

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

VOL. XVII. No. 50 AHMEDABAD—SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1954

TWO ANNAS

WORLD'S FIRST PACIFIST

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

[A summary of the speech delivered to the students of the S. L. D. Arts and H. L. Commerce Colleges, Ahmedabad, on the occasion of the Charkha Dwadashi Day—Gandhiji's birthday according to the Hindu calendar, in the year 1940 A.D.]

The President of your Union in his invitation had suggested to me to say something about truth and non-violence. I was, therefore, as I was coming here, casting about for a subject which would not only interest you as the audience in the brief space of time at our disposal, but also me as the speaker, the consideration being that if it interested me as the speaker, I could reasonably expect it to interest you as well. I share with you in brief the thoughts which have thus occurred to me.

I

Different people from all over the world have viewed Gandhiji's life and personality from vastly differing angles and each has tried to assess it and label it according as he has understood it. While on the one side he has been hailed a *mahatma* and an *avatar*, on the other he had been dubbed a shrewd diplomat, an insolent detractor, an unscrupulous opportunist etc. How would I describe him if some one were to ask me for it, I thought. And the answer which suggested itself to me was: Gandhiji is the world's first true pacifist, that is, the first man who asks that even war should be fought by non-violent means. I will explain myself.

I have used the word 'pacifist', but the word 'pacifist' needs some clarification. As it is understood, there is as much relation or want of relation between Gandhiji's life-work and this word, as there is between Satyagraha and what is called passive resistance. Pacifist and pacifism are English words and have acquired a special meaning in that language. The meaning which usage in that language has fixed for them would seem to be that a pacifist is a person who is opposed to war and the ideology built up to uphold and justify such opposition is pacifism. The content of these words as such is therefore of a negative and a passive kind. That is why in Europe a pacifist is believed to have done his duty when he has refused to list in the event of a conscription for compulsory military service.

Gandhiji was not a pacifist in this sense. When some of Europe's well-known pacifists met him in 1931, he surprised them by criticizing their attitude and ideology. Gandhiji told them that they could not be said to have done their duty merely by refusing to join the war. Because they would still be assisting the war-effort by paying taxes to the State and otherwise also by remaining neutral—which is what mere non-participation would amount to—on a question of vital importance to their community and mankind.

Having regard to this distinction it would not be right to call Gandhiji a pacifist in its usual European sense. Our own word Satyagrahi is far more correct and appropriate. But then Gandhiji cannot be called the first Satyagrahi of the world. Prahlad, Socrates, Christ and so on were also Satyagrahis, each in his own way. Moreover, the word Satyagrahi has wider connotation and would not therefore be fit to describe his uniqueness among the great of the world. That is why I have seized on this word—pacifist to describe him. But you will please remember that I am not using it in its usual narrow sense, but in its true sense, as I understand it. And it is in this extended and real sense of this word that I call Gandhiji the first pacifist of the world.

II

Just a few days back newspapers had featured a radio-broadcast by the well-known British pacifist and war-resister Prof. Joad. He had explained in it why he a lifelong pacifist had changed into an ardent advocate of war against Germany. His argument in short was that there were certain things which, he believed, could be far more calamitous in their consequences than war and that Nazism was one such. It was therefore necessary to resist it even by recourse to war. His position would seem to be that he would subscribe to pacifism only so long as he believed that such things could be resisted and eradicated by peaceful means. But he now feels that Nazism cannot be faced and resisted except by recourse to the violent means of war. The conditions are such, he says, that it cannot be resisted and repulsed except by force. He therefore feels, even at the risk of appearing to follow

expediency rather than right, that Nazi supremacy represents a greater danger to the world than war and that an armed resistance is the only course open to us to drive it back and destroy it.

You can see quite easily that if such logic is accepted, there would hardly be left any ground for denouncing and resisting any war. One may declare an apprehended destruction of anything one loves as being more disastrous than war. In fact this has been the pet argument of every war-monger. Pacifism and war-resistance would then seem to have no case at all.

Let us however go further into this discussion.

