

The Bengal Hindu Mahasabha

FORWARD BLOC

A POLITICAL WEEKLY

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SATURDAY, MARCH 30

*The Bengal**Hindu Mahasabha*

The annual All-India Conference of the Hindu Mahasabha was held in Calcutta towards the close of last year. As a conference it was a great success and it afforded considerable satisfaction to the Mahasabha leaders who began to hope that their organisation would forge ahead in Bengal. At that time, it was whispered about that the conference was merely a preparation for the coming Municipal Election in Calcutta and subsequent events have not belied that report.

With a view to promoting the civic welfare and advancement of Calcutta and in order to avoid unnecessary friction and clash over the elections, the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha arrived at an understanding through their respective representatives. The terms of the understanding were duly published in the press. The basis of the understanding was that that the elections would be run in the name of the Joint Congress Corporation Election Board and that all those who would be elected would join the Congress Municipal Association. The Congress Corporation Election Board would co-opt six nominees of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Committee that would select candidates would have an equal number of representatives from both the organisations. But the elections would not be run separately by the Hindu Mahasabha nor would there be a separate Hindu Mahasabha Bloc in the

Corporation. If any communal question came up before the Corporation in future, the Congress Municipal Association would not make it a party question but would allow liberty to the members to vote as they desired.

The afore-mentioned agreement did not last long. Differences arose over the selection of candidates and the agreement had to be abandoned.

Prior to the above understanding with the Hindu Mahasabha, I had made a public appeal to all organisations interested in the elections, and particularly to the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, asking for their co-operation in the domain of civic affairs, in spite of any differences that might exist on other questions. I also addressed letters to several organisations in this connection. We naturally felt gratified when the Hindu Mahasabha responded in the above manner.

According to our reading of the situation, the temporary agreement was possible because of the pro-nationalist elements in the Hindu Mahasabha. The agreement fell through because the die-hard communal elements in the Hindu Mahasabha who were throughout opposed to any understanding with the Congress, ultimately got the upper hand.

There has been a countrywide propaganda against us because of our understanding with the Hindu Mahasabha over civic affairs. Much of this propaganda is mendacious, while some of it is based on misunderstanding. We are convinced that the basis of the understanding was a sound one and was fully consonant with Congress principles. If the understanding had been implemented in due course, the principles of nationalism would have trium-

phed and not those of communalism. Unfortunately, to some politicians and political agents we are the *bete noire* and any stick is good enough to beat us with. But we desire to assert even at this late hour that the basis on which we arrived at a temporary understanding with the Hindu Mahasabha is a basis on which a similar understanding could be arrived at with any other organisation.

The New Calcutta Municipal Act which is the result of the recent Amending Bill and according to which elections have just been held, has created a new situation for Calcutta which is fraught with danger. If the Indian members of the Corporation, both Hindu and Moslem, do not join hands, then the Corporation will pass into the hands of Britishers. A handful of Britishers will begin to dominate the Corporation as they have been dominating the Bengal Assembly.

We tried to avert this calamity by seeking the co-operation of the Hindu Mahasabha in civic affairs while adhering to Congress principles. We have been disappointed. Moreover, the tactics employed by some Hindu Mahasabha leaders for whom we had great personal regard, as also by some Hindu Mahasabha workers in connection with the elections, have caused us pain and sorrow. The Hindu Mahasabha did not fight a clean fight.

What is more, the Hindu Mahasabha candidates included men who had tried their level best to break the Congress Municipal Association and to that end had formed the United Party in the Corporation in co-operation with British and Nominated Groups of councillors. Some of them have been re-elected and one could easily anticipate how they would behave in future. The Hindu Mahasabha has

given evidence of greater desire to down the Congress than to save the Corporation from British domination.

It remains to be seen if any other Indian group in the Corporation will show more keenness to resist British domination than to fight the Congress.

The above action of the Hindu Mahasabha is the beginning of a new phase in its history. It has come forward to play a political role and to make a bid for the political leadership of Bengal, or at least of the Hindus of Bengal who have been the backbone of Nationalism in this country. With a real Hindu Mahasabha, we have no quarrel and no conflict. But with a political Hindu Mahasabha that seeks to replace the Congress in the public life of Bengal and for that purpose has already taken the offensive against us, a fight is inevitable. This fight has just begun.

Sethna Anandaborn

THE REAL DIFFERENCE

The present international situation has pushed the question of India's struggle for freedom to the fore. The difference between the Left and the Right has to-day been reduced to the simple issue of fight *versus* no-fight, which virtually amounts to compromise with British imperialism. The real issue is not however so simple as a superficial view of things would seem to envisage. There are deeper implications beneath it which are not only necessary to unravel, but to emphasise with all the force that we can command. At bottom it is not some honest difference of opinion in regard to India's preparedness to launch an immediate struggle or altogether doing away with it that keeps the Right apart from the Left. The difference goes deeper, it is fundamental because it pertains to the ideologies swaying two conflicting schools.

Let us make what we say absolutely clear. In spite of bellicose verbosity splashing through the speeches, writings and resolutions of the Rightists, it is certain

beyond a shade of doubt that they will not hurl the country into the vortex of a grim fight. These are no more than mere stage-thunders to trap the unwary. They could have gone on uniformly with this game of bluff and bluster if *only* the Indian people were concerned in the matter. But, unfortunately for them, there is another factor to reckon with. Bent on a compromise as they are, they must occasionally afford to the other party an inkling into their real selves. Sheer necessity then makes them throw off the mask. It is for this reason that from the sombre Mahatma down to the garrulous Satyamurti, the Rightists have occasionally to talk of a "settlement" with the Government. So it becomes necessary to tax diplomatic ingenuity to find out a basis for compromise. Resolutions adopted formerly in the full flush of idealism, become tempered with prudence and undergo a distinct watering-down. Pure and undiluted independence then becomes beautifully vague and elastic in its "substance."

As we have hinted before, there is a deep-laid plan behind the whole move for compromise. A "settlement" may at most result in the transference of some power from the white to a brown bureaucracy. It may bring about some changes on the fringe of the existing social and economic order. It will not certainly effect an overhaul of the present system. And that is what the Rightists want. As a matter of fact, the Congress, patronised and financed by the capitalists, thankfully recognised by the princes and zamindars as a bulwark against a mighty mass up-surge, eager to come to terms with the bourgeois communalists among the Muslims represented by the League, and mortally afraid of a large influx of kisans and mazdoors within its fold, cannot be sincerely after a revolution that will sweep away the present order and usher in another absolutely new. History has testified to the fact again and again that those who win power, ultimately keep it. The disappointed and desperate middle classes of Germany, lavishly financed by the industrial magnates of Ruhr, led the Nazi vanguard and put Hitler in power. Therefore,

the Governmental authority in Germany did not find its way to trickle down to the masses. On the other side, the famished soldiers of Russia, drawn mostly from the proletarian classes, pushed on Lenin to power on the crest of their revolt. The Government therefore, took its pattern from the class of people who won power.

If the Rightist leaders today seek to shirk a fight, it is only because they know it full well that in the course of the struggle tremendous mass-energies now ready for a burst-out, will be unleashed which they will fail to control, with the consequence, that the movement will pass on to Leftist hands. That will prove to be a serious menace to the *Status quo* which they are eager to maintain with some changes. Therefore, they are bent on avoiding that infinitely dark contingency by all conceivable means.

We have been led on afresh to this train of thoughts by Mahatma Gandhi's recent article in the *Harijan* on the problem of States. In the course of the article Mahatmaji has said, "I personally do not desire the extinction of the Princely Order. But I do want the Princes to recognise the signs of the times and shed a large part of their autocracy." The implication of the statement needs no lengthy dilating upon. And if we link up this statement, which is but an emblem of a comprehensive outlook, with the present plans and policies of the Rightists, then the underlying significance of their compromise move will become crystal clear to all. Again, it is against this broader background that Gandhiji's non-violence too, has to be politically evaluated. Non-violence, as a spiritual creed, is the highest ideal that humanity can conceive of. In fact, mankind have been moving steadily towards this ideal of supreme love, which alone is capable of bringing about an efflorescence of all that is noble and beautiful in human nature. But Mahatmaji's *Ahimsa*, as a close scrutiny of his numerous speeches and writings will bear out, becomes, when reduced to political terms, a safeguard against an overhaul of the present social and economic order. Indeed, as we have pointed

out more than once before, there is going on a veritable class struggle beneath the differences between the Right and the Left. It is really amazing and regrettable that some people professing Leftism can not see through it. Or perhaps by seeing they feign blindness. But the real Left need not be disheartened. As time will proceed, the alignment of forces will become more definite.

