

# The Economic Weekly

A Journal of Current Economic and Political Affairs

(Established January 1949)

March 23, 1957

Volume IX — No. 12

Eight annas

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## Verdict of the People

K'ARL MARX, It has been remarked, was a good economist, but a bad politician. He has been proved a false prophet. Capitalism has not collapsed because Marx's second postulate of increasing misery of the labour class has proved wrong. Marx failed to anticipate the advent of Democracy. This political device has disproved Marx by falsifying his assumptions. There is an element of truth in this assessment of Marx. Democracy has had a tendency to stimulate consumption. Here, the crucial issue whether Democracy can ensure adequate accumulation of capital is not directly under reference. Despite the favourable American experience, theoreticians of Democratic Socialism have their doubts. But even pundits concede that Democracy has been a major influence behind the survival of Capitalism.

To accept this interpretation, is not necessarily to admit the sovereignty of politics over economics. To the extent that both have a sociological basis, each acts and reacts on the other. Even so, in a materialistic Society, it is permissible to argue the case for economic sovereignty. It is irrelevant to discuss here whether Society in India is materialistic in that sense. But it is clear beyond the shadow of any doubt that economic issues have been the prime underlying factors in free India's second general elections. Certainly, it is true that the Congress is being voted to power because the people have no faith in alternative leadership. This remains a challenge to the Opposition. But it would be dishonest not to concede that the Congress can claim a more positive, economic interpretation of election results announced so far.

By all current indications, the Congress seems to be bettering its performance in the first general elections. It is winning more seats in Parliament and in many State assemblies. It is, and this is far more significant, polling more votes. Even this time, the Congress will be winning the elections on a minority vote. But it is futile to emphasise the significance of this aspect of the election verdict. In a vast country, with a multiplicity of parties contesting the elections, the winning party must necessarily become the ruling party on a minority vote. Far more significant is the growing evidence that, this time, the Congress is not winning on the split vote. In many States, the parties of the Left entered into an electoral alliance against the Congress. In the majority of crucial contests, there have been straight fights. And the Congress has won the majority of such seats.

An exhaustive analysis of election results must necessarily await a detailed tabulation of voting throughout the country. But certain inferences can be drawn. There is evidence that the Congress has improved its position in rural areas. This cannot be explained away mainly by casting a reflection on the level of political consciousness of rural India. It is no less a refraction of the Second Plan's bias to village and small-scale industries, of Community Projects and National Extension Service, of abolition of landlordism, of repeated avowals of the Congress sympathy and concern for the uplift of the farmer and the village community. But in urban and semi-urban areas, too, the Congress has scored overwhelming successes. With the exception of the City of Calcutta where the Congress has won so far less seats than the combined Left, or of Bombay and Ahmedabad, where the electorate has clearly voted against the

The Economic Weekly

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Telephone : 23406

Annual Subscription :Rs 24

Foreign Rs 27