To resume: Prof. Joad seems to claim that the way and the values of life evolved by British imperialism are so humanitarian and so much conducive to human welfare that they should be preserved at any cost. Pity that he forgets that a big country like India with a population of more than 35 crores is simply groaning under the yoke of this same way and values of life. It is a measure of the moral confusion which prevails in the world today that even eminent scholars and thinkers like Prof. Joad can be so erratic and purblind in their opinions.

III

Let us now consider the other side of the case. We are taught in our moral text-books that it is necessary to look at the reverse of the medal also in order to form a correct judgment. Truth is nobody's monopoly. In fact this principle is the foundation of the development of thought and knowledge. Now if this foundation is to be kept intact, people must cultivate a liberal tolerance for all thought-systems. After all what does Hitler or Mussolini or Stalin say? Are they also not waging their wars and mobilizing their people behind them under ideological slogans? Are they not also mouthing words like 'peace' and 'end of war'? Do they not also speak the same language of allowing the lesser evil of war for warding off an evil greater than war?

When I say this, I do not suggest that what they say is true. But both sides can honestly hold that what they aim at is to bring deliverance to the world from its many ills. A lover of truth or peace has to allow for this fact. Difference of opinion in regard to the truth of a matter is common experience. History has sought to resolve it in its acute cases by means of war. Only recently the Secretary of State for India, Mr Amery said that if Gandhiji abhorred the idea of war from his heart, the Viceroy felt equally strongly that nothing should be allowed to thwart India's war-effort. Most of the problems with which we are faced today are of this type.

Gandhiji therefore said that war is never the right means for settling the truth. The world

has such bitter experience of war that no untruth can be more disastrous than war. I would hold this conviction to be the foundation of pacifism. If it is taken away, the whole superstructure of pacifism must come down, as it has actually come down in the case of Prof. Joad.

IV

It would be relevant in this connection to refer to another historical example. We today hold that the crusades of European history were the product of ignorant fanaticism. If religious zeal outgrows its proper limits and starts on a campaign of persecution and destruction of its supposed opponents, we denounce it. Why? Perhaps because our age has not the same faith in the old religious form as our ancestors had. Or perhaps because experience has taught us that indulgence in this kind of fighting cannot at least serve the cause of true religion. Whatever it may be, this perception of the futility of religious wars has certainly helped the world to take a big stride on its march towards progress.

But why cannot we see that we are clinging to our political 'isms' with almost the same kind of fanaticism? Is not the mentality which says, "My 'ism' right or wrong" just another version of the old religious fanaticism? I would urge you to ponder over this question calmly and with a dispassionate mind. If I as a Hindu challenged a Christian or a Muslim to a fight, you would laugh at me. But what would be your reaction if I did it as an adherent of Nazism or Communism? Perhaps some of you might feel that it would serve me right if I were given a good trouncing. But this is not pacifism. This is not the way of the pacifist who, to speak in terms of Gandhiji, ought to strive for the good even of his enemy.

The question is: Shall we then sit idle and just look on since both the sides may honestly feel to be in the right? Shall we for that reason submit ourselves to Nazism or Communism? Is inaction pacifism?

No, certainly not. And this is what distinguishes Gandhiji from the European pacifists. He says that we should resist them by non-violent means, by Satyagraha. Truth and fear can never be reconciled. But truth can be supported and promoted by only truthful means — means which are of the same nature as truth. Satyagraha then is the only right means for the achievement of truth; and with that as our sole means we must fight for what we regard as the truth.

V

This in short is Gandhiji's conception of Satyagraha. But he had not yet extended it to cover wars between one nation and another. We know that in the first World War before 1920 he had agreed to join the war on the side of the Allies.

This was, we should admit, something of a contradiction for a man wedded to non-violence. He was not prepared at that time to say that even nations can and should fight — of course if they cannot avoid it — by means of non-violence. But today he finds himself able to advise Britain to throw away her arms and fight by means of Ahimsa. And he tells his country that non-violent moral support is the best and the only proper help which she can offer the Allies in their hour of difficulty. If India has chosen to practise Ahimsa, it is not open to her to tread the sanguinary path of war at this hour. Rather this is just the time for India to declare her resolve to fight the enemy only by non-violent means and thus give her message to the world.

