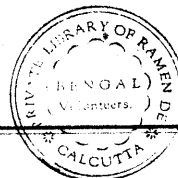


# FORWARD BLOC

A POLITICAL WEEKLY

Editor : SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE



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CALCUTTA, SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 1940

ONE ANNA

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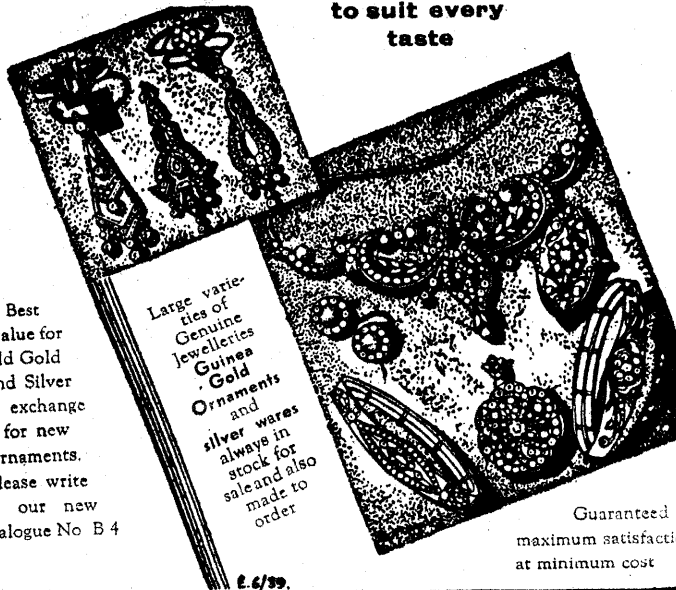
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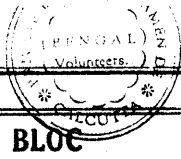
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FORWARD BLOC

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

*Forward, Bengal!*

It is not generally known outside Bengal that after the outbreak of war in Europe, Emergency Ordinances were promulgated in that province which virtually strangled public life there. In the matter of rigour and ruthlessness, the "Ordinance Raj" introduced in other provinces administered by Congress Ministries could not stand a moment's comparison with what obtained in Bengal. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee waited for nearly five months to see if the Bengal Government would alter their ways and the latter were actually advised by influential quarters to do so, but to no avail. During these five months, the Congress Working Committee had to be approached three times for permission to start Civil Disobedience as a protest against the Ordinances.

By the middle of January, the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee reached the limit of patience and it decided to start a campaign of Civil Disobedience before the month was out. The most obnoxious feature in the "Ordinance Raj" was the banning of public meetings, demonstrations etc. throughout the province of Bengal, whereby public activities were virtually brought to a stand-still. The first public meeting in defiance of the Ordinance was convened by the writer on the 31st January at the Shradhananda Park in Calcutta. Politically-minded Bengal was bursting with excitement on that day in the expectation that wholesale arrests would be made and that the Gov-

ernment would endeavour to put down the movement by force.

Nothing of the sort happened. For inscrutable reasons, the Government surrendered and everything went off peacefully. From that day onward, the Ordinance was defied by the Provincial Congress Committee and its supporters all over Bengal. In consequence thereof, the 'status quo' prior to September was automatically restored and such Civil Liberty as existed in this enslaved land before the outbreak of war was recovered by the people. The magnitude of the B. P. C. C.'s success was unexpected and unprecedented. Arrests made by the Government for violation of the above Ordinance were, however, comparatively few in number. But perhaps for that very reason, the success achieved by the B. P. C. C. though substantial, was not spectacular.

This is how the B. P. C. C. has behaved since January last. But what about the Gandhites and the neo-Gandhites, viz., our National Fronters? It is reported that the authorities banned a Gandhite Conference in Arambagh Subdivision in Hooghly District and the local Gandhites did not think of violating that order. In Nadia District, the neo-Gandhites wanted to hold a meeting. But when the authorities did not permit it, they demonstrated that discretion was the better part of valour and abandoned their project. On May Day, the Provincial Trade Union Congress held a rally in Calcutta with Governmental permission, but the meeting and rally arranged by the B. P. C. C. on that very day, was done without any reference to the authorities.

In May, Bengal stood in need of a fresh spurt. The struggle for the restoration of Civil Liberty had

proved successful. The attempt of reactionary elements like the Ad Hoc Committee (the creature of the Congress Working Committee), the Hindu Mahasabha and the treacherous newspapers like the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the *Yugantar* to down the B. P. C. C. had failed miserably. People were looking forward eagerly for a further lead.

