angry or sarcastic, can take away the sting from the German Fuehrer's remark. "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." And the hand, not of Germany alone, is red with guilt. Wars and rumours of war have disturbed the peace of Europe during the last half a century and across the frontiers of India has strided the colossus of a devastating menace, whether it be the Yellow Peril, the Russian Bugbear or the German Dread.

If India were free, we fully believe the future of democracy and of the human kind would have been more secure, and the civilisation of man should have preserved the higher human values, the sacredness of individuality, freedom for all, more air, more refinement, and a more liberal perspective.

If Britain has failed—Lord Zetland still talks the high falutin of Imperialist arrogance—India has failed too. Not only the individual, but every nation in a way is the architect of its own fortune. We receive but what we give. In a crisis "our better men" who should have shown the way have been lost in the mazes of their own talk. They trace and re-trace their steps in endless and amazing confusion. The Mahatma seems determined to try his patience against British recalcitrance. Pandit Nehru had been weaving romances of a new view of society and a new world order. And the Congress President has been doing his best to tune his key somewhere in the golden mean. Fortunately however, India is slowly emerging in the ken of Pandit Nehru. The bluntness, yea the rudeness of the Secretary of State for India has taught us to discard the freedom of twenty-five countries as a lost cause. "I am not any further interested in what happens in the British Parliament," so declares Pandit Nehru. "We are very busy in India." So we ought to be. Should we stray into truth? There is the inimitable Mr. Satyamurti whose hopes and fancies do not roam, even in the sharpest crisis, beyond Congress Ministries. He hopes that the Congress Ministry—he was using the singular about Madras alone—"would soon return to office." Let those who have a light mind say "Amen." We need not point the moral. For those who cherish freedom, we say, with the oft-quoted Shakespeare :

"It is held,

"That valour is the chiefest
virtue, and

"Most dignifies the haver :"

The Jhut Platform

Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, the Minister for Commerce, Labour and Rural Reconstruction bids fair to succeed Mr. Fazlul Huq, the Chief Minister, when he vacates his *guddee* for taking upon himself the work of the Muslim paper to be born (?), or of the Muslim League (to be re-born ?), or of the Muslim community (to be united), or of the Bengal Krishaks (to be re-united), or of Hindu-Muslim amity (to be established),—or of becoming dear, old Maulavi Fazlul Huq (to be re-discovered). Before that Huq transformation comes off, the Suhrawardy evolution has, however, begun. This must fill every breast with great hopes. For, Mr. Huq in the high tension of our high politics (or is it low politics, as some aver?) strikes that extremely essential Falstaff note without which the high comedy of Huq ministry would be a boring *tamasha* to the Bengalee spectators. Mr. Suhrawardy cannot claim that natural Huq gift. But he feels all the more how necessary is the gift of being sometimes ridiculous even in ministerial existence. It keeps Mr. Huq, for example, dear, old, "Huq Sahab" with thousands of his fellowmen. Mr. Huq gets thereby the license for saying anything—excepting sense. Mr. Suhrawardy is also the hero of the many platforms. He is the shrewd dealer of the many commercial deals beginning with that of the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation which record his big success. He is the pioneer in Labour measures which have initiated a new era in social legislation in Bengal. He has reared it on the basis of a chain of employer-patronised Trade Unions, of which he has again to be the sole guiding spirit. He had his say in promulgating the Jute Ordinance of last year which helped the employers to tide over those difficult days. The Jute workers and Jute growers, who no doubt were left to their fate then, were not forgotten by the Minister for Industry and Rural Reconstruction. He had certainly his usual share in forging the present Jute Ordinances that fixed the price of jute in the

phatka market. Yes, the long demanded "fixing of jute price" is an accomplished fact now, and the growers need only hold out, he instructed, against the unscrupulous purchasers who offer them a low price. He moved further on, and has covered now Bengal with a staff of jute officers, empowered again with an Ordinance for making a statistical survey of the area under jute crop.

All this spoke of great wisdom, of high public spirit, of noble planning. And how these qualities were tested as the war came and brought with it a boom in the jute industry! Millions and millions of hessian bags were ordered for from the Jute Mills Associations. The requirements are immediate. Mr. Suhrawardy is certainly not the man to fail the Jute Mills Association. Thousands of workers in the industry had lost their jobs in the months preceding the declaration of war; thousands more had their hours reduced and their wages cut to less than starvation standard. It was then an area swarming with discontent. But Mr. Suhrawardy knows the art of removing discontent. Remove the 'agitator,' remove the dissatisfied worker, the industry will know peace. The peace then would be further extended with the help of the new Trade Unions that could then come to life. So, 'agitators' are driven out by the communal trade unions, by the administrative orders of 107, Cr. P. C., or of 144, Cr. P. C., and by a regular crop of prosecutions. A Suhrawardy peace reigns now and the complete suppression of all civil liberties in Bengal leaves the jute areas open to the communal eloquence of the 'bona fide' trade unionists as opposed to the 'communist agitators.'

