

Stem the Rot

# FORWARD BLOC

A POLITICAL WEEKLY

Editor :—SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

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## FORWARD BLOC

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

*Stem the Rot*

The air is thick with rumours of persistent efforts at a compromise between the Congress High Command and the British Government. Circles in close touch with our Ex-Ministers are greatly interested and feel optimistic about an early return of the Congress Ministries. There are two theories afloat at the present moment. Some surmise that the Ramgarh Congress will be presented with a *fait accompli*. Others hold that the Ramgarh Congress will vest the Working Committee or Mahatma Gandhi with plenary powers and that the compromise will follow and not precede the Congress session. The first theory appears to us to be improbable. Whether the second will fructify remains to be seen. What is certain is that both Mahatma Gandhi and the British Government are keen on a compromise. Gandhiji wants to win Swaraj without a fight. The Government would welcome a compromise before the Spring offensive on the Western Front begins. At the time of writing it still appears unlikely that the British Government will concede the minimum that Gandhiji would demand for effecting a compromise. We are referring to Gandhiji alone, because the Working Committee has made him the Sole Dictator.

What is troubling the British Government and is preventing it from going far enough in the direction of meeting the Indian demand is its impression that the Congress will not ultimately show fight. Despite the new situation created by the European War, the British Government has not discarded its age-long habit of making concessions too inadequately and too late. We also know from experience that even when concessions do come, they are granted half-heartedly and they consequently lack generosity

and good grace. Consequently, it is quite on the cards that despite the keenness of both parties, the proposed compromise may not come off.

Another thorn in the path of a compromise is the attitude of the British Government towards the Indian minorities: The former is not yet ready to give up playing with the latter or using them as a lever against the Congress. But the latest reports go to show that if a compromise with the Congress High Command could be arranged the Government would be prepared to let down the Muslim League. The recent editorial comments in the *London Times* and other British journals lend colour to this view. Should the British Government come to an understanding with Gandhiji behind the back of the Muslim League, it appears to us inevitable that both the Congress and the Muslim League will split. Within the Congress, Gandhiji and all those who stand by him will line up with British Imperialism. On the other side, the loyalist elements in the Muslim League, being under the thumb of the British Government, will break away from Mr. Jinnah and the progressive section who are influential in the League Council today.

It is high time that we seriously contemplated what would happen in the event of the Congress High Command compromising with the Government. It is but natural that in the name of unity and discipline, the Rightists should try to force the compromise down the throats of dissident members. The former hope that a majority decision will silence the latter, just as the campaign against the acceptance of ministerial office in the provinces was liquidated as soon as the All India Congress Committee decided in favour of office-acceptance. But what will the dissenting Leftists do on this occasion?

It would be hazardous now to make a prediction on behalf of the entire Left. For the present, we shall speak only on behalf of the Forward Bloc. The Bloc cannot accept a compromise with British Imperialism. This would be altogether inconsistent

with our goal of Purna Swaraj. We shall therefore be constrained to declare that we are not bound by the compromise and that we shall continue the fight for independence. The compromise-wallahs will, in our view, be guilty of two crimes—firstly, abandoning the objective of independence and secondly, giving up the method of non-cooperation and Satyagraha. We shall, therefore, be perfectly justified in declaring that the compromise-wallahs having given up the essentials of the Congress, automatically cease to be Congressmen. Should they persist in their folly or in sticking to the Congress, we would be further justified in expelling them from the Congress.

For the Congress is essentially and fundamentally an organisation which stands for complete independence and the method it has adopted is that of non-cooperation and Satyagraha. If a Congressman abandons these essentials and fundamentals he automatically ceases to be a Congressman. And if the Congress to-morrow gives up its fundamental objective and method, it will cease to be the Indian National Congress with which we have been familiar since 1920. With the voluntary withdrawal or expulsion from the Congress of the compromise-wallahs, the Congress will be restored to its former status and will become once again the revolutionary organisation that it should always be. Why should we secede from the Congress and allow the back-sliders to inherit the name and the traditions of that body? The latter should be expelled and it will be for them to set up a parallel organisation if they so desire. The Congress should belong exclusively to those who stand for independence and carry on the struggle for it.

We realise that the compromise-wallahs may not voluntarily withdraw from the Congress and may, with the help of a packed majority, continue exploiting the name of that body. In that event one can visualise two Congresses. It will then be for the people—for the masses—to decide and declare which is their Congress. About their answer, we have no doubt

in our minds—for the masses are with us. The united Left has a very much larger following than the united Right, despite the prestige of Mahatma Gandhi's name. What, after all, is the following of the present Congress Working Committee without the support of the Left Wing. It does not command the confidence of the organised peasantry, of the organised workers, of the organised youths, of the organised students and of the minorities. Consequently, with such a slender following, can they deliver the goods on behalf of the Indian people? The answer is obvious.

