

# HARIJAN

Editor: MAHADEV DESAI

VOL. IX, NO. 18]

AHMEDABAD — SUNDAY, MAY 17, 1942

[ FIVE PICE

## LIFE OR DEATH?

A correspondent writes:

"Gandhiji's article on Foreign Soldiers has been interpreted by various people in various ways. For instance, the sentence, 'The Nazi power had risen as a nemesis to punish Britain for her sins of exploitation and enslavement of the Asiatic and African races', is innocuous enough. But some of my friends here say: 'This is nothing short of a curse pronounced by Mahatmaji. He thinks what is happening is just punishment for Britain's sins, and if she is defeated she will have deserved it.' Some say: 'Mahatmaji wants Britain to be defeated and sees nothing but good for India in Britain's defeat. He would seem to favour a Japanese invasion.' On the contrary you have often said that we cannot wish for Britain's defeat, and Pandit Jawaharlal has said that the victory of Nazism and Fascism would mean impenetrable darkness on earth.

Now this theory of a just nemesis cuts both ways. We have been slaves all these years. Must Britain's coming in India be taken to be a just punishment for our sins? The well-to-do orthodox say that the untouchables are being punished for their sins. Even so the British may say we are being punished for our sins. The theory of a just nemesis can thus be easily used against us."

There is a lot of confusion in this letter. As the correspondent himself has admitted the sentence quoted is innocuous, though in the last paragraph of his letter he contradicts himself. The sentence quoted summarises in a nutshell the facts of history. Look at any history of the British Empire, and you will find that what Gandhiji has said is but a mild indictment. I need not make more than a passing reference here to the dark record of the East India Company, the horrors of the "Sepoy Mutiny" and the annexations that followed. Need I narrate the story of the West Indies where "the Negroes brought from Africa were exposed for sale under the British flag and sent to serve European masters all over the new world"? Nor need I narrate the story of the series of Kaffir Wars with Basutos, Zulus, Matabele. "The Kaffirs were defeated, but they proved much too virile a people to go under as the blacks of Australia or the redskins of North America did;" the blacks in Australia were exterminated, but the "primary problem of policy is now the desire to keep the yellow man out of the vast open spaces of Australia"; not until a whole series of wars did the Maoris of New Zealand, "these contumacious people learn their place in the British scheme of things"; and consolidation in the Pacific naturally led to the annexation of the Fiji Islands; the scramble for

grubbing South Africa reached its height in 1885 when it was solemnly legalised by a conference of the European Powers which met at Berlin, where all bound themselves to go ahead with the partition of Africa in order "to further the moral and material well-being of the native population"; then come the "treaties" with the native chiefs and the story of Kenya and Rhodesia where "the natives were herded into 'reserves' and the fertile land handed over to white settlers." "In China it was for the moral benefit of the Chinese that Britain used armed force to compel China to buy opium and to open China to outside world trade. Some 300,000 square miles were added to the British Empire in the nineteenth century, and "much of this expansion had unfortunately to be achieved by the use of force against the original inhabitants — black, brown, or yellow — of the square miles in question." This led to rivalry and bickerings ultimately leading to the world war, in which Britain was victorious and Britain's share of the spoils was tremendous. There was unrest everywhere — among the vanquished; in India; in Egypt; in Ireland; in China; among the natives of various parts of Africa. "It was clear," sums up Horrabin, "that there would have to be more and more repression, more deals with the capitalist classes of the Dominions, more Pacts with allies, bigger and bigger armaments."

The building up of the Empire was the beginning of the end. The war of 1914-1918 was won, but peace was lost. Instead of humbling the victors it intoxicated them.

"Not the faintest attempt was made to be merciful or fair or even decently polite to the vanquished foe... Even so unexceptionable an English economist as Mr. Maynard Keynes pointed out the insanity of demands that might have put any businesslike robber to the blush... In intention and appearance the peace registered the defeat and downfall of the German Empire. But perhaps some historian of the future viewing these things in surer perspective may decide that in the context of civilisations, the defeat was not German, but British or Anglo-American... If ever it could have been said of a whole nation that it was not itself, that description would have applied to Britain in the time immediately following the Armistice... The wildest extravagances of sentiment and conduct were in vogue. In this shell-shocked atmosphere things were perpetrated which almost suggested that Britain herself had gone Prussian. Frightfulness in India, frightfulness in Ireland."

