

Incha Fails Again



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INDIA FAILS AGAIN



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CURRENT TOPICS PUBLISHING HOUSE

12 Hunters Road, Vepery, Madras.

Price As. 4

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THE CRISIS

India has failed again.

She has missed the bus, now, as in every critical period for more than 1,000 years, in spite of the pious protestations of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru that we cannot afford to ignore the international reactions to our national decisions.

Her own children have betrayed India into an unenviable position from which the fanatically-minded political blunderers try in vain to retrieve her, if possible without loss of face. Gandhi, the greatest of her children, has betrayed her by his unpractical idealism.

This is not the first time in the history of nations that the so-called saviour sacrifices the interests of his country for the sake of his own pet philosophy, political or otherwise. Dictators, violent or non-violent, are one in this regard, they do not scruple to exploit the confidence of their fellow countrymen in them.

They forget that the greatest patriot is he who sacrifices himself and subordinates his individual point of view for the sake of the nation, and certainly not he who is prepared to sacrifice the nation's interests, particularly in a critical period of its history, for his own personal aggrandisement or, as in the case of Gandhi, for the propagation of political and philosophical theories which have been questioned, tested and found wanting, on his own admission.

The fact that non-violence is the sheet-anchor of Gandhi's programme does not in the least lessen the ridiculous and pitiable plight in which he has landed India in the present crisis.

Add to this, Congress's political obstinacy which had its climax at Ramgarh and the fantastic fulminations of Jinnah for the vivisection of India at Lahore, you fill the cup of India's misery to the brim.

The antagonism between the two great political organisations has worsened the situation to a degree unknown before in recent Indian history. Politicians credited with modern outlook have openly avowed religious fanaticism that cannot but end in civil turmoil. Congressmen and Muslim Leaguers both rivalled each

other in damning Federation as envisaged under the Government of India Act 1935, instead of tackling those problems which lay deeper and were bound to come, in fact did come, to the surface when the critical period of declaration of war by Britain and France against Germany was reached in the end of August 1939.

The anti-Federation zealots had the satisfaction of torpedoing the Federal scheme, without, however, suggesting any alternative solution to bind the centrifugal forces together when the stress of war was upon India. They have embarrassed Britain to no small degree and, but for the timely realisation by Britain of the fact that India was neither politically developed nor militarily prepared to defend herself for her to relax her control, we do not know in what chaos the country would have been plunged.

The Federal scheme, as His Excellency Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, has so often dinned into the ears of our leaders is the one solution to bring the various provinces and states together to preserve the constitutional unity of India. And that stands postponed and unless Britain is careful enough not to be stampeded into any hasty course by Congressmen and Muslim Leaguers, one cannot visualise with equanimity the fate of India when that constitutional unity is impaired.

This is not the first time, unfortunately, that we note these attempts by the constituent units that composed the nation to war with each other at the nation's expense. That has ever been with us throughout our history for 1,000 years. The present war has once more crystallised two tangled problems, or, what might be considered two aspects of the same problem that had always faced the country, namely, not so much the attainment of constitutional unity as its preservation and continuance in critical periods of our history.

It is here that India has failed again and again. At every crisis, when the constitutional unity of India has been questioned or disturbed, the petty jealousies and rivalries between the various classes and communities crop up. Instead of unity we are faced with disunity. This is the bane of our history, and yet our leaders have not learnt this bitter lesson that now at least

the constitutional unity of India should be preserved at all costs, and that their predilections for a particular political philosophy or economic programmes should not cloud the issue and tend to separate the national forces.

It is at a dangerous turn of our national affairs, at a moment when the energies of all classes and groups should flow into the one channel of unified nationalism, that we make a foolish exhibition, unashamed and unrepenting, of our lack not only of political wisdom but what is worse, our utter indifference to national interests. We may paint our foreheads with patriotic titles or shout political slogans till our voices are hoarse, the horrid fact, however, remains that we lack the essence of nationality, unity.

The war has once more churned our ancient muddy waters and agelong feuds, which, one had thought, had been smothered by the solid British achievement of the constitutional unity of India once again, have raised their hydra heads.

II

Events caught our leaders napping in August 1939, though the shadow of war had been growing over Europe with the ever increasing bellicose utterances of Hitler and his henchmen. When the time came for quick judgement and wise decision, our leaders were unprepared. To save their faces they began to wind yarns of India's rights and the conditions for the participation in an "Imperialist" war.

The time for action becomes, to the unprepared, the time for words. Speeches and statements, any number of them, were issued, one clarifying the one that went before. Congress and non-Congress parties were alike with the Allies; the Congressmen, wellknown for their mental reservations, had to cover their inconsistent approach to the problem that confronted the nation on the outbreak of the war.

Our national impotence is patent indeed. The Congress, numerically powerful, is strong only apparently for whatever strength is brought to it by its numerical superiority is sapped by its vacillating policy. There is no direction in the Congress

attitude to the problems created by the war, perhaps the Congress is still probing its way and sounding different policies to decide its way of approach!

Blinded by its hostility to Britain, the Congress in spite of the supposed sobering influence of Gandhi stands aloof. But the shrew has to be and will be tamed.

The other parties, with the exception of the Muslim League, weak in number and incoherent in policy, look to Britain for safeguards and guidance.

The Congress blames Britain for all our ills and says the problems that confront the nation today are the creation of British domination.

