

FORWARD BLOC

A POLITICAL WEEKLY

Editor : SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE



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CALCUTTA, SATURDAY, MAY 25, 1940

ONE ANNA

An advertisement for Everest Eng. Co. featuring a black and white photograph of a baby lying in bed, looking up at a ceiling fan. The fan is the product being advertised. The text "How Sweet" is written in a cursive font above the fan. To the right of the fan, the text "FOR EFFICIENCY COMFORT & ECONOMY" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the advertisement, the text "EVEREST ENG. CO." is written in a bold, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner, there is a circular logo with the letters "E&A" inside. Below the logo, the text "E-2 AURORA" is visible.

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How Sweet

FOR EFFICIENCY COMFORT & ECONOMY

EVEREST ENG. CO.

E-2 AURORA

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FORWARD BLOC

SATURDAY, MAY 25

Hour of Trial

The War in Europe rages with that terrible ferocity which puts all calculations to shame. Amien and Arras return to memory again after 1914 and the Somme is again the line on which the fortunes of thousands of men are staked. While the fields of Flanders are again watered with human blood, the German troops have entered Boulogne. Abbeville fell to them and the French Channel coast is likely to see them, pounding the busy little towns to dust as they enter or retire. Fortune may not favour the Belgian and French Channel puts the same way as she did in the last war. As we have stated it repeatedly that Germany more than ever thinks that only a direct blow on England, the heart of the British Empire, would settle the issues. The present operations, therefore, are full of mighty consequences for the Germans. "They are throwing into the battle all their reserves of mechanized material. The operations in Northern France and Belgium are believed to comprise the first part of Hitler's plan....The second phase of the plan would be a direct attack against Britain."

"A decisive struggle is now upon us", declared King George VI broadcasting an Empire Day message, which speaks plainly in "this hour of trial." At home, the British Parliament in course of two hours presented the person and property of the British men and women to the state. Thus must Churchill's anti-socialistic mission save itself by this device of war-time socialism. The 'fifth column' is being hounded out. Mosley and his compatriots are under arrest. And Sir Strafford Cripps may be sent to Moscow to negotiate for a trade pact. Ireland, it is feared, may serve as the landing ground of the invading parachutists from across the channel while the English towns and cities are certainly, inspite of

the barricades of coastal artillery, anti-aircraft guns, and the British 'Fighter', in danger of the German 'bombers' raining havoc on them. It is easier to dislocate the life of an industrialised people with heavy bombing than that of the scattered rural population of a less economically developed nation. Britain, as a bombing objective, is an alluring, and as Hitler conceives it, decisive proposition. The vast Empire will be of little help and less consolation to the Britisher at home, when the smoking ruins and dying faces will bring consternation into their homeless hearts. The Empire itself will be a burden in the face of this *Blitzkrieg*—far-flung as the Empire is, and, incapable of offering the resources so quickly as the situation demands. On the contrary, it will detain the forces that usually Britain could count on. Thus, in the Far East — at Singapore, the British Far Eastern naval units must wait for any developments in the Dutch East Indies and Hongkong and Australia, in the Mediterranean, the great Mediterranean fleet cannot stir out of the sea when Gibraltar of British women and children, has to be evacuated and Rome is openly avowing herself to be more hostile than friendly to Britain. "Defeat", reminds the King of Britain, "will not mean some brief eclipse from which we shall emerge with our strength renewed", and "it is no mere territorial conquest our enemies are seeking. It is the overthrow, complete and final, of this Empire".

The overthrow, complete and final,—how incredibly the words sound as they come from the lips of our Emperor. Many in India can hardly believe that England can be defeated. Yet Englishmen, in spite of their will to victory, cannot ward off that thought from their mind. The hour of trial for the British Empire, we should know, is doubly an hour of trial for India, as we warned when the war began. The Empire of course is not ours. No, it is not. The proud and patriotic Englishmen have not failed to remind us of this fact. "There is a word which our enemies use against us—Imperialism," said the Emperor, on the Empire Day, the day that itself supported the

enemy's contention. The enemy may be an aspirant for the very same thing, a share in the spoils of peoples; but the truth of it for the reason is not disproved. Britain has an Empire, and, her Imperialism has killed many a people materially and spiritually. So much so, that when the Empire is in danger, these unmanned people cannot even realise that fact nor dare realise their chance for a better, healthier and manly existence. Let us face realities. We are doubly on our trial—and we are failing in it. If we are too weak to realise our freedom, we may be left to our fate any day by the masters who may be forced to leave us free. Our leaders are overwhelmed, it appears, at the very prospect. They would want the Empire to last and India to be free! So, slavish persiflages reign. Cliches dominate the thought. But effete chivalry cannot deceive the world or remove the canker of the soul of which it is the symptom.

The Communal Problem

It is but a truism that for a nation in bondage freedom is the greatest necessity and all other considerations must be subordinate to it. While a foreign power still holds the reins, it is not only a grave folly but positive crime to wrangle among ourselves, for in our differences that power will seek to entrench itself and continue its domination. This ought to be the normal consciousness among us—all sections of Indians—but at the present hour its need is felt to be all the more imperative. In view of the deadly grapple in which Britain is engaged today, it will not be possible for her to retain the imperial sceptre in her close grip for long and the disintegration of the empire seems but imminent. What we require today is to stand together with our national demand, press for and if need be, enforce its acceptance, and once freedom is won, to devise means to preserve it from all external aggression.

