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## Vetoed Vote in France

FERHAT Abbas and the FLN are not the only ones to be disappointed with the recent speeches of President de Gaulle on the subject of Algeria; the disappointment is fairly general within and without Algeria and France. It had been widely expected that the President's rather eventful visit to Algiers a few weeks ago would have a chastening effect on his thinking, and that at least the one point on which this would have made him more realistic than before would be the absolute need to recognise the indispensability of negotiating directly with the FLN as an essential party in a new Algerian Government. The speeches have strangely belied this expectation. The President has been talking as if the FLN never existed. Does he really believe that it will be possible to set up his semi-autonomous Government in Algiers without in any way associating the nationalist rebels with it?

The natural and automatic effect of this curious omission in his speeches has been to make Mr Ferhat Abbas frankly contemptuous of the referendum which has already begun this week. He has called upon his followers, and indeed to the Algerian Muslims generally, to boycott it completely and to have nothing to do with it in any way. Certainly the referendum is a queer experiment from the point of the nationalists. One of the two points on which it seeks France's "massive and forthright" approval for the President's Algerian policy is unnecessary; the other is unworkable. The superfluous point is the one that asks the country to endorse "the principle of self-determination" for Algeria—a strange endorsement to ask for a Government which has already shown in practice in many parts of Africa that it represents a people who recognise the self-determination principle for erstwhile colonies. Moreover, in the case of Algeria, it is not so much the principle of self-determination as its application that presents the greatest difficulties.

The second question in the referendum calls for the endorsement of President de Gaulle's plan to establish provisional institutions in Algeria which would eventually flower into an "association" with France, giving the Algerians themselves nothing more substantial than local autonomy, with such things as defence, finance, foreign policy and education left in the charge of Paris. It is almost incredible that de Gaulle should ask his people to give him a specific mandate to apply a policy in Algeria which the other less militant French colonies in Africa have in the past refused to accept. The Gaullist conception of Algerian autonomy might have worked if the nationalist sentiment there was wholly lacking; but in circumstances where this sentiment is powerfully embodied in the FLN, the entire manoeuvre must seem a futile one.

The essential point in this whole tangle is that de Gaulle must recognise without much further delay (for the Algerian debacle is losing France friends everywhere) that there is no alternative to direct negotiations with the FLN. He simply must talk to them and come to an understanding with their leader. Ferhat Abbas, The Melun attempt needs to be made again. This is not to suggest that the French President does not see this need; but his insistence that the rebel negotiators must "agree to leave the knives in the cloakroom" will need modification.

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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