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A POLITICAL WEEKLY

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ONE ANNA

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

Lead from Wardha

All eyes are now turned towards Wardha where the Working Committee meets under unique circumstances—unique, not figuratively but literally. There was hardly an occasion before when it was faced with a graver issue; there was hardly a time before when it was called upon to thrash out a more fateful decision. The attitude that the Working Committee will take in regard to the War will largely shape the future destiny of the Indian nation. It is happy to find that the Committee has been fully alive to the unprecedented situation that now confronts the country; as such it has been quite meet and graceful on its part to have extended invitation to some of the representative leaders of the Congress who do not happen to be on the Cabinet today. May the Congress speak with one voice in this crucial hour of the country's history; may the stupendous issue that faces it today act as a mighty leveller. Unity is the most pressing need of the hour. Let all efforts be made to achieve it.

It is not possible to anticipate the decision of the Committee. Mahatma Gandhi, on the invitation of the Viceroy, had two interviews with the latter. The statement that he has issued after them is as enigmatic as anything. He has said that he returned from the viceregal lodge quite "empty-handed." Are we to take that he proposed some terms to Lord Linlithgow on the fulfilment of which he would induce the Congress to settle up with the Government and help Britain with all the available resources in men and money that the great national organisation can command? We fail to understand how the question of "empty hand" can come at all if it was not stretched for anything whatsoever. The presumption becomes almost irresistible that he at least suggested some lines of rapprochement between the Congress and the Government which did not meet with adequate countenance from the Viceroy. If this presumption of the public be wrong, if

Mahatma Gandhi went to Simla, as he has said subsequently, merely to hear from the Representative of the Crown how far Whitehall is prepared to go to appease India for securing her good-will and co-operation in this hour of sore trial for Britain, he should not only apprise the Working Committee of the full facts but also make a clearer public statement in elucidation of the whole situation. The matter now remains shrouded in a good deal of mist, unfortunately created by Mahatmaji's own statement.

Mahatma Gandhi has given a graphic account of how he broke down before the Viceroy at the grim prospect of the War—the huge magnitude of destruction in human lives and properties that will come in its trail. That was just like him. Not to speak of a Mahatma, even an ordinary man cannot but shudder at the contemplation of the terrible wreckage that will follow on the heels of the War. But we hope that the Mahatma did not fail to conjure up before the Viceroy an equally telling picture of India today—a country with a glorious past but grovelling in the dust at present under the heels of an alien imperialism, with its teeming millions starving and thoroughly emasculated, both physically and morally. Here is an epic tale instinct with the deepest pathos that cannot but stir even the most callous heart to "humanitarianism". Today we hear such lofty principles as democracy and peace being mouthed too glibly; but how can these principles ignore the problem of a nation of more than 35 crores of people to whom democracy has been most flagrantly denied and peace has been merely a will-o-the-wisp?

This is the exact position of India vis-a-vis Britain. This is the one all-important issue on which the Working Committee shall have to frame a decision. The Congress must press the National Demand on the authorities and insist on its immediate fulfilment. A free nation will then be able to choose its course according to its light. It is impossible for India to be satisfied with the vague and evasive assurance that her case will be considered after the present crisis is over. It is extremely painful to us to rake up the bitter memories of the past when England lies under the shadow of a grave calamity. But at the moment they force themselves upon us in spite of ourselves. How can we forget that

during the last War in response to Montagu's appeal for help India opened her purse-strings most generously and her manhood shed streams of blood on the battle-fields of Europe? How can we forget, further, how Britain's pledge of granting full self-government to India on the termination of War was broken to her face and all her inestimable services were finally rewarded with a Jallinwallabagh? That betrayal may not be repeated again but still India must square up her accounts with Britain here and now. Let not our leaders who are now deliberating at Wardha ask for a whit less than what is our inherent birth-right. If they are called on to negotiate, let them do so honourably, with their heads erect, and not merely fumble out some weak and halting accents.

The country wants a bold lead from Wardha which it is prepared to follow up at any cost. A golden opportunity, the like of which seldom comes in the life of a dependent nation, has come to us and is knocking at our door. May it not slip over us without yielding us what we want.

BESIDES WAR

Art treasures are removed to the country; children leave the family roofs for safe residences under unknown management; couples rush in the Churches to marry and to part for the respective duty—thus is Europe placing itself on "war-basis." A "war of nerves" has prepared the people of Europe for a dark night all but too closely envisaged. Abyssinia, Spain, and China, have warned men and women, the man in the street and the woman in her home, that no longer is the King's high way safe, no longer is home the castle.

People accept everything; they know refusal is impossible, revolt madness. Enmeshed in the complex, complicated web of the present and past, they accept it as the decree of fate. So, human spirit has forgot its undying urge of revolt, mass propaganda and the knowledge of the overwhelming might of the gateful things, have tamed man into a submission, at best stoic, at worst, unthinking.

If the war lengthens, the world will settle down to a carnage, to the loss of the dearest and nearest in life; to the

