

FORWARD BLOC

A POLITICAL WEEKLY

Editor :—SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

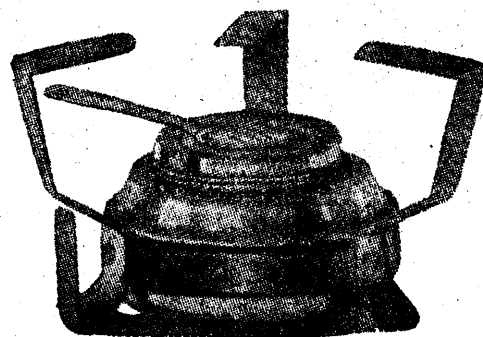
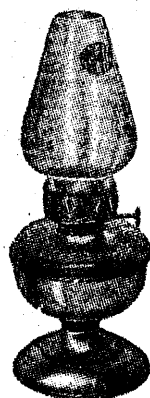
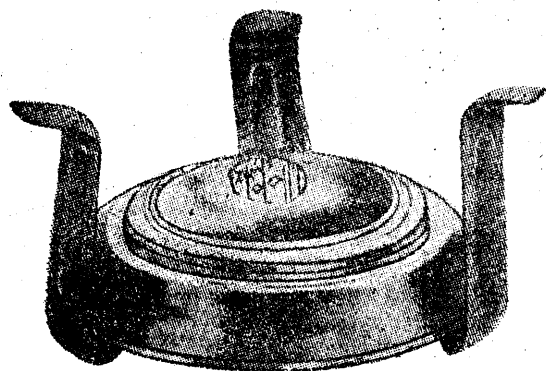
VOL I. No. 19

CALCUTTA, SATURDAY DECEMBER 16, 1939

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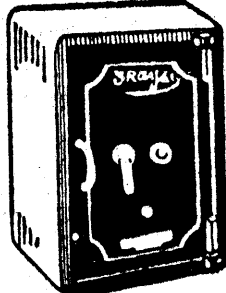
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Bombay Visit.



Babu Amrita Lall Kumar Proprietor of **BHARAT OIL MILL** who started for Bombay on his business purpose on the 27th Nov. has returned Calcutta on 12th Dec. by the Bombay Mail which reached Howrah at 10-39 A. M. (Calcutta Time). He was given a hearty welcome in the Howrah Station.

FORWARD BLOC

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

A Reminder

It may be remembered that soon after the inception of the Forward Bloc we had declared that in addition to working out the detailed programme adopted by it, the Bloc would aim at achieving a three-fold objective in the immediate future—firstly, Left-consolidation; secondly, conversion of the Congress to its own point of view and the establishment of real unity within the Congress and thirdly, the resumption of the national struggle in the name of the Congress. No occasion has arisen for altering this immediate objective in the light of subsequent events and in particular, the developments since September last. But a slight modification has become necessary. Owing to the pressure of events the tempo of our movement has perforce been accelerated. We cannot therefore wait till we can convert the majority in the Congress to our point of view and initiate a forward move in the name of the Congress. On the one hand, speedy action has become absolutely necessary, and on the other, the task of winning over the Congress majority has been made more difficult by the persistent drive against the Left and by various constitutional devices as well as executive acts of the Rightist leaders. The endeavour to convert the Congress majority will undoubtedly continue, as also the attempt to get the Congress to launch a forward move. But what if they do not fructify at once? Time and tide wait for no man and the world today is now advancing like a roaring cataract. In the present critical situation the Forward Bloc must be prepared to launch a forward move and to act in a dynamic way in the event of the Congress Working Committee holding back or staying its hands. We cannot afford to wait on the doorstep of Time for the day when we shall secure a majority in the Congress or succeed in having a forward

move adopted by the Congress itself. It sometimes happens in history that the vanguard has to act in advance of—and perhaps in temporary isolation from—the rest. Desperate situations need desperate remedies at times.