This is what a Liberal historian Esme Wingfield-Stratford has written. He is not an enemy of the Empire, he has even defended the benevolent intentions of Britain, but British behaviour after the war



sickened even him, and in one sentence he has summed up his worst fears: "The dragon's teeth that had been sown did not sprout all in a moment." He refrains from discussing the complications and cross-currents of the daily changing situation, but grandiloquently sums up in the self-satisfied way of the benevolent British Imperialist: "Mankind has to choose between two ways, one of Empire, which is now that of the Totalitarian Powers, the other of Freedom, which is our British way, so long as Britain preserves that truth to herself which is the soul of her civilisation. The choice is in the deepest sense between life and death." (*The Foundations of British Patriotism*) One word of comment on this. It is absolute truth that the Empire way is the way of death, the Freedom way is the way of life. Britain is still going right ahead along the Empire way, and in asking Britain to withdraw from India and to disgorge her ill-gotten gains Gandhiji is asking her to choose even at this late hour Freedom's way or the way of Life.

The sentence that Gandhiji has written has almost a literal echo in another British writer. Middleton Murry, a fellow-pacifist:

"The moral debacle of the blockade and of Versailles plunged me into a condition of despair concerning human destiny out of which I struggled only after five long years, and then only by way of a mystical illumination. My faith such as it is is not primarily a faith in this world. Nevertheless the most transcendent faith must return to earth. It is here on the sweet and violated earth that we must struggle that the good may prevail. If the war of 1914-18 and the shameful peace which ended it appeared to me 20 years ago so nakedly evil, so beyond all possibility of justification, that it weighed like lead upon my soul for five long years, is it possible that the consequences of this crime against man, this sin against God, shall be expiated without a terrible humiliation for my country? I do not pretend to answer. But I ask myself the question again and again. There is repentance; and there is humiliation. I believe that the salvation of democracy lies in repentance." (*Defence of Democracy*)

I suppose that makes Gandhiji's meaning clear beyond the shadow of a doubt. Gandhiji does not wish for a Nazi or Japanese victory any more than do Esme Wingfield-Stratford and Middleton Murry. But he shares their wholesome fear, and he has, if I may say so, an intuition that, if Britain does not repent in the way he has suggested, she will be humiliated.

Remains the last question. Is the statement about a just nemesis double-edged? Is there any justice in the criticism that the statement sounds like that of the orthodox Hindus that the untouchables are suffering for their sins, or of Britain that India is suffering for her sins? The statement about a just nemesis lies ill in the mouth of those whom God uses as instruments of punishment. Nemesis would herself mock viciously at Hitler, if he said that he was being used by God to punish iniquitous Britain. The untouchables may have sinned, but we have been vastly deeper sinners and, if we do not atone for our sin, it is Dr

Ambedkar whom God will ultimately use to destroy Hinduism. When Gandhiji said that if untouchability remains Hinduism perishes, he did not pronounce a curse on Hinduism, any more than he has now done on Britain. Hinduism can still save itself from extinction by purging itself of untouchability, as Britain still can by wiping out the sin of Empire and retiring in an honourable and repentant manner from India and other territories. The dragon's teeth that had been sown are now sprouting, and the frightful crop may have to be reaped in a manner never reaped before. The atonement cannot be done *after* the war. It has to be done *today*. The way of Empire is death, the way of Freedom is Life. Which shall she choose?

On the way to Bombay, 10-5-42

M. D.

### MAGANWADI CONVOCATION

The A. I. V. I. A. held its convocation at Maganwadi, Wardha, on 29-4-42. Shri Vinoba Bhawe presided. The Secretary's report showed that

"Training given in Maganwadi is divided into two main groups: oil-pressing and paper-making. The A. I. V. I. A. has a three year plan for expanding the *ghani* industry in the country with a capital investment of about Rs. 20,000 to begin with. The centres are to undertake manufacturing and supply of *ghanis*, training of carpenters, and doing general propaganda work. The Board of Management of the Association has also allowed some latitude with regard to the process of making pulp for paper-making by the use of mechanical power under certain restrictions. The idea behind it is to make paper cheap, improve the quality, and make it available in large quantities.

In the session under report 32 students were admitted. Of these 26 were for Vinit courses and 6 for special courses in paper industry. Of the former 8 were deputed by the C. P. Government, 3 by the Bombay Government, 3 by the Sind Government, 8 by the Gwalior State, 2 (1 from Tamilnad and 1 from Bihar) were awarded A. I. V. I. A. scholarships, and 2 (one from the Punjab and one from Phaltan State) bore their own expenses. Of these 11 took oil-pressing and 15 took paper-making.