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

Epidemic strike of students has flooded the government and a section of the press has pilloried the protagonists of the movement since it is argued that the movement aims at getting the youngsters drilled and habituated to a way of anarchic living. This, truly speaking, is a hollow mockery amidst the lip-serving platitudes of imperial devotees. Student movement is inseparably bound up with the body-politic and should not be treated as an isolated social phenomenon. Today the world presents a bemoaned spectacle. Millions are maimed and killed and progress is discovered as nothing but a gloss on fundamental human savagery. The old world has accepted this fate with dignity and composure, entranced by some lyricism of death. And reaction of students to this scene of destruction is of supreme importance and their protest against the steady process of dehumanisation stands out like a huge volcanic rock. All over the world students have ranged under the standards of Peace, Freedom and Progress and have moved forward by measured steps, without haste and without rest, to goal. In India student movement is dedicated to this noble credo and has done much to prop up social consciousness and sense of internationalism. Being a colony, India is gripped by the imperialist octopus and is robbed of lineaments of a civilized people. Indian student movement has battled against the dogmatic conception of life and has helped to create conditions stimulating to ascend the animal kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of Freedom and Love. Incapable of appreciating the logic and its application to India life, Government

has sensed indiscipline and spirit of revolt among the students. Repeatedly students of Great Britain have advertised their opposition to imperialist war and breathed their differences with Cabinet. Has the British Government ever denied them the right of action or tried to inculcate the spirit of mechanical obedience? And in India the question is rendered all the more complicated by Governments' uncanny attitude, equalled by educational authorities, adherence to medieval ideal. Indian student movement has summed up the spirit of defiance against the corroding system and stands against the stone-wall of authoritarianism. Students' demonstration is found revolting to the government and students are supposed to have mutinied dutifully at the call of revolutionaries. Is this not a travesty of truth and a cunning ruse to disarm the popular resentment against the government? Indian educational authorities are in perpetual feud with the students. Strikes are indicative of their complete lack of sympathy with Indian aspirations and colossal ignorance of Indian life. Relation of students with teachers has never been happy and the teachers suffer from some sort of obsession and their conduct is never tempered by moderation. Students are usually denied the right of association within the precincts of educational institutes and freedom of action in matters of vital importance affecting the national well-being. At present eight colleges in the Punjab, one in Orissa and two in Bengal are virtually closed down. The tragic drama of the Scottish Church College is heading towards its climax and has gripped the attention and emotion of all. The college area is policed, military guards are posted and black marias are kept in readiness to carry the offenders. The Principal has called in the police aid, for conduct of the students was said to be mutinous but this statement has been exploded by the students. Reason, argument, are useless; the grip has become all the more convulsive; open hands are tightened into clenched fists and the Principal is a feeble prisoner in the galley of slaughter. Principal Cameron has

harmed the noble tradition of the college built up through the labour of years and we would request him to repair the error before it is too late. Students, we believe, cannot be paralysed nor can they be plunged into stupor of exhaustion. We ask the University to end this lamentable state of things since strike is infectious and the entire machinery may be deadlocked.

CURRENT COMMENTS

Mr. Jinnah's Fancy-flight

So the Pakistan fantasy has most definitely caught on the Muslim League. So long only some stray members were toying with it, but now, captained by Mr. Jinnah, the League has put its official seal on the same. The idea is so preposterous, it is so much against the whole drift of Indian history and even bare commonsense that it can hardly be taken at its face value, specially when it has been sponsored by such an intelligent man as Mr. Jinnah. It can, therefore, be taken only as a stunt in his bargaining game. That it has been meant to be such has been amply borne out by the comments of the London *Times*. To talk of a compromise with the Congress as Mr. Jinnah has done, after putting in his Pakistan plea, appears to us nothing but a hollow mockery. It is heartening to find that the idea has already been denounced by some prominent Muslims. It appears but certain that when Mr. Jinnah has been soaring up on the wings of his communal fancy, the earth has been steadily slipping away from under his feet. We, therefore, beseech him to compose his fluttering wings in order to avoid a disastrous crash.

Khaksar — A Menace?

India is infested with the hordes of Khaksars and their nightly parade conducted in the strict military manner has caused quieting feelings. The Khaksar organisation though claiming to be a social service league has gladly copied the *Nazi method* of building up a disciplined body to wrest power and its insistence on the theory of Pakistan has exposed the reactionary character of the movement. Any movement that aims at parceling out India on

racial basis is inimical to the national well-being and a positive menace to the peace of the country. The Khaksar movement has wooed the lower middle class Mahammadeans and the doctrine of Islamic State has goaded them on to the verge of utter lunacy. The world is sick of "shirt movements" and history abounds with their fiendish exploits. India abhors the effort to import this sinister doctrine for it would spell countless evils to the country. We would request Dr. Inayat Ullah whose genius has fathered the movement to cultivate the spirit of true nationalism and develop a realistic attitude to the entire problem. We ask the Khaksars to disown their ideal of Pakistan and line up with the Congress or they would be weeded out in no time. The true ideal of Nationalism rises superior to the communal bickerings and smooths out difference between community and community.

Australia and War

The New South Wales Labour Party of Australia at its Easter Conference criticising the Government's war policy in a resolution stated: "The conference makes it clear that while opposed to Australian participation in overseas conflicts, it is also opposed to any effort of the present anti-Labour Government to change the direction of the war by an aggressive act against any other country with which we are not at war including the Soviet Union." Mr. R. G. Menzies, the Premier of Australia, described the resolution as "un-British" and regretted the steady disintegration of Labour Party's war policy. The Secretary of the Federal Labour Party pointed out that in passing the resolution the New South Wales Labour Party had exceeded its powers and the Federal conference of the Australian Labour Party was the only body authorised to determine the war policy.

The most significant feature of Mr. Menzies' Cabinet is that it has sixteen members, and all of them are members of one party, the United Australia Party. That is, Australia is under the dictatorship of a single party, and the Country

Party has "banged, bolted and barred" the door to co-operation so long it remains under the leadership of Sir Earl Page. Mr. Menzies therefore has no difficulty to overcome to formulate his foreign policy. It is also not in the least surprising that he would describe the New South Wales Labour Party's war resolution as "un-British", because the United Australia Party represents the pro-British section of Australia.

But the decision of the New South Wales Labour Party is very significant. Australian Federal Labour Party takes the lead from the British Labour Party and at the outset of the war it declared its loyalty to Britain. The declaration now becomes practically meaningless because the New South Wales Labour Party has much greater influence in shaping the labour opinion of the Empire. New South Wales is the wealthiest of all states and has rich mines of silver-lead. As the principal mining centre, the Party which controls its labour forces, has surely a decisive voice in determining the war policy of the Empire. Menzies' Government may stubbornly oppose it, and Australian Federal Labour Party may declare it as unauthorised. It may disaffiliate the party but the New South Wales Labour Party will surely have its say when the Empire will be threatened with the danger of being embroiled in war as an inevitable result of Menzies' foreign policy and Federal Labour Party's ungrateful treason. The resolution of the New South Wales Labour Party shows beyond doubt that the Second Internationalists are not making easy headway even in the Empires, where still, in fact, Britain rules.

Well Done, Rate-Payers

At the time of writing this note all the results in the Corporation elections have not been made available to us. Those that have already been announced, show a decisive victory for the Congress. The Hindu Mahasabha, which can quite fairly be described as a refuge of some retired people with an itch for publicity, had entered the lists against the only popular organisation in the country and has deservedly been trounced in the

contest. The Ad Hoc Committee, that had played an open and subterranean role in sabotaging the Congress in the Corporation, has also got its rightful meed in the adventure. The secret letter circulated by the Chairman of the British Municipal Association in favour of two stalwarts ever loyal to the Ad Hoc, and published by two of our enterprising contemporaries, has proved beyond a shade of doubt what part they were destined to play in the Corporation. The elections have demonstrated who represent the real Congress in Bengal. We heartily thank the rate-payers of Calcutta for vindicating its honour in the province. We however hope that the forlorn few who have been returned on Mahasabha ticket, will now sign the Congress creed and form a solid Congress Bloc in the Corporation. We address our appeal also to the independents to line up with the Congress and carry out faithfully the programme laid down by Deshabandhu Das.

Agitation in Manipure

The people of Manipure until recent times have been isolated from the national life and recent movement for the realization of democratic rights has linked them up with entire India. Feudalism, rightly speaking, has outlived its days and is an anomaly with the present-day world. Indian India can boast of an unending series of feudal chiefs exceeding six hundred, and Manipure is the biggest state in the province of Assam. The state of Manipure, though presided over by the Maharaj, is really ruled by a British official whose authority and decision cannot be questioned. British Government is aware of the strategic importance of Manipure and has turned it a buffer-state to guard the easternmost limit of India. Introduction of popular government runs counter to the basic interests of British Government. Hence the obduracy on the part of the Maharaja. But the popular movement is growing in volume and intensity and the sense of unity cannot be defeated by repression. Right of self-determination in states is guaranteed by the Congress and let the Maharaja take timely counsel of discretion.