The Congress speaks with two voices, one intended for home consumption and the other for foreign, that is, British consumption.

It says, on the one hand, that Swaraj cannot come without Hindu-Muslim unity. This is when the Congress addresses itself to the people of India. Toward Britain, however, it changes its attitude and says that Britain should concede its claim for self-government for India and that Hindu-Muslim unity is a domestic problem and can be solved only after Britain has conceded the Congress claim. The communal problems, it is stated, cannot be solved so long as the third party existed.

The unfair allegation that Britain is exploiting India's weaknesses is only an admission of our political bankruptcy which finds its expression in our impotence and patent disunity.

Granting that they are right who assert that Britain is exploiting our disunity, how should we proceed? Surely lamentations cannot take us nearer the goal of freedom. Not only the continuance but the very origin of British rule in India in the early 17th century was the result of disunity and disorder in India. If, therefore, we have to eliminate what has resulted from our disunity, we have to tackle the root cause of the problem, for the point can never be overstressed that the very causes of the origin of foreign domination are responsible for its continuance.

If the Congress had only impartially viewed the problem at this present crisis, the party would not have proceeded about its business in a flamboyant manner—a covering for its vagueness—but would have proceeded with humility to secure that greatest common measure of agreement between all the parties in India that is so necessary for the transference of power on the part of Britain. Let us always remember that it is not her unwillingness but the fact that there is no one fit to shoulder the burden of responsibility for Indian affairs that prevents Britain from parting with power in India.

On the other hand, the provocative attitude of the Congress toward the Muslim League has only resulted in an open cleavage between the two organisations, and what is worse, all the other minority organisations have more or less rallied under the banner of the Muslim League and proposed claims counter to those of the Congress. The unhappy result of this was that whatever prestige the Congress had in the eyes of Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, as the greatest political organisation in India and capable of a realistic approach to the problems that faced the country was questioned the very moment when His Excellency was trying to come to a settlement with Gandhi and the major political parties. With all sorts of discordant voices came disgruntled nobodies and harassed His Excellency to hearken unto them.

The Congress proceeded to criticise the Viceroy and the British Government for stipulating that unity should precede concession to the Congress claim for self-government. It is clear that internal unity and ability to defend ourselves against aggression are the *sine qua non* of the achievement of freedom. If we only achieve that unity and so modify our political thought as to give scope for military preparedness, freedom will follow as day follows night.

By ignoring these basic features of the Indian problem and by its overzealous adherence to hazy sentimental nationalism, the Congress unfitted itself for the task of accepting the responsibilities for the Indian administration, however much it demanded it as a matter of right.

Gandhi himself has realised this for he admits the grave risks in India if Britain withdraws, though he puts it in his own characteristic vein.

Gandhi said :

"There can be no manly peace in the land unless the British bayonet is withdrawn. The risk of riots has to be run. Non-violence will be born out of such risks, if at all it is to be part of the national life. It is daily becoming crystal clear that real unity will not come so long as the British bayonet crushes the free spirit of the people. The peace it imposes is the peace of the grave.

"I feel that riots will be a welcome relief, if that is the price we have to pay for freedom, for out of them I can conceive the possibility of peace coming, not out of the present unreality.

"The way out of riots, on the one hand, and British bayonets, on the other hand, is frank acceptance of non-violence. To this my life is dedicated and my faith in its possibility and efficacy will survive the dissolution of my body."

But the Congress itself has not accepted the Non-violence theory without considerable qualifications.

Gandhi would advise us to run the risk of riots in spite of his past experiences and the bloodshed it has already given rise to in northern India. The British bayonet came to settle the Indian disputes in time for had the internecine wars, of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the ancient counterparts to our modern communal riots, continued without British intervention or their resultant domination, it is doubtful whether the course of Indian history during the last two hundred years would have been what it was and whether the constitutional unity of India would have been maintained at all costs.

It is only implacable hatred for Britain that could explain Gandhi's willing welcome to riots instead of cooperation with Britain with a view to arriving at a compromise. As already pointed out it is such political fanaticism that has marred Indian history so long.

As The Statesman (Calcutta) recently pointed out,

"The only possibility of an easier and happier solution in India rests with Mr. Gandhi who can still hold back his followers. There are times when he seems thoroughly weary of his own former creed and to realise how much it has cost India and how little good it has achieved. Experience has made him a co-operator at heart. He has the power to turn his followers into the path of cooperation. The first step in the path is to realise that threats lead, not to peace but to war. 'Non-violent non-cooperation' far more than physical war breeds hatred and leads to the unrestrainedly violent language that has characterised each campaign."

Gandhi effected such a cooperation immediately after the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy in April 1937 under the Government of India Act of 1935. He enabled the Congress shrew which had refused to accept office in provinces where it had obtained legislative majorities to take over the reins of administration or as the trumpet boys of the Congress would have it to hide their political hypocrisy, to occupy the strategic posts and fighting the enemy from within.

But note what followed. The Congress ignored the basic problem of achieving unity between the various Indian parties. The problem was there as a writing on the wall but in its zeal "to fight Federation from within," it proceeded with the constitutional experiment in a manner more to show its prowess in administration than to achieve constitutional unity in the provinces and in the Centre, easily attainable in a peaceful period.