Subsequently one student from the Gwalior Government changed over from the regular to the special course, and two students in paper-making from the same Government went on leave and did not return. 21 students remained till the end of the session.

The result of the final examination was as given below: 1 was awarded a merit certificate, 4 obtained pass certificates, 1 failed, 14 qualified for industry certificates.

Two more students were admitted for the short courses in paper-making during the session. Besides training in the major industries of the group for which they were admitted, 14 students were trained in bee-keeping and soap-making out of sujji, and 7 were trained in soap-making and date palm *gud* making."

Shri Vinoba in addressing the students said that the certificates he had distributed were an indication of the preparation and training imparted for the life they had chosen to adopt. These were perilous times in which each one was going to be severely tested. We may not be fully prepared, but there were ample opportunities for service. When they



went to the villages they would find standards of life very low, but the villagers' standards of service were high. So far only saints had served them. Otherwise everyone had exploited them. The villagers were shrewd and closely examined those who went and lived with them. It was not an easy thing to obtain their certificate. They must not be looked down on by us, their servants, as illiterate or ignorant in comparison with ourselves. They have their own methods of work in agriculture as in all matters pertaining to their requirements. Very often it has been found that those who try to impart book knowledge to them fail miserably when put to practical tests. They are hard-working, as a rule. No worker, therefore, with half-baked knowledge or one who is lazy will make good in a village. Above all he has to become one with the villagers in every respect. There can be no entrance for a worker into the hearts of the people unless he learns to be attracted by their qualities and disregards their shortcomings. "I always look upon the merits of a person as the window through which one can enter his heart and the weaknesses as the walls. It is no good battering one's head against a wall when an entrance is there for us. And if we are unable to see the good in others, there is something gravely lacking in us."

The next thought Shri Vinoba conveyed to the students was that they should be above all party strife in villages. Their only 'ism' in these days of 'isms' was service. And in that whole-hearted service there must be neither desire for reward nor looking for results.

Lastly he impressed on them that they would have to serve in various ways but they must never neglect the industrial side of their work. At least half the day should be devoted to whatever craft they had taken up. They had to continue to improve their knowledge and become experts. Their minds must be fresh and alert; quick to respond to local conditions. In Maganwadi they had been provided with every facility. In villages they would have to depend on their own ingenuity. It was the little things in everyday life which would be the big things for them. Therefore their practical knowledge of the crafts must penetrate down to the minutest detail. A man who can weave beautiful patterns is no good, if he cannot set up a loom and put it right if it gets out of order.

Village soil was not easy to cultivate. The career they had chosen for themselves would need infinite patience, keen intelligence and abounding love. Shri Vinoba hoped that those who had received certificates at Maganwadi would in due course obtain what he would call the real certificates of merit from the world in whose service they had decided to live.

A portrait of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj having been unveiled, the ceremony came to an end.  
Sevagram, 3-5-42

A. K.

### The Indian States' Problem

By Gandhiji

687 Pages, Price Rs. 4. Postage 10 As. extra.

### PURPOSEFUL POLITICS

The atmosphere today is surcharged with politics, but few stop to think what it is all about and to what end. Some are scared by the Japanese bombs and would fain hide themselves behind the skirts of Britannia and offer cooperation on any terms in her imperialistic war. Others there be who disdain Britain's offer but roll up their sleeves gallantly to rescue China, forgetting the clay feet on which we are standing. Being slaves ourselves we cannot help others before attaining our own freedom. Is the end of politics war? Or is it capturing a number of seats in the legislatures to let out hot air? Or is it to secure a few good posts and titles for our friends and members of our community and thus incidentally glorify ourselves?

#### Freedom

Some will rightly answer that our politics are calculated to secure independence and freedom. Yes, but freedom for what and from what? True freedom should be conducive to the growth of the people. As Tagore puts it freedom is

"Where the mind is without fear

and the head is held high,

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into  
fragments

by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come from the depth of truth,

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards

Perfection!