By Benoy Ghose

WHITHER FRANCE ?

Immediately after his office acceptance the new Prime Minister of France, M. Reynaud, addressing the Chamber of Deputies, said: "*France is to speed up her war effort... We shall not neglect any effort to make workmen understand that if we are fighting Communism it is not because of its extreme left-wing doctrine but because we are fighting an organisation of treason. The Communists have worked against the country. We shall crush that.*" (Applause) The new 'socialist' Ministers chimed in. The new Government's policy is "to arouse, muster and direct all the strength of France to fight and win and crush all treason," and, according to Reynaud and his political henchmen, Communism is an organisation of treason like Nazism. The declaration is couched in frank terms, but to appreciate fully this frankness one must peep into the past contributions of M. Reynaud, the ex-Finance Minister of France, to French economy.

Reynaud's Economic Policy

Rocklike Reynaud with his "profound technical financial knowledge," introduced a new batch of decree-laws with a view to increase the military and economic strength of France in November, 1938. After five months, these provisions were found insufficient for the intended purpose and some notable additions and alterations were made in April, 1939. The object of November Plan was to reduce the Budget deficit both by cutting expenditure and raising revenue. *Expenditure was curtailed by abandoning the greater part of the civil public works programme, and revenue was increased by increasing taxes.* The November decrees also abolished the 40-hour week. Overtime was permitted, rather forced up to 48 hours a week, overtime wage rates were reduced, and conditions were created in which big business men could decide to expand their operations in accordance with their sweet will. *The April plan was a plan for war economy.* It is not now a question merely of increasing production, but of increasing the production of specific (war) commodities, even at the cost of impeding the production of other articles

which are deemed unnecessary in present circumstances, that is, articles of general consumption. In this respect, M. Reynaud's April Plan accepted most of the suggestions made for British use by Mr. Keynes in *The Times* at that time. Consumption must be limited, so that any productive resources not now employed can be reserved for industries working directly for war purpose. The most important measure in the April plan is the suppression of overtime wages for hours up to 45 a week with the result that a check was put on the working-class income and consuming power, and a depression in consumer's goods industries set in. France has thus been slapped by M. Reynaud to turn her face towards a war economy.

The results of this war economy are obvious. The measures that have now been taken shall have to be reinforced by additional instalments from time to time as changing situations will demand with the prolongation of war. As production will be speeded up in the war industries, and as the activity of the peace industries will slow down to nil, there will have to be a large-scale transfer of labour, for which compulsory and more stringent measures will be needed. Consumption will have to undergo a process of restriction till it reaches the starvation level. Taxes will have to be increased till they snatch the last morsel of food from France. And these are exactly M. Reynaud's economic plans. One wonders why even after all this so much time should be wasted for the sake of preaching a democratic sermon to the world. In fact, M. Reynaud will himself wonder if he ever meets Dr. Schacht or Funk, who will boldly declare that these are also their plans in Nazi Germany.

France was already put on a war-production footing by M. Daladier. M. Reynaud will speed up this centralisation of military supplies and output. French capital will be used for war purposes. Economic activities will more and more be concentrated upon industries turning out goods of war. Investment will in general be limited to short-term issues of the state for arms and defence purposes

and investment in private enterprise will lag far behind. To ensure maximum supply of labour, re-employed workers will be prevented from spending their incomes and the wages of other workers will be callously cut down. Industries producing articles of consumption will be switched off. France will gradually sink in the pit of economic crisis, starvation and poverty. As the speed of the war machine will be accelerated, discontent will rise up to the point of explosion. Hungry and famished workers of France will storm Place de la Bastille and Place de la Nation, even against the pious wish of the 'pink' Socialists and political buffoons like Blum. France will be hurled in the inferno of a terrible civil war, if Reynaud exercises his political power with his financial genius to the fullest extent. This Reynaud cannot but do if war continues, and the result cannot but be this—Civil War in France.

Prospect

The reaction of the people of France against the "Sixth of February" is still too green in memory to require recapitulation. One cannot forget the "Front Populaire Oath" of July 14, 1935—the oath "to defend the republic, to give bread to the workers, and peace to humanity." Those were the days when actually Thorez, Blum and Daladier walked arm-in-arm towards a common end. But that Front Populaire broke down completely two years ago. Nevertheless, it has served its purpose as a great anti-Fascist coalition, and if it has not killed 'plutocracy' in France, it has wiped out militant Fascism, at least as it was known in 1934 and 1935. Today, in 1940, it is altogether a different France to tell a completely new tale. All parties including the Blum-brand socialists in France, are walking arm-in-arm towards a common end, the crushing of the Communists. Why? Because France is at war, and because the Second Internationalists (French Socialists) are the veritable agents of the war-mongers, active for their bourgeois masters in the ranks of the workers. So no longer can "Front Populaire" be an expedient tactic for those who will reiterate today its solemn oath "to give bread to the workers, peace to humanity, and to defend France." "We will reply to enmity with enmity" says Reynaud to the Communists. Reynaud is right. A militant proletariat will move today from the Bastille to the Place de la Nation, not a motley crowd of July, 1935, with large tri-colour flags. Front Populaire may die, but its oath and the French people cannot. When M. Reynaud's powerful war machine will be set in full motion, despite the shrill cry of Blum and Monnet, the oath will be fulfilled by the French Proletariat.

By C. R. KUNHUNNI

STATES IN FUTURE INDIA

Commenting on the past Delhi Talks between Gandhiji and the Viceroy, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, Dewan of Travancore, in a press statement is reported to have said that without a solution of the problem of defence, Dominion Status of any variety whatsoever, cannot, under Indian conditions, be achieved or maintained. He *inter alia* said that to state that the Princes will have to join the National Assembly not as individuals but as the duly elected representatives of their people, is to ignore the facts of history and even the present state of affairs. The word 'elected representative', it seems, has shocked him because the State of Travancore, administered by this practical politician, is notorious for its autocracy. The Dewan further adds that if the Crown parts with power, the Princes cannot do likewise nor can there be an automatic transference of allegiance or obligations or rights to some other political entity (presumably the Congress). His contention is that if the Crown withdraws from India, the Indian States would re-assume the position they occupied in India before the Treaties with the Paramount Power were entered into. And lastly, he clings fast to the "history of Indian States" and tries to justify their separate existence and autocratic rule.

Sir Akbar Hydari, Prime Minister of Hyderabad, recently harped on the same tune as the Travancore Dewan. Sir C. P. on one occasion said that Travancore was not subject or subservient to the Empire and the Treaties with the Paramount Power were only on a contractual basis. When a resolution for Responsible Government came before the Travancore Assembly, the same Sir C. P. said that Travancore was subservient to the Paramount Power and the State, on its own initiative, could do nothing in regard to constitutional reforms without the consent of that Power. The very debate on the question, he said, was against all Treaty obligations.

According to the assumption of Sir C. P., if there is equality of status and rights between the States like Travancore and the Paramount Power and if the

States can speak and act independently, then why should Dewans like Sir C. P. nurse any fear at all? But his exhibition of undue fear and reluctance to grant constitutional reforms in the State bears out our contention that in the first place, he is deadly opposed to granting of such reforms and secondly, that States as such have no equality of right or freedom with the Paramount Power.

The same is true of Hyderabad also. Everybody knows the agitations carried out in 1926 by the present Nizam of Hyderabad to regain Berar and the warning given by the then Viceroy, Lord Reading, that the Princes had no authority to speak or do anything independently and on equal terms with the Crown and that they had only to obey the Paramount Power's dictates with all possible docility. Conditions being such, an unsophisticated and unbiased man cannot but laugh when he hears Sir Akbar Hydari speaking of equality of status of States and their integral freedom. Coming to the question of the so-called freedom and history of Native States, it is pertinent to ask whether did these States at any time enjoy full freedom. Were these States at any time independent?

The Butler Committee Report clearly lays down that these States were not independent at any time. They were either subject to the Paramountty of the Moghul Emperors or subservient to the Maharastras and when the British won over them, these Princes automatically came under the British sway. The British have even enthroned new rulers in some States, e.g. Mysore.

As such, when power is transferred from the British Crown to the Indian National Democratic Government, why cannot these Princes owe allegiance to that Government as they did to the Moghuls, Maharastras and the Britishers?

Of course, they will have no other alternative but to submit to such a Government.

Sir Mirza Ismail, Dewan of Mysore, was a bit forward. Some time ago he suggested that Indians should accept H. E. the Viceroy's offer and get together in an Executive Council representing the whole nation and draft a constitution for India. Administrators like Sir C. P. and Sir Akbar Hydari are not prepared even to heed such a suggestion. They only want to continue the autocratic rule in their respective States. These Princes neither care for the political progress of their States nor the freedom of India. These pillars of British Imperialism in India only care to perpetuate the *status*

quo and thereby safeguard their own interests, as against their people's collective interests. In such circumstances, there can conceivably be nothing astounding about their recent statements and speeches regarding their rights and position in future India.

