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INDIANS DESTINY IS BOUND UP WITH THE VICTORY OF DEMOCRACY

"No one can expect consistency from Mr. Gandhi. But everybody did and had a right to expect a sense of responsibility from him. There can be no doubt that, Mr. Gandhi's present move to launch a mass movement is both irresponsible and insane," observed the Hon. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Labour Member, Government of India, to a representative of "The Times of India," prior to his departure to Delhi on Monday evening.*

Why does Mr. Gandhi not try the other method, namely, bringing about unity among all parties ? Why does he not call a conference of leaders of all the different parties to find out their demands and settle if there is any dispute?"

These questions were asked by Dr. Ambedkar. He added : "Duty requires that those who do not believe in Mr. Gandhi's movement must take steps to prevent his threatened action from taking shape."

"It is difficult to understand why Mr. Gandhi should think it necessary to enter upon so hazardous a plan of action at so perilous a time in the history of India, Dr. Ambedkar said.—

"To me some points are quite clear. As to India's reaching its political goal, no one can deny that the transfer of power from the British to the hands of Indians has been continuous and of late rapid—except those who affect a certain degree of passion for independence. Barring such passionate patriots, it can be said without exaggeration that the British *vis-a-vis* Indians are in the last ditch. That the British do not wish to enterench themselves in the last ditch and prevent the political advancement of India to its final goal is equally clear. If any proof was necessary, the Cripps Proposals are there. They conceded Independence and Constituent Assembly both of which have been the demands which the Congress has been making.

After the Cripps Proposals it is hard to believe Mr. Gandhi when he says that the British do not intend to transfer power to the hands of Indians. It is a positive and deliberate untruth.

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*The 27th July, 1942.

"That the Cripps Proposal have fallen through does not, to my mind, affect the fact that the British Government are committed to independence if Indians prefer it to Domminion Status.

Short-Sighted View

"One does not know what led the Congress to reject the Cripps Proposals even when they conceded Independence and Constituent Assembly. If the failure to transfer defence be the reason for starting a mass movement, I am sure very few will accept the soundness of so short-sighted view. In the first place the Congress claimed from the British only a declaration of their war aims and did not claim their implementation during the war. Secondly, there is no Indian politician so far as I know, competent to run the technical and military side of the Defence department. Indians have neglected to study this subject. In these circumstances, it is foolish to ask for Indian control of defence; for, such control when in the hands of an ignorant person can only be nominal. Thirdly, when all departments were transferred, as was contemplated by the Cripps Proposals, it was childish to quarrel over the non-transfer of the Defence Department. Any man with commonsense would know that the reserved department could not have held out on matters insisted upon by the transferred departments if they are necessary and reasonable. This is what had happened to the special powers of the Governors when the Congress took office in 1937. It is surprising that the Congress should have forgotten its own experience in this matter.

"I am clearly of the opinion that the Congress deserves on sympathy in this move for causing disorder. It has rejected the best opportunity it was given to serve the country. Looking at it from this point of view, I cannot see how this move, proposed to be taken by Mr. Gandhi, can be held to be in the interests of the country.

"It seems to me that Mr. Gandhi is merely trying to retrieve the prestige which he and the Congress have lost since the war started.

"The Congress can live with prestige in either of two ways. It can live by the glamour of direct action or it can live by the partronage which office gives. Mr. Gandhi compelled the Congress to give up office and he refused to be a party to direct action. The slump

caused in the Congress prestige by this do nothing, policy of Mr. Gandhi has been disastrous to Mr. Gandhi and to the Congress and this desperate game of Mr. Gandhi is intended to retrieve his position and to die covered with glory.

"This move may be the best way to serve the best interests of the Congress party. But it certainly is not the way to serve the country. At this juncture such a move is fraught with the greatest mischief and is sure to result in the greatest harm to the country.

"There are two ways open to the Congress party to further the political advancement of this country ; direct action by the Congress and united demand by all parties representing the different elements in the national life of the country. Mr. Gandhi and the Congress are very keen about the first. It is a stock plan. Except Mr. Gandhi, everyone knows that beyond a certain limit it is worse than useless and even when it succeeds because the British Government, unlike the Nazi Government are not addicted to the use of brute force and do not use unmoral means to suppress a moral cause. Mr. Gandhi will not admit it. That is only because he fortunately has no experince as to how the Nazis will deal with his mass Civil Disobedience. No doubt the Nazis will give Mr. Gandhi a very short shrift and prove that his plan of direct action can be put out of action at the very start.