To furnish that lead, a Special Session of the Bengal Provincial Conference was held at Dacca on the 25th and 26th May. It was indeed a brilliant idea to have convened that Conference. The number of delegates who attended was considerable, viz., nearly 600 and they all came with great alacrity. Dacca gave a wild and tumultuous reception to the President-Elect and the writer on the 25th May. The main Conference drew a vast crowd of visitors and side-shows like the Students' Conference, Workers' Conference, Kishan Conference and Women's Conference were also successful. Everybody returned from Dacca with hope, confidence and buoyant expectation.

What was it that inspired those who attended the Dacca Conference? It was the bold and clear lead given there. The call of Dacca was a call for the intensification of the struggle and the widening of the fighting-front. But it was not an appeal addressed to subject race. The Indian scene having changed beyond recognition during the last few months, the clarion-call was sent out to a people who had regained their self-respect and self-confidence and had begun to think, feel and act in terms of an independent nation.

The Conference, therefore, urged the people to cast off and demolish all emblems of political servitude

which militated against the newly awakened consciousness of Free India. The Holwell Monument in Calcutta which advertises the slavery of the Bengalis in the very heart of the city must now go. So also must disappear another symbol of our subjection, viz., political prisoners in jail and in restraint. And all this as a prelude to wiping out from the face of Free and Fair India all the stain of the past two centuries!

The Dacca Conference struck another much-needed note of warning to the Indian people. With kings and kingdoms toppling down overnight, power appeared to be within sight and within reach. To seize that power and to retain it for all time, national unity and national solidarity seemed essential and indispensable. An appeal was, therefore, made for the restoration of unity within the Congress and for a lasting solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem. In a word, the direction of the Provincial Conference was "Struggle and Unite"—struggle against alien Imperialism and unite among yourselves—if you want to win freedom and preserve it.

All this great and noble endeavour has to be made under the rallying-cry of "All power to the Indian people". "All or none" is to be our principle and there is no room for compromise or half-way halt.

*Satya Gandhi*

## GANDHIJI'S GAME

That was not very long ago. At the outset of the present war Mahatma Gandhi once shivered to his very core at the dark prospect of the beautiful Westminster Abbey

being razed to the ground by the Nazi bombs. He then solemnly declared that he would not embarrass Britain in that hour of her sore trial. Since then much water has flown down the Thames and here down the Ganges too. The war began to take a slow and meandering course. It did not unleash its full furies and the Mahatma's Satyagrahi conscience was greatly relieved of tension. As a result Wardha began to speak in a somewhat strident voice. It started by demanding of Britain an elucidation of her war-aims. Journeys to Delhi followed. Britain's war-aims were explained by the Viceroy, but apparently not to the satisfaction of the Mahatma. He sulked but did not lose heart and kept waiting for one more call from Delhi, but in vain. His gloom deepened and out of sheer desperation he ordered that the country should get ready for Satyagraha; when, that was to be decided by the Mahatma himself. Brisk preparations were set on foot; Satyagraha camps cropped up in plenty; Charkha—the chief weapon in the armoury of the Mahatma—was dragged out of obscurity and began to be emblazoned in all its attributed glory; leaders appeared in shorts and shirts and the help of camera was requisitioned to flash it in newspapers, evidently with the object of reviving the country's drooping spirits. People found a gleam of hope in the encircling darkness and were assured.

The wheel has now come round. The war is now revealing its most ruthless phases and the Mahatma has again been seized by a gush of humanitarianism with the result that he has come out with the declaration that "England will be embarrassed in the prosecution of the war if there is anarchy in

India; that the Congress will never do so long as it is under my discipline." Good Heavens! is India to desist from her fight for national freedom because Britain is faced with a peril? Let us not be misunderstood. We sincerely believe—and we have expressed it more than once quite unreservedly—that Nazi aggressiveness is a source of potential danger to the whole world. But we, like the overwhelming masses of our countrymen, are just human and our human-ness does not shrink from attempts at wresting freedom from a nation which, even in the face of a grave danger, will not relax its iron-grip on a far-flung empire. We claim to have some familiarity with history and do not know of a single country in bondage which fell back from its onward march to liberty in consideration that the ruling power might thereby be "embarrassed." But we forget, the leaders of those countries were ordinary men and not Mahatmas and the difference is not certainly negligible.