J. C. K.

(To be concluded)

#### Mysore

Reference has already been made in these columns about the Mysore Government's repressive measures against the State Congress. Now comes the news of a worse tragedy in the shape of a police charge at Bhadravati resulting in three deaths, including a child three years old, from firing by the police on an unarmed crowd. I do not wish to enter into the details. According to the Congress version the whole tragedy arose out of a peaceful labour demonstration. There is a suggestion on the Government side that the firing had to be resorted to because the crowd had attacked the police station in Bhadravati. The President of the Congress denies the charge and demands an inquiry. It will be worthless unless it is admittedly impartial. If the crowd had attacked the police station, what was the cause? If the crowd was non-violent, was the firing a mere wanton awe-inspiring process? In either case the people must learn the art of being killed, and if they are non-violent, without any reason therefor save for their love of liberty. It is a duty then to face death as cheerfully as we face imprisonment. Indeed, I do not know that such a swift ending is not more welcome than the prolonged agony that jail life sometimes becomes. As the struggle becomes wider and more earnest and more real, imprisonment is bound to be, as past experience teaches, increasingly hard to bear. Death for a brave and strong-willed man will then be a welcome relief.

On the way to Bombay, 10-5-42

M. K. G.



## HARIJAN

May 17

1942

## TO EVERY BRITON

(By M. K. Gandhi)

When I had just begun my public career in South Africa I wrote "An Open Letter to Every Briton in South Africa". It had its effect. I feel that I should repeat the example at this critical juncture in the history of the world. This time my appeal must be to every Briton in the world. He may be nobody in the counsels of his nation. But in the empire of non-violence every true thought counts, every true voice has its full value. *Vox populi vox dei* is not a copy-book maxim. It is an expression of the solid experience of mankind. But it has one qualification. Its truth is confined to the field of non-violence. Violence can for the moment completely frustrate a people's voice. But since I work on the field of non-violence only, every true thought expressed or unexpressed counts for me.

I ask every Briton to support me in my appeal to the British at this very hour to retire from every Asiatic and African possession and at least from India. That step is essential for the safety of the world and for the destruction of Nazism and Fascism. In this I include Japan's 'ism' also. It is a good copy of the two. Acceptance of my appeal will confound all the military plans of all the Axis Powers and even of the military advisers of Great Britain.

If my appeal goes home, I am sure the cost of British interests in India and Africa would be nothing compared to the present ever-growing cost of the war to Britain. And when one puts morals in the scales, there is nothing but gain to Britain, India and the world.

Though I ask for their withdrawal from Asia and Africa, let me confine myself for the moment to India. British statesmen talk glibly of India's participation in the war. Now India was never even formally consulted on the declaration of war. Why should it be? India does not belong to Indians. It belongs to the British. It has been even called a British possession. The British practically do with it as they like. They make me — an all-war resister — pay a war tax in a variety of ways. Thus I pay two pice as war tax on every letter I post, one pice on every postcard, and two annas on every wire I send. This is the lightest side of the dismal picture. But it shows British ingenuity. If I was a student of economics, I could produce startling figures as to what India has been made to pay towards the war apart from what are mis-called voluntary contributions. No contribution made to a conqueror can be truly described as voluntary. What a conqueror the Briton makes! He is well saddled in his seat. I do not exaggerate

when I say that a whisper of his wish is promptly answered in India. Britain may, therefore, be said to be at perpetual war with India which she holds by right of conquest and through an army of occupation. How does India profit by this enforced participation in Britain's war? The bravery of Indian soldiers profits India nothing.

Before the Japanese menace overtakes India, India's homesteads are being occupied by British troops — Indian and non-Indian. The dwellers are summarily ejected and expected to shift for themselves. They are paid a paltry vacating expense which carries them nowhere. Their occupation is gone. They have to build their cottages and search for their livelihood. These people do not vacate out of a spirit of patriotism. When this incident was referred to me a few days ago, I wrote in these columns that the dispossessed people should be asked to bear their lot with resignation. But my co-workers protested and invited me to go to the evacuees and console them myself or send someone to perform the impossible task. They were right. These poor people should never have been treated as they were. They should have been lodged suitably at the same time that they were asked to vacate.

People in East Bengal may almost be regarded as amphibious. They live partly on land and partly on the waters of the rivers. They have light canoes which enable them to go from place to place. For fear of the Japanese using the canoes the people have been called upon to surrender them. For a Bengali to part with his canoe, is almost like parting with his life. So those who take away his canoe he regards as his enemy.

Great Britain has to win the war. Need she do so at India's expense? Should she do so?

But I have something more to add to this sad chapter. The falsity that envelopes Indian life is suffocating. Almost every Indian you meet is discontented. But he will not own it publicly. The Government employees high and low are no exception. I am not giving hearsay evidence. Many British officials know this. But they have evolved the art of taking work from such elements. This all-pervading distrust and falsity make life worthless unless one resists it with one's whole soul.

You may refuse to believe all I say. Of course I shall be contradicted. I shall survive the contradictions.