Unity among Parties

"The question that agitates my mind is this : Why does Mr. Gandhi resort to his method of direct action carried on single-handed by the Congress when it is proved to be so inefficacious ? Why does he not try the other method, namely bringing about unity among all parties ? Why does Mr. Gandhi not call a conference of all leaders of the different parties to find out their demands and to settle if there is any dispute about them. This is a way worth trying. It is also a way of statesmanship and a way which will bring enduring peace among the communities. But Mr. Gandhi has never made such an attempt and I have never been able to understand his reasons for avoiding this way of solving the problem. To say that no settlement can take place while the British are there can, to my mind, mean only two things : that the leaders of the minority communities are tools in the hands of the British or that the Congress thinks it would be better to talk of communal settlement after the British

Government have withdrawn because the Congress than in charge of law and order will be in a better position to dictate to the minorities and force a settlement on its own terms. If it means the first, then it is a vile and wanton aspersion on the character of, the leaders of the minority communities. The Congress must drop this selfrighteous attitude and admit that even those who differ from it are as good patriots, if not better, Settlement of the communal problem, is, I am sure, rendered more difficult by such stupid and baseless allegations which the Congress and its Press have persistently indulging in against the leaders of the minority communities. If it means the second, then there is no doubt that the move is a deceitful one. In either case, it proclaims the bankruptcy of statesmanship on the part of Mr. Gandhi.

"Mr. Gandhi has not realised one thing which the sooner he realises the better. His most advertised political virtues were to bring about-Hindu-Muslim unity and to serve the Untouchables.

"After 20 years, neither the Muslims nor the Untouchables trust Mr. Gandhi. This is the greatest tragedy in his life.

"The sooner he realises this, the better. Even now Mr. Gandhi can call the leaders of the minorities for consultation. There is no use saying that they are making impossible demands : for, it is always open to Mr. Gandhi to call upon them to agree to refer the matter to international arbitration.

"The general public has no cause to support Mr. Gandhi in this move which is quite uncalled for. The minorties have no reason to join Mr. Gandhi for, he refuses to give them an assurance as to their safety and security under the new constitution in terms which are explicit and in a spirity which has all the hallmark of sincerity.

"We are living in such perilous times that our duty cannot end in merely expressing our disagreement with Mr. Gandhi. Duty requires that those who do not believe in his movement must take steps to prevent it from taking shape. In the C. D. movement of 1930, the Muslims and the Depressed Classes, although they did not participate in it, had observed a kind of benevolent neutrality towards it. The situation in 1930 was very different from what it is now. In the 1930 movement, there were only two possibilities. Either political power would have remained with the

British or it would have devolved upon Indians. There was no possibility of Japan or Germany stepping in and making itself the master of India. The possibility is now staring us in the face. It would be madness to weaken law and order at a time when the barbarians are at our gates, intending not merely to defeat the British but to enslave us for ever. There, in my mind, lies the great difference between the C. D. Movement of 1930 and the mass movement now threatened by Mr. Gandhi.

False Claim

"The Congress and Mr. Gandhi have been arrogating to themselves the right to speak in the name of the country. It is a false claim but nobody has cared to challenge it. That is because of the feeling that so long as the Congress was doing no harm to the interests of the country it was a matter of small moment whether it claimed to speak in the name of the nation or in the name of the party which it is. But when the Congress, being only a party, proposes to launch upon a policy which puts the safety, security and even the possibility of the independence of the country in jeopardy, it becomes the duty to other parties to drop the attitude of benevolent neutrality and oppose the Congress when it is throwing the country in chaos and inviting certain frustration of the realisation of the political destiny of this country which is so near at hand. I wish Indians to realise two things : first, that their destiny is bound up with the victory of democracy against Nazism and second, that once democracy wins nothing in the world can stop India to gain her freedom if Indians take care to unite themselves. I am sure Mr. Gandhi's move is quite uncalled for.

"If democracy wins, no one can stand in the way of India's freedom. The supreme task of Indians at the moment is to see that democracy wins. It is not out of love for principle that they should do so. It is our country's future that requires us to do it as our duty. Mr. Gandhi is an old man in a hurry. Indians should be careful not to do anything in a hurry which they will have to regret in leisure."

Dr. Ambedkar left Bombay on Monday night for New Delhi by the Frontier Mail. At Bombay Central, he was given a hearty send-off by nearly 400 persons, representing the Scheduled Classes, the Independent Labour Party, the Municipal Kamgar Sangh and various other organisations, and several personal friends and admirers."[1]

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1. : The Times of India, dated 28th July 1942.