Without waiting for the day when the Rightists will succeed in effecting a compromise, we should, from now, try our level best to frustrate all efforts in that direction. With a view to that end, an Anti-compromise Conference is being arranged at Ramgarh at the time the Congress is to meet. All Leftists and Leftist organisations in the country should muster strong at Ramgarh on the 18th and 19th March and help to make the Anti-compromise Conference a complete success. We have no doubt in our minds that if this Conference proves to be a success it will automatically put an end to all efforts at a compromise and it will thereby save the Congress and the country from a national calamity.

The Bihar Provincial Kishan Sabha is organising a peasants' rally at Ramgarh which will be attended by two lacs of Kishans. It is also proposed to hold the All India Conference of the Forward Bloc at Ramgarh at or about the time the Congress meets. The occasion may therefore be opportune for holding an All India Anti-compromise Conference. We hope that this Conference will be held and the Leftists and Leftist organisations all over India will muster strong with a view to make this Anti-compromise Conference a complete success. This Conference will serve to end all talk of a compromise and stem the rot that has set in.

Meanwhile may we not appeal to Mahatma Gandhi to give up

these long and tiresome journeys to Viceroy's House and to come and stand at the head of his countrymen as he did in 1920?

*Sukhdev Dutt*

## A PERTINENT QUERY

The Independence Pledge has made the *Statesman* angry and naturally in two of its recent editorial articles it has ranted and raved to its heart's content. The four-fold ruin that the British conquest of this country has brought in its trail has been characterised by the "Friend of India" as a "foul and abominable lie" and it has gone on to propound the thesis that Britain's possession of the vast and fabulously rich Eastern land and her continued holding on to it has been an act of pure altruism on her part and that India has profited tremendously by her subjection to a nation from the far-off Isles. We are not, however, amazed that our contemporary, bred on the true Kiplingian tradition, has ventured once more to put forth this myth of an argument in defence of British imperialism gripping on India; it has been dinned into our ears so often that we have almost become used to it. But what has really surprised us is that although the Pledge has stood for a decade, although it has been repeated from thousand platforms by millions of freedom-hungry population from year to year with all the solemnity of a religious ceremony, why has the *Statesman* lapsed into an unbridled fury *this time* and indulged in vituperation exceeding the limits of bare decency? Coming events, they say, cast their shadows before and has this exponent of vested British

interests been appalled at the impending loss of India on whose vast resources countless Britons have sponged at will and fattened themselves? How else to explain these rabid outbursts on the part of our contemporary?

The *Statesman* has sought to make out a case for British rule in India by pointing its finger to a page of our history. That our country fell on dark days just on the eve of the advent of the Britishers, is denied by no body today; that the liberal ideas that they brought along with them quickened our moribund national life, is an admitted fact. But even on this score Britain has not much to be proud of. Ideas are not in the nature of trade monopolies and the wave of liberalism that swept over Europe at that time would have broken all barriers, crossed the seas and reached the Eastern shores a day sooner or later. It is a stark truth that Englishmen did not come to this country primarily on a cultural or philanthropic mission and left its shores when this laudable task was done. Their chief object was to drain off the wealth of the land and with this end in view they went on tightening their grip on it by and by till they succeeded in stepping on to the supremely privileged position of the administrators. From that time on economic exploitation has proceeded along with cultural doping, the latter as an aid to the former. Lord Macaulay, that scurrilous calumniator of the Indians, pushed on vigorously with his mission of anglicisation. But some spiritual giants in the persons of Ram Mohun, Vivekananda, Dayananda, Vidyasagar and others appeared in time to stem its onrush which had already thrown many an Indian off

his feet. The soul of India thus survived the subtle strangulation, gradually recovered itself and has today become fully triumphant. The *Statesman* has observed that it is not complimentary to the Indians themselves that they succumbed to an alien culture. We agree. But it was not unnatural for the weaker spirits to have yielded to the sedulous propaganda that all that the Englishmen stood for was good and noble and the culture of India was no better than a bundle of irrational prejudices. Further, the temptation of material advance as a result of ready conversion to English ways had also its part in the game of seduction. Even today there are men and women among us who take an abnormal pleasure in aping the manners of the rulers. They are the waifs of the society and the awakened nationhood of India is really ashamed of them.

This is only one side of the picture. The *Statesman* has also described graphically how England sends the very flowers of her youth to India and gets back some pitiable wrecks—parched in brains, perverted in nature, in fact, some extremely sorry specimens of humanity who are insufferable nuisances even to their own servants. There is nothing to wonder at it. Dr. Tagore in one of his memorable poems has said that slavery is a double-edged evil, it debases both the serfs as well as the masters. People here will testify that their degradation begins as soon as they arrive in this country and start on their professional career. Either pressed to an uniformly boorish pattern by the bureaucratic machine or pampered beyond all deserts on the score of skin, they become thoroughly spoiled before they set

out for their home. And if, as the *Statesman* asserts, India has been a losing concern to Britain for the sacrifice of the best manhood that this country calls forth, in spite of the piles that she carries off from here, can it not be quite pertinently asked why this pathetic eagerness on the part of Englishmen for clinging on to the Indian soil and having the upperhand in the affairs of this country? Is it not better for them to leave India bag and baggage so that she may achieve her destiny in an unfettered way