Two arguments will be advanced against such a policy. It will be argued by doctrinaire disciplinarians that if the Left-wing or the vanguard acts in this manner it will violate discipline and destroy organisational unity. By pseudo-pragmatists it will be argued that if the vanguard acts thus, it will isolate itself and thereby reduce itself to impotency—whereas it should in reality seek to isolate the Right-wing leadership from the rank and file.

To the first argument, our reply is that unity and discipline are not ends in themselves but means to an end. They have value in so far as they strengthen us for action and struggle and they are meaningless if they reduce us to inaction. To the second argument, our reply is that while there is a possibility that the vanguard may isolate itself from the rank and file if it adopts a dynamic policy—it is equally possible that in a crisis when action is paralysed owing to the influence of political Hamlets, a bold move on the part of the Left-wing may break the stalemate, bring the eager rank and file into the vortex and thereby isolate the Right-wing leadership from its erstwhile following. It would be a mistake to suppose that the isolation of the Right-wing Leadership can come only through steady propaganda or through local struggles in different parts of the country. It would be equally wrong to suppose that we should first bring about the isolation of the Rightists before we can look up to the Left-wing to launch a forward move on a national scale. We should never forget that under certain circumstances, the isolation of the Right-wing leadership can best be brought about by the Left-wing taking a leap in the dark, as it were, and initiating a dynamic policy. This may be an adventure of some sort—but not necessarily adventurism.

But how are we to judge if an adventure of this kind will lead to

the isolation of the Right-wing or of the Left-wing? It is difficult to answer such a question. It is largely a question of political instinct or intuition.

Today it is possible for us to cogitate as to what would have happened if Lenin's adventure had failed in 1917. What would have happened, we may also ask, if the Irish adventurers of 1916 had brought about their own political death by their rash and hasty action, instead of digging the grave of the Redmondite Party?

Consider again Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha of 1919 which not only misfired but landed the country in the Jallianwallabag tragedy. And what about Hitler's Munich Putsch of 1923 which was ridiculed by the whole world including the Germans themselves?

There is no similarity between such variegated scenes as those of Moscow, Dublin, Delhi and Munich—but the underlying moral is the same. There is no royal road for isolating an effete leadership. More often than not, bold action on the part of the vanguard becomes indispensable for bringing about such a consummation. And without the isolation of a worn-out leadership further progress is impossible of achievement.

For the new-born Forward Bloc the ninth of July was a formidable hurdle. There were many who apprehended an early death for the Bloc when it faced this hurdle so early in its career. But we were optimistic because we could feel the public pulse. Our anticipations were justified. The Forward Bloc emerged out of the ordeal with added strength and prestige. Subsequent persecution of our members has only speeded up our progress. The Bloc has come to stay and it has already become a factor in the public life of India which cannot be ignored—not even by the "Friend of India."

We had declared at the outset that the Forward Bloc was the product of historical and dialectical necessity. So it really is. But the "Forward Bloc" has to be forward in policy and in action if it is to justify its existence in future as

well. And if the "Forward Bloc" continues to be forward, everything will be well for the country and for itself.

Sulaiman Sulaiman

Builders of a New Order

Last week two universities held their annual convocation to which two persons of different kinds of distinction were called upon to deliver addresses. The speech of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu at the Nagpur University was, quite naturally, a jewelled mosaic of poetic sentiments clothed in appropriate language. She appealed to the students to break the narrow bounds of life, to look at things from an empyrean height and seek to refashion not only their own country but the whole world in a new mould. The world today is perceptibly in the throes of a new birth; visions of the Order-to-be have been bursting on us with an overwhelming force. The sound of its impending advent has touched the core of our heart and tingled into our veins. Should the students, Mrs. Naidu has asked, turn away from those inspiring visions and waste their youth, generous impulses and idealism in the cloistered seclusion of study-rooms? What is study for if it fails to galvanise life into noble activities? So the poetess has urged the students to rescue themselves from the thralldom of selfish calculations, to expand themselves, and project their beings into greater and greater heights. For this, complete dedication to the highest ideals of life is necessary. "I am a Brahmini" Mrs. Naidu has concluded her message, "I want 'bhiksha' from you, 'bhiksha' of your lives dedicated to the service of the country and the humanity.

