

Changers' Series No. 1

# AN INDICTMENT

Whose Responsibility

For

The Failure of 1942

*By*

RAM SWARUP

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'Not because the people failed it

But because the leaders failed it !

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DAYA

General Editor

Price Annas 6.

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Hero-Worship is a general characteristic of Indian-life —and nowhere more so than in politics. Ignorance of facts—colossal both in Depth and Extent—is the cardinal reason for it. This series of 'Changers' Publications' will try to remedy the defect in both of its aspects. It shall try to be both informative and interpretative. It shall also attempt to guide the trend of Indian Politics on more rational and national lines. This 'phamphlet No. 1' of the Series attempts a *Nationalistic* Appraisal of the Great Insurrection of 1942 and tries to investigate the causes of its failure. If the presentation seem unnecessarily bitter, we only say Failures are a luxury we can not afford to repeat. In order to avoid misunderstanding we may say outright that we have nothing in common with the so-called Communist party of India. With us 'India's Freedom is first and India's Freedom is last' (Bose).

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 NEXT PUBLICATION  
 "FROM AGITATION TO REVOLUTION."

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## AN INDICTMENT

Friends,

I should like to place before you for your consideration a fact of overwhelming importance and moral. A total world war, a crisis, of the highest magnitude in human affairs has passed away without touching India in the least. We have the same political status as of old, we have the same masters—and, *curiously enough the same leaders.*

As against this static background, we have the picture of other countries, whose face is entirely changed. France and England in spite of their being victorious countries have experienced and accepted a new political outlook and class-configuration, at home. Coming to the people nearer home, whose problems are similar to ours in the Middle East and Far East, we find that they have woken up to a new political consciousness and, what is more, a new *effort and action.*

Consider this fact again. Just consider a total war which has changed the life of other countries, and was meant to change it, whether we wanted it or not. And consider the same war of the same total nature, which has left us where we have been. We are forced to the conclusion that something is wrong somewhere.

But didn't we try to do something about it? Didn't we launch a movement as early as 1942, to remedy the above-mentioned 'wrong somewhere'? We are responsible for our actions but not for the results of those actions, for many times we do not determine them. We tried but, unfortunately, we failed.

Now, my friends, I want to bring home to your mind the fact that we failed. It is an unpleasant fact. But let us learn to look at facts, especially when they are unpleasant

because it is the beginning and basis of any fruitful action and results. We cannot build upon make-believes.

If we agree that there was a war of a very universal and intense character which has left us stand still and from which we did not profit, so far as it lay in our powers, and if we also accept the unpleasant fact that we failed, when we exercised those powers, we should agree that there is room for stock-taking. Let us try to find out why we failed and how we could remedy the cause of failure.

In August 1942, people gave a mighty account of themselves. They showed patience and courage which were highly praiseworthy. But those efforts came to nothing, because our leaders were inefficient, unimaginative, unintelligent, incapable, purposeless—a MOB. I draw up the indictment.

From the beginning of the war in Europe and before it, when it was in the air they refused to admit it as a fact. To them, it was only a moral issue. Consequently, they only bewailed it, instead of doing anything about it, or taking an advantage of it. They defined their *attitude* towards it instead of defining their *part* in it and actively preparing for that part. They regarded the problem from all irrelevant angles. They looked upon it sentimentally, morally, when they should have done it intelligently, understandingly. Their international relations were based upon sentiments and sympathy, not upon policy and preparation. Jawaharlal Nehru refused to meet Mussolini on the ground that he had usurped Ethiopia, What a fine vent for his 'democratic feelings'. But quite useless for planning India's freedom, or being able to give concrete shape to India's democratic feelings at some future time. *In fact, it was criminal. Why can't we see that we are responsible through our troops for the continued slavery of our neighbours,*

*in the Middle East and the Far East. It would be the greatest service to those countries, objectively, if by restraining our immediate and subjective reactions and sympathies, we could do something about our own freedom and put a stop to the use of our troops to suppress the freedom movement of those countries.*

In the face of the war and the threat of it, the Indian leadership just moralised and *attitudinised*. Their international politics came to this; They cried *against* England or France when they invaded, and cried *for* them when they were invaded—naïve, lovable creatures.