Now this resolve and readiness to resist an armed invasion of a country by means of non-violence distinguishes Gandhiji from all other pacifists of the world. He himself had not adopted this extreme position before 1940. Or, to be more precise, though this was his position in the seed-form, it is only this year that it has become clearly defined. And for this reason the year 1940 will go down as a remarkable landmark in his life. Gandhiji often says that though he is growing old in years he is ceaselessly growing rich in spirit. If a proof were needed for this assertion, the year 1940 provides one most conclusively.

VI

Some of you might ask, "But Buddha, Christ and Krishna were also pacifists. Why not give the honour of being the first pacifist to them? Or do you think Gandhiji outshines them all?"

Now I may tell you that making comparisons between the great ones is a piece of dangerous self-deception. I am not going to do that. I will simply draw your attention to a lesson emphasized by historians. They say that though it is true that great men influence and shape their times, the converse of this proposition that their times also influence and shape them is equally true. The truth lies midway between these two views. No historian would deny that if Buddha and Christ were to be born in this age, they would act differently. In Gandhiji's case we actually see it before our eyes that while time and circumstances have influenced him not a little, he in his turn has been changing and shaping them after his ideals.

However you might still ask, "Leave the great ones alone. But why should you not agree to give precedence in this matter to such distinguished pacifists of our own times as Tolstoy and Garrison?" I admit that so far as condemnation and rejection of war as a method of settling disputes is concerned, these were certainly pioneers. But as regards pacifism as I have described, they fall short of the required standard. They rejected war, no doubt, but they failed to point out the

non-violent substitute of war. They certainly advocated passive resistance to war by keeping away from it, but the method of active non-violent resistance did not occur to them. And to that extent their pacifism was imperfect. That is why pacifism in Europe today has become indistinguishable from a sort of escapism or inaction. At any rate, it has not developed the power either to effectively resist violent war or to supplant it by a more efficacious non-violent substitute.

Gandhiji could not rest content with mere passive resistance. He wanted action — positive action which would, by its very nature, produce a change for the better, not only in social and political conditions but also in human psychology and thus draw the day when peace shall reign on earth — the dream of the pacifists — closer and closer still. That is why I call him world's first pacifist.

(From Hindi)

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HARIJAN

Feb. 13

1954

ASIA AND WORLD PEACE

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

The Prime Minister of Ceylon, Sir John Kotelawala came to Delhi and successfully negotiated with our Prime Minister Indo-Ceylonese Agreement on the vexed question of the rights of citizenship of Indian emigrants to Ceylon.

And he also took the opportunity to explain his move to call a conference of the prime ministers of the five Asian countries, viz. Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan. The move has naturally assumed very great importance in the international field,—specially so because of the impending Pak-American Military Aid Agreement.

South-East Asia as a geographical unit of world strategy is the product of the last World War. It was thought of by the Allied High Command from its strategic importance to meet Japan's onrush in that theatre of the war. A separate S-E. A. Command was set up, and as we know, Lord Mountbatten was in its charge.

After the war, the area naturally assumed political importance also. This is a distinct result of the war: India which was one country then split up into four Nation States, viz., Burma, Ceylon, Bharat, and Pakistan. Thereafter, thanks to the moral help and encouragement from India, Indonesia also became independent. This was the time when there met the first Asian Conference at Delhi.

The emergence of these five neighbouring nations on the political map of the world is an event by itself, and it is any day a very welcome thing that they should meet and discuss common questions of their progress and development. That such a move on their part will not be for a military purpose, but shall be for the peace and prosperity of the world is praiseworthy.

There are other countries also in S-E. Asia, viz., Indo-China, Malaya, Cambodia etc. equally important. Unfortunately, these areas are not still free from the colonial grip of the European imperialism of the last century, though they strive hard to be so. The French people who hold the sway are not still ready to accept the new world idea of withering colonialism. Do we also not see that they are not still prepared to let go the few islands that they hold in the free territory of our country?

