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A POLITICAL WEEKLY

Editor :—SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

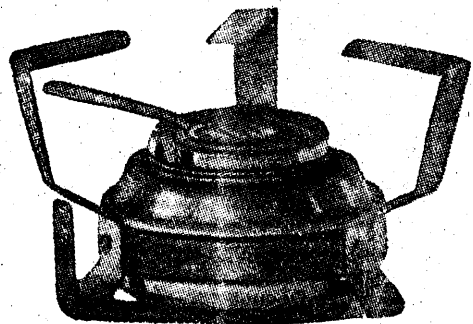
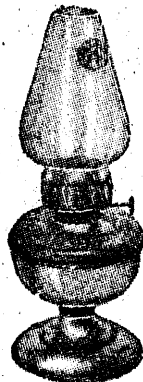
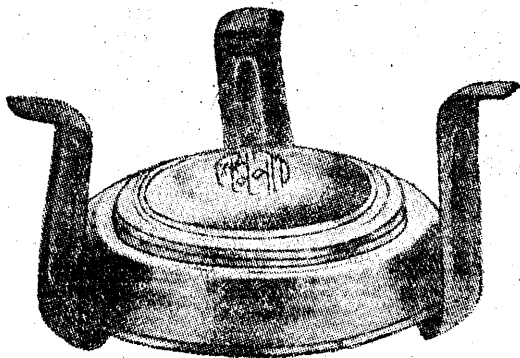
VOL I. No. 16

CALCUTTA, SATURDAY NOVEMBER 25, 1939

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Whom they fight?

As I glanced through this morning's papers, certain incongruous things struck my eye. On the first page—and perhaps in order of importance—comes the resolution on the Congress attitude towards the British Government. Then follows the time-table of the Rangarh Congress. Thereafter we come across a lengthy resolution on the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

The most significant sentence in the first resolution is as follows:—"The Working Committee will continue to explore all means of arriving at an honourable settlement, even though the British Government has banged the door in the face of the Congress", which when paraphrased should read "We shall continue to lick the feet of the British Government even though we have been kicked by them."

This is not Politics as we understand it or as the modern world understands it—but perhaps it is in accordance with Biblical or Vaishnavic traditions. Such a policy may appeal to one or to a few persons—but will it be acceptable to the nation that is more interested in freedom, which is a life-and-death question, than in the whims of individuals? It remains to be seen if the Indian people will repudiate a policy that demands that we should lick the feet that kick us.

In the same resolution appears the following:—"The Working Committee desire to make it clear that the true test of preparedness for Civil Disobedience lies in Congressmen themselves spinning and promoting the cause of Khadi to the exclusion of mill-cloth and deeming it their duty to establish harmony between the Communities by personal acts of service to those other than members of their own community and individual Hindu Congressmen seeking an occasion

for fraternising with Harijans as often as possible. The Congress organisations and Congressmen should, therefore, prepare for future action by promoting this programme....."

When we came to this part of the resolution, we rubbed and rubbed our eyes and once again glanced at the date of the paper—November 24, 1939. So in the year of grace 1939, a political party of the stature and importance of the Indian National Congress can put forward such a wonderful plan for preparing the country for Direct Action. There is no reference to enlistment of volunteers—no talk of cadres for a programme of Direct Action. There is no appeal to one's higher self which can send a thrill through his nerves and steel him for suffering and persecution. There is not a word about collection of funds either, which are the sinews of war, whether violent or non-violent. There is no direction, either, to wind up other unimportant affairs and clear the decks for action. We are told instead that the preparations for the Rangarh Congress, including the election of delegates, Presidential election etc. are to go on apace—as if nothing has happened or is to happen. But the Indian people are no longer as politically ignorant or unsophisticated to lay as they were some time back. Does not even a child know today that in a war emergency, the first step to be taken by any Government or Party is to postpone elections *sine die*?