But the teeming millions of freedom-loving people both in Indian India and British India cannot and will not brush aside the cause of the States, which in all respects has become a serious problem to progressive India.

We can now see in almost all Native States the struggle for better government and though many of them have not yet succeeded in their attempts, their struggle for freedom will still go on unabated until their goal is reached.

The British politicians both in India and outside have declared times without number that British Government were not opposed to States' granting of constitutional reforms without prejudice to their interests. They have on many occasions even advised the Princes to grant such reforms and take the people into their confidence as that would materially push forward the progress of the States in various respects. A few days ago the present Viceroy, though posing as a 'disinterested spectator,' made a feeble appeal to the Princes at the last session of the Chamber of Princes to effect constitutional reforms in their States and smooth the way for a united India. We need not however take into account the genuineness of that appeal.

Many Princes have granted some sort of constitutional reforms in their States and some are seriously considering the question. But some Princes, otherwise called as 'miniature Hitlers' and administrators of two premier States like Sir C. P. and Sir Akbar Hydari, show palpable reluctance even to think of that. They seem to forget that they are living in the twentieth century. Sir C. P.'s presumption that the States would re-assume their old position and autocratic rule, is a mere delusion. They should know that they are now facing a different world. The position of States before the advent of British to India was quite different from the position existing today. The past two hundred years have roused much political consciousness in the States' people and naturally they will not further tolerate the old status and autocratic rule preferred by Sir C. P. and others. And so it is high time for the Princes and their administrators to realize that so long as they are not prepared to give up their so-called 'historical privileges' and notions of dignity and personal importance at the altar of duty and humanity, the Princely Order will be risking its very existence.

FORWARD BLOC NEWS

ANDHRA KISAN SABHA Forward Blocists Capture Offices (From our correspondent)

Palasa, 27th March.

The annual meeting of the Andhra Provincial Kisan Sabha was held recently. In the unavoidable absence of Mr. S. N. Murthi, the out-going President, Mr. P. Shyama Sundar Rao, M. L. A., the Vice-President, presided. Election of Office-bearers took place for the year. Mr. P. Shyama Sundara Rao was unanimously elected President for the year.

When it came to the question of electing a General Secretary, there was no agreement and all efforts of the President, Prof. Ranga and Mr. P. Bapiat, the General Secretary of the Andhra Provincial Forward Bloc, for bringing about an agreement, failed. Mr. P. Bapiat, on behalf of the Forward Blocists, proposed that there should be three secretaries, all of equal status, instead of only one General and another joint secretary, as it was obtaining at present. The proposal, though carried by a majority, contemplating, as it did, a change in the constitution, required two-thirds majority and hence fell through due to the opposition of the Socialists of the "National Front" group.

Two names were then proposed for the General Secretaryship, those of V. Sivalinga Prasad, the present General Secretary (Socialist) and Mr. C. Bali Reddi (Forward Blocist). The contest was keen, but Mr. Bali Reddi of the Forward Bloc, came out successful in the election. The Joint Secretaryship was offered by Prof. Ranga and others to the Socialists, but they declined it. Then Mr. G. Latchana, a member of the A.I.C.C., also a member of the Andhra Forward Bloc Working Committee, was unanimously elected Joint Secretary.

FORWARD BLOC Delhi To Form Council Of Action

It is understood that under instructions from the Central organisation of the Forward Bloc, the Delhi Provincial Forward Bloc will be dissolved and a Council of Action formed.

A meeting of the Working Committee of the Delhi Provincial Congress Committee

will be held on March 29 to consider the situation arising out of the resolution adopted at the Anti-Compromise Conference held recently at Ramgarh.

MR. R. S. NIMBKAR ARRESTED

Charge Of Violation Of Order

Mr. R. S. Nimbkar, General Secretary, Girni Kamgar Union and member, Council of Action, Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress was arrested recently on a charge of being a member of an unlawful assembly and violating the Police Commissioner's order. The arrest was effected while Mr. Nimbkar was addressing a meeting at Matunga Labour camp at Bombay. He was taken to the Mahim police station and subsequently released on bail.

All mills were closed to-day owing to Holi holidays. Labour leaders are making plans to give relief to strikers. Mass collection for the funds for relief of strikers will be made by the volunteers of the Citizens Strike Relief Committee on a day to be fixed in the first week of April.—

ANTI-COMPROMISE RESOLUTION

Council Of Leftist Leaders To Be Formed

A Council comprising of certain prominent leftist leaders, it is understood, will be formed after the All India Kisan Conference at Palasa in order to give effect to the main resolution of the recent Ramgarh Anti-Compromise Conference.

This Council, it is further understood will outline a programme in pursuance of that resolution for the guidance of the Anti-Compromise leaders and workers all over the country, taking into consideration various local conditions.

ALL-INDIA KISAN CONFERENCE At Palasa

(From a Correspondent)

Palasa, Mar. 27

Last evening the open session of the All-India Kisan Sabha met under the presidency of Baba Sohan Singh. About a lakh of people, of whom nearly a fourth were women and a large number of Savaras and Kothus belonging to hilltribes attended.

In the absence of S. Subhas Bose, Swami Sahajanand unfurled the red flag. S. Subhas Bose's message expressing complete solidarity with the Kisan movement and wishing the conference every success, was received with loud acclamation, relieving in some measure the great disappointment caused to the masses by his inability to come.

The principal resolution referred to the national struggle. While asking the A. I. C. C. to give the call for a nationwide struggle, a definite plan of campaign was urged to be popularised from the 6th April, the day fixed by the anti-Compromise Conference for commencing a nationwide struggle, and without specifically referring to the call for national struggle given by the anti-Compromise Conference, it urged the adoption of a scheme of a no-tax and no-rent movement in the ensuing national struggle. And it was crystal clear to the vast masses of the assembled people that the ensuing struggle only meant the one fixed to begin on the 6th April under the lead of S. Subhas Bose and Swami Sahajanand.

Thus Swamiji without offending the communist susceptibilities of the National Front group represented at the Conference, tactfully managed to make the resolution the nearest approach to that of the anti-Compromise Conference.

Prof. Ranga, who played a notable part in the Conference throughout, succeeded, though not without a tough fight, in getting the slogan of "Kisan-Majdur Raj", to which the people's fight for economic and political freedom would lead ultimately, definitely incorporated in the resolution. Prof. Ranga, S. Bankim Mukherjee, Mohanlal Gautam, Divakar Patnaik and Niharendu Datta-Mazumdar made eloquent speeches in support of the resolution.

S. Mazumdar's was the speech of the day and he was repeatedly cheered when he referred to the compromising tactics of the Congress leadership and the drive against the Left, symbolised in the disciplinary action against S. Subhas Bose and Swamiji. An interrupter was effectively silenced by the masterly logic and stirring orators of S. Mazumdar.

The resolution was declared carried unanimously amidst deafening cheers.

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By A. K. Sen

THE INDIAN FILM—IT'S PROBLEM AND POSSIBILITIES

(*Concluded*)

(*The first part of this article appeared the week before last in 'Forward Bloc'—Ed. F. B.*)

To come now to the more material aspect of cinema, i.e. cinema as an industry, the war brings before us—the film-loving public and technicians—a new and serious problem, whether the film-producing concerns in this country can stand the strains of war and increased prices, since for every foot of raw film, every grain of chemical and every piece of machinery, we are dependent on supplies from abroad and hence subject to scarcity and increased cost; most of our film studios being already in bad financial straits.

There has been of late some talk in certain quarters on the necessity and possibilities of raw film-manufacture in this country. The idea is commendable, no doubt, but not practical. Film-manufacture is a highly specialised industry and few countries in the world have proved equal to it. India's industrial backwardness compels her to import almost every bit of manufactured commodity from abroad and she would need to undergo a very high degree of industrialization before such a pretentious plan as the manufacture of raw film, can even be thought of. The disquieting facts facing us today continue to be India's lack of material development and the consequent poverty. Despite her immense reserves in man and matter, she suffers from material barrenness for the one single reason—the lack of co-ordination between brain and money. While money is wasted often so flagrantly on futilities, or otherwise misused, it is strangely enough withheld from honest and creative intellect. In a queer mixture of mediaeval feudalism and petty capitalism, the life in the country stands inert and unless some force shakes off this material and intellectual stupor, no growth seems likely; hunger and necessity having been in our case not the mother of inventions but motives for degradation.