The result of this dire intransigence on the part of imperial France has brought in the calamity of the world's two power blocs fighting for supremacy in the S-E. Asian area. This has naturally its bearing on the above five free nations. The two warring power blocs might

as well intend to engulf them also in their cold war. Under these circumstances the Pak-American Military Alliance becomes a very significant and not quite an innocent move.

Obviously India holds an important place among the five nations. It does not desire to associate itself with either of the power blocs. Such an independent policy and position in the world hurts America. Perhaps, it is afraid that these third group nations might just go over to the Soviet bloc at a critical moment. India's attitude to China, as can be seen at the U. N. O., might, though wrongly, cause such suspicion in its mind. It is unfortunate that America does not feel confident that India's real mind is for positive peace and cordial neutrality. It is up to us to win such confidence by our acts. If we can do that and secure such change of heart on the part of America, it will surely be our great Satyagrahi victory.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan hesitates to attend the proposed Colombo Conference, because he does not wish that the impending American aid to Pakistan should be discussed. The Conference is surely not for that, and hence the Ceylon Prime Minister had no difficulty in giving necessary assurance to Prime Minister Mahomed Ali.

The Conference is really meeting for another purpose. Prime Minister Kotelawala has well explained it in his Delhi speech, which is reproduced in this issue. The five countries have just come out of their colonial clutches; it is natural that they should meet to consider common economic questions of their mutual welfare and development. The basis of such consideration should be to resist war and secure world peace and economic self-sufficiency obtained through Swadeshi and mutual aid. If this can be done, it will be a valuable step in the direction of waging peace and prosperity.

India's Constitution ordains that the State shall (a) promote international peace and security, (b) maintain just and honourable relations between nations, (c) foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized people with one another, and (d) encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration. It is up to the nations of the world also to find ways and means to ban war and wage peace in the world.

There are two broad ways to do it—firstly, the internal economy of a country and secondly, its foreign relations. Will our country take to the ways of western economy and through industrialism enter the arena of fighting for world markets? Or will it take to the decentralized economy of self-sufficiency through basic small-scale industries and Swadeshi?—This is the larger question that faces us today.

On the second question, the main problem is whether a country will be friendly and peace-loving in its foreign relations or will it be

harbouring vengeance and suspicion against some and contriving to have armed strength?

India is beginning to indicate its mind on the latter question of peace-loving relations with the whole world. However, it must be said that it is not so clear or definite about the former question of internal economy. It should be obvious to us that if we are not definite about it, we will surely be involving ourselves in difficulties about the other question of our foreign relations too. Because, in the world at present, it is the thoughtless cut-throat competition for markets and a craze for raising the standard of living anyhow that become potent causes of tensions and conflict leading to war and human misery.

A country, therefore, which does not have its internal economy attuned to peaceful and contented ends, will sooner than later provoke jealousy and hatred of others, which will lead to disturbed conditions. If the Colombo Conference achieves tangible results in this direction of such economy of peace and contentment, it will surely negotiate an important turn in the direction of non-violence and Sarvodaya that Gandhiji showed to the world.

30-1-54

(From the original in Gujarati)

OVERHAULING EDUCATION *

(By Vinoba)

Under the British rule our village industries were deliberately neglected for more than a century. Most of them died away one after another and the rest were seriously crippled. With the advent of freedom it was hoped that efforts would be made to revive them. But the piling up of more and more machines which we are doing will wipe off even the few that remain. One would like to know whether this will make the villagers happy.

In the field of education too we are carrying on the same old system which we used to condemn as anti-national and destructive of our cultural and economic life. It is now being realized that this is one of the main causes of the growing increase in unemployment. Six precious years have been lost for noticing a defect which was patent from the beginning.