Against this background stand in bold relief the statements issued from time to time by prominent members of the Working Committee, including Dr. Rajendra Prasad, to the effect that they hope and trust that it will soon be possible for the Congress Ministers to go back to office. What longing, tearful eyes they must still have to continue thinking of the vacant chair in such an atmosphere and in the midst of such an emergency. One wonders if they are losing all sense of national self-respect. And one is surprised and pained beyond measure to be reminded that in the midst of this tragic scene stands the lone figure of the ex-revolu-

tionary, ex-Leftist leader of India who had once emphatically declared to a worshipping world that in no circumstances would he accept a seat on a homogeneous Cabinet, whether of the Right or of the Left. Who can tell us if this solemn declaration could be reconciled with his present stand—his complete identification with the Rightist elements in the Congress and his complete disavowal of the Left-movement in the country?

Let us therefore be perfectly plain and brutally frank, despite the danger of treading on others' corns. Nothing will be gained by mincing matters in this fateful hour of our national history. Such resolutions of the Working Committee are mere verbosity, calculated to hoodwink and bluff the innocent people of this country. Mahatma Gandhi has been consistently telling us for a year or more that a national struggle is out of the question and that the country is not prepared for it—though it is a moot question as to who is not prepared, the country or the shining lights of the Working Committee. If the Mahatma had stood for a struggle from the beginning, much of the present controversy and dispute between the Right and the Left would not have arisen at all. Consequently, it would be futile to hope that at this late hour that he will go back on all that he has said and all that he has stood for, during the last twelve months. Pressure of events and the force of public opinion may make him do a lot, but they cannot induce him to launch a nation-wide struggle. It is one thing to take a plunge and enter a swimming-bout, it is quite a different thing to be pushed into the water from behind when the sight of it gives you cold hands and feet. Compare the inspiring articles of *Young India* of 1921 with the stuff that is now-a-days served out by the weekly *Harijan* and you will at once see the difference. It is a changing world that we are living in and as the world changes, so do the personalities who dominate it.

The problem today is not merely one of launching Direct Action. This has to be done effectively—if at all—otherwise it will amount to 'sabotaging' and not launching

Direct Action. There is also the further question of pursuing it to a victorious end and avoiding any half-way house along our path. Let us be perfectly frank once again and say that even if Direct Action is started by the present Working Committee, the Left will nurse the apprehension that Chauri Chaura and the Harijan Movement, or rather new forms of them, may appear any time and scotch our movement when it gathers strength and volume.

Is this apprehension justified—we may be asked? Of course, it is—otherwise the drive against the Left would not have continued with unabated ferocity even after the declaration of War. From all provinces news continue to pour in of this drive against the Left and in the case of the Forward Bloc it amounts to a vendetta. Naturally, the wrath of the Working Committee is concentrated on Bengal and the Bengal portfolio has been taken over by the President himself. The word has gone round throughout the province that one has only to send in a complaint direct to the Working Committee or to the President from any remote corner and he can rest assured that the Provincial Congress Committee will at once be summoned to the dock. The impartial observer consequently finds lip-homage paid to the ideals of unity and discipline in lengthy press statements but in actual practice, suppression and persecution of political opponents within the Congress. In the case of the British Government, you may undertake repeated pilgrimages to Viceroy's House and lick the feet that kick you. In the case of your Leftist colleagues, you may nevertheless consistently with your principles of Truth and Non-Violence, refrain from any demonstration of toleration, goodwill and generosity and continue with full wrath and ferocity a policy of vendetta.

What is the moral of this sordid story? It is this that for the Rightists, British Imperialism is a lesser enemy than Indian Leftism. You can compromise with the former, but in the case of the latter, war to the bitter end. And perhaps if British Imperialism strikes at Indian Leftism our Rightist friends will have no cause for regret.

"If India is to be freed, let her be freed by us or not at all"—so says a Bengali adage and so think our Rightists today.

