

If the meaning of this condition is that the rebels must give up the physical fight before France agrees to negotiate with them, then the condition is an impossible one. The reason is the simple one that the stage is long past when the FLN could feel safe in reposing so much confidence in de Gaulle's intentions as to call off its struggle. Unfortunately, the position at the moment is not even favourable to an effort at negotiating a ceasefire.

There is only one thing de Gaulle can do in the circumstances; and that is to call off the battle unilaterally on his side and then ask the rebels to follow suit as a preparation for wider negotiations.

President de Gaulle is not beyond making such a grand gesture. If he is convinced that this would be the only way of stopping the war, he may well agree to making the offer. But the difficulty is that such unilateral action on the part of

France would be meaningless unless the intention were to revise the whole French attitude towards the question of Algerian freedom. This business of granting "local autonomy" would have to be abandoned altogether, as also the threat that total independence could not come to Algeria except in the company of partition. As long as those two remain the limits of Gaullist accommodation with the rebels, the battle will continue.

Allergy to Economic Theory

FROM all accounts, the last Economic Conference, was a refreshing departure from previous Conferences. The President set the level of discussion at the Conference with a neat, lurid and illuminating discourse on how economic theory deviated from the course which Adam Smith had set for it and got lost in marginalism, from which post-Keynesian 'growth economists' have brought it back to the main stream. Marginalism, however. Professor Das Gupta does not dismiss as entirely arid. It has its uses, but only when growth is recognised as the governing force. For an underdeveloped economy, however, the forced pace of growth which it needs must inevitably be accompanied by control and direction of the price system as also of the allocation of resources.

From this highly provocative analysis of "Tendencies in Economic Theory", which formed the subject of his address. Professor Das Gupta moves on to the question, why were economists in this country, particularly of the older generation, allergic to theory? That Indian economists found the prevailing climate of economic thought in the West uncongenial, pervaded as it was by economic liberalism which did not apply to this country at all, is only part of the explanation. Why did the challenge of the economic stagnation in the country fail to provoke adequate response? The ingredients of a growth theory were there in Adam Smith and Marx. Curiously enough, Marx received no attention in this country until after the first World War. Did the class-composition of the intellectuals, then, partly account for the sterility of economic thinking?

Perhaps the answer is to be sought in the quotation from Whitehead which prefaces his address: "In any science which has failed to produce any theory with a sufficient scope of application, progress is necessarily very slow".

The laissez-faire economics of the day may not have appealed to the Indian intellectual, and the theory of allocation of resources in a self-adjusting economy may have left him cold. The scholastic traditions of the country had ceased for centuries to react to environment and reality. But it had not ceased to revel in abstraction. Indeed, it had shown a remarkable capacity in pursuing abstractions and developing logical systems from such abstractions with amazing skill and sustained, life-long devotion. How was it that this tradition of scholasticism did not find a congenial held in (the hair-splitting logic and formalism of the value theory of the day? The lack of response of the Indian intellectual to the challenge of reality does not answer this particular question.

For the past generation there was little purpose and meaning in developing any economic theory since its application was left to others. Decisions were made in Whitehall and they had no means of influencing action. Instead of remaining altogether sterile or ploughing a lonely furrow in the sand, a minority converted themselves into apologists of the economic policies imposed by the British while the majority devoted their energies to exposing the economic exploitation of India by Britain and supplying intellectual ammunition to the national movement for freedom.

Is it possible that English language retarded original thinking in economics as in other social sciences? Significantly enough, it is in mathematics and pure sciences that India made contributions in this period. These are fields of study in which communication is least handicapped by the loom of language. To say that the arms were there, but the men were wanting, as Professor Das Gupta lends to imply, would be to underestimate, if not to ignore, the objective factors.

It is the possibility of combining thought with action, of the chance of testing in practice the results of theoretical speculation opened up by independence and inauguration of planning that has given a tremendous fillip, for the first time, to the systematic study of economic problems and stimulated interest in economic theory. This is an altogether new development and is most welcome. But there is incipient danger in this. Theory can develop when it is unfettered and not too much obsessed with practical application. Planning which has given such a powerful impetus to economic thinking may retard progress at a later stage when all that remains is implementation and the solution of technical problems.