The apparent excellence of the provincial Congress administrations, not being based on communal unity, disappeared at the first sign of stress when the war came on. A share in the Central Government was offered, but the parties were not united. On the other hand, two and a half years of Congress administration in the majority of provinces had only resulted in further estrangement between the major political party and the communal minorities, particularly the Muslims.

Whether the minority allegations against the Congress Ministries were true or were merely the hallucinations of the frightened man, the point cannot be gainsaid that minority fears

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existed and, psychologically worked terrible havoc in our mutual political relations. The purblind Congress, however, refused to note the disastrous effects of its own obduracy. The semblance of peace was ended in the drama of provincial autonomy. The piquant situation then arose in which the clock of political progress was turned to the Minto days of undiluted autocracy. India once more exhibited herself as a house divided against herself.

Need we wonder that Lord Zetland, Secretary of State for India pleads that the parties in India should not be victims of words.

Faced with the need for but unable to bring about a compromise formula between, in the words of Lord Linlithgow, "the marked difference of outlook, markedly different demands and markedly different solutions for the problem," the Congress took to the Constituent Assembly proposal as a safety valve. This only resulted in further estrangement between the Congress and the Muslim League.

III

It is true that the proposed Constituent Assembly is the only and, perhaps, the most democratic method of ascertaining the people's will. It is true that such a direct appeal to the electorate will truly reflect the wishes of the people whereas any settlement among the leaders is likely to be superficial and cannot result in a government of the people for the people, but only the government of a caucus for its own ends.

Gandhi intriguingly adds that "it will also have to rely upon the British bayonet."

Hostility to Britain, hostility, hostility and nothing else.

Both in regard to India's attitude toward Britain and the war and in evolving the compromise formula for the achievement of Indian unity, Gandhi originally had his own views which he later modified to suit the Congress hierarchy's pressure.

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In his statement after his first visit to the Viceroy in Simla, he declared:

"I knew that I had no instructions whatsoever from the Working Committee in the matter. I had answered a telegraphic invitation and taken the first train I could catch. And what is more, with my irresponsible and out and out non-violence, I knew that I could not represent the national mind, and I should cut a sorry figure if I tried to do so. I told His Excellency as much.

"Therefore, there could be no question of any understanding or negotiation with me. Nor, I saw, had he sent for me to negotiate. I have returned from the Viceregal Lodge empty-handed, and without any understanding, open or secret. If there is to be any, it would be between the Congress and the Government.

"Having, therefore, made my position vis-a-vis the Congress quite clear, I told His Excellency that my own sympathies were with England and France from the purely humanitarian standpoint. I told him that I could not contemplate, without being stirred to the very depth, the destruction of London, which had hitherto been regarded as impregnable. And as I was picturing before him the houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey and their possible destruction, I broke down.

"I have become disconsolate. In the secret of my heart I am in a perpetual quarrel with God that he should allow such things to go on. My non-violence seems almost impotent. But the answer comes at the end of the daily quarrel that neither God nor non-violence is impotent. Impotence is in men. I must try to go on without losing faith, even though I may break in the attempt.

"I am not, therefore just now thinking of India's deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fail, or if they come out victorious over Germany ruined and humbled?

"Yet it almost seems as if Herr Hitler knows no God but brute force, and as Mr. Chamberlain says, he will listen to nothing else. It is in the midst of this catastrophe without parallel that

Congress men and all other responsible Indians individually and collectively have to decide what part India is to play in this terrible drama."

And now see how Gandhi changes his view or rather justifies the Congress Working Committee's statement on the war stipulating on the conditions for India's willing participation in the war. Commenting on the Congress Working Committee's statement Gandhi said :

"I am sorry to find myself alone in thinking that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally. This could only be done on a purely non-violent basis. But the Committee had a tremendous responsibility to discharge. It could not take the purely non-violent attitude. It felt that the nation had not imbibed the non-violent spirit requisite for the possession of the strength which disdains to take advantage of the difficulty of the opponent. But in stating the reasons for the conclusion the Committee desired to show the greatest consideration for the English."

The Working Committee statement, for active cooperation (non-violent, of course) in the war wanted "the British Government to declare unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present.

"Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people? A clear declaration about the future, pledging the Government to the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike, will be welcomed by the people of all countries, but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it, to the largest possible extent, for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honoured.

"The real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and give shape to the future."

Earlier, the Working Committee stated :

"If the war is to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it.

"The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy for India or elsewhere and Imperialism and Fascism. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference, and must guide their own policy. A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic cooperation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilising the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity."

In changing over to the Constituent Assembly proposal for the evolution of a new constitution, Gandhi had deliberately gone over to the extremist section of the Congress. Many times before he had himself met Mr. Jinnah for a full settlement of the Hindu-Muslim problem, many times he had followed up the path of personal negotiations and one fails to understand why he should suddenly change his mind into thinking that only a Constituent Assembly could possibly solve the Indian tangle.

It has already been pointed out that the Constituent Assembly is the most democratic form of ascertaining the people's wishes, but in the conditions obtaining in India today what is the sanction behind the Constituent Assembly? Who is to enforce the results of its deliberations? Will it not end in internecine quarrels and chaos

unless all parties are united and pledge to abide by the verdict of such Assembly?

These are the questions that must be faced.