The first and foremost thing in an enterprise is its finance and finance for film has not been easy to obtain for reasons more than one. The most

important of these being the lack of much certainty of returns for the investments already made. The film industry in India has deserved every one of its successive setbacks and reverses, systematically ignored as it has the importance of good organization and execution, factors, without which no enterprise can make a headway. To be specific, money has not been well used when obtained, so much so, that the history of film in this country constitutes a series of costly experiments entrusted, with few exceptions, to wrong people, leading to disastrous losses of money and possibilities. Such losses cripple chances of growth and also discourage prospective investors. Lack of capital for film-studios often assume such proportions that loans have got to be made at interests reaching upto 45%! Favouritism and nepotism turned the cinema industry into some sort of an arrangement to provide jobs and privileges for the *musahibs*, dependents and relatives of the cinema executive, irrespective of utility. This leads to an encouragement to intrigue and a scramble for individual advantage, evils to which so many film studios have fallen prey. It is surprising that in spite of all the reverses and the cumulative experience of years, nothing has been learnt and that film still continues to be a gamble of chances. Such a fatalistic blindness to causes of loss and failure would have been impossible in any other country, but fatalism is a phenomenon which stands deeply rooted in this land of paradox.

A person who has some money to invest in film production, becomes in this country eligible for the status of a producer, irrespective of his understanding of matters which are important for such very responsible work—matters artistic, dramatic and technical and last but not the least, organizing capabilities. But film, after all, is no Alladin's lamp just waiting for anybody to be rubbed for a wish to be fulfilled. Jesse L. Lasky defines the producer as follows: The term Producer

of Motion Pictures' applies to the man-in-charge of production. In his hands lies the supervision of every element that goes to make up the finished product. These elements are both tangible and intangible, the control of human beings and real properties as well as the control of artistic temperament, the shaping of creative forces and the knowledge of the public needs for entertainment. A producer must be a prophet and a general, a diplomat and a peace-maker, a miser and a spendthrift. He must have vision tempered by 'hindsight, daring governed by caution, the patience of a saint and the iron of a Cromwell.' How many producers in this country answer, even in part, to this definition? Individuals often overestimate their own capabilities, misjudge and fail and such failures involve frequently the ruin of their entire capital. Men who propose to finance pictures must proceed with the same amount of caution and judgement as would be essential for any other enterprise involving such large outlays. A picture is either a success or a failure. It can be only one of these two extremes. It can however be very safely accepted that a picture with well-defined qualities can never be a flop. And to make a good picture is not a matter of chance, but a matter of ability and intellect. This fundament holds good for any creation in this world. Even when viewed from purely material considerations, the artistic or technical merits of a picture can never affect adversely its financial success. This excuse is lame that a picture fails because it is too artistic for the understanding of the average person. It fails because it is bad and equally so for the connoisseur as well as for the average spectator.

It needs not much of critical study to come to the conclusion that money for film has come mostly from the following three classes of people: (1) those who had been led to believe that film-making, in whatever manner done, brings quick money, more quick perhaps than anything else, (2) those who think that film-making

promises pleasure and other diversions, and (3) unpractical enthusiasts. It would however, be wrong not to recognize those who came with genuine ideals, understanding and interest. But alas! they have been so few!

It is doubtful from our experience of the past that there is much hope of any voluntary improvement. Organization after organization sprang up during the last few years with big flourishes of great ideas and ideals only to degenerate speedily into hunting-grounds for the caprices of individuals or groups who somehow got the control of things. Opportunists got the greatest chances of their lives in the process—film, unlike every other industry or enterprise, having no norm nor control. Wrong people got the licence to ruin systematically great possibilities and filmcraft lost its natural status of a great art to be mistaken by many as unrespectable and unproductive.

Can our cinema extricate itself from insolvency and degradation? Not until better people can enter and guide the industry. Our characteristic failings reflect on our film-making organizations in the same measure as they do in other spheres of our life. A voluntary improvement does not seem very likely, for, good ideas dawn upon us slowly and their realization takes decades. The exclusiveness of the country's leaders of thought and of the serious section of the press has unfortunately left evils overshadowing the cinema industry free from every weighty criticism. Yet cinema today cannot simply be ignored out of existence. It would be blindness to ignore the great influence which the film has come to exert on the life of the people. Thousands attend shows and take with them their own impressions. But apart from its far-reaching moral effects, this industry has its economic bearings on our community life as well, in as much as it causes investments, disbursements and employment. The film industry in Germany in post-war years received the active financial support and patronage of the State which made that picturesque height of creative excellence, so much in evidence in German film productions of those years, possible. Not to speak of control, guidance or financial help, the Government take no more interest in the workings of the film industry in this country, save the exercise of censorship, which too, is ultimately left in most cases to the discretion of subordinate police officials. Yet no other art, perhaps, equals the film in its universality

or its resourcefulness as an instrument to interpret the past, depict the present and be a forerunner of the future to millions for whom no other language exists in the world. A French philosopher once said that the masses think in images. The picture indeed is the best and the simplest instrument of expression, for, it explains itself.

"Our ideal," said Aristotle, "is what we consciously pursue," and it would need an united effort of reformatory forces to elevate film-art from its present state of degradation. Our cinema is starved of intellect, idealism and sincerity in the same measure as it is neglected by the State in the matter of constructive control or guidance. Public opinion ignores it. But in spite of everything, the film has come to stay and it is time for our leaders of political and cultural thought

to decide in which form it should best be allowed to survive. Will they make a move? Will our national press respond to this earnest appeal and make its voice felt? If we cannot consent to the slightest compromise in the quality of our art and literature, why should we not work for better films? Our cinema must now be freed from the chaotic state of lawlessness and confusion by the initiation of comprehensive legislative measures far-reaching enough to guarantee wholesome entertainment to the public, to ensure proper use of the capital invested and to safeguard the interests of every person actively engaged in the industry. The setting up and enforcement of definite rules, regulations, norms and standards would go a long way to free this industry of evils which cripple it and stand in the way of progress.

A BALLADE OF UNITY

By—"Spartacus".

Now Nazi footsteps echo through the halls
Where Beck once gloried; faced with ruin sad
Those liberties which Poland's name recalls
Union alone can save us from the mad
Degenerates who rule in Leningrad,
Scornful of all that England's fighting for.
They seem to think that we are just as bad!
Nothing must be allowed to stop the war.

* * *
The Empire answers when the bugle calls!
A truce to every silly Leftist fad.
Unmindful of the spate of (cannon) balls
Stout Moslem Premiers preach the new *Jehad*.
At such a moment no one but a cad
Would bargain, with the Bolshies at the door.
To call our aims imperialist is mad.
Nothing must be allowed to stop the war.

* * *
The Indian knows that if the Empire falls
He'd only lose the liberties he had.
Of course the mildest description still galls
Some types of trouble-making swine. A lad
Like Dyer knew a thing or two, by God!
An ounce of shot is worth a pound of law.
Be damned to talk of "Hindusthan Azad"
Nothing must be allowed to stop the war.

ENVOI

My Prince, believe me, things are not so bad.
You will survive, as you have done before.
So, go and jail the Praja Parisad.
Nothing must be allowed to stop the war.

By SARDAR SARJUL SINGH CAVEESHAR

DOMINION STATUS OR COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE ?

[The first part appeared the week before last E. D. F. B.]

One other plea is put forward to keep India within the British Empire. It is argued that the British Empire is an alliance of different peoples and different countries working together for the peace of the world, that it foreshadows the International Federation of the future when all countries would live side by side as friends strung together by a common constitution.

To be in close union with such an Empire means strength, India would be weak if she had to work out her destiny all alone. England is regarded the home of Western civilisation and India is known as the cradle of Eastern culture; the intimate connection of two countries would, it is suggested, redound to the glory of both. By a hearty cooperation between Indians on the one side and the British people on the other, the fate of the whole world, it is said, would be changed for the better; there would be peace all round and no one would be allowed by these two peoples to do any mischief. The British Commonwealth would be a model for the League of Nations and by its example all refractory people would be hushed into sweet silence. East and West, linked in a holy union, would usher in the reign of contentment for the whole world; all strife and war shall come to an end.

This is grand, even alluring. But the other side has not less weighty reasons in support of separation. The linking of England, one of the most advanced countries in the world, with India, a country which for the last hundred years has not been allowed to make progress much would not be helpful to the full and natural growth of the weaker country. It is always the case when two men of unequal strength are put together. The idea of equal partnership, it is argued, is only a myth. The stronger nation has always the tendency to exploit the weak partner.

For India and also for the whole world, it is further argued, it would be better if Indians closely allied themselves with their natural friends, than with those

who happen to be connected with them only through an historical accident. It would be easy and advantageous for India to work together with Persia, Arabia, China, Siam Japan and other Asiatic countries with whom she has many natural associations of race, religion and history than with the people with whom she has no affinity. It looks strange that India should be hostile or indifferent towards her next door neighbours and should form such a close alliance with a country seven thousand miles away, and so different in culture and civilisation. It would be better for the future peace and progress of the world, if Asiatic countries grow as strong as European nations; because when both sides are equally strong, they would be glad to meet each other on an equal footing, and the ideas of exploitation and injustice would automatically vanish.