I have stated what I believe to be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

My people may or may not approve of this loud thinking. I have consulted nobody. This appeal is being written during my silence day. I am just now concerned with Britain's action. When slavery was abolished in America many slaves protested, some even wept. But protests and tears notwithstanding, slavery was abolished in law. But the abolition was the result of a bloody war between the South and the North; and so though the Negro's lot is considerably better than before, he still remains the outcaste of high society. I am



asking for something much higher. I ask for a bloodless end of an unnatural domination and for a new era, even though there may be protests and wailings from some of us.

Bombay, 11-5-42

### AN APPEAL

Gandhiji is visiting Bombay under somewhat unusual circumstances. The public are well aware of his preoccupations, especially during these days of stress and strain. Besides, he is none too strong these days. And it is well-known that he is loath to leave Sevagram. When Seth Ghanshyamdas Birla and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were in Wardha some days ago, they discussed with him his appeal for the Deenbandhu Memorial Fund. They said that, if he could spare a few days and come to Bombay, they might be able to help in collecting the amount. They could not bear the thought of Gandhiji making a tour for collecting Rs. 5 lakhs for Santiniketan. His time and energy were, they knew, premortgaged for other purposes, and it would be a tragedy if he had to make a tour for the mere purpose of this collection.

This reminds me of a similar occasion when Gandhiji decided that Gurudev should not be permitted to tour the country giving performances of his plays for the sake of his institutions, when he had already passed 70. It was in the month of March 1936 when we happened to be in Delhi, and Gurudev too was there with the inmates of his Ashram to give a performance of his famous musical play *Chandalika*. He looked aged and worn, and his appearing on the stage in order to beg for his institutions was unbearable to Gandhiji. He spoke to Ghanshyamdasji who agreed that the Poet should be relieved of the burden. The following letter with a cheque was immediately addressed to the Poet:

Delhi, Harijan Colony,  
27th March, 1936

Respected Sir,

Please find the enclosed draft for Rs. 60,000 which we believe is the deficit on the expenses on Santiniketan, to cover which you have been exhibiting your art from place to place. When we heard this, we felt humiliated. We believe that at your advanced age and in your weak state of health you ought not to have to undertake these arduous tours. We must confess that we know very little of the institution — except the name. But we have not been unaware of your great fame as the Poet of the age. You are not only the greatest Poet of India, you are the Poet of humanity. Your poems remind one of the hymns of the ancient rishis. You have by your unrivalled gifts raised the status of our country. And we feel that those whom God has blessed with means should relieve you of the burden of finding the funds required for the conduct of the institution. Our contribution is a humble effort in that direction. For reasons, which need not be stated, we prefer to remain anonymous. We hope that you will now cancel all the engagements taken for raising the sum above mentioned.

Praying for your long life to continue the service you are rendering to our country,

We remain,

Your humble countrymen

The Poet, to whom I took the letter, was immensely happy. He cancelled his tour and wrote to Gandhiji a letter of which the single sentence still reverberates in my memory: "Words fail me to express my gratefulness for your having come to my help and reminded me of my Swadharma from which I had fallen."

Well, now that Gurudev is no more and C. F. Andrews too is no more, our debt to both of them is all the greater and more imperative. The very fact that Gandhiji should have put aside his preoccupations for the purpose should indicate the importance and peremptory nature of his mission. I appeal to the generous-minded public of Bombay to fill Gandhiji's begging bowl within the next week that he has set apart for the purpose. These are days when nothing seems to be secure — certainly not money and property — but duty done and money given to a noble purpose were never insecure, and I appeal to everyone to respond to this call of duty.

M. D.

### QUESTION BOX

(By M. K. Gandhi)

#### If 'Harijan' Is Prohibited

Q. You are going strong. You should know that, if the people follow you, it must hinder the present war effort. The Government cannot allow it. If they do, you will admit that only the British Government can show such generosity. And what will you do if they suppress it?