The very notion of a Constituent Assembly which *we want* Britain to recognise is a political absurdity, for the success of a Constituent Assembly rests on two things, namely, first, that the result of its deliberations can be enforced, and second, that it envisages the achievement of a nationality which cannot be questioned again.

Can India fulfil these conditions now? Her problem to-day is to evolve a system of government with modern trappings for a community or rather a group of communities who still retain a feudal framework.

Let us remember that if we only possess the strength to convene such a Constituent Assembly and enforce its conclusions on Britain, we solve the problem of Indian freedom once for all. Such strength can come only from internal unity which is a political problem and ability to defend ourselves now and hereafter and resist all foreign aggression, which is a military problem.

THE POLITICAL PROBLEM

Let us first take up the political problem of Indian unity. It is patent that the Congress claims are far above its powers. It has antagonised, on the one hand, the important political minority as represented by the All-India Muslim League and, on the other hand, the Indian States.

The primal cause of this antagonism is that the Congress during the two and half years when it governed in eight provinces failed to enlist the sympathy of the Muslim community and to arrive at a workable political compromise which would have found India ready to face the problems thrust upon her by the war.

The Congress's insistence on an undiluted application of the British democratic system has only provoked the Muslim League. If the Congress had only thought of achieving Indian unity during that period instead of merely consolidating its power as a party and gloating over cheap parliamentary successes, she would not have insisted on the wholesale adoption of the British Parliamentary system in the unsuitable political climate prevailing in India, and thus widened the gulf of antagonism.

As that veteran Congress leader Mr. S. Srinivasa Ayyangar one-time President of the Congress has pointed out in a searching analysis of the political situation in the country recently :

"If as a result of two and half years of democratic government led by a non-violent Congress party with their avowed aims of justice and impartiality, we find ourselves facing not only dissensions within the Congress and discontent among Congressmen but climax of communal feeling among large sections in this and other provinces, the suitability of party government to Indian conditions stands conclusively disproved.

"We should also remember that in this province the differences between Tamils and Andhras have become during this period much more acute and general than ever they were before. Again we find that apart from communal differences there are no such vital differences of principle or policy as can form the foundation of any system of parties.

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"It were a tragedy for India to adopt the system of party government when England and France have eschewed it and when it

does not now exist in any country in the world in the form in which it is now sought to be maintained by Congressmen in India. It will not only bring in its train all the evils to which party system is subject but will lead to the added peril of one party government or dictatorship whether of the Nazi, Fascist, Bolshevik or other type.

"The peril is not fanciful but real on account of the intoxication of power which leadership of a great party holding the government of a country brings. The substitution for a party system of a non-party government is quite practicable one as it has been found to be in all western countries in times of crisis."

It is true that the Muslim League's demands for partition of India cut at the very root of the constitutional unity of India. Only as a reaction to the extremist trend of Congress politics can it be justified and for nothing else. The League itself found its position only during the last two or three years. In the general elections held under the Government of India Act 1935 before the inauguration of the Provincial Autonomy it woefully failed to enlist the sympathies of the majority Muslim populations of the Punjab and Bengal.

In the Punjab, Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, leader of the Unionist party (consisting of Hindus and Muslims) refused to bow to the League's demand for incorporation, and rightly so for Sir Sikandar could not antagonise the Hindu members of the Unionist party and throw the province into a turmoil, as the Sind situation now indicates. The Muslim League candidates were defeated by the Unionist Muslims, and in a bitter temper during his election campaign, Mr. Jinnah expressed his deep disappointment by characterising the Punjab as the most official-ridden province.

In Bengal, Mr. Fazlul Huq as the leader of the Proja party won a large following among the masses and his candidates were returned in a thumping majority. Kwaja Sir Nazimuddin, Home Minister was himself defeated by Mr. Huq in the elections and it was only when Mr. Fazlul Huq required the help of the Muslim League members, consequent on his refusal to cooperate with the Congress, that he persuaded a member of the Proja party to resign his seat to enable Sir Nazimuddin to be elected.

The General Elections proved that the Muslim masses were not behind the Muslim League but the Unionist party in the

Punjab and the Proja party in Bengal. And even today nearly three years after the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy both Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan and Mr. Fazlul Huq, though Premiers of the provinces with majority Muslim population know full well that they can carry on the legislatures with them only with the help of a coalition with the Hindu parties. They work with Hindu Ministers and who dare say that these two provinces are saved by such coalitions.

In view of this cooperation between the leaders of the two communities in these provinces, one fails to understand how Mr. Jinnah could reconcile the demand of the League for a partition of India with the success that has attended the Unionist Ministry in the Punjab and the Fazlul Huq Ministry in Bengal.

What will happen if provoked by the Muslim League's political pyrotechnics the Hindu Ministers resign? Will it not mean that like the Congress the Muslim League is spoiling for a fight and that the League demand for partition of India will only result in the extension of chaos to the Punjab and Bengal now happy under autonomous administrations?

Can India afford the extension of political bankruptcy with the progress of the war? Certainly not. The League's suicidal demand for the partitioning of the country should be taken more as an expression of the communal problem. For let it be stressed the partition will not solve the communal problem.

The spirit that inflamed the League to pass the partition resolution will be only fanned further after such a partition with the increasing temptation to form the Pan-Islamic federation. The temptation will be irresistible and it will result in aggression on the southern or Hindu part of India. Who can envisage with equanimity the chaos and ruin such a situation will bring upon us?