The British Empire is the outward expression of what British Imperialism aims at. British Imperialism aims at the expansion of British interests. India by remaining in the Empire has helped Britain to dominate China, Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia and other downtrodden countries. These countries have now made up their mind to free themselves from foreign domination. By remaining within the British Empire Indians are liable to put themselves in the wrong with those neighbouring countries.

From whatever point one may discuss the question—from the ethical, social, economic, or political—it is in the best interests of India and England that India should have an unrestricted right of self-determination; India should no more be forced to hang like a tag on the British Empire portfolio. India and the Empire have only one thing in common: their history of the past two hundred years or so. And of this history every Indian must feel ashamed; and if conscience really has a prick and if the people infected with Imperial malady have left them any conscience, the British Imperialist too cannot feel proud of it.

Such an attitude is born of the

present dependent position of India. No one likes to lose power; but when India gets Swaraj, and the pride of power is gone out of the mind of the British people, they will not remain anxious to keep India within the Empire. Between Indians and the British a union of common interests may be possible; but such union will be the result of free negotiations between the two high contracting parties.

It would be of some interest to the reader to know what clear-headed Britishers like Mr. Bernard Shaw think of the Indian connection with the British Empire. In one of his broad-cast talks, Mr. Shaw, discussing "This Empire Business" said :-

"The instinct not only of the distant Indian, but even of the nearby Welshman, the Irishman, and Scot, was to resent and repudiate Imperial dominance, so that if we were to preserve the connexion, we must make it appear flattering and advantageous to all the parts of the Empire, giving them Home Rule, calling them Dominions instead of Colonies, and putting them on the same footing as what we called the Mother Country, or even on a better one. But let them think what that might lead to. There was only a handful of English-speaking people with pink skins in the Dominions. The Indians outnumbered the rest of the Empire, including England, five-to-one. Consequently, the effect of making India a Dominion, in the Canadian sense, would be that England would become, in effect a Dominion of India, and England might not like that. England might break off from the Empire, as the United States did.

"I can not feel sure of the permanence of any intimate political combination not based on homogeneity, or the people in the combination being reasonably like one another in their tastes and religious faiths, their traditions and hopes. A combination of the northern States of Europe with the United States of America, and with Australia and New Zealand, would be far more homogenous than any possible combination of Europeans with Asiatics. If I were a stranger from another planet I would say that an attempt to combine England with India before England was combined with the United States on the one side and with all her Western European neighbours on the other, was a crazy reversal of the natural order of things and could not possibly last. If we did not make the constituents of the Empire so independent of England that England would have nothing to do but support an enormously expensive Navy to protect them, they would break off as the American Colonies did; yet if we granted them that independence, the tail would wag

the dog, as it did very vigorously at the Ottawa Conference."

Let the East form an alliance of its own, Europe another, and America another; when these natural geographical alliances are formed then all the federated units could come together and guarantee the peace of the world. There was no peace in the British Empire itself; India, Ireland, Egypt were in revolt, how could then the British Empire work for the peace of the world? All high-sounding phrases about the interests of humanity and world peace are no more than a clever camouflage to hoodwink the ignorant. As long as Western attitude in politics was that of glorified robbers, as long as as their dishonest designs prompted the European powers to quarrel amongst themselves like dogs and wolves, for them to come forward and put before the Asiatics the ideal of world peace was sheer hypocrisy; all European wars belied European pretensions in this direction. To expect European nations to work for the peace of the world is, not better than asking thieves and highwaymen of a country to organise its police force.

Clash of interests

Notwithstanding some mutual advantages on both sides, the relations even between England and India are not quite natural; their interests are apt to clash with each other more often than it is generally believed. In the war between Greece and Turkey, England had her sympathies with Greece; race, religion and geographical associations naturally prompted the English to side with the Greeks; no one had a right to object to such a course on the part of the English. On the other hand, similar causes prompted Indians to side with the Turks; Indian sympathies with Turkey were as justifiable as those of England with Greece. The result was a constant tug-of-war between Indians on the one side and the British on the other. In the matter of peace with Turkey these differences became acute to the extent that Mr. Montagu had to be dismissed from the Cabinet because of his leaning towards the Indian point of view.

The same is the case in regard to English dealings with Arabia, Mesopotamia and China. The British Government wants to keep these countries under its control because they form good markets for English manufacturers and also because English capital finds good investment in exploiting their natural resources. Indians have no interest in such enterprises.

It is not difficult to imagine also other circumstances where Indian and British interests will be found diametrically opposed to each other. To end such awkward situations the best thing is that India and England should pursue their foreign policies quite independently. Both the countries can then go their own way without any bitterness or misunderstanding on either side.

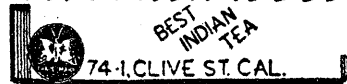


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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS OF RAHULA SANKRITYAYANA PROBLEMS OF KISANS IN INDIA

The following is the presidential address of Sj. Rahuls Sankrityana, who has recently been detained under the Defence of India Act, read out at the All-India Kisan Conference held on March 24 and 25, at Palasa, in Vizigapatam district :—

The agrarian problem is one of the most crucial problems of our country. The peasantry constitutes near three-fourths of the population of India and produces ever 80 percent of the total wealth of the country. And yet to-day millions of men and women belonging to the agricultural classes live in a state of abject poverty while chronic under-nourishment, illiteracy and disease are devastating the countryside. An Indian village presents an aspect of terrible decay—ill-fed and half-naked human beings living in dilapidated mud huts or rickety thatched structures, with no furniture and very scanty household belongings. The great majority of peasants cannot get one decent meal a day. About 95 per cent of the village dwellers are illiterate and preventable disease takes an alarming toll of life. The entire countryside is irretrievably steeped in debt. The exactions of the moneylenders and the extortionate demands of the landlords and the bureaucracy have brought hunger and pauperisation to almost every peasant home. Acute land-hunger and over-pressure of population on land has become a permanent feature of Indian agriculture, while the methods of agricultural production remain extremely backward.

What then is the genesis of the agrarian problem in India? If we examine carefully the socio-economic structure of our country to-day, we shall find that the decay of Indian agriculture and the consequent poverty of the peasantry is attributable directly to the network of socio-economic relationships established in this country since the advent of the British.

New Social Order

The conquest of India by the British brought about far-reaching changes in

the ancient social economy of India, for unlike all earlier conquerors, the British came to India as agents of a new social order, namely capitalism. Within less than fifty years' time the independent feudal economy of India which had as its basis a peculiar combination of agriculture with handicrafts, was reduced to the position of a helpless appendage to the young and developing capitalist economy of Great Britain. The village community system which had constituted the backbone of the old order began to disintegrate rapidly under the influence of the new economic forces let loose in the country by British merchant capitalists. The opening up of the country through railways destroyed the self-sufficiency of the village community, flooded the Indian market with foreign manufactures, killed the ancient handicrafts and caused the export of raw materials on a large scale. The rapid expansion of money economy in response to the exigencies of the trading and financial requirements of the East India Company enabled commercial capital to make serious inroads into the agrarian system. Merchants, moneylenders and other middlemen invaded the countryside in a ruthless hunt for profits. Land itself became a commodity and the entire peasantry soon became a helpless prey not only to the relentless greed of foreign and indigenous merchants, but also to all the vicissitudes of capitalist trade.

In order to maintain and reinforce their political and economic strangle-hold over the country the British ruling classes further brought about a complete transformation in the system of land tenure in India. Landlordism was deliberately fostered. The great bulk of the peasants were deprived of their allodial rights and such new and powerful vested interests on land were created as could serve as an effective social prop for British rule in the country. The history of the growth of Zemindari system will for ever remain one of the darkest chapters in the annals of British rule in India.

Land Tax Increased

Land tax was also increased during the nineteenth century with such astounding relentlessness that normal agricultural reproduction became difficult. In many cases as much as 75 per cent of the gross produce of the peasant was taken away from him in the form of rent or land revenue.

These and various other factors caused Indian agriculture to decline rapidly, for the brunt of imperialist exploitation was borne by the peasantry which produced by far the largest part of the wealth of the country. This decline culminated in a series of devastating famines which darkened the face of India and brought death and ruin to millions of peasant homes during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Driven to desperation, the peasantry rushed into sporadic revolts in various parts of the country against the tyranny and oppression of money-lenders and merchants, or of the landlords and the bureaucracy. Needless to add that these revolts were crushed with an iron hand.

Alarmed at the prospect of losing the Indian market the British ruling classes began to make some attempts, by about the end of the last century, to check any further decline of Indian agriculture. Thus a variety of measures, such as Tenancy Acts, Agricultural Relief Acts, Land Alienation Acts were passed. Agricultural Departments were opened, irrigation works were extended and some arrangements were made for co-operative lending. None of these measures could however restore any prosperity to agriculture.

