

Foundations Laid For A Blue-Print For India

PANDIT NEHRU ON FUNDAMENTALS "NOBODY COULD CHALLENGE"

From Our Special Representative

NEW DELHI, December 13.

IT was the Constituent Assembly's big day today. It laid the foundations of its work, rather drew up a blue-print.

The resolution setting out in broad outline what it seeks to achieve was moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru with a magnificent speech and seconded by Babu Purshotamdas Tandon in a fighting oration. The two speeches took up the entire sitting, and the House adjourned till Monday afternoon.

Pandit Nehru spoke for an hour, first in Hindustani and then in English. It was an inspired recital, pitched in a lofty key. He talked of their high adventure of giving shape in written word to a nation's dream. He spoke like one who had seen a vision and his "thoughts broke through language and escaped."

The U. P. Speaker's performance was in contrast to that of the mover. He delivered broadsides against Britain, who, he said, was taking shelter behind the Muslim League and aiming shafts at India. Describing the League as a "British morcha," he declared, "We are aware of this game and are prepared to fight the British and all those who are with them."

This contrast perhaps represents the two trends among our constitution-makers of today: one idealistic and dignified and the other vigorous, in a hurry and impatient of obstacles.

Pandit Nehru was solemn, indeed earnest, spoke from the very depths of his heart, peering through the faces of his hearers and beyond. He made a panoramic sweep of the world with history as his brush, though occasionally he burst into a hard remark—that is characteristic of Jawahar. Mr. Tandon was harsh, incisive and challenging, often irritating. But for the fact that these represent two aspects of feeling in the Assembly, this mixture of sentiment would be hard to explain.

A PLEDGE AND DEDICATION

The mover observed that the resolution was a resolve, a pledge, a dedication and sought to embody the magic spirit of the nation. It steered a middle course, said neither too much nor too little, laid down certain fundamentals which, he felt sure, nobody could take exception to. It was not part of the constitution and would not affect the negotiations that might take place in future. He asked those who had tabled amendments to approach it in a big way and not to indulge in technicalities and wordy squabbles.

Pandit Nehru was fascinated by the undertaking in a transition, as it were, from night to day—a cloudy day but nevertheless day. He was reminded of the past, pressed by the present and beckoned by the future. No one, he said, should think at this historic moment of party or group, religion or community, section or province, but of the 400,000,000 millions.

Impersonally he referred to Mr. Gandhi as "the father of our nation, the architect of this Assembly," to the League, the Princes and the British. He ardently hoped that the League would come in, but said:—"Meanwhile there is a duty cast upon us to bear the absentees in mind and function not for one party but for India as a whole, to rise above our little selves, be tolerant and

strive to produce something worthy of India."

"THE WRONG PATH"

"We shall continue to endeavour where we have to deal with our own countrymen, even though in our view some of them have taken the wrong path, for after all we have to live together," he said, but added, "Our striving for co-operation cannot, does not and will not mean sacrifice of the fundamentals for which we stand, of things which we prize more than life."

About States he said he could not understand why the Princes should be frightened by the resolution. There was no incongruity between a Republic and the form of administration inside a State; the rulers could remain monarchical figureheads if their people so desired, though personally he liked uniformity. At all events there could be no difference in the degree of freedom enjoyed by the people of the States and those of British India. The States people must completely share in the freedom, and the Assembly's constitution-making effort must be through the real representatives of the States. Nevertheless, he added, these points would be considered in consultation with the States and the resolution would not prejudice future negotiations. "If anybody challenges the goal set out in the resolution, we accept the challenge and hold our own."

Referring to his London visit, Pandit Nehru complained that he went hoping for a message of good cheer but returned disappointed. With bitterness in his voice, he referred to "new obstacles and limitations imposed on us" in the shape of new methods of procedure. These things, coming as they did when they were about to embark on a joyous undertaking, hurt, he said. Even at this moment he was ready to co-operate with Britain and if it was denied India would be injured, but Britain and the world no less. He resented "imposition and patronage" and declared, "We are used to the valley of the shadow of suffering and if necessity arises we shall go through it again."

(Details on page 8).