The machines then hum and roar; but the time is too short to enable the Jute Mills Association to fulfil the contracts within the prescribed period. Does it point to the necessity of employing more hands, of relieving thereby the distress of the vast number of unemployed, of bringing back the old workers thrown out of employment? No, that would increase the cost of production. An increment in the hour of work would keep

the cost low and enable the Jute Mills Association to fulfil the obligations as well. So, Mr. Suhrawardy steps in and a Government *communiqué* obligingly exempts the factory owners, as noted last week, from the limitations of 54-hours week in the industry. The International Labour Office of the League of Nations are making attempts to introduce throughout the world 40-hours week in the interests of the health of the workers as well as to relieve unemployment. India did not of course agree to this; here the legal maximum is 54-hours week. But Mr. Suhrawardy has found the health of the Bengal labour so improved and unemployment so rare that that 54-hours limitation must now go. A notification prescribes this week that the periods of work of an adult worker is not to spread, however, over more than 13½ hours in a day.

Of course, there is nothing new about it. The war boom would mean more work for the worker, but not more employment. The war has already sent up prices of food-stuff, but the workers' wages remain at the same rate and war-allowance is a demand that cannot even be voiced when the entire jute area has been silenced by war-measures; more orders would no doubt mean more profits for the Association mills, and, death for the smaller Indian factories on the one hand and no recompense for the Indian workers who would create the profits.

So far there is nothing that endows our Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy with a new role—that strange role of a comedian relieving the war tension. This was a shortcoming, as we saw, for Mr. Suhrawardy. So, he steps forth in the new garb. The jute growers of the countryside offer him the stage for the purpose. In a statement to the press he now announces that the Jute Mills Association deserve his thanks for having abrogated an agreement they had made among themselves not to buy jute except at a price fixed by themselves. So, now after this abrogation, the rural growers may expect a better price. They have already made a good bargain this year, thanks to

the previous price-fixing Ordinance. This was doubly assured, for Mr. Suhrawardy had advised them to hold out unless they got good market. A counsel of perfection, it was so kind of him to give. Now, Mr. Suhrawardy advises them again not to fritter away that good money in trinkets. Here the Minister of Rural Reconstruction speaks—he has not forgotten this role—"Run Palli-Mangal Samities, oh ye children of Israel, who have your hands full of jute money and hearts full of Suhrawardy happiness. For the Jute Mills Association will not put any restriction on the jute price any more."

The comedy is well-begun. The Bengal peasants may lack holding power; they might have finished all their sales long before the Pujas and the Association Mills finished their purchases long before this 'abrogation'; very little of the increased price of raw jute must have fallen to the share of the actual jute growers; but Mr. Suhrawardy has found his new role. He is to strut in the borrowed garbs of our Moulavi Fazlul Huq as a jute comedian—on the *jhut* platform.

Current Comments

Vacillation still

It is happy to find that the sorry rebuff that the Congress leaders have met with at New Delhi, has somewhat shocked them back to their senses. The result has been that they have now begun to think in terms of a fight. But it is curious that all of them are not talking in the identical language about the matter. Thus, while Pandit Jawaharlal, who though not formally belonging to the Working Committee, has chosen to be its unofficial guide and philosopher, has thrown out a clear hint about the necessity of an impending struggle, and Sardar Patel has virtually dittoed him, the utterances of Mahatma Gandhi and Rashtrapati Rajendra Prasad are unfortunately quite halting and hedged in with various "buts" and "ifs." There are still doubts, vacillation and longing and lingering looks at Delhi. History does not provide a single example of a nation talking itself into the glory of independence, nor of a struggle being supported by all sections of people

Then, as regards the spirit of non-violence the country has it undoubtedly today, at least to the same measure as in 1930. And if there is want of unity in the Congress, pray, who are responsible for it? Let those, who are at the helm of its affairs, look within and answer. At any rate, this should not serve as a deterrent to a bold policy. Once it is decided upon, the difficulty on this score will automatically melt away into thin air.