Types of Land Ownership

One of the main features of the agrarian constitution of the country is the predominance of landlordism and state-ownership over peasant-proprietorship. Taking into account only the major types of land ownership, we can divide agricultural land into the following four regions :

1. The region of big and middle-sized landlord estates.

2. The region of the state-ownership of land.

3. The region of peasant-proprietorship.

4. The regions of plantations.

The big and middle-sized landed states are found in the greater part of Bengal, the northern districts of Madras, the Central Provinces, Bihar, Orissa and Oudh. These estates together cover about 50 per cent of the total arable area and accommodate about 60 per cent of the total population. Thus the bulk of the Indian peasantry is directly under the rule of feudal landlords.

The region of state-ownership of land covers about 30 per cent of the total arable land and accommodates about 25 per cent of population. Here the Government acts as the landlord.

The region of peasant ownership covers a large part of the Bombay Presidency, the southern districts of Madras, the Punjab and a few other areas. Land is very unequally divided among individual peasants in this region.

The plantations are mainly concentrated in the province of Assam. They are also found in certain parts of Bengal and southern India. Altogether they cover only about 0.5 per cent of the total cultivable area, a large number of these plantations being owned by foreign individuals or companies.

It may be noted that the present system of landownership in India not only ensures the predominance of big vested interests in land, but has also rendered millions of peasants landless. The number of landless peasants in India to-day is roughly 40 millions.

Pressure of Population on Land

Another striking feature of the Indian agrarian system is the over-pressure of population on land. In 1850, the total population of the country was 150 millions, it rose to 290 millions in 1891 and 350 millions in 1931. To-day it is about 400 millions out of which about 300 millions are dependent on agriculture. The rapidity with which the pressure on land has increased can be seen from the fact that while the percentage of the agricultural population to the total population was 58 in 1881, it was 71.6 in 1921. The Royal Commission on Agriculture estimated this percentage at 73 and it can be safely assumed that to-day no less than 75 per cent of the people live on land. In fact one can easily maintain that on a conservative estimate over 50 per cent of the total holdings in the country are

uneconomic. Thus for example, the average size of a holding in Bengal is 3.1 acres, in Assam 3 acres, in Bihar and Orissa 3.1 acres, in Madras 4.9 acres, in Central Provinces 8.5 acres, in the Punjab 9.2 acres and in Bombay 12.2 acres. The averages do not however give a correct picture of the actual conditions. In British India as a whole holdings of less than one acre are no less than 23 per cent of the total and those below five acres 56 per cent, all of which may be considered uneconomic. In the Punjab which is considered to be comparatively prosperous the number of holdings which are of less than five acres is so large as to constitute 56 per cent of the total holding of the province. As against this the percentage of holdings of less than five acres in England, Sweden and Bulgaria, countries whose technique of production is much superior to that of India, is 19.3, 28.3 and 23.4 respectively.

Over-Taxation

The Indian peasantry is perhaps the most heavily taxed peasantry in the world, in view of the extremely meagre margin of profits on which it subsists. That agricultural output per acre in India is much smaller than in other countries can be seen from the fact that while an acre yields 2,359 lbs. of rice in Egypt, 2,767 lbs. in Japan and 4,601 in Italy, it yields only 1,353 lbs in India. Similarly an acre of wheat yields 1,241 lbs. in Italy, 1,508 lbs. in Japan, 1,688 lbs. in Egypt, 1,812 lbs. in England and only 652 in India. The per capita income of India may be estimated at Rs. 75 to-day. As against this the per capita income of Japan is Rs. 271, of France Rs. 636, of England Rs. 1,092, and of the U. S. A. Rs. 2,053.

It is now an admitted fact that land taxation has increased with an astounding rapidity under British rule. To quote one or two instances, in the Presidency of Madras the land revenue was raised from £ 381,330, in 1767-68 to £ 5,63,349 in 1776-77 and in Bombay within three years (1817 to 1820) it rose from £ 8,68,047 to £ 18,18,314. Then again in the Bombay Presidency the total land revenue increased from Rs. 3,07,47,607 in 1902-03 to Rs. 4,09,45,297 in 1932-34, although during the same period the total cultivated acreage fell from 3,23,86,549 acres to 3,22,15,081 acres.

Land tax throughout the country rose to an unprecedented level within a few decades of the establishment of British rule. In ancient India, according to the laws of Manu, land tax normally fluctuated between 8 and 16 per cent of the gross produce. Under Akbar, it never exceeded 33 per cent. In neither of these cases were the peasants obliged to pay any other taxes. Under the British, however, land tax has never fallen below 50 per cent of the gross produce while in many cases as much as 75 per cent has been charged.

Burden of Landlordism

In ancient India the cultivator of the soil was always considered to be its owner.

The Moghuls also never recognised the proprietary rights of middlemen in land. But in response to the financial and political exigencies of their rule the British administrators deliberately created and fostered big landlord interests.

According to the Permanent Settlement of Bengal of 1793 all revenue collectors were declared proprietors of the areas over which their authority as revenue collectors extended, while the actual cultivators were deprived of all the rights and privileges which they had enjoyed from times immemorial. This was the first step in the direction of foisting a class of big landed proprietors on the agrarian system.

A Unique Right

Mr. C. D. Field in his book "Relations of Landlords and Tenants in various Countries" while describing the multiform oppression to which the peasantry was subjected by the Permanent Zemindari Settlement, wrote, "There is scarcely a country in the civilised world in which a landlord is allowed to evict his tenant without having recourse to the regular tribunals; but the Bengal zamindar was deliberately told by the Legislature that he was at liberty to oust his tenants if the rents claimed by him were in arrear at the end of the year, leaving them to recover their rights if infringed by having recourse to those new and untried Courts of Justice, the failure in which might be punished with fine or imprisonment."

Space does not permit us here to describe in detail the innumerable legal and illegal excesses of the zamindars against the peasantry. Suffice to note the following few statements taken from official documents regarding illegal exactions of the zamindars.

In their Letter of Instruction to Supervisors appointed in 1769 the Government of Bengal observed:—"The truth cannot be doubted that the poor and industrious tenant is taxed by his zamindar for even extravagance, that avarice, ambition, pride, vanity or intemperance may lead him in to, over and above, what is generally deemed the established rent of the lands. If he is to be married, a child born, honours conferred, luxury indulged, and nezaranas or fines exacted even for his own misconduct, all must be paid by the rayat."

The Collector of Mymensingh described the illegal cesses levied by the landlords on the cultivators in 1920-21 as follows: "One Circle Officer has prepared a list of over twenty such exactions and rightly remarks, 'the very list arouses indignation'.....The tenant pays an average of 4 annas to 8 annas of his rent in abwabs."

The Collector of Mymensingh noted again in his report for 1927-28: "Levy of abwabs continues to be consecrated by custom, and the penal provisions of the Tenancy Act, which were framed with a view to protect tenants from exactions of this nature, remain almost a dead letter."

(To be continued)

Book Reviews

Industrial Development of Japan By S. Bagchi. To be had of M. C. Sarkar & Sons, Ltd., Calcutta, Rs. 2-8 as.

The author of this book visited Japan and other foreign countries as a Calcutta University scholar and made a very careful study of the industrial conditions obtaining there. His studies and observations, so far as Japan is concerned, have been embodied in the present publication. Japan is today one of the foremost industrial countries of the world and what is particularly creditable in her achievement is that she scored this phenomenal success in the course of a comparatively short time. The author has very correctly traced out the reasons of the success. In the first place, industrial expansion was essential for Japan for her very existence, since mere agriculture of that island country could not adequately maintain her teeming population. In the second place, the Japanese are a highly industrious, energetic and skilful nation. Thirdly, the success is due to the earnest and well-directed efforts of the Japanese Government towards the organisation of the industrial life of the country.

The author has successfully met the charge of Japanese dumping. He has shown that the whole industrial life of the country is under the control of a strict rationalisation. He has also done well by emphasising the fact that small and medium industries still occupy an important and substantial place in the commercial life of Japan. Situated as India today is, she can take a fruitful lesson from her progressive neighbour in this respect. Indeed, to India the industrial life of Japan can serve as a very apt model. Of course, the very basis of that life, so far as it pertains to the relation between labour and capital, calls for a thorough overhaul; for we remain absolutely unconvinced by what the author has said to exonerate the Japanese entrepreneurs in their deal with labour. In this respect a new outlook ought to have been brought to bear on the whole question which the author utterly lacks in. But that is no reason why the progress that Japan has achieved in her industrial life should

not have a strong appeal for our country. Particularly, when we remember that Japan received her impetus for industrial advance during the last Great War when the more important European countries could not carry on their normal activities, the appeal becomes all the more powerful. Will India be able now to take a leaf out of the Japanese life?

The book is neatly got up and beautifully illustrated. The language occasionally is defective. We hope the author will try to improve it in the next edition.