A. No Government can afford to be generous. A man is generous when he does something at his own expense. Governments can do nothing at their own expense. But they always succeed in making people believe that they are generous even when they are barely or less than just. Justice is like a debt which has to be discharged. Therefore, if the Government permit *Harijan* to continue its even course, they will do so because it is proper from their point of view. They will not hesitate to suppress it when they think it is improper not to do so. I stated at the time of the resumption of publication that it was no part of my plan to persist in publication in spite of prohibition. I will, therefore, again suspend publication when the Government desire it. If they do, it will be a loss to the public. For, apart from the three weeklies, its articles appear by special permission in Urdu *Hindustan* — Lucknow, Urdu *Harijan* — Lahore, Marathi *Harijan* — Wardha. It is also published in Telugu and Ooria. Articles are sent to them in advance. Numerous other newspapers copy or translate articles from it week by week. There is no generosity in tolerating the publication of such a popular weekly. And my writings will not hinder war effort, if it is voluntary. If they influence the people, surely there is something wrong somewhere. It is not *Harijan* that should be stopped, but the wrong it exposes should be undone. I look upon



my writings as a solid contribution to war effort, for he serves a cause best who exposes its weaknesses or those of its representatives.

You ask what I would do if they suppress *Harijan*. I must frankly confess, I do not know. I have cultivated the habit of not anticipating evil. I am able to know the remedy instinctively when I am face to face with an evil. That is how a God-fearing man acts. The fear of God disposes of every other fear. But I can give you this assurance that suppression of *Harijan* can never mean suppression of me.

Bombay, 11-5-42

#### Intellectual Conviction

Q. Intellectually I am convinced that non-violence is the only solution of quarrels between man and man. But by nature I cannot but react violently to acts of hostility to my country or myself. So I am unable to be content with non-violent resistance only against the Japanese. I feel that, in addition to whatever I may be able to do by way of non-violent resistance, I should also do my utmost to help the war effort against them. They have no right to invade my country even though it is in British hands and not ours. But when I think of helping the war effort, my intellectual conviction of non-violence does not allow me to do so with peace of mind.

A. Your difficulty is a common difficulty. But if you have real intellectual conviction, it will overcome your nature which is nothing but habit. Your conviction should tell you that non-violence is a force infinitely superior to violence. Hence you do not need to rely upon violent assistance. Moreover you are labouring under a fallacy. Why do you say that the Japanese have no right to invade your country although it is in foreigners' hands? In the first place, the country is not yours while it is in others' hands. You cannot do what you like with it. The foreigners can and do. Secondly, if the Japanese have enmity against your master, they have every right to attack what your master possesses. We are not examining here the correctness of Japan's conduct in going to war against Great Britain. I am simply pointing out what seems to me to be your mental confusion. The proper course for you is to ask the wrongful possessor to vacate your country. When he has done it you will have the choice between violence and non-violence against the Japanese attack, if it comes. But the thing is not so simple as I have put it. Your difficulty is real. You feel that you cannot defend your country. You have lost it. The English can, if you help them. If the English vacate the country, the Japanese are much more likely to attack undefended India if only for strategic purposes, and you will be utterly helpless against the invading host. Therefore, seeing that the English are in India and they can defend, why not make common cause with them and answer the impending attack? After victory, have they not said, they would go away if they are not wanted? This, I expect, is your argument. In my opinion it is only plausible. The British do not want your help on your terms, as

witness the failure of the Cripps mission. They want it on their terms. If, therefore, victory is achieved, the British hold will be ever so much stronger than before. If they will not trust you now, there is no warrant for supposing that they will after victory. They will then ask you with greater force than now to produce the unity which cannot be produced whilst they are here. You get out of all this tangle, if you adopt my method. If you have intellectual conviction, you can approach the problem with the utmost confidence. You are friend to all. You say to the British with the greatest goodwill that, if they leave India, she will take care of herself and will probably escape Japanese attention, and if she cannot, she will answer it with non-violence. Then by that simple act of justice they gain your eternal friendship. It may stand them in good stead even during the present war. For India will then of her own free will help China, Russia and others. If India sets her own house in order, as I have no doubt it will, India can work wonders.

Bombay, 10-5-42

#### Congress and League

Q. Maulana Saheb has made what I consider a very wise and patriotic suggestion that the Congress Working Committee will nominate five representatives to meet the representatives of the Muslim League when the latter so desire to do. I trust it will commend itself to you. If it does, I should like you publicly to support it. It will go a long way to bring the Hindus and the Muslims together.

A. I have no hesitation in endorsing Maulana Saheb's suggestion. No one would be more glad than I if, with or without my endorsement, the two can come together. I have always felt that there is something radically wrong with both that the most obvious thing, viz. the coming together of the wise men of both with a will to find a solution of the deadlock, has not happened.