What wonder that at the time when India was involved in the war, the leaders were caught napping. Such a state of ideological, organisational and technical unpreparedness was a natural corollary from their attitude towards the war and its international issues and implications. To them it was not an opportunity which could be turned to national account. They suffered from an excess of moral integrity and irrelevant considerations. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 when Britain declared war on Germany, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, in his "A Message to India", invited her to play a part worthy of her place among the great nations and the historic civilisations of the world." Gandhiji rose to the occasion and said that it would not be in keeping with the high traditions of India to enter into a bargaining spirit with England, when she was involved in a life-and-death struggle, and advised that "what support was to be given to the British was to be given unconditionally." The rest of the Gods in the Indian political and philosophical pantheon followed suit. Pant, Radhakrishnan repeated the same sentiment on the same grounds of India's historic traditions. Jawaharlal rushed back from China, and hastened to make a statement as he landed at Rangoon, accepting every clause

of Gandhiji's statement—the justification of the cause of the democratic Allies, the high traditions of India and the unbargaining spirit—but added one more clause. He wanted to know how those principles of democracy for which England was fighting would be applied to India. The next day, the same pantheon began to voice the same thing, in the same order, with the same addition.

The 'historic' Congress Working Committee met on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1939 and after five days' prolonged discussions and 'earnest consideration of the grave crisis' resolved that "it (Congress) has seen in Fascism and Nazism the intensification of Imperialism." At the end, it invited the "British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to India."

The further action of the Congress leadership was nothing but a round of the same sentiments and invitations. It was a round of condemning fascism as a prelude to condemning imperialism. The A.I.C.C. met on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> October and passed:

"While the Committee condemns Fascism and Nazi aggression, it was convinced that peace and freedom can only be established and preserved by an extension of democracy to all colonial countries."

And as to the need of doing anything about it they did not feel any. They met at Allahabad on the 19<sup>th</sup> November and passed :

"The Congress has looked upon the war crisis and the problem it raises as essentially a *moral* issue and have not sought to profit by it in any spirit of bargaining."

Hate the sin and not the sinner, was the motto. For, this is true both ethically as well as logically. Ethically, we should not hate or harm anybody. Though I, on my part, cannot see how you can help singeing nobody's beard if you go around with the 'Torch of Truth'. The proposition was also logically true. British exploitation of India is not the

same thing as the British exploiters of India. Every time they said they hated British imperialism, they hastened to add they loved the British *people*. What an attitude towards those with whom, you know, you are not arguing, but against whom you are fighting.

I should like to point out, rather emphatically, one fact, which was responsible in a very high degree, for our failure and which was the doing of our leaders. This was the international bias towards the issue of the war. The 'democratic' West (that is, the interested parties of the Allies) told us that it was a struggle between the fascist forces on the one side and democratic forces on the other, on an *international scale*, irrespective of national boundaries. Moscow endorsed it. The nationalist leaders of Marxist tradition accepted it. Indian communists alienated themselves completely from the Indian struggle for freedom. In fact, they opposed it. The Indian struggle for freedom lost all its meaning – and, in fact, became harmful, at a time when world fascism (I do not know the meaning) was being fought by the world people (again I do not know the meaning). Intellectually the Congress also accepted the same mischievous interpretation of the war – thanks to the confusion and efforts of Jawahar Lal – with a proviso. They accepted that it was a democratic war. They accepted that Britain was fighting for such a war. They were convinced of that. What remained was that they wanted to know how those principles of democracy for which war was being fought would be applied to India.

But this proviso was unimportant. The fact remains that we accepted the *moral* validity of our enemy's position. *This was the major ideological defeat we suffered at the hands of Britain*. Why is Leftism a force in the whole world of today? It is because it had won its battle against the philosophers of

status quo and reaction, on the intellectual plane first. We had on the other hand, in our battle, accepted the intellectual analysis of the war by our enemy and so, consequently, we also *accepted the ideological validity of their position*. From such a step, inefficiency, unpreparedness and confusion in practice were natural corollaries.

After the acceptance of such a view towards the war, the question of Indian freedom became a second-rate question, of a future importance, to be bothered about when Democracy, the first-rate question, of immediate importance, had been solved.

Such an analysis of the war and its issues was totally wrong and greatly harmful. It threw the national question in particular and the colonial question in general out of a true and advantageous perspective.