Everybody knew that the system of education introduced by the British was aimed at strengthening the bonds of our slavery. How could it be expected to help promote the advancement of the country? Gandhiji, we know, had advocated the scrapping up of the old system. He had placed before us a new system of education which he thought could serve all our needs better and more satisfactorily. If those whose business it was to bring about the required change in education did not like Gandhiji's scheme, then the least they should

have done, knowing as they did that the old system was quite unserviceable, was to close the schools and colleges for some time during which they should have taken counsel with one another and worked out the new scheme after their own liking.

The point is that with the attainment of freedom we should have made a fresh start in the right direction in every field of our national life. Instead we find that either old things are being continued or the changes which have been introduced are only superficial. Take the case of land-reforms. Though Zamindari has been abolished in most of the States, it has not at all benefited the poor cultivators and agricultural labourers. What is worse, the same old Zamindari has been readmitted by the back door in the shape of big farms run as industrial concerns. The cultivators work in these farms as labourers in the same old way. Their position is no better than that of the bullocks. Like the bullocks they do all the labour and produce the crops, but they do not get anything out of these crops. Why cannot these labourers along with the owners be made co-sharers in the produce? But this is not being done which means we are not making good use of our freedom.

Let me now tell you in brief what we need to do in order to go forward towards our goal.

First, so far as the primary wants are concerned all the raw produce in the village must be converted into its various products locally. Most of you are clothed in mill-cloth. If you thus continue to purchase your needs from the cities, the villages will have no industry left except agriculture, which is bound to diminish at least in respect of land as the population increases. It is therefore necessary that the villages should have many other industries. In the absence of other industries, the villagers are forced to sell their grain and other agricultural produce. This works against them in two ways: Firstly, they are deprived of their bargaining power and fail to get favourable prices. Secondly, in the event of a famine or any other natural calamity, they find themselves bereft of all purchasing power. Last year, there was famine in Gorakhpur. The Government dispatched enough grain to be sold to the people of that area, but it was found the people had no purchasing power. This was so because there are no village industries in the villages.

Secondly, land must be redistributed. It is a gift of God and must be available to all like air, water and sun.

Thirdly, the villagers must get full educational facilities. The education imparted to them should of course be of the right type. It should enable them to know how they can start new industries and improve their agriculture.

The prevailing system of education dominated by the teaching of English is worse than

* From a speech at Lalganj in Muzaffarpur District on 6-1-54.

useless. I do not understand how it can profit the village boys and girls to know that the animal they call 'ghora' in Hindi is called 'a horse' in English. At most, they learn a useless new word. Of course, some who have the capacity and the will may learn English. But then they must learn it well so that they may render well-chosen books from English into their own language. But there is no need to impose it on all. And then why learn only English? There are many other languages besides English; such as, French, Chinese, Japanese etc. which can be learnt with equal profit. Today all our knowledge of the world is derived through English. This is not desirable. It makes us look at the world in the same way as the English look at it. It distorts our perspective. Let those, therefore, who can, choose other languages besides English so that we may have a more complete knowledge of what is happening in the world.

But the education which we provide to the villages will have for its object the improvement of agriculture, imparting of skills in various village industries, and the inculcation of proper social outlook. It is not necessary to have six-hour schools for this purpose. I would recommend one-hour schools. For the rest of the day the teacher and the boys will work on land or in any of the other village occupations. The teacher will not get any cash salary. The Kisans will give him a share in their produce and provide for his other needs. The present six-hour schools are a mockery of education. I have seen teachers sleep and even smoke in the class. They ask the boys to do the assignment while themselves they doze or dream, opening up their eyes, at intervals just to interject an admonition to the erring boys to keep quiet. We do not want such schools.

It is said that the opening up of these schools in the villages will cost a lot of money. Pandit Nehru and Maulana Azad both have raised this question of money and pleaded inability to spend more at the present time. But in the scheme that I am proposing there is no need for money. The teacher will teach the boys only for an hour and both together will work for the rest of the day. When we were touring in Telangana, in a small village on the bank of the Godavari, there met us a few Brahmanas in the village. I enquired of them whether there was a school in the village. They said, "No, the Government has not yet opened one." Then I asked them why they should not undertake to teach the village boys for an hour each day. They agreed and from the next day there was a school in the village. And such schools can be multiplied in any number one likes throughout India.