The poetess, true to her vocation, has given the students more a glimpse of the Heaven than of the Earth below. She has sung, so to say, a celestial song. Sir Mahammed Sulaiman, who delivered address at the Lucknow University convocation, may be said to have supplemented Mrs. Naidu and filled in the picture. The two addresses,

taken together, have set forth a complete ideal to the students. A great scientist, Sir Sulaiman has talked practical things in almost matter-of-fact accents. He has not soared up to the sky, but has kept close to the earth. The ideal that he has held up to the students is more concrete, more true to the realities of life than the ivory abstractions of the poetess. "The vital problems of life in the country," the scientist has said, "call for a national solution in which individual gains and losses alone donot signify much. The great problem of Indian poverty, for instance, cannot be solved by adding a few more wealthy people to the community. The root causes which go to encourage wasteful habits and uneconomic living have to be removed." As we have said before, both these ideals must join together to make one whole. Abstract idealism, divorced from mundane realities, may fret, foam and at last waste itself in the thin air of the sky; on the other hand, mere practicality, torn away from the bracing expansiveness of the empyrean, may degenerate into crass earthiness. Science has got to be poetised. Idealism has to be infused into the dry bones of realities to create a new vision for the youths of today to which they will strive to give a practical shape in the Order of the Morrow. Not that each of the addresses had not the implications of fullness in it. But the one shed more light, more colour on the other. So, though each important in its own way, the two together had the distinction of unique comprehensiveness of idealism.

The world, as has been said before, is now in a travail due to the surge of a new spirit. The students of our country, as elsewhere, shall have to address themselves to the inspiring task of threshing out order from the chaos. It is the peculiar luck of the youths of the present generation and they should thank their stars that they have been born at the threshold of a new era from where they may hear the rumblings of impending revolutionary changes. Let them forge ahead, strike at the untruth with all their might and help in building a fresh world on the foundations of

love, justice, freedom and equality. The Heaven from above is bending down to meet the Earth, let the youths come forward to celebrate their glorious nuptial. May they not lag behind now and then repent afterwards :

Beauty the Pilgrim
Came to my door ;
But I was busy
Counting my store ;
And when I looked up
Where day had shone,
My store was withered away
And Beauty gone.

Russia and The League

"Beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye." Had Jesus Christ been alive today he would surely have said this to the honest England, France and the Liliputian Latin American States, who, due to the unbearable sting of conscience for defending a helpless nation like Finland from the claws of a Devil, have merrily slammed the door of the Holy Temple, the League of Nations, on the face of Russia with a bang. Russia has no right to trample the stairs of this sacred temple so long he does not forsake the ignoble spirit of aggression. Russia has been condemned as a Phillistine by the chosen Disciples of Europe and America and this indictment Russia has welcomed without even faintest stir or murmur. The Tribunal of Nations has delivered its judgment and the criminal accepts that in toto.

We had had lofty ideals of the *civitas maxima* of mankind before, of the glorious Parliament of Man and Federation of the World, of morality in International Law and such other things. We had had enough of these sickening cants and sentimental oozings when the League of Nations was born amidst the applause of the victorious and the wailing of the vanquished Nations. We have watched since its birth its growth of what it is today. We need not re-iterate them in details here as they are too green in the memory of the world. What is the League of