Congress leadership, and not the nationalist people, and particularly Jawaharlal were responsible for all this international fuss. "We hate imperialism but we hate fascism more," which was the usual theme, was untrue both as a matter of fact, as far as people were concerned, and as a matter of reading, as far as analysis was concerned.

Let us refresh our minds before we go further. We have seen how hopelessly the Congress mind was confused. They had no idea of the goal they wanted to reach except that every one was allowed to paint his or her own picture of it and invest it with all the glories and colours of which he or she was capable. Worse still, they had no idea of how this goal was to be reached. Some of them were fighting for moral principles like non-violence; others were fighting for internationalism, or what is *temptingly* but *vaingloriously* called 'humanity', which in the mouth of an unimaginative and mentally dull section of the Congress leadership meant "British Humanity"; while, still others wanted to vindicate their natural, inalienable birthright of freedom before the bar of the world—*which generally meant America*.

While they stood either for a moral cant or a political fashion, none of them stood for Indian freedom of 40 crores of humanity—perhaps, they were not a part of ‘democratic humanity’ for which the leadership were fighting—exclusively, with undivided loyalty. Indian cause was an orphan; at best, an accidental side-issue.

From such a criminal mental confusion and irrelevant loyalties, confusion in practice was a foregone conclusion. When, at last, at the instance of Gandhiji, the Congress leaders met at Allahabad on April 27 to discuss the action contemplated by him, the first point of the draft resolution was “A demand to the British Government to clear out.” The whole discussion had an utter unreality about it, which is characteristic of the Congress leadership. As they discussed and made this demand on paper, they assumed that their demand was also conceded. Their whole discussion is a testimony of this fact. They were not at all thinking about how best to make this demand effective in the event of its not being accepted (which was clear to any thinker); they were only thinking about its unreasonableness, and harmfulness, when the demand had been conceded (which was equally clear to a wishful thinker). Jawaharlal, the worst bungler of our politics, said, “This approach is contrary to the Congress policy for the last two years and a half. The Allied countries will have a feeling that we are their enemies.” Again, “The approach is a variation from the attitude we have taken up about the Allies. At least I have committed myself to that sympathy 100%. It would be dishonourable for me to resign from that position.”

The gallant logician was thinking of the consistency of the proposition, and, perhaps, through the exercise of his self-same capacities of logic, after coming to the conclusion that the British could not “reasonably do it (quit India) even if they recognised Independence,” he was beset with

terror that would attend such a possibility. He said, "Withdrawal of troops and the whole apparatus of civil administration will create a vacuum which cannot be filled up immediately."

Maulana Azad perceived the 'difficulty' not less visibly. He not only saw the harm of such a step (of Britain quitting India) clearly, he saw the benefit of taking an opposite one (inviting Britain to stay) still more clearly. He said, "What is our position? Shall he tell the British Government to go and allow the Japanese and Germans to come or do we want the British Government to stay and stem the new aggression?"

Two points clearly emerge from this discussion.

1. The leaders were not worrying about the national urgency and validity of the demand; they were worrying about its consistency, its ethicality and what the 'allies would feel.'

2. They did not consider how best to execute this demand, to effect it and make it good; on the other hand, they assumed that this demand had been conceded, and were terror-stricken at such a possibility. They did not think this demand would have to be fought for by them, they thought it had to be conceded by the British. This facile attitude explains why they were afraid of the 'vacuum,' which the withdrawal of troops would create. This was a false fear. There was going to be no 'vacuum'; for the British were not going to withdraw, unless they were made to. We should have to create an alternate power before we would be able to create a British Vacuum in India.

The real reason why they were so ignominiously stampeding at the prospect of such a 'frightful' possibility as a British withdrawal from India, did not lie in any real terrors of such a situation, but lay in the fact that the leadership had no tradition of responsibility. They were afraid of snatching it, because they were afraid of exercising it. They were only talkative, not knowing. They were merely

good at essay-writing in the form of pious resolutions, and quite incapable of any organised, sustained and purposive action.

What wonder, that with such political alignment, and ‘international loyalties’ (fifth columnist loyalties) as their’s, they should resolve, in the famous August Resolution, “to check the growing ill-will against Britain,” and to enable India to play a more effective part in the war, “to bring all subject and oppressed humanity to the side of the United Nations, thus giving them moral and spiritual leadership of the world.”

This is what the leaders were fighting for, or, more correctly, invited the Indian People to fight for.