Subhas Chandra Bose

Role of Youths in India

Our youngmen are not to dream dreams, nor our old men see visions. In a land like ours we have learnt to our bitter cost that dreams and visions are dangerous things. They have an "explosive quality" about them which may burst our shell of narrow existence. So, there is a social Explosives Act to keep us away from all dreams and visions—and, therefore, from "mischief".

But even the best of plans for peace are found to fail. And so even in India dangerous thoughts appear; forces, almost primaeval in character and urge, fight their way from unknown depths into the socio-economic life; our youths eagerly accept that "baptism of fire" and even our old men are kindled to their soul with a new light and a new hope.

So our youngmen dream dreams and our old men see visions—even though both are forbidden to do it. No, they must not do it:—they are the youths of an emasculated people, of an impoverished country; should they indulge in dreams? They are the citizens in a disarmed and enslaved nation, in a land where hungry mouths go without bread and die without regret; should they lose their head in weaving visions?

True, very true. But there is India, India of the Twentieth Century, India of 1939,—India at the crucial point of her history and the history of the world. Dreams come to youngmen, dreams come to the old—dreams that are more potent than the dirt of poverty and deadliness of bondage.

We are reminded of this noble truth as we read the Presidential Address of S. J. Sarat Chandra Bose at the Dhubri Students' Federation. Here is a man, no longer young in years, inviting in the quiet, forceful language of his mature thought his youthful hearers to the newly opened land of dreams and visions—of "constructive statesmanship."

Referring for this purpose to Kemal Ataturk, S. J. Basu reminded his Assamese friends:

"We also want that kind of foresight and vision, more especially because our goal will not be attained in a day, but will have to be striven for through years, in successive waves of active effort and organization. Such a campaign requires staying power, depending in its turn on constructive work, which alone can develop the full powers of the nation. This kind of work requires not only inherent gifts, but also training and habit. We cannot expect a far-reaching programme of national reconstruction to be conceived and carried through by persons who on getting the opportunity allow themselves to be so enmeshed in details and red tape that they feel like welcoming the first occasion when they would be relieved of their responsibilities. Nor can such a task be shouldered by men whose zeal for national reconstruction is satisfied with sanctioning some tube-wells here, a few charitable dispensaries there, and a dozen elementary schools at other places".

Boldly to conceive and more boldly to continue—that is what Indian reconstruction needs. And S. J. Basu avows: "It is here that I pin the greatest faith in the coming generation... I do not believe in isolating the youth of a country from public affairs". It is a pity that he has still to argue for this. They would not require it in Britain or hear it in Bohemia or Moravia where thousands are today dying for Czech liberty. Still S. J. Bose has to argue it:—"Without the vitalizing contact of public affairs youth is likely to become anaemic, morally speaking and wither in lackadaisical inanition. Athenians of the greatest age used to look upon a man who took no interest in public affairs not only as a harmless man but also as a useless one. I have found from experience that young men who have never felt about them the keen and bracing atmosphere of public affairs inevitably tend to lose their robustness, as also the highest attribute of youth—its activism. I do not want our young men to become over-protected and delicate hothouse plants.

"On the other hand, public affairs

gain a lot by keeping in touch with the idealism and fervour, and I may also add, even the impetuosity of youth. Practical politics, with its makeshifts and compromises, is one long second best in whose swirls those who are engaged with it often tend to lose their sense of the relative value of things and more often confuse means with ends. To them youth's criticisms come as a reminder of the true purpose of their activities. No one who is in politics will willingly forego that stimulus, although the flagging spirit of the elders might at times find the critics too meddlesome".

And the "constructive statesman" who can see such visions winds up with a bold word of caution that is as necessary for youths: "I do not like to see them used as political cannon-fooder." And, "We must not impose a preconceived and external system of values on youth, depriving them of free and responsible choice."