The address concludes with a strong appeal for encouragement to research in theoretical economics. Empirical studies no longer need special pleading. Much is being done for them. Theoretical economics cannot develop in the country unless those who are attracted by it are given adequate opportunity to pursue their interests, untrammelled by pressures arising out of immediate problems. Professor Das Gupta

wants that instead of all the funds being spent on empirical studies, some funds could usefully be devoted to finance a centre for research in economic theory also.

While the need for research in economic theory will be readily conceded and it will no longer be opposed on the ground that theory has little practical value, one may still enter a caveat. Is the establishment of one more institute the right answer? While something is certainly better than nothing, obviously the right thing to do is to build up the economics faculties of the universities properly so that they may be able to attract and retain those who show most promise and aptitude for economic theory. The universities cannot retain them any longer. They lack both funds and glamour, and the economics faculties tend to get isolated and too far removed from the main stream. A certain detachment and some measure of isolation is necessary to create the proper atmosphere for the study of theory, but not too much of it for a subject like economics. For revitalising economics faculties not only more funds will be needed, it will also be necessary to establish a two-way traffic between the faculties and the Government departments, institutes of empirical research and international bodies which handle economic problems. An essential first step

would be to raise the status of university teachers, and make it possible for them to work with Government departments and others on short-term assignments, so that they may go back to teaching, enriched by the experience of handling practical problems. We need competent, well-trained economists in large numbers, but are doing nothing in the way of capital formation by putting back the best products into teaching and research. Has any research centre anywhere, purely devoted to theoretical research, made significant contributions to economic theory? Disassociation of theory, application and teaching is no answer to the problem which Professor Das Gupta has in mind.

Tagore Centenary in Bombay

MAHARASHTRA had the unique honour of being the first State in India to inaugurate the Centenary Celebration of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore by starting it off on the New Year's day of the centenary year. How did Bombay come to have this privilege? The Chief Minister of Maharashtra might think that "it was in the fitness of things that the capital of Maharashtra and the leading city of India should inaugurate the countryside celebrations", but what made this possible was the drive and energy of the organisers and a chance coincidence of circumstances. Prabasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan was due to have its annual conference in Bombay at the end of last month and the date of the conference could be easily pushed back by a few days to the New Year. As a literary body of standing, the inaugural conference of which had been presided over by Rabindranath himself in 1922, it got full support from the All-India Tagore Centenary Committee in Delhi, sponsored by the Sahitya Akademi.

A large number of literary luminaries from many countries in the world attended by special invitation and the gathering was truly international. The celebration was held in a decorated pandal at the bra-bourne Stadium. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated with a moving speech in which the accent was naturally on Tagore's idealism and internationalism, in a remi-

niscent vein, he said that he could not even remember his first meeting with Tagore; so great was Gandhiji's influence on him, but his mind was more in tune with Tagore although all his activities were conditioned by Gandhiji. Among other things, Nehru made a pointed reference to Rabindranath's role in vitalising Bengali literature by writing simply and in the spoken language of the people, thus freeing Bengali from the chains of scholasticism. This he did to the disparagement of Hindi which he said suffered from an excessive load of learned word or it was written in a manner which was not understood outside a select circle.

Tagore's mysticism was the principal theme of the Presidential address of Shri Sudhi Ranjan Das, the Vice-Chancellor of the Visva Bharati University founded by Rabindranath. It is unfortunate that Tagore should be known outside Bengal mainly as a mystic. Though the subsequent sessions of the Conference were devoted to several aspects of the contributions of the Poet, his prose writings, only a few of which have been translated, did not receive the attention they deserve, particularly the writings on political and social subjects. The centenary celebrations will be held all over India throughout the year. They will fail in their main purpose, if the trend of the speeches continues in the same rut.

The celebration in Bombay was highly successful and the presence of literary luminaries from every State in India and the world over added lustre to it. There was one discordant note, however, how did the Tagore Centenary Celebrations come to be held under the auspices of the Bombay Durga Bari Samiti? Those who knew Rabindranath's deep aversion to idol worship cannot help feeling a little uneasy at seeing his name associated with that of Durga. Nehru's secularism has displaced Vande Mataram from its pride of place as the National Anthem, even though the song, truncated of the stanzas in which Durga is invoked as the Goddess with ten arms bearing weapons passed Gandhiji's test. How could the Prime Minister of secular India participate in a function held under the auspices of an organisation bearing the name of a Hindu Goddess?

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The Offices of *The Economic Weekly* have been shifted to Sonawala Building, 65, Apollo Street, Bombay-1, with effect from January 1, 1961.

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