The Congress's insistence on the introduction of the British democratic system was responsible for this provocation of the League. But the danger does not lie there alone. That it goes further than the immediate political situation is made clear by Mr. Srinivasa Ayyangar who prophetically uttered the following warning:

"Looking at the question from another aspect, when, as we fondly hope, we attain complete independence, the system of a party government will undoubtedly give rise to three of its greatest dangers."

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"A numerous and dissatisfied party might invite a foreign government as, in early or medieval India, oppressed communities or defeated rulers probably invited or supported the invasion of foreigners. Again ambitious rulers of Indian states might ally themselves with a defeated and inflamed party and imperil the new democracy. So also a disappointed party might form an alliance with the chiefs of the Indian standing army."

The League resolution has only too truly proved the correctness of this analysis. And the problem has come to us now itself, sooner than Mr. Srinivasa Ayyangar hoped, and long before even the semblance of complete independence could be attained.

What is the attitude of the British Government to this partition scheme? Before we discuss, however the British Government's position vis-a-vis the partition problem, let us consider how the Congress policy towards the states had reacted on the rulers.

If the Congress's intolerant attitude toward the League during the last two and half years had provoked the partition resolution of the Lahore session of the League, it had, on the other hand, roused the Princes' hostility to the Federal scheme—though this is not openly done, at least it has provoked the Princes to the extent of requiring considerable modifications of that scheme to secure effective safeguards against the Congress, that is, the British Indian encroachment.

The one political blunder which the Congress has made and continues to make is to treat the Princes as a factor not to be counted upon in settling the Indian problem. In fact, the Princes have no place in the Congress picture of a free India. Gandhi's restraining hand is, of course, there; he believes that a considerable modification of autocracy can still enable the Princes to play their part in moulding the future of India and he has not hesitated to touch upon the benefits of the Princely Order. But considering how he has been hustled by the Working Committee to revise, first, his attitude to the Indo-British connexion, and, second, his approach to the solution of the communal problem—by leaving the path of negotiation and mutual settlement and instead voting for a Constituent Assembly—so, it will not be surprising if Gandhi wants to have the Princes removed lock, stock and barrel, thanks to the pressure from the extreme members of the Working Committee led by Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru.

THE POLITICAL PROBLEM

Gandhi's statements on the Princes' role in Indian politics are completely at variance with the official Congress policy.

With the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy in April 1937 and the subsequent assumption of office by the Congress, first in seven provinces and later in eight provinces, it was inevitable that the states peoples should react to the more democratic peoples' administrations across the border. Power brought the Congress prestige and influence and much care and thought was not bestowed on the delicate problems affecting British India and the Indian states.

For long the Princes did not know their exact position vis-a-vis the Congress; but when they did know, with the assumption of office by the Congress, they were flabbergasted by the aggressive form of interference in the internal affairs of the states by Congress leaders from British India.

More or less indirectly sponsored from across the frontiers, the peoples of the states began to grow restive both in north and south India. The Princes, already burdened with the enormous task of reconciling their openly avowed desire to join the Federation in the interests of national unity and the considerable encroachments on their treaty rights and privileges which accession to Federation involved, the Princes' embarrassment was completed by the internal agitations within the more important states.

Their fears were only strengthened and once more their expressions of dismay at the growing troubles were misunderstood by British Indian politicians who only wanted to take advantage of the Princes' embarrassment instead of trying to assuage the Princes' fears. Individually and collectively the Princes began to take counsel to tackle both the internal and external problems that suddenly faced them.

That they are not content to remain passive spectators of anything that will involve India in chaos and ruin is realised from the recent speech of H. H. the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar, Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes in a recent review of the Indian political situation at a meeting of the Chamber.

His Highness pointed out that the confused political situation and the hostility in British India toward the states had proved a decisive factor with the Princes in their growing apathy to the

Federal scheme. He rightly contended that the attitude of a large section in British India toward the Crown and the recent experiences of organised subversive movements from British India against the States did not in the existing circumstances provide that basis which was essential for a closer union between British India and the States.

Proceeding the Jam Saheb said :

" If India is to progress on the path of ordered evolution, there should be a specific constitutional obligation and a moral code of honour amongst the units composing India. Let it be clearly understood that the Indian Princes are not averse to progress within their territories and they have already given proof of their bonafides in this matter by the association of their people with the administration and by laying down the basis of a rule of law and administrative reforms in the States. We are determined to move from precedent to precedent. Nevertheless, we feel that it would be a sad tradition if people from one unit, be it a state or a province, are permitted to march into the territory of the other unit to coerce its duly constituted authority to take decision in matters within its competence. Such tendencies which have lately exhibited themselves, if not arrested in time, would be an invitation to civil war in the country which all patriotic Indians must join their hands to avert."

That is the danger, that once again the constitutional unity of India will be broken up.

If His Highness had pointed his finger correctly at the root problem of the Indian situation, the comment of *The Statesman* (Calcutta) on His Highness's speech has brought out more clearly the implications of the danger. Says *The Statesman* :

" We look to the enlightened Rulers of large and living states to combine to deal firmly with this situation, and also to give a fresh lead in the changed circumstances of the world on the subject of federation. It is said that some States contemplate with satisfaction the coming of Dominion Status, in which they calculate on chaotic conditions arising when British support is withdrawn in what were lately the Congress governed provinces."