(Adapted from Hindi)

PROHIBITION IN ANDHRA

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

Shri Sitaram Shastri and two other friends from Andhra write to say:

"You will be glad to note that we, some of the leading constructive workers of Andhrades met here yesterday (25-1-54) under the Chairmanship of Shri Gadicherla Harisvottamaraa, veteran Andhra leader."

"A Committee has been appointed consisting of three members to go into the question of working of Prohibition Act and report before the 15th of February, that is to say, in the middle of the Budget Session. It is feared that the Committee will report in favour of scrapping of Prohibition so as to enable the Government to introduce legislation for the re-introduction of toddy and arrack sale throughout Andhrades and thereby make up the whole or part of the budget deficit as from 1st April. If so, it would be a most retrograde step imperilling the health and safety of lakhs of poor downtrodden men and women belonging to the lowest strata of society including the Harijan and the Adim-jati people."

"We are determined to combat the Government measures and resist them to the best of our ability paying, if necessary, the extreme price—the supreme sacrifice of valued lives. Before going to that extreme step we want to exhaust all other methods available to us. Therefore, we have taken up your suggestion of forming an All-India Prohibition League and establish branches throughout the country and especially in Andhra. In this connection, we had the advantage of the Chandil resolution of last year. We have appealed to the Sarva Seva Sangh authorities at Wardha to take the necessary steps for its formation and for drawing up a proper constitution for the same, and place it before the next session of the Sarva Seva Sangh."

I wish god-speed to the efforts of these co-workers in Andhra. They require help and encouragement from all quarters. The Sarva Seva Sangh will surely give all necessary help. What about the Congress is a natural question. Can it be called a Congress Government that can venture to scrap Prohibition? In and out of season we are told by responsible people in the Congress—only a few days back, on 30th January, we avowed our faith in it—that we follow the ideals given to us by the Father of the Nation. I am sure, nobody will deny that what is threatening to take place in Andhra is surely a thing that Gandhiji would never allow or wish us to do. The Congress and the Constitution of India stand for Prohibition. To scrap Prohibition already accepted is surely a flagrant violation of Art. 47 of the Constitution which says that the State shall prohibit the use of intoxicant drugs and drink.

Will the Congress Working Committee look up the matter and guide its Andhra Government aright? There is a call of duty on the Central Government as well. It should see that a small deficit of a crore or so is met from other sources or ultimately by a subvention under the national development programme. Prohibition is surely a very important and necessary item of the national plan for a Welfare State.

4-1-54

GANDHI—THE MAN AND HIS TECHNIQUE*

(By Pyarelal)

III

Soon afterwards I joined him in his Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati. To an uninitiate it looked at first sight, like a dull, drab place, where people performed commonplace, uninteresting chores, toiled like day-labourers amid what would be regarded as a primitive standard of amenities. Many an intellectual who went there full of enthusiasm turned back in disappointment on finding that there was not a "trace of political commotion" there. And yet this place was the nodal point of all his political activity. One saw the how of it as soon as one came to the hard core of the Ashram vows or spiritual disciplines, and their significance. They were truth in thought, word and deed; non-violence, non-possession and non-stealing; chastity and its concomitant control of the palate; equal respect for all religions and shedding of all caste feeling with particular reference to untouchability; Swadeshi or the principle of self-sufficiency, and finally fearlessness which is the foundation as well as the final result of these observances. Much as I would like to, I must not go into a detailed explanation of the meaning and interrelation of these observances. Suffice it to say that they are all rooted in the vow of truth which has to be realized in one's daily-life. Their practice is the indispensable condition for one who really wants to realize his identity with mankind and to develop the power of Satyagraha which naturally flows from it.