## 7

And with what means and methods? With the method of non-violence! Govind Ballabh Pant said, “*There is no difference of opinion so far as non-violence is concerned. There may be two opinions about its effectiveness.*” We are asked to *Stick* to a method even when its effectiveness is highly dubious.

In fact, for the Congress leaders the effectiveness of a method was a matter of opinion, about some principle of high abstraction, and not a matter of technique, training, organisation, and preparation.

I would not enter into the controversy of the principle, which is purely of a doctrinaire nature. I would only say this: that not only were the Congress leaders hopelessly incapable of any ‘substantive rationality’—that is, any intelligent insight into the inter-relations of an event or situation; they were still more hopelessly incapable of any ‘functional rationality,—that is, a power of co-ordinating and organising means for the efficient and effective achievement of previously defined goals. They were not only confused and divided in their ends and loyalties, they were also confused and confounded and inefficient in their methods.

We cannot joke with revolution. The leaders thought they could. They thought, they could choose their own, time and their own methods in winning a revolution. They were sadly unaware of the socio-political dynamics and needs of a revolution. They forgot, or, more correctly, they never knew, that “insurrection is an art as much as war—and subject to certain rules and procedure,” as Lenin said.

“A new Revolution is possible only as a consequence of a new crisis.” The approach of a crisis is the clarion call of the Revolution. On the other hand, the Congress leaders bewailed that crisis. They were afraid of “taking an advantage of the situation.” They were afraid of “embarrassing the Government.” In the face of the crisis, which was a capital opportunity, the leaders, instead of doing, preparing and acting were hustling about, prattling about. When they began, it was rather late. The crisis had already taken an opposite turn.

The reason why Indians could not take advantage of the tide was that the leaders thought of fighting the Government with ‘their own strength’. They had no idea of a Revolution beyond an isolated Putsch of “their own non-violent strength”.

And even when they started it, belated though it was, they were absolutely unprepared for it. They never prepared for it because their ideas of a revolution are highly romantic and are based upon the instance of the French Revolution, when it was possible for a mob in a city to rise up and sack the whole state. They believed too much in the mysterious will of the people or the self-adjusting, self-correcting social forces, which can be depended upon to operate for themselves in the interest of the ends visualised by the Congress.

Today, it is a patent fact—so patent, that it glares everybody in the eyes—that the success of everything depends upon a proper technique, planning and organisation. We

have to plan and prepare for a war as well as for peace. In fact, today the social and political life is so complicated that the success of anything, great or small, depends upon a proper anticipation, calculation and preparation. But the leaders thought, they could do without every one of them and go about their job of Revolution. They had absolutely no idea of a '*planned Revolution*'. *They forgot that Revolution, in a large measure, is an Engineering problem.*

A proper organisation is necessary for achieving anything. For, an organisation is functional. It stores and canalises energy. It co-ordinates activities, avoids unnecessary friction, waste, jamming, clashes, panics and crisis, and ensures continuity. It achieves the maximum effect with the minimum of effort. But the Congress chose the method of disorganised activity of everybody being his own leader. It chose the method of "*leâst possible resistance and greatest possible blunder.*"

They erred on the point of organisation. They still more criminally erred on the point of training. Any activity in order to be effective must be trained and informed, *technically*. It is not sufficient to depute one to a job. It is equally necessary to train him to execute that job. Doing requires capacity, relevant information and proper training. But in the absence of these requisites, the slogan DO or DIE would generally end in one's dying only, instead of one's doing anything. So, those who gave the people this slogan without giving them proper training were butchers not sacrifices. Death—even when it is martyrdom—is an ugly thing, though, unfortunately, due to group-greed and group domination sometimes a necessary thing. But it is the duty of the "*Recognised Leadership*" (as Azad describes himself and his colleagues) to minimize the chances of death consistent with the realization of the goal. But perhaps the Recognised Leadership did not think that way. There are people who seem to revel in death. They are people of very unhealthy and unnatural instinct.