In this view of the situation we have started by saying that the question of Indian unity has today come to the fore and in this crucial hour it does not behove us to treat

it lightly or shilly-shally with it lest the cause on which we have staked our all is lost by our indecision or obstinacy. For the present we leave other aspects of the problem of unity and concentrate ourselves on the communal issue. We believe—and we have never concealed it—that it is the presence of a foreign ruling power in our midst that has complicated the communal problem beyond measure and made it so baffling to us. Some of our Muslim brethren deny it outright and dismiss it as a figment of imagination. To them we want to pose a few questions. It is true that the Muslims came here as conquering hordes but unlike Scythians and Huns and others, they settled in this land and made it their home. For centuries they have lived here side by side with the Hindus and other communities, ruled empires, broadened and enriched Indian culture by their distinctive gifts and at a fateful turn of Indian history passed into slavery along with others. During this long period when did the communal problem raise its hideous head in our midst? Did it make its appearance even in the early years of British rule when all the administrative authority was held fast by a foreign nation? Did it not first emerge into our ken with the gift of a few crumbs of privileges and concessions by our common masters? Further, has it not become all the more serious with the addition of more crumbs with the passage of time? And is not therefore, the whole communal problem the direct out come of our national slavery and will it not automatically be solved when the foreign yoke will be overthrown by common efforts?

A section of Muslims have today raised the cry of separate nationhood for themselves. They want parcel out of the country and take parts to it as their exclusive homeland. After all, the sense of composite nationhood is a matter of feeling and as an example it is worth noting that in England today the Welsh and the Scotch have formed an indivisible part of the British nation, while the Irish have refused to be merged into it. Our question, again, to the exponents of the two-nation theory is that, do they genuinely feel that they are

an entity apart from the rest? Their present claim is palpably against the verdict of history and we, therefore, refuse to believe that they feel like that. In the course association for countries and consequent interchange of ideas and ideals, both Hindus and Muslim have evolved a composite culture which has imprinted its stamp on the arts, architecture, and even religions of India. It is very difficult to turn back the continuous flow of history and as a matter of fact, we believe that the present separatist mentality of the Muslims is a faked creation, the psychological result of wishful thinking against the vicious background of foreign domination. We appeal to our Muslim friends with all the earnestness we command to rid themselves of the narrow sectarianism with which they seem to have been possessed today. It is certainly not in tune with their great Islamic traditions. Moreover, communalism is a contagious evil as we have been witnessing to our bitter cost today. Its ugly manifestations on both sides have made us really apprehensive about the future of our dear motherland. Unless it is scotched and buried fathoms deep today, it will not only impede the march of the nation to its goal but will even prevent it from holding the treasure of freedom when it will be won. Particularly at the present hour when an united front is an essential necessity, communal compartmentalism must have to be levelled down by all means and a settlement achieved quickly. Why are the Muslims more afraid of Congressmen than of the Britishers? Should not the clear assurance of Mahatma Gandhi that "the Muslims alone have the right to dictate what safeguards they want and these should be accepted by the Hindus as the basis of any compromise to secure Hindu-Muslim unity" set all their fanciful fears at rest? Providence has irrevocably linked their fates with the destinies of India. They should, therefore, square up their accounts with the Hindus at least in a spirit of justice, if not of generosity. They should then face the rulers with the demand for complete national freedom. Posterity will not forgive them if they fail in this crucial hour. We

again appeal to them, awake to realities and be sensible, lest you miss the chance and then repent.

CURRENT COMMENTS

Mr. Amery speaks out

Mr. L. S. Amery had his first say about India on Thursday last after his appointment as the Secretary of State for this country and thereby he quite revealed himself and his Government. On going through his speech we could not help wondering if there are some set phrases cold-stored in some archive of Downing Street for use by successive Cabinets so far as India is concerned. Change in personnel does not alter them, nor, what is stranger still, change in the situation. Scan the speech of Mr. Amery and compare it with any of the utterances of Lord Zetland and the truth of our observation will be amply borne out. There will be found the same stereotyped references to "goal of British policy" "legitimate claims of all communities and interests" and "cleavage of opinion in India." Statesmen-like imagination is conspicuous by its absence and it seems too much to hope that it will ever dawn in Downing Street. What about Messrs. Attlee and Morrison now? Have they managed to change colour so soon after joining the new company? It is really surprising that even in view of this attitude of the Government, there are some, even among Congressmen, who are addressing appeals to India to settle up things with Britain immediately. To such Congressmen with wagging tongues Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru has recently dealt out a smart slap which, we hope, will go home. As for enthusiasts like Sapru, Sircar and Setalvad, we can only say that we need not take them seriously. In the very nature of things, their utterances are bound to be tuned to a certain key.

Democracy—Living or Dead?

The world has entered the period of peril. Humanity is threatened with the total annihilation of life and culture. And in its frantic effort to build up a system that