" It cannot, of course, be denied that such things are possible. One can conceive a state of affairs in which, for instance, inhabitants of the Central Provinces, if it fell into prolonged disorder,

might turn their eyes to the stable government] in Hyderabad and beg it to extend itself not only into Berar but further still. But such calculations are of no service to India. For India to rise to the height of her greatness to fulfil the hopes that many cherish, she must attain a strong Central Government of her own, with its roots in this country, and enjoying popular consent and trust (antic ours). That she can only attain through a federation, based upon the participation of the Indian States and on the harmonious cooperation of the Hindus and Muslims, the various majorities and minorities in British India."

THE MILITARY PROBLEM

Throughout its history, or more correctly, after the advent of Gandhi in Indian politics, the Congress has concentrated its attention only on the political aspect of the problem of Indian freedom and completely ignored the military aspect, namely the defence of India.

In other words, while demanding complete Independence and the severance of British connexion immediately, the Congress wants the benefits of the British defence system for India. In no other way can be explained the Congress policy of demanding self-government without developing a corresponding military preparedness for the defence of the country and for maintaining what is achieved.

Apart from the unfairness of the proposal to view the British army in India as purely mercenary and the British connexion as existing without any stake either for the British or for ourselves, one has to consider whether India can isolate herself from Britain, and even if that is possible, whether it is desirable.

The present war, for all the horrid implications of its extension to other areas, particularly in the Near and Far East, has not shaken the agelong torpor and apathy of the masses in India and our politicians act in a manner which makes one reasonably believe that they think that the present war will not press on Britain so much as to fear a triumph for Nazi aggression. Are the Congress politicians sure who refuse to follow Britain in the present war—even granting their argument that was Britain's own making and is fought for Imperial ends—that India can for long be immune from any need for direct participation in a war at all?

The fate of China and the continued march of Japan to the western territories, now so near Indo-China, should be warning to the stargazing Nehru. Stargazing, however valuable in peacetime, is hardly the luxury we can afford when the earth is being dug under our feet. There can be no doubt that whatever internal complications may arise in India if the British withdraw bag and baggage, its international reactions, particularly in

offering a temptation to the aggressive nationalism of Japan is the real to be brushed aside. Already with a fairly settled feet in China, it is not improbable that Japan would like to exploit the situation for an extension of her influence over the Orient and Central Asia. Unless the warning from the Far East is seriously taken up and steps be immediately taken to counteract the impending catastrophe, an extension of the China war further west is certain. Then, instead of India engaging herself with a political problem of settlement with Britain, she will be hard put to by the military problem of great magnitude as well.

These are not mere fears or the expression of exaggerated importance to small and isolated incidents. If the highly modern and fully militarily prepared nations like the Dutch and the Belgians are living in evergrowing threat of war, how much greater is our problem.

It is the height of our political folly to prattle about complete independence without developing our military strength to resist foreign invasion. So long as we depend upon Britain for military help not only for internal order—as even former Congress Ministers would admit—but to resist foreign aggression, we cannot afford to make that help merely mercenary and draw upon it as and when we like.

The strained political relationship between Britain and India is a reflex of the fact that while we want British military help for the defence of our shores, we do not want that our political and economic relationship should be compromised but be to our own benefit.

The constitutional unity of India has been the achievement of British rule and as a political force in spite of all-India character and strength, the Congress cannot effectively substitute for the British element in Indian administration. The minorities, whatever the merits or demerits of their demands for safeguards, some of which like the scheme of partition for India border on political insanity, do not yet trust the Congress.

Britain will be justified in withdrawing from her domineering influence in India only when there is a cohesive force not only willing but capable of maintaining the unity of the country for ever.

As long ago as 1843, Lord Ellenborough, the Governor-General explained the nature of British connexion in India. In his famous minute on the nature of Paramountcy dated Nov. 1, 1843, Lord Ellenborough said :

"The withdrawal of our restraining hand would let loose all the elements of confusion. Redress for the daily occurring grievances of the several states (now states, Provinces and communities) against each other would still be sought, not from the superintending justice of the British Government but from the armed reprisals of the injured, and bad ambition availing itself of the love of plunder and of war, which pervades so large a portion of the population of India, would again expose to devastation countries which under our protection have enjoyed many of the advantages of peace."

Even earlier, the great Sir Charles Metcalfe has said :

"We have become the paramount state in India. In 1817, it became the established principle of our policy to maintain tranquillity among the states of India.....and we cannot be indifferent spectators of anarchy there in without ultimately giving up India again to pillage and confusion from which we rescued her."

The warning is loud and clear and a century and a quarter after it was uttered, has a relevancy to the present situation, which is amazing indeed.

It is true that with the growing development of internationalism India has to surrender a part of her national sovereignty. But we have not yet even reached the stage when we can be said to have achieved national sovereignty which implies, as already pointed out, internal unity and ability to resist foreign aggression.

Our total blindness to imminent and overwhelming danger is not a title due to Gandhi's theories of a non-violent war. In a note on the "Impending Crisis" in Harijan Sept. 2, 1939, Gandhi stated :

"But I have no hesitation in redeclaring my faith in reason which is another word for non-violence, rather the arbitrament of war for the settlement of disputes or redress of wrongs. I cannot emphasise my belief more forcibly than by saying that I personally will not purchase my own country's freedom

by violence even if such a thing were a possibility. My faith in the wise saying that what is gained by the sword will also be lost by the sword is imperishable."