The "Statesman's" Vision

It is clear to an impartial observer that *The Statesman* serves as a sort of faithful megaphone of Delhi and Whitehall. It coaxes, cajoles, howls, twits and supplicates just to the tune of its official patrons. Its loves and hates are determined by imperialist ends. Like the high lights in the British officialdom, it has managed to delude itself into the pathetic belief that the present war, in case it brings victory for the imperialist Allies, will end war for all time and usher in a new world order. Those who share in this belief are, according to the paper, the friends of humanity, and those who cannot rationally do so, its enemies. Quite logically, it has begun to carp at Pandit Jawaharlal, for whom, till other day, it bubbled with admiration, and has discovered unlimited virtues in Sir Sikander, who, among the Indians, has leapt into uniqueness by his recent performance in the Punjab Assembly. Recently the paper conjured up in one of its editorials an amusing vision about the future which is as follows: in the old age of the Pandit a small Nehru will ask him, "what did you do in the war that ended war, Grand-dad?" "I non-co-operated, My Child! I kept asking people to tell me what they were fighting for, but they would not tell me. So I never knew till afterwards. Uncle Sikander knew but I did not believe him." Those who do not look at things through imperialist specs, visualise, however, a quite different spectre. On being questioned about the present war, the old Nehru will perhaps pat the child on the back and say, "did I not see through the hoax all right? But Uncle Sikander was such a damned fool that he was easily carried away by the tall professions of the agents of imperialism!"

British Press on India's Demand

It is really gratifying to find that a section of the British Press has been

expressing full-throated sympathy with India's national aspirations. It has been extending hearty approval to the stand taken up by the Congress in regard to the war. Thus, in a recent editorial the *Manchester Guardian* had the following. "Whatever the consequences of the Congress withdrawal into the wilderness of Opposition, it remains the cherished objective of the British people to transform imperialism into partnership. Unless that aim is reached in India, victory in the field would remain a barren achievement." *The Daily Herald* and the *New Statesman and Nation*, among others, have also consistently been giving vent to similar sentiments. The Tory Press that really counts in the administrative affairs of Britain, has, however, chosen to remain less vociferous and more cautious. While Whitehall possibly smiles at what it thinks to be the sloppy sentimentality of the section of Press referred to above, its services to India, at least in one respect, should, however, be thankfully acknowledged. Britain's real aims in the present war are being exposed to the world by a section of the British people themselves. That has been really to the benefit of our country.

British attitude to Russia

"Should a British Cabinet Minister be sent to Moscow to discuss Britain's future relations with Russia"? This was the question put a few days ago to a cross section of British voters by the British Institute of Public Opinion in order to seek views of the men and women in the street on the present attitude of Russia. The following is the analysis of answers received by the Institute.

Yes : 47 P. C.

No : 34 P. C.

Don't know : 19 P. C.

It may be remembered in this connection that in April and July last the position was eight out of ten, when the question was voted in favour of a military alliance between Britain, France and Russia. Much water has since then flown down the Thames and if after the Russo-German Pact and particularly M. Molotov's recent utterances in which the Soviet Foreign Minister has tarred Germany, France and Britain with the same brush, there are 47 P. C. to vote for a Russo-British alliance, the reason thereof is to be sought in the fact that

illusion dies hard, particularly in one that is in dire distress. Of the British Press the *News Chronicle* has frankly confessed that this is hardly the moment to send a Minister to Moscow. The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* have discovered in M. Molotov's speeches only "some kicks for Herr Hitler." But these organs of the Tory opinion in Britain have quite easily stomached the "kicks" that have been served out to the Government they represent. Or, perhaps they have managed to put on a jubilant face while the bruise is rankling within.

No peace in sight

People all over the world had for the last few days hoped in vain that peace was coming back, at least temporarily. Their hopes have now been dashed to the ground by the Fuehrer's speech. Herr Hitler has indulged in a lot of spectacular sabre-rattling and Mr. Chamberlain, in his turn, has answered the German Dictator by a good deal of equally spectacular boot-thudding. Herr Hitler has sought to push Britain to a tight corner by referring to her vaunted war aims and has quite relevantly raised the issue of Indian freedom, which the British Premier, in his reply, has discreetly chosen to side-track. The Dictator has issued orders to General Goering to prepare for five years' war to which Mr. Chamberlain has replied with the following words, "To those who speak no language but that of force, force is the only answer, and since we have been compelled to take arms, we shall not lay them down till we are assured that Europe has been freed from the threats which have so long paralysed the life of her peoples." From the raging temper both at Berlin and London it seems idle to expect peace in near future, unless circumstances on either side force the party to sue for it at any cost.

PURULIA FORWARD BLOC

A meeting of the Forward Bloc members of the Manbhum District Congress Committee and the Thana Congress Committee was held under the presidency of Pandit Sheelbhadra Yajce, M.L.A., General Secretary of the B. P. F. B. to elect office-bearers for the current year. The following office-bearers were elected: President:—Sj. Santosh Kumar Mitra, General Secretary:—Sj. Jagdish Chatterjee, Pleader, Treasurer:—Sj. Jagdish Chandra Roy Choudhury.