#### Ingenious Method

Q. Your advocacy of the learning of Urdu as part of the national language which you have called Hindustani is all very well. What do you say to the propaganda that is being carried on in the Nizam's Dominions on behalf of Urdu? Here is the first question in a Telugu examination paper:

"If for the purposes of Federation a common language for India is indispensable and the case of Hindustani is strong enough, then it seems to me that as far as this University is concerned it should immediately make Urdu its medium of instruction especially when it happens to be the mother-tongue of this province. Those who would wait till it grows richer are sadly mistaken and argue in a circle. It will remain poor as long as the Universities make no use of it in teaching all branches of knowledge."

Remember that Telugu and not Urdu is the mother-tongue of the majority of the people in this part of the country. What do you say to the ingenious method adopted of carrying on pro-Urdu propaganda through examination papers?

A. I admit that the method adopted is both ingenious and strange. An examination paper is hardly a vehicle for propaganda on a question on



which sharp division of opinion prevails. I agree that Urdu is not the mother-tongue of the people of H. E. H. the Nizam's Dominions. What proportion of the population knows Telugu I do not know. My notion of an all-India speech does not involve the displacement of the great provincial languages, but its knowledge is meant to be an addition to that of the provincial speech. Nor do I expect that the millions will ever learn the all-India speech. It will be learnt by the politically-minded and those who have interprovincial connections. Indeed a correspondent suggests that in the place of an all-India speech I should advocate the learning of the languages of neighbouring provinces. Thus he says: "It is far more useful for the Assamese to know Bengali than Hindi or Urdu and now according to you Hindi and Urdu." If we had not the intolerable burden of learning English not merely as a second language but as a language through which all higher instruction is imparted to us, we should find it child's play to learn our neighbours' speech and certainly learn the all-India speech for all-India contacts. In my opinion a boy or girl lacks culture and accomplishment, if he or she does not know half a dozen languages of India. It is a sure sign of brain fog on the part of English-knowing Indians when they tremble at the very thought of learning a language other than English, not excluding even their mother's speech. For the majority of objectors are English-knowing Indians. I have found no difficulty about the Ashram inmates learning Urdu in addition to Hindi. And I know that in South Africa the Tamil labourers could speak Telugu and *vice versa*, and they had a working knowledge of Hindi. No one had told them that they should learn Hindi. Somehow or other they knew intuitively that they should know Hindi. Of course they were no scholars, but for mutual intercourse they picked up what was necessary. They picked up also the speech of their neighbours, the Zulus. They could not carry on their business, if they did not. Thus most Indians knew besides their mother-tongues two more Indian languages, Zulu, and a smattering of even English. Needless to say many of them wrote no language, and most could write only ungrammatically their own mother-tongues. The moral of this is obvious.

If you dispense with the script, you pick up your neighbour's language without effort and without difficulty, and if you are fresh and the brain is not wearied, you can learn as many scripts as you wish without any difficulty. The study is any day interesting and stimulating. The study of languages is an art and valuable at that.

On the way to Bombay, 10-5-42

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## IN RESURGENT CHINA

In the constructive effort of Nationalist China there are several features which should be of special interest to us. One of the most important items in that programme has been the rehabilitation of village life. In the retreat before the advancing Japanese hordes the Chinese had to abandon cities and fall back on villages. People had to depend on rural products and adapt themselves to rural surroundings. Madame Chiang Kai-shek wrote:

"Continuance of national resistance against aggression entails greater need for economy and self-sacrifice on the part of the whole country. Even before the hostilities began New Life laid emphasis upon rational living. Since the war began, this principle has become not only desirable but necessary. The need of it inspired New Life to celebrate its fifth anniversary last year (i. e. in 1939) by sponsoring exhibitions in all the main cities to show the people the most practical ways of utilising local products. Houses furnished with only native goods were exhibited. Bamboos were used as water pipes, and bed mattresses were made of palm bark — far cooler and almost as resilient as the foreign 'Beauty Rest' mattresses, and costing a fraction of the price of the latter. In every phase of life people were encouraged to take advantage of the material at hand." (*China Shall Rise Again*)

A "Grow More Food, Save More Food" movement was set afoot. It caught the farmers' imagination. The cultivation of potato, soya beans and Indian corn was recommended because they yield most food per unit. Non-food crops were to be reduced. People were asked to wear their old cotton clothes longer than they would in times of peace. New lands in the interior were put under cultivation and refugees were put on the work. The programme provided work to two farm hands where only one was employed before. The practice of growing wheat in rice fields in winter, when they used to be allowed to lie fallow, was adopted and increased. Agriculturists were encouraged to adopt better methods of cultivation, to strengthen the dykes against rivers, and to dig more irrigation ditches as a safeguard against draught. Irrigation and drainage projects were pushed forward, and forest lands began to be cleared.