They talked big and made tall promises, and held out impossible hopes. They used sonorous phrases. Do and Die, or “plunge-into-death” are very good phrases and under well-understood conditions, are even useful and necessary phrases, in so far as they create a proper atmosphere, and generally enthuse the people. But used in themselves and for the sake of them, without anything to back them, is the greatest cause of demoralization. Many of the leaders, in fact, promised that the movement was going to be so swift and victory so easy that it would take just a week to achieve them, without the need of the people being told, what they were to do in those days of the memorable week, which I think was rather introduced after the biblical fashion of God’s seven day’s creation. Even considering such irresponsible outbursts most charitably, it was a bad propaganda. *For propaganda is the art of anticipating events, and preparing people for what is coming, in advance; otherwise the shock of the contrast between what is promised and what turns out is too much for people and demoralizes them.*

They talked. Perhaps, they thought, they could conjure up vistas with their words.

They confused and confounded everything before August 1942. They did the same while at it. And they are continuing at the same old job of confusing and confounding after they have come out of it—and always with the same airs of all knowing-ness, all doing-ness, and busy-ness.

When the leaders came out of the jail, they had to apologize to the Government for all that *happened*. They disowned Responsibility for it and rightly so. For they had no part in it either in deeds or in words or even in intentions, except that they were caught and involved by the Government. The respectable, middle-class, Gandhi-caps, the official responsible Congress, the whole array of secretaries and presidents in the country were caught to no

purpose. What was done was done by the students, the labourers, and the peasants, on their own initiative, at *their own hazards*, with no help or word of encouragement from the Congress quarters. The only part of the high official Congress when it came out of the jail was, to insult them and belittle their inspiration. They invariably and uniformly, have been called ‘mobs’ by the leaders and their press. On the other hand, one of them came and owned it and “assumed the sole responsibility for it”, of a thing in which he had absolutely no share.

The leaders tried to explain away the whole political significance of whatever little was done. They gave an interpretation of the August “*disturbances*” (mere disturbances?) which was highly flattering to themselves. They explained that the people rose “spontaneously at the unprovoked arrest of their beloved leaders.” Well, they may be leaders of the people in their own estimation, and, perhaps also as a matter of sentiment, but they have done nothing to show that they deserve this position and, on the other hand, did everything to forfeit their right to this privilege.

Unfortunately, true to themselves, they have again busied themselves with owning or disowning or responsibilities, apportioning and exchanging blames, exchanging bouquets for the sacrifices they made. They should have set up a commission to inquire into the causes of the failure of the movement. That should have been their first job. But, instead of doing it, they are playing at being blind and not looking to the fact that they failed. *Either, they argue, they did not start any movement, and in case they started, they did not lose it. According to them they won it. What a complacency!!!*

*I indict the leaders because they proved themselves incapable of any insight. They could not and did not see issues and situations in their mutual inter-relationships. Instead, they depended upon*

*certain moral cant, and political fashions, and individual points of honour for their light.*

*I indict them because they have proved themselves incapable of any foresight. They failed to prepare and plan, organize and train for the struggle that was coming. On the other hand they depended upon their speech-making and essay-writing, and emotional slangs (like the 'final plunge') of dubious political effectiveness and revolutionary achievements.*

*I indict them because they have proved themselves incapable of any retrospection. They have failed to inquire into the causes of the failure of the movement and to take any lesson from it. Instead, they believe that owning and disowning, blaming and blessing can replace the need of an intelligent and honest appreciation of the causes of failure and trying to remedy them next time.*

*I indict them because they always belittled and insulted those (people like Bose and Jai Prakash) who had any conception of the national goal or who appreciated the magnitude of the problem, or the broad sweep of strategy, the intensity of the struggle ahead, and the national urgency of fighting out the issue, and the inspired impatience to win the battle.*

*They are not equal to the responsibility of a nation's leadership. They can neither read history, nor take advantage of it, not shape it; nor listen, follow and respect those who can do it.*

I shall close with an appeal to all those who have an intelligent and critical interest in our national politics. Our leaders think and behave as if leadership is a *privilege* which anyone can earn if he has enough money and leisure and if he can afford to come out periodically to appear on the stage or platform to treat an admiring audience to some moral slangs and political slogans. *We should see that leadership is also a responsibility, a care, a trust, and those who offer to shoulder them are also accountable.* Is it not a reflection on India's thinking revolutionaries to find, that after such a criminal mess-up and fiasco, as the 42 movement, the leaders after their comfortable refuge in the prison, should again go about

with the same old highly self-satisfied looks, indulging in the same promises and hopes, believing in their ideas—or rather the lack of them—their audience and of course their speeches, in the self-same way, in the same state of complete self-delusion and self-hypnotism, without being even once challenged or questioned?

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