Now it is crystal-clear that the war resolutions adopted by the Congress were meant to be no more than mere hoax by Gandhiji and his faithful crew, the vociferous sponsor there of, we mean Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, not excepting; for they must have foreknown that the war in Europe in which imperialist Britain would be involved, would not be fought by words, sweet, sobbing or angry, or by Charkha and peaceful defiance of laws by Satyagrahis. They carried the resolutions knowing full well that wide-spread carnage and devastation would follow in the trail of that war. Then why this ignominious retreat now? Had it been due only to considerations of humanitarianism, our regret would

have been mellowed with a sense of pity. But Gandhiji is not merely a Mahatma, but a shrewd politician as well. Beneath the 'idyllic altruism of his present decision there is a diplomatic method which can not fail the discerning eye and the evidence thereof hangs in the middle of the sentence we have quoted above. "If there is anarchy in India"—ah! there's the rub. In that case it is not only England that will be "embarrassed" but the Rightist leadership too! Gandhiji knows it too well for it is not 1921 or '30 now. Tremendous forces have now burst on the Indian scene—forces which were conspicuous by their absence ten or twenty years ago, and the Mahatma is shrewd enough to realise that if a movement is started today, the mighty mass-upheaval that it will release, will burst all his ethical bonds and ultimately endanger the present reformist leadership of the Congress. That the Mahatma is not going to allow with his eyes open. He, therefore, wants, as far as possible, a peaceful transference of power from the British bourgeoisie to the Indian bourgeoisie that now constitutes the leadership of the official Congress. This is evidently Gandhiji's plan and however much he may try to hide it behind the smoke-screen of diplomatic verbiage, the Indian masses, we believe, have seen through his game and become alert. They are perceptibly becoming impatient of the Mahatmic brand of "discipline" dominating the Congress.

## CURRENT COMMENTS

### Belgium Surrenders

German *Blitzkrieg* will now mature into *Deutschland*, a composite Netherlands State, including Belgium, Luxemburg, Holland and

other groups, an ideal for which the *Verbond Van Deutsche National-solidaristen* was set up by the Nazis in the Low Countries, after the disgraceful (?) defection of King Leopold. Despite the militant protest of Belgian Ministers and all their sentimental outpourings from a safe castle in Paris, beyond the danger zone of Belgium, it is hardly believable that King Leopold, on whom the Anglo-French Press showered torrents of flummery the other day for defending the country gallantly, has welcomed today willingly the humiliation of surrender to the Nazis and left his throne vacant for an inhuman German Gauletier. Whatever may be the actual fact behind the "News Blockade", there is scarcely any doubt that the Low Countries have been laid low by the simultaneous charge of German tanks, firing of machine-guns and the indiscriminate bombing of speedy fighters and bombers. German Army will now advance towards the Channel Coast, and from an enemy, baptised in *Blitzkrieg* and with convenient bases at Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk, Ostend and Zeeburgge, the British Isles will receive a terrible convulsion, perhaps for the first time in her long solemn history of security and peace.

Britain, therefore, now faces a peril, unparalleled in her long majestic life of imperial sunshine. Whether the sun has set or not yet set, surely the hour of final trial has come. On one side of the Coast now frets the frivolous child of Macdonald and Chamberlain with all vicious weapons of carnage at his disposal, and on the other side a motley crowd of Labour, Liberal and Conservative are being huddled together for the sake of national unity under the supreme direction of a brilliant and unlucky statesman,

Mr. Winston Churchill. It is really painful to conjure up cruel visions of German fighters<sup>1</sup> and bombers careering across the sky over the Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, Downing Street and London, but it is much more heart-rending to reconcile the facts, that while Britain has staked her all to defend a noble cause and to kill the cancer of civilisation she is persistently putting forward pernicious pleas to India in defence of her out-worn imperialist policy. Britain must purge herself of all these sickening shams, before she can persuade the world to give credence to her cause and policy in this deadly War.

### Anglo-Soviet Trade Talk

Months have passed since the Anglo-Soviet Trade talk started and in the intervening period-momentous changes have taken place all over Europe. The theatre of war is widening; under Mr. Churchill Britain is being schooled to the realities of the war. The Cabinet has begun reconstructing the national economy and its latest achievement is *national socialism*. In the past ideological differences blinded the British Cabinet to the growing need of the hour and Mr. Chamberlain did blunder in putting off the Soviet trade talk. In the early days of the Finnish war the Soviet Union was herded with the totalitarian regime by the hostile press and any co-operation with it was regarded an act of sacrilege and a direct aid to Hitler. Now the virtuous wrath has cooled down. The British Cabinet has roused itself from the political apathy into which it has been lulled and without illusion is facing the crisis. Sir Stafford Cripps is sent to Moscow to finish the talk. For long Great Britain endeavoured to reduce the