Nations? It is mainly a facade of Internationalism which the British and French ruling classes use to hide their imperialist interests. The League, as it is, has no sovereignty of its own, save the collective sovereignty of different nations. It ought to have been a League with a Will to international peace and security composed of the individual wills of nations. But there is a wide gulf between what it ought to have been and what it is today. Today it is a playground of rampant inequity. Today it is an instrument in the hands of a few nations, interested neither in peace nor in democracy, but in the subjugation and exploitation of nations. If there was any State which tried to give it its true shape, it was Soviet Russia. Since 1934, Russia has been endeavouring to fulfil its aims of peace and democracy, but it has miserably failed. We have heard the ravings of Simon, Hoare and Halifax at Geneva. We have seen Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain, Czecho-Slovakia, sanctimoniously sacrificed at the altar of the Big Powers at Geneva. That is too tedious a story to repeat here. What is significant is that the League has been sabotaged, mainly by Britain and France, despite the repeated attempts of the Soviet Union. Britain and France, to be frank, have so long tried to turn the League into an anti-Soviet League of Nations. So, Russia has been disillusioned about the Democracies. Once Russia joined the League out of its own will and with an aim. Today it is hounded out of the League against its will. Never the less, its aim remains unchanged. The world knows, nay, it is the verdict of history, that an ideal, if it is true and just, never dies. Halifax may whine and Kallo may whimper. The sham ideal of Democracy and Peace which has lived in dust, will, by the marching humanity be, finally, trampled into dust and die. The red horizon of a new morning woos the people of the world today and they will move on. Russia will live and lead.

CURRENT COMMENTS

An Ominous Speech

The speech which his Excellency Sir John Herbert delivered in reply to the address of welcome presented by the European Association is the first political utterance by the new Governor of Bengal. We regret he has not deviated from the beaten track. One part of his speech, however, is ominous, namely his reference to the menace of terrorism. He thanks the European Association "for your assurance of support should revolutionary activity once more become a menace to the peace of the province." His Excellency goes on to say: "It is no use being blind to the fact that there are still in India those who have not abandoned the prospect of attaining their political objectives by ultimate, if not by immediate, violence; there are also those who, if internal disturbances were to accompany a period of war-time stress, would be sorely tempted to adopt at an earlier stage those methods of violence which in more normal times, their own prudence would counsel them to postpone."

We have said that this part of his Excellency's speech is ominous. It may be a hint of a spell of repression. His Excellency has been in this province only for a few weeks, and he cannot have any personal knowledge of its politics. He should have known that the political prisoners and detenus who have only been recently released have abjured faith in methods of violence, and those of them who do any political work have deliberately accepted the method and the creed of the Indian National Congress. If passion for independence and normal Congress activity are "revolutionary activity," well, it is there. It is no use distorting facts. Articles in the *Statesman* have laid the ground for repression. And this speech before the European Association may be read as a hint and a shadow of coming "events." Already the "unremitting vigilance" of the underlings of the police has made the life of political workers a tiresome burden.

Bengal's Dietary.

In recent years the attention of the Bengali people has often been drawn to the poor dietary of the people of the province. The appeals made so far to improve the dietary have come from experts and propagandists and have not, so to say, gone home. Rabindranath has now added the weight of his name to this appeal, and it cannot go unheeded. If Bengal must live, it is not enough that she should show the value and the vitality of her intelligence and culture. Her people must possess ample physical strength and feel their life in every limb. In the course of an address at the Corporation Commercial Museum Rabindranath said that among their various national activities the improvement of their dietary should occupy a prominent place. "It would not do to forget that owing to the deficiency in the nutritive value of their daily food their vitality was being sapped. Fine milled rice, mustard oil crushed in mills, and too many spices have robbed the daily food of the Bengali people of its nutritive value. "In life's struggle," said Rabindranath, "Bengalis were being left in everything, big or small," and he attributed this calamity to the loss of strength caused by consumption of unnutritive food. The improvement of Bengal's dietary has become a national problem.

The Study of History

Dr. R. C. Mazumdar, as president of the third session of the Indian Historical Congress, has said that history, if it is to be of value to mankind, must be written and studied as a science. It must have an all-embracing view, and it must regard the unity of the world, and the unity and the continuity of world affairs. The historian is not only a story teller but a witness bound to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Dr. Mazumdar has laid special emphasis on Indian history and the dangers and difficulties that beset the historian of India, and the student of Indian history. Let us quote the words of Dr. Mazumdar:

"The Provincial outlook, in historical studies as in political and