Under the title Conundrums, in Harijan (Sept. 30, 1939), Gandhi replies to the following questions by a wellknown Congressman :

1. What is your personal attitude towards this war consistent with non-violence ?

2. Is it the same as or different from your attitude during the last war ?

3. How could you with your non-violence actively associate with and help the Congress whose policy is based on violence in the present crisis ?

4. What is your concrete plan based on non-violence to oppose or prevent this war ?

To give a typical instance, a friend between whom and me there never is any mental reservation, thus writes in anguish rather than anger :

"In the not-improbable event of India being a theatre of war, is Gandhiji prepared to advise his countrymen to bare their breasts to the enemy's sword ? A little while ago I would have pledged my word he would do so, but I am not confident any more."

I can only assure him that, notwithstanding my recent writings, he can retain his confidence that I would give the same advice as he expects I would have given before, or as I gave to the Czechs or the Abyssinians. My non-violence is made of stern stuff. It is firmer than the firmest metal known to the scientists. Yet, alas, I am painfully conscious of the fact that it has still not attained its native firmness. If it had, God would have shown me the way to deal with the many local cases of violence that I helplessly witness daily. This is said not in arrogance but in the certain knowledge of the power of perfect non-violence. I will not have the power of non-violence to be underestimated in order to cover my limitations or weaknesses.

Now for a few lines in answer to the foregoing questions.

1. My personal reaction towards this war is one of greater horror than ever before. I was not so disconsolate before as I am to-day. But the greater horror would prevent me to-day from becoming the self-appointed recruiting sergeant that I had become during the last war. And yet, strange as it may appear, my sympathies are wholly with the Allies. Willynilly this war is resolving itself into one between such democracy as the West has evolved and totalitarianism as it is typified in Herr Hitler. Though the part that Russia is playing is painful, let us hope that the unnatural combination will result in a happy though unintended fusion whose shape no one can foretell. Unless the Allies suffer demoralization, of which there is not the slightest indication, this war may be used to end all wars, at any rate, of the virulent type that we see to-day. I have the hope that India, distraught though it is with internal dissensions, will play, an effective part in ensuring the desired end and the spread of cleaner democracy than hitherto.

This will undoubtedly depend upon how the Working Committee will ultimately act in the real tragedy that is being played on the world stage. We are both actors in and spectators of the drama. My line is cast. Whether I act as a humble guide of the Working Committee or, if I may use the same expression, without offence, of the Government, my guidance will be for the deliberate purpose of taking either or both along the path of non-violence, be the step ever so imperceptible. It is plain that I cannot force the pace either way. I can only use such power as God may endow my head or heart with for the moment.

2. I think I have covered the second question in answering the first.

3. There are degrees of violence as of non-violence. The Working Committee has not wilfully departed from the policy of non-violence. It could not honestly accept the real implications of non-violence. It felt that the vast mass of Congressmen had never clearly understood that in the event of danger from without they were to defend the country by non-violent means. All that they had learnt truly was that they could

put up a successful fight, on the whole non-violent, against the British Government. Congressmen have had no training in the use of non-violence in other fields. Thus, for example, they had not yet discovered a sure method of dealing successfully in a non-violent manner with communal riots on goondaism. The argument is final inasmuch as it is based on actual experience. I would not serve the cause of non-violence, if I deserted my best co-workers because they could not follow me in an extended application of non-violence.

I, therefore, remain with them in the faith that their departure from the non-violent method will be confined to the narrowest field and will be temporary.

"But assuming that God had endowed me with full powers (which He never does), I would at once ask the English to lay down arms, free all their vassals, take pride in being called 'little Englanders' and defy all the totalitarians of the world to do their worst. Englishmen will then die unresistingly and go down to History as heroes of non-violence. I would further invite Indians to cooperate with Englishmen in this godly martyrdom. It will be an indissoluble partnership drawn up in letters of the blood of their own bodies, not of their so-called enemies. But I have no such general power. Non-violence is a plant of slow growth. It grows imperceptibly but surely. And even at the risk of being misunderstood, I must act in obedience to the still small voice."

The 'still small voice' has not however, persuaded the Working Committee to prevent "their departure from the non-violent method" which it is claimed, will be confined to the narrowest field and will be temporary."

Such are the intricacies of the Messianic vocabulary.

Again in criticising His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief's broadcast of Sept. 5 in which His Excellency stated that India is a military country, Gandhi said:

"Of all countries in the world India is the least military. Though I have failed with the Working Committee in persuading them, at this supreme moment, to declare their undying

faith in non-violence as the only sovereign remedy for saving mankind from destruction, I have not lost the hope that the masses will refuse to bow to the Moloch of war but will rely upon their capacity for suffering to save the country's honour. How has the undoubted military valour of Poland served her against the superior forces of Germany and Russia? Would Poland unarmed have fared worse if it had met the challenge of these combined forces with the resolution to face death without retaliation? Would the invading forces have taken a heavier toll from an infinitely more valorous Poland? It is highly probable that their essential nature would have made them desist from a wholesale slaughter of innocents.