Soviet Union to nonentity and it has rebounded upon Great Britain with the disastrous result of its supremacy being injured. Mr. Churchill though a hard boiled conservative has practical insight into the things of the world and the Soviet trade negotiation might prove a prelude to other changes to come about. For behind the trade agreement lay the hope of repairing friendship with the state that was baffled and angered by Britain. The latest report about the mission of Sir Stafford however is not heartening and the possibility of its being translated into action is ruled out. Step by step and day by day humanity is being remorselessly and fatuously conducted to the blind alley. The world is sick of holocaust and craves for peace. Let Britain once more extend sincere cooperation to the Soviet Union in building up the bulwark against war and aggression.

### The Call of England

A dismal atmosphere pervades in England today. Aside the English Channel simple folks are hurriedly evacuating their villages, and far beyond the bombing-range of the ghoulis enemy, the flabbergasted children are making a new comradeship with their compeers. The helmsman of the new Government has urged the people of England to face the gravest catastrophe with perfect complacency, and all the heroic deeds and tales of by-gone days have been recalled and rechanted to rouse the citizens from slumber. The Ministers of the Labour Party, supposed to be the representatives of the working people of England, have lent their whole-hearted support to this policy of Churchill's Government, and are driving myriads of workers to the factories to speed up the production of war materials and at the same time are persuading them to put aside their legitimate demand for higher wages to meet with higher costs of living. The obvious result is swelling discontentment among the common people, specially the workers, who live beyond the emotional penumbra of patriotism, and are accustomed to reality-consciousness. A few Labour

M.P.'s called a private Conference at Bournemouth to express their emphatic disapproval of this iniquitous policy of the Labour Ministers. They have made an appeal to the Government to negotiate peace, not as peace-at-any-price men and 'calamity-howlers', but as the accredited spokesmen of British working class. The Labour Ministers did not pay the slightest heed to it, because national crisis did not allow them to do so. The workers must forego all their claims ungrudgingly, that is the national demand.

This is, therefore, not the time for the workers to reason why and to indulge in petty squabbles of day-to-day grievances, but to obey meekly the command of the rulers of their national destiny. They must accept the hard fact that economic militarisation is the only defensive against the Blitzkrieg of a crazy tyrant. Reason is an ineffective weapon to combat madness. Will the workers of England submit to it, or they will search out from the dim corners of their national history a glorious chapter of their life when the streets of England echoed with their choral Chartist song:

"Then rise, my boys and fight the foe,  
Your arms are truth and reason,  
We'll let the Whigs and Tories know,  
That Union is not treason."

### Lead from Dacca

The special session of the Bengal Provincial Conference that recently met at Dacca was on all counts an event of exceptional importance. It was held under unique circumstances and gave a remarkably wise and bold lead to the country. It was fortunate in having as its president no less a man than Prof. Jyotish Chandra Ghosh, whose record of service to the cause of the country is an example and inspiration to many. He rose to the full height of the occasion and the address delivered is a weighty political document worthy of careful perusal and consideration of all who have the best interests of the country at heart. The sheaf of resolutions passed in the Conference (printed in this issue) bear the unmistakable stamp of clear thinking, political foresight and

courageous decision. We particularly call the attention of our countrymen to the resolution on National Struggle. A fight is already on in our midst and the alert and the alive cannot certainly have missed its stir. Courting arrest in defiance of lawless laws may be a quiet affair, but it has its moral dynamics nonetheless. Now it is up to all to widen the base of the existing struggle and add tremendously to its momentum. No better choice of the issues for fight could have been made than the two picked up by the Conference. The Holwell Monument has been a concrete reminder of our national bondage and as such a glaring emblem of national humiliation. A fight on the score of its demolition or removal will, it is expected, be able to rally all the bold elements in the province, irrespective of communities. Another issue for struggle selected by the Conference will also be of wide appeal to all sections of people. The problem of political release has loomed large before us but we have not as yet been able to get back our dear comrades in our midst. But they have to be released and a concerted drive has to be made to that end immediately. So far about Bengal for the present, but the struggle must not remain confined to a particular province. It has to assume an all-comprehensive national shape for which it must start in all parts of the country on issues of local importance which will develop and finally converge into one mighty whole. A golden opportunity has to-day presented to us for winning back our national freedom and it must on no account be allowed to slip by.

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