Freedom, therefore, youth must possess—and this freedom is perfectly consistent with discipline. "Discipline is a spontaneous and free-willed acquiescence in a higher moral law, through which alone are our anarchic and anti-social egotistical impulses permanently tamed. External compulsion never can and never will create this spirit. But faith, conviction and devotion, born and fostered in freedom, will. When in the life of an individual, this spirit is present, everything falls in its place—duty to one's fellow-men to one's country, to oneself; sacrifices become easy if the call comes; even without it life acquires a new meaning and value as if it was nourished from an eternal and invisible spring".

This spirit indeed is abroad in India—waiting to be "awakened to its full and fragrant bloom." So our youngmen dream dreams—the dreams that are to come true.

CURRENT COMMENTS

Repression is Rampant

While the Working Committee has been talking and talking and straining its ears for one more call from Delhi, Government has not

stopped pursuing a policy of repression with unabated zeal. Arrests, house searches and seizure of books on socialism have become the order of the day. Messrs. V. D. Tripathy, Maumatha Gupta, Bhagat Singh and a number of others have already fallen victims to this policy and it may be taken as certain that many more will gradually come under its broadening sweep. Ordinances have been promulgated in industrial areas in Behar with a view to suppress labour discontent and there is hardly any doubt that more of them will be set in operation in different parts of the country to gag "inconvenient" voices and draft away "unruly elements" from the scene. And the most tragic and shameful part of the story is that the Congress High Command, even in face of these circumstances, think of keeping the door open for—negotiation? Or repression?

A Stupid Excuse

To people in general the War has been an evil but to Sir Muhammad Saadulla and men of his ilk it has been a veritable boon. After being hounded out of the Ministerial *guddee* he was sitting on the fence, biding time and waiting for his chance. Now the opportunity has arrived and he has again stepped into the breach created by the resignation of the Bardoloi Ministry. But circumstanced as he is, Sir Saadulla is not destined to know rest and peace. As soon as he became installed in the *guddee*, no less than 59 members of the Opposition tabled no-confidence motions against his Ministry. Sir Saadulla, on his part, discreetly preferred to beat a hasty retreat before the stupendous onslaught, and, rather than fall shaft-ridden on the floor, he managed to get the Assembly adjourned for about 3 months. This has given him some breathing time and a chance to strengthen the ranks of his supporters by extension of patronage—a process that has already begun. The device has been too apparent to deceive anybody, but yet Sir Saadulla has now come forward with a face-saving explanation in support of his action. He has said that had the Assembly continued its session at present, the Congress Party would have brought

forward a resolution on War *which he does not approve!* (Italics ours) A more stupid excuse can hardly be conceived. According to all parliamentary canons, a motion, provided it is approved by the Speaker or the President, must have its way in a representative Assembly, no matter what the Premier and his Ministry may think of it. Could not Mr. Hockenhull, Sir Saadulla's patron, guide, philosopher and protector, invent a more plausible excuse for him?

Unity and Discipline

For some time past, Congressmen in general have been treated to lengthy sermons on unity and discipline by the High Command, including Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and others. Even the resolution adopted by the Working Committee at Allahabad has laid particular emphasis on the need of these two sublime virtues at the present critical hour. But it seems that according to the notion of these leaders, unity means conformity to a set pattern and discipline weeding out of all elements in the Congress that refuse to fall readily in line with them. We firmly believe that unity can be achieved in the course of a single day if the present leadership, instead of knocking again and again at the gate of the Viceregal lodge, takes a bold stand on the Congress resolutions on war and means seriously to implement them. If it cannot call up requisite courage for it, what is the use of these hollow wails about want of unity in Congress ranks? By the way, Pandit Jawaharlal was till the other day an uncompromising exponent of a composite Cabinet. But why has he now trooped into a homogeneous Rightist Cabinet? Will he please lay bare to the public the reasons of this *volte-face*?

Power of a Joke

The other day the German News Agency broadcast a joke of the Fuehrer. It is said that Herr Hitler in a recent speech asked jocularly of Britain, consistently with her professed "war aims" to grant complete independence to Ireland, India, Egypt—in fact, to all her