His saintly character and sincerity and frank statements of his convictions has made Gandhi a world personality. His creed of non-violence may be the beginning of a new world order, but it is clear that the enunciation of that world order is rather early and considering the present stage of human development, socially and politically such an order based on non-violence if brought forth out of the Gandhian womb would be a stillborn child.

Much less can the tender plant of Indian nationalism afford to experiment with its very life by such a creed which has already acted as an opiate and deeply affected the people. Political apathy has taken a new cloak of superiority, and Congressmen who violently shout non-violent slogans consider themselves the salt of the earth, their faces beam with pride at the thought that they are making India deliver a new message to mankind.

This 'message producing' notion of Indian history that India has been a spiritual dynamo and has always been the originator of spiritual messages is a kind of hallucination which superficial orientalisks have helped to foster.

The sooner we got rid of such ideas the better for us and the nation. The pride and privilege that we will claim for India that she has a new packet of message of Ahimsa for the settlement of individual, communal and national disputes can serve to satisfy our human vanity, but it cannot save India as a nation. The so-called greatness of India even spiritually was when she had a wellknit and strong political organisation.

All human progress either in the east or in the west can spring only from deep spirituality. No nation can be spiritually great if politically small. The very success of the foreign invasions emphasise that something was wrong within our social fabric, praised to the skies for its so-called spirituality, which allowed itself to be completely shattered if not destroyed.

A nation's life is a coordination of its political institutions, economic and social systems and the basic spirituality of all its organisations. Any superdevelopment of one over the other will spell disaster and have many examples of it in our own history. The moment we cease to believe in the integration of our political social and economic institutions that moment we fall as a nation.

Let us not gloat over the exaggerated notion of our spiritual eminence which may, after all, be only a cloak for our political bankruptcy. The really efficient automatically achieve equality in status, and will not just lodge a claim for it as the inefficient will do.

We must once for all shake off the exaggerated emphasis we have so far placed on the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence.

Gandhi himself seems to be afraid of the implication of anarchy that might result from a too lenient application of the non-violent principle.

Can a state carry on strictly according to the principle of non-violence? This was the question put to him when he was in Santiniketan recently.

"A Government cannot succeed," replied Gandhi, "in becoming entirely non-violent, because it represents all the people. I do not today conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a predominantly non-violent society. And I am working for it. A Government representing such society will use the least amount of force.

"But no Government worth its name can suffer anarchy to prevail. Hence I have said that even under a Government based primarily on non-violence, a small police force will be necessary."

It is fallacious to argue that Britain was not interested in creating a national army as she is afraid of revolt; that she has intentionally restricted recruitment to the classes who can be trusted for their loyalty to Britain; and that the Army budget in India had been purposely made heavy to make the people always look to Britain helplessly for an adequate measure of defence requirements in abnormal times like the present.

Apart from the generally accepted view that the educated Indians are generally unwilling to join the army, the fact remains that the Congress attitude toward Britain has inevitably estranged the British attitude to the Indian defence problem. The British should be more than human if we expect them to vote for a thoroughgoing Indianisation of our defence forces when the Congress politicians in season and out of season vehemently denounce the British connexion.

If, therefore the Government of India seem to be somewhat indifferent to greater speed and efficiency in India's war efforts, it is not a little due to the hostile attitude of the Congress to Britain and its muddled policy toward the military problem.

As Gandhi has said, "no Government worth its name can suffer anarchy to prevail." No Government can arm the rebels against itself.

Unlike other Dominions, British India's war effort is next to nothing. Not that we do not realise the danger of Nazi triumph. The fate of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland is still green in our memory. Still in our own nonchalant way we take things easily and think that the distant war is not for us.

That is not the attitude India should adopt. To be prepared for danger is to avert it. If we do not bestir ourselves in time and come to a working arrangement with the British Government politically not only our constitutional progress will be stopped completely but our military preparedness will be nil.

CONCLUSION

The present stalemate in Indian politics should end, and the Muslim League's fratricidal attempt to divide India should be nipped in the bud.

How to do this?

1. The Congress should revise its attitude toward Britain and rely on cooperation with her as the only way to maintain the constitutional unity of India on the one hand and preserve an international status on the other hand.

India's natural aversion to totalitarianism leads to the corollary that in world affairs she must ally herself with Britain. The impracticability of isolation in these days when the world is getting smaller and smaller has already been pointed out in these pages.

2. The Congress should drop the Constituent Assembly idea and concede the need for a conference of party leaders.

Federation should be the basis of any future constitution of India. It should embrace the states; they should not be left out on the ground of their autocracy. Personal rule will pass away in the states as it has passed away in British India when the two parts combine to work a real Federation of India.

3. The Congress should come to a settlement with the All-India Muslim League to solve the communal problem. The compromise formula should once for all remove the sting out of Muslim suspicion and fear of Hindu majority rule. The wind will then be taken out of the sails of Pakistanwallahs.

4. The Congress organisation should have nothing to do with those aspects of Gandhi's programme, now pompously classed as the Constructive Programme, which only means revivalism at its worst.

A Free India cannot but be founded on a thoroughgoing and planned industrial regeneration. We cannot afford to ignore the present and urgent needs of the country in the name of an attempt to create a non-competitive world of artisans and handicrafts which Gandhian economics envisage.

Will the Congress stoop to conquer? Who will tame this shrew of Indian politics?

PRINTED AT

VEPERY, MADRAS

APRIL 1940

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