In order to economise in the consumption of food, "people were asked to eat unpolished rice and coarse flour, as well as sweet potatoes, beans, squash, and other vegetables. Another way of conserving food is to abstain from drinking wine. Chinese wine is made of rice which today is more urgently needed as food." (Chen Ta-jen) The Government issued an order prohibiting the milling and sale of high-grade polished rice, and organised a campaign for promoting and popularising the use of miscellaneous food crops as substitutes for rice.

With a view to providing people "driven away from or bombed out of their homes" with nourishing food, the New Life movement started a network of cafeterias where cheap, clean and nutritive food could be had and where the customers served themselves. A new article of food, nourishing



though cheap — 'vitacake' — has been invented. "It provides something portable and nutritive to eat during the long hours in dugouts. It is made of half wheat, and half soya-bean milk residue. Formerly the latter was used only for the feeding of chickens."

The revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving is another important item. Though the Chinese performed the amazing feat of bodily removing the machinery of about 150 large factories (weighing over 15,000 tons) by small boats to Chungking and up the 300 steps of the city by coolies, the products of the textile mills could not suffice for the needs of the army and the people, and cloth became scarce. As Edgar Mowrer says in his book on China, "Shantung, the great silk-producing province, practically all of the cotton-growing and textile-manufacturing regions, were overrun by the enemy. Therefore, Madame Chaing Kai-shek obtained 70,000 hand looms for refugee women on which to weave cotton stuffs of the simplest kind . . . She summoned a great meeting of important women from all over China at Kuling, and extended their activity to the organisation of weaving and the stimulation of home industries." Describing the training given to students in hand-weaving and hand-spinning, she says:

"A three months' course of training in spinning and weaving is the order of the day. During the first month the pupils get their board and lodging free. During the second month they are able to bear half of the expenses. At the end of the third month they can support other members of their families. When they are graduated they return home, and six months later they generally have made enough money not only to support themselves and their families, but to pay for the wheel, or the looms, bought on the cooperative plan."

Experimental centres have been started in various places, and in one district which formerly did not grow cotton, over 1,500 cooperative members are engaged in producing cotton. The result is that in a place where people before were clothed in tatters for want of cloth, "now, two years later, the place presents an entirely different atmosphere and appearance. The people are all cleanly and well dressed; the old stores reopened; new stores, carrying a line of goods bordering on luxuries, have opened, and their stocks alone show how the standard of living has gone up."

Nor have other industries been neglected. The Madame goes on to say:

"The Production Department has also trained several hundred women as staff workers in hand-made embroidery. These women are now being sent out to various districts to train the local women to produce embroidered articles mostly from ramie (sometimes called grass linen, or China grass) which finds a steady market both at home and abroad . . . . . Wherever there are teams of our workers we have some form of production going on. In each district the type of work is decided by the raw materials produced. In one district where

the clay makes good porcelain, we are specializing in the making of artistic dishes and bowls at low cost."

While Japan could destroy and has destroyed large mills and factories by bombing, no amount of bombing could possibly wipe out village industries, and even if destroyed, they could be started again without much difficulty.

Emphasising the paramount necessity of starting village industries and of restricting the development of large scale industries to the minimum unavoidable she said, as far back as in 1938:

"I should like to see village industry carefully developed wherever it is possible for raw materials to be produced and worked up to supply the daily needs of the people. There will have to be mechanical aid in cases; but I hope that machinery never will be brought to China to save labour as its first principle and requirement. Machinery should be used to make necessities which hands cannot make, but there it should stop. Nor should cut-throat competition in manufacture be permitted. In that the workmen suffer. . . . If we emerge safely from the calamities of this war, there is one brake that will be put upon us that should have a restraining influence upon development of too many large industries. That is the brake of exhausted finance. It will not be easy to plunge into great schemes of factory development, and that, to my mind, is a good thing. There is so much to be done by hand, so many hands to do it, that wisdom dictates energetic arrangement of opportunities and possibilities for manual work just as quickly as circumstances will allow." (*China in Peace and War*)

If China could put forth this tremendous mass effort at nation-building in spite of her preoccupation with a devastating war, it should be no less possible for us, provided we can summon up enough of will and resourcefulness. The constructive programme has long been before us. And now that adversity has thrown city-bred classes and village-bred masses together, it is up to the former to utilise the opportunity for rekindling the life of the villages which, though long neglected and derided, are proving our only resort of safety and refuge.

C. S.

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