But what has Ashram life or the philosophy of Ashram disciplines to do with the non-violent struggle which culminated in India's independence? Here is the explanation: One day soon after my joining the Ashram I accompanied Gandhiji on his evening walk. At the end of the walk was the Sabarmati Central Prison. Pointing to it he said: "This is our other Ashram!" He explained his meaning afterwards: "In our Ashram there are no walls. The only walls we have are of the various disciplines. They do not restrain us, they protect. It is only when we voluntarily observe them that we experience real freedom. Armed with their power we can go anywhere, face any emergency and never feel baffled. Our life here is supposed to be harder than prison life. We have no possessions of which anybody can deprive us, we shall miss no delights of the palate if we are put in prison, having renounced them already, nor any other physical indulgence. We shall fear no one because we shall have learnt to walk in the fear of God always and we shall gladly die bearing witness to truth that freedom is our birthright but never repudiate it. And since in prison a civil resister voluntarily observes the prison discipline and welcomes the hardships incidental to jail life as a part of vicarious suffering for truth, we shall feel happy and free like bird even

behind the prison walls. And when the whole of India learns that art, India shall be free, for if the alien powers then turn the whole of India into a vast prison, it will not be able to imprison India's soul." This was said in 1920. The truth of it was demonstrated in 1942 when the whole of India was virtually turned into a vast prison camp—but it could not crush India's will to be free.

Einstein has familiarized us with his "unified field" theory of matter and energy. To Gandhiji self, family, Ashram and the wider world of politics represented a "unified field" that was interpreted and controlled by the same law. Ashram was his "wider family" and politics an extension of his Ashram activities. Politics had been turned into a highly complicated, inaccessible and abstruse subject by its high-priests—almost an esoteric lore which stood above morality and ethics and whose high mysteries only the initiated few could penetrate. It was a part of Gandhiji's mission to strip it of its mystery and bring it into the light of the common day as the science of the happiness of the toiling masses to enable the individual to realize the highest in life. As such it had to be capable of being reduced to commonplace elements of everyday life of the man-behind-the-plough and to conform to the fundamental truths of life whose practice—whether conscious or unconscious—sustains society and mankind. And since fundamental research in these was the goal of Gandhiji's Ashram activity, the latter held the key to his politics also.

PROPOSED COLOMBO CONFERENCE

[The Prime Minister of Ceylon, Sir John Kotelawala, during his few days' stay in Delhi, addressed the members of the Indian Council of World Affairs and Asian Relations Organization. Thereby he took occasion to explain the objects he had in view in convening a Conference of the Prime Ministers of the five S.E. Asian countries, viz., Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. To do that he took a bird's-eye view of Asian affairs as they are today. The following is reproduced from the press report of his speech, with the hope that it will help the reader to understand the problem of peace in the world in general, and in S.E. Asia at least in particular. Such an understanding is very necessary on the part of a citizen living under a free and democratic order, which is ours now.]

28-1-54

—M. P.J.

Asian affairs have loomed large in the present day world with the emancipation of India, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia and Ceylon, the disturbances in China, the situation in Vietnam and Korea, and the outbreak of terrorism in parts of Malaya. Asia has been the heart which has pumped the blood to keep the rest of the world alive for longer than one can recall. She has placed at the disposal of the rest of the world her immense natural resources, which unfortunately colonialism exploited for the benefit of the West without adequate thought for the development of the East. Is it a wonder, therefore, that the world's richest continent should also be the one in which humanity is most impoverished, and the level of economic life is lowest?

More than half the world's population centres round Asia in one-fifth of the world's

* Further instalment of the address delivered to the U. S. Educational Foundation, New Delhi. The first two appeared in the issues of 30-1-54 and 6-2-54 respectively.

square area. The wealth of Asia that fed the world can surely be developed to sustain a large proportion of its inhabitants on a higher standard of life than is unhappily their lot today. No internal development in Asia is possible so long as there is mutual fear and distrust among neighbours, all of whom have the same problem of fighting the battle of disease with the ammunition of better sanitation and drugs, the war on under-nourishment with the bullets of greater productivity, the use of fertilizers and improved strains and methods, and combating the menace of houselessness and slum-dwelling by well-planned housing operations. Yes, my friends, we have a common battle-front on our very doorstep to engage our attention, and while we delay in facing it, the ugly form of Communism rears its head above us.