Aims and Ideals of Ancient Indian Culture By Broja Sundar Roy, M.A., B.L. Published by A. Roy from 2A, Radha Prasad Lane, Calcutta. Rs. 2.

The book under review is a survey of the ancient Indian culture in all its aspects. The aim of the erudite author, as we have understood on going through the book, has been to establish the superiority of Indian culture over that of that Occident. In this task he has not only set forth the Indian ideals in all their comprehensiveness as embodied primarily in the Upanishads and the Gita, but has drawn at large on various authorities both of East and West and documented his treatise in a manner that amply testifies to his deep and wide learning. The ideal of ancient Indian culture, viewed in its true perspective, is not ascetic in spirit, as is sometimes wrongly supposed to be. It advocated richness and fullness of existence, and not lean and devalitised poverty or a flight from worldly life. But being spiritual at its very core, it considered *human welfare* and not mere *power* as the consummation to be devoutly wished for. And since spirituality was the fundamental truth of ancient Indian life, it imprinted its stamp on various aspects of that life. The author has shown at length how educational, social and even political life of ancient India was deeply influenced by its spiritual ideal. Life was then looked upon as an organic whole; it was not compartmentalised as has been done today in Europe.

There can be no running away from the fact that evils have today crept in Indian life and culture. The forms have largely continued but the underlying spirit has become moribund. It is a sickening and discouraging sight no doubt. But there is no sense, for that reason, in giving a cold shoulder to the Indian ideal as such. With the march of time, life has thrown up new experiences and evolved new standards. They have put in their claims on our consideration. But still it is worth while to consider if it is possible to adjust the "old principles"

with the "new ideals that are forcing themselves upon us." The very basis of our existence has to be re-evaluated in a spirit of unfaltering truth. That is the greatest cultural need of the hour. And in that effort books like the one under review may be of real help to us.

B. S.

BENGALI

Lenin O Bolshevic Party By Revati Burman. Burman Publishing House. 72 Harrison Road, Calcutta, One Rupee.

Lenin was the harbinger of a new civilization based upon the equality of man and his life was devoted to the realization of it for he regarded action as the end of thought. And in strength and ability he towered above his contemporaries and his achievements are numerous and would daunt one to catalogue them. An institute is the lengthening shadow of one man, said Emerson. And rightly can Lenin be said to be the father of Bolshevic party. The book under review is an attempt to study the life and activities of Lenin with equal stress upon the political development of Russia. Chapters on new Economic Policy, War communism and Imperialism are highly instructive and should be read by all. We recommend the book to the readers.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHY THIS HEART-BURNING ?

To
The Editor, Forward Bloc
SIR,

Com. J. P. Narain's arrest is no more a news. All that has to be seen is the way in which the anti-imperialist forces of the country, specially the national leadership, has reacted to it. Pt. Nehru takes it as a challenge, Mr. Kripalani, as though disillusioned, takes the incident to mean the Govt.'s intention to fight the Congress and the Congress President takes it as a matter of course, for he says, "It is not the first of its kinds nor is going to be the last."

But then the *National Herald*, the Lucknow champion of national unity and anti-imperialist cause, takes the opportunity, although absolutely out of way and wholly uncalled for, to draw a line of demarcation between the C. S. P. and the Forward Bloc in its issue dated the 9th inst. It has tried to vilify Com. Subhas Bose and his colleagues by proving them to be 'the best friends of the bureaucracy and of British Imperialism.....their tall talks notwithstanding. The paper says that the 'extreme left-wing Firebrands' meaning members of the Forward Bloc—are not likely to be touched by Govt.' And it is all by way of praising Com. J. P. Narain for his efforts to maintain Congress unity 'even at the sacrifice of his convictions at times.' One is left wondering as to how Com. Bose comes in, but he has been dragged in all the same.

This is not the occasion to enter into the controversy, nay, it is unwarranted even to raise the question at this zero hour in our history, as to who and which party has done what either to create 'division in the Congress rank' or to maintain the Congress and national unity. It is useless either to discuss the merits and demerits of the actions of Com. J. P. Narain or Com. Bose, and for that reason of C. S. P. and Forward Bloc. But one thing is certain that Com. Bose has never acted against his convictions; of course, it is up-to Com. J. P. whether he will refute or pocket the aspersion cast on him that he sacrifices his convictions at times.

As regards Forward Bloc people's unlikelihood of being touched by Govt., I think a responsible paper like the *National Herald* should not have so deliberately ignored facts. Is not it a fact that no sooner the crisis came in Com. B. D. Tripathi, Secretary All India Forward Bloc was arrested just in the neighbourhood of the *National Herald*? And what about a number of U. P. comrades either undergoing their terms of imprisonment or standing their

trial? Comrades Jata Shankar Shukla, Manmath Nath Gupta, Ram Dulare Trivedi are all important members of the U. P. Forward Bloc executive. Only today has come the news that Com. Ashrafuddin Choudhry has been arrested. Do not these arrests have a significance which should not be lost on people who are deliberately out to discredit Com. Bose?

One might differ with the ideas and line of actions of Acharya Narendra Devaji or Rashtrapati Rajendra Prasadji, but would one be justified in saying that simply because they are still at large, they have turned best friends of British Imperialism? Likewise, one is quite at liberty to differ with Com. Bose and criticise his actions in the spirit of fair play, but it would be going beyond the limits of decency to say that he—who has an unequalled record of sacrifices in the cause of the country and the Congress to his credit and has spent the best parts of his life in fighting British Imperialism—has turned a friend of bureaucracy, simply because he has been spared so far by the Govt.

All that I mean to say is that all the comrades who have been subjected to Imperialist repression are all brave fighters in the cause of the country, might belong either to Gandhian group, C. S. P., C. P. or the Forward Bloc.

LUCKNOW
12th March '40. S. BALUPURI.

PERSONALISM IN POLITICS

To
The Editor, Forward Bloc
SIR,

It is deeply regrettable that the group, which passes under the name of radicalism, really consists of the henchmen of the Gandhians. The League of Radical Congressmen, better known as the Royist Group, has been well-known as an ally of the Rightists in Behar and U. P. The manner in which this group supported the Rightists for a number of years in the Congress Elections of these provinces, has left no doubt as to its real position in the present scheme of things. Its attitude in Bengal has been equally disgraceful. No true leftist can be misled by the pseudo-leftist declarations and boasts of this group.

The "inverted Rightism" of the Royist group in All-India politics is also well-known. On all important problems like the kisan sabha movement, the office acceptance issue, the 9th July demonstrations, and the ministerial resignations, the Royists have shown themselves as naked Rightists. While sabotaging by their actions the rise of a new leadership

in India, they claim to stand for an alternative leadership. It is clear that their alternative leadership means the leadership of the "Inverted Rightist"-cum-"Rightist" alliance.

Mr. M. N. Roy talked much of his theatrical radicalism at the Tripuri Congress. Now he seems to have forgotten his attitude towards the Left movement before and after the Tripuri session. Even with reference to the Tripuri Presidential election, Mr. Roy is today suppressing an important fact. In the leaflet under his signature distributed at the U. P. Provincial delegates' meeting on the occasion of the 1939 Presidential election, he had definitely declared that he would have supported Maulana Abul Kalam Azad if the latter had not withdrawn his candidature. But now when Mr. Roy's personal question is involved, even neutrality due to his anti-Left activities is interpreted by him as a vote against the Left. There could not have been more personalism in politics.

Ananda Chowk,
Dehra Dun

S. LAL.

"UNITED FRONT"

To
The Editor, Forward Bloc
SIR,

Of late we have been hearing much about "united front" and "national unity." Mr. J. P. Narayan's latest is no surprise to us at all. This champion of unity does not know that the development of unity as advocated by him will result in quite the opposite to what he expects; it will lead to united surrender. Mr. J. P. Narayan accuses a certain section of left wing of "infantilism" and "disruptive tendencies." Yes, a disruption—disruption between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces! But what Mr. J. P. is doing, in the name of unity? He is disrupting the revolutionary forces, thus acting as a henchman of the counter-revolution.

Mr. Jai Prakash seems to be over jubilant over the Patna resolution of the Working Committee. He went so far as to characterise it as a definite turning-point in current Indian history and a signal for struggle. Mahatma Gandhi's article in "Harijan" is, perhaps, a smart slap on his face. By the way, what about the National Front's opportunistic "forcing theory"?

What we require now is not the so-called "national unity"—which is, in fact, a betrayal of the nation; we require unity amongst our own ranks—amongst the revolutionary forces. I request our comrades to think over it.

16th March

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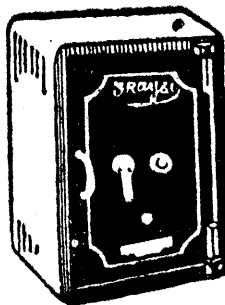
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