## CURRENT COMMENTS

### "Bengal Congress Day"

The 11th February has been fixed as the Bengal Congress Day. We hope Congressmen all over the province will faithfully carry out the instructions issued by the secretary of the B.P.C.C. The authoritarian methods of the Wardha Rump have brought the great national organisation to a very sorry pass. It appears clear that the High Command is bent on a compromise with British imperialism resulting in a sabotage of the National Cause. That is the reason of the present ruthless drive against the Left in all provinces and specially in Bengal which is proud to have the largest Leftist contingent. An unbending stand has to be taken against the present drift of the Congress and its true character restored, for, as the exponent of the Nation's hopes and aspirations it is greater than any particular leadership that may for the time being hold the field. The 11th February will provide an occasion to all Congressmen in Bengal to register their emphatic protest against the compromising

ways of the High Command. May they rise to the height of the solemn occasion.

### Whither Congress?

How can it be explained, legions of puzzled people have queried us that on return from the Viceregal Lodge the other day Gandhiji gave out that the difference between the Government and the Congress was "vital" and yet only a few hours after at Jhansi he declared that the talks were "only suspended" and still he was hopeful of Swaraj without a struggle? We frankly confessed to our interrogators that we, too, fully shared their confusion. But as days are going by, we seem to be approaching a solution to the riddle. The Government is adamant so far as its withdrawal from the scene of constitution-making is concerned, as is evident from Lord Linlithgow's renewed assurance to Mr. Jinnah to safeguard the "legitimate interests" of the minorities. But that does not matter much. There has been taking place a definite climb-down on the other side. The steady rapidity with which the idea of a Constituent Assembly is undergoing dilution, can leave no doubt whatsoever as to which way the wind is blowing. Some time ago Shri Rajagopalchariar talked of a small body to frame a constitution for India and the inimitable Mr. Satyapuri gleefully jumped on the scene to say ditto to it. Sardar Patel opined a few days ago at Surat that "if a Constituent Assembly elected by an electorate based on adult franchise is considered impracticable, a substitute on the basis of the present provincial franchise will do." As the Congress demand is watering down apace, it seems that if the Government is not found agreeable even to this modest proposal, there

may be a fresh offer from the other side to settle things through a Gandhi-Jinnah-Ambedkar meeting. It is not difficult to anticipate its outcome. The whole show may fizzle out. And if a settlement can be threshed out, possibly that will be sought to be passed off as Purna Swaraj.

### Pandit Nehru's 'Indignation'

The *National Herald*, Pandit Nehru's paper, has given the following picturesque description of one of the recent speeches of its Boss. "Pandit Nehru's voice quivered with indignation when he referred to those who talked of Dominion Status." It is neither unusual nor surprising. For it has been seen on innumerable occasions that away from Wardha the Pandit roars, then on its way he begins to cool down and when he reaches the place he turns into a veritable lamp. We would like to put in a simple query to our Allahabad contemporary: if the Pandit is such an indignant protestant against Dominion Status, how could he lend his support to the proposal empowering Gandhiji to negotiate terms on the basis of the Viceroy's Bombay speech? Let it think out a plausible explanation which will at least save the face of its Boss, even if it can not convince the public.

### No Peace in Sight

"We rejoice to think" Mr. Chamberlain has said, "that the help given from England has been of real value to Finland. Further aid is on the way." It is clear that Britain has now thrown off the mask and is going to help Finland openly. A few days ago M. Daladier too, openly assured French support to the Finns. This intervention of the Allies in the Russo-Finnish scuffle can have only one

effect: it will throw Stalin more closely into the arms of the Fuehrer and Russo-German *entente* will be greatly cemented. In view of this fresh development in the war situation, the hope of early peace seems to be but a mirage. And Goering's reported offer of a six-point settlement strikes as nothing more a catching newspaper scoop.

### Excess Profits Tax

The proposed Excess Profits Tax has raised a furore in the Indian Big Money circles. Frankly speaking, we have hardly been able to account for it. There is no denying the fact that to the commercial magnates the excess profits caused by the war have been in the nature of an unearned increment—a veritable windfall. Their owners have hardly done anything

to deserve them. And if there be no getting away from a tax to help on the war finances, what can be more taxable incomes than those on which it has been levied? Of course, some mitigation of its heaviness may be pleaded for with some justification, for 50 p.c., after all, is too much. But that does not take away the essential reasonableness of the proposed tax. One of our contemporaries has been somewhat surprised at Sj. Bhulabhai Desai's downright condemnation of the tax. How can the Congress, it has argued, which has identified itself with the poor man, have any objection to this imposition? We are no less surprised than our contemporary at its naive credulity. Really, things are not always what they seem and test cases come occasionally to prick the bubble.

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