The spectacle is dismal enough to need the attention of Asia's leaders, and the concentrated effort and fullest co-operation of every man and woman. The problems of Asia are our problems. They can be solved only if we make an honest attempt to solve them and let the rest of the world see that we have made a move-on without waiting for them to come in and do it for us.

The future of Asia cannot be built up on free give-aways, foreign gunboat visits, and by the mass concentration of armed strength. The economics of distrust and war is the economics of waste. Wars have been fought since the beginnings of history and no brave new world has yet materialized; it never will through the road of battle. Large armies or military expenditure, in the context of Asia's economy today, are therefore, a deadweight which no country can afford. They can only be paid for at the price of economic development and human misery. It is for Asia's leaders, therefore, to remove any possible sources of misgiving and distrust through full, frank, friendly and free discussion.

It is, therefore, that I suggested shortly after I assumed the office of Prime Minister of my country that a start be made by calling a Conference of the Prime Ministers of Indonesia, Burma, India, Pakistan and Ceylon to remove any obstacles that may exist towards progress, friendship, amity and the fullest co-operation among these neighbouring nations. It is not necessary that the national characteristics of these five countries should be effaced in our efforts towards cohesion in thought and action for the development of South-East Asia. Indeed, the special national characteristics of these countries are a great asset in facing up to the obvious difficulties that one must necessarily encounter. Nationality, to my mind, means nothing if it is not backed up with a spirit of loyalty and devotion to the country whose nationality one claims. Patriotism is one of the main forces for the survival of our freedom,

which must be protected at all costs against foreign interference in our affairs, whether it be through Communist activities or in any other manner. Communism in Asia, which owes no loyalties to anyone but to the international movement, unfortunately thrives because, in our democratic way of life, we honour the liberties of our citizens. Communism is entirely foreign to the religious, cultural and social traditions of our people. In facing it, too, South-East Asia can achieve more by acting in concert than by the efforts of individual nations.

The idea of an Asian Prime Ministers' Conference was born out of Asia's present plight and Asia's needs. The tradition of centuries of close co-operation, cultural, religious, racial and trade connections pointed to this as the obvious goal of South-East Asian statesmanship. The voice of 600 million people is the voice of a quarter of the globe. The hand of colonialism no longer exists to gag them or bludgeon them into action which is not to their liking. South-East Asia is not bankrupt of men, material, resources or leadership. Her people are quite competent to decide freely for themselves what they will or will not have.

The need for friendly relations with countries outside this region cannot be over-emphasized, but those relations, in the context of the freedom of South-East Asia must be in keeping with the dignity that is attached to the fraternity of free nations of the world. To those who wish to help us from outside the region there will always be a welcome, but it must be a welcome by someone who is master of his house. The free nations of South-East Asia look to one another to help maintain that dignity, the national independence of each sovereign State, and the forces of democracy which are the bulwark of the future.

What we shall discuss when we meet is as yet in the womb of time; but of this I am assured, that our Convention will be a demonstration of our Asian conscience and of our awareness of the perils that threaten once more to engulf us. If some goodwill materialize from the meetings of South-East Asian Prime Ministers, as I know it must, that will be the satisfaction that I shall have derived for the crystallization of that idea.

CONTENTS	PAGE
WORLD'S FIRST PACIFIST .. Maganbhai P. Desai	393
ASIA AND WORLD PEACE .. Maganbhai P. Desai	396
OVERHAULING EDUCATION .. Vinoba	397
PROHIBITION IN ANDHRA .. Maganbhai P. Desai	398
GANDHI—THE MAN AND HIS TECHNIQUE .. Pyarelal	399
PROPOSED COLOMBO CONFERENCE .. Sir John Kotelawala	399
NOTE:	
HINDUSTANI TALIMI SANGH PUBLICATIONS ..	395