

Letter from South

The Image of India

THE South in these days of danger is decisively India. The emergency caused by Chinese aggression has gripped the deepest and most stable recesses of the Southern personality and placed it irrevocably in the integrated Indian context. There is poise and confidence, but equally a desire to assert the unity that was always there despite the more striking demands for regional or linguistic recognition.

Some cynics might say that the call from the capital and the declaration of emergency left no choice but for all to protest their patriotism and their Indianness. But this view is as superficial as it is spurious. There is, as a matter of fact, no choice about the sense of nationhood. But this is consequent not on external compulsion but rather as a wellingup, a feeling of release after a traumatic experience. The rally of the South is inescapable but it is witness to deep creative springs that pour forth and not the tepidity of a forced performance.

The elder and the middle generations, whether in Madras or Hyderabad or Trivandrum or Bangalore, reminiscence that there never was this tightening of emotion and this commitment since freedom dawned. And the young, who looked back in languor, have now their first proud glimpse of the image of India. Restlessness and a certain spare passion begins to replace triviality and boredom.

Regional Business Overdone

From the time one had begun to try to feel in the South one suspected that this regional business was being overdone. The grumbles, the conflicts and the responses were much of a muchness with what one had heard in Delhi or Calcutta or Chandigarh. And the colouration of the discontent depended here, as in the North or the East or the West, on the immediate split in the national movement, on the depth of the political impulse and the degree of radicalisation. If loyalties at times tended to be parochial or casteist or linguistic, these were

here, as elsewhere, the product of a scarce economy on the move but at a pace and with a pattern that did not weld and that could not project the same compulsive image of a nation struggling for identity.

Moreover, the South itself was riddled. Mysore is still in search of its name since the Vokkaligas who were dominant in the old Mysore consider that the change of Karnataka would be yet another feather in the cap for the Lingayats. Osmania University in Hyderabad requires that a student should have been born in Telengana of Telengana parents if he is to be admitted — a device supposedly to ward off Andhra domination. Kerala is a cauldron of caste communalism while in Tarnilnad the Thevars, the Nadars and the Brahmins have each their own cluster. And, if the national emergency had not supervened, there would have been a rare set-to over the recommendations of the Gulhati Commission. And, perhaps, an eruption of the border dispute between Kerala and Mysore over Kasargode.

A More Compelling Drive

As a matter of fact the serious limitations of attempting to group these four States as a macro-economic region were revealingly outlined by Professor Prakash Rao in a talk to the Indian Institute of Economics. The South is either confined to the Kaveri belt or extends beyond the Vindhyas and over the Western Ghats. At any rate these pseudo-controversies and ideals of misplaced concreteness recede with the resurrected larger coherence in the face of the threat to our borders.

It is significant that on his release, the first statement that Annadurai of I) M K made was that Dravidanad would have to wait till the Chinese were pushed out of the NEFA region. Even if we interpret this, uncharitably, as a tactical gesture, the question remains — why is this good tactics if the burning urge of the Dravidians is to break off from Delhi's tutelage? There is, then, a larger and more compelling drive than the passions of Tamil chauvinism.

Another fact needs underlining. Kerala and Andhra represent the peak of communist achievement in India and supply dose on a half of the all-India membership. And these units of the C P I are preponderantly peasant and village oriented. Both units were planning powerful satyagraha campaigns, together with other parties. Yet the response to the danger in the North was immediate. Not only were the satyagrahas called off but the denunciation of China was unequivocal and coupled with an unconditional offer of cooperation for public mobilisation. This means something, too, as the Government and the Congress well know.

The Swatantra, of course, has rubbed in the point that they had seen the Chinese perfidy long before the Government. But oddly enough it is they who still remain partisan — Menon must go and the alliance with America must come! And some of their top* notchers even feel that this emergency fever is being exaggerated. Withdrawal of the anti-land levy enhancement satyagraha in Andhra was delayed for a few days by the uncertainty attaching to their attitude and that of their ally. Tenneti Viswanatham. They have, however, fallen in line.

Resource Mobilisation : How ?

Now that the deepest stratum of the South Indian emotional structure has pulled to the surface there will be no difficulty about accepting the appeal for resource mobilisation and production jumps. But it is on this front that the Government and the ruling party arc tending to lag. Nehru's surcharged broadcasts and the spectacular donations in the States' capitals are not enough. There must be united penetration at every level and the generation of social pressure that each contribute to his capacity. And capacity is known for most at the local level, where the effective resource mobilisation will have to operate.

Apart from those right at the pinnacle, resource mobilisation will have to take the form of inducing

savings more than donations. In the South there is an increasing tendency for a very appreciable section of the middle class to increase consumption and to save in the form of gold or plots of land. Here the impact of patriotism will be conditioned by the need for status and security. Consumption curbs will, to a large extent, be voluntarily applied if it is universalised. But for security there should be a substitute for the appreciating value of gold and land in the form of bonds with a fairly high rate of interest, if a staggering savings response is to be brought about.

After all, even in the heydays of the freedom struggle the future was a matter of concern for all but a very small minority. What patriotism can do is to channelise savings in the desired direction. It cannot, over a long period, entail the sacrifice of savings. The South has gold fairly widely dispersed but this can pour into the national treasury only if sacrifice is tempered with a large measure of security. Patriotism can break down the prejudices of assets preference of a particular type but it cannot lead to voluntary proletarianisation of the middle class or its acceptance of the fact of inflation.

Diplomatic Offensive

Further, to correct the impression that all national policies emanate from Delhi — that is, after all, only the point of focus and of proclamation — there exists considerable sentiment in this area that there is need not only to outfight the Chinese but to diplomatically outmanoeuvre them. It has been noted here that firm support to India has come only from the West and from those (apart from Pakistan) who lean that way. The neutrals remain neutral and the Soviet Union, despite its ideological tensions with China, inclines to the view of negotiations even prior to vacation of aggression. To counter the Chinese diplomatic offensive, why should India not suggest arbitration by a neutral nation like Yugoslavia, whose findings would have a moral compulsion? Or a committee of neutrals like the U A R, Ceylon and Yugoslavia? And why should not a team of Communist and markedly left Congressmen be

sent to present India's case to the Soviet public? The whole point is to persuade our friends in these two sectors of the world that it is not a case of two Asian countries both equally in the right or wrong but of an unparalleled provocation and pressure on the part of China gone insanely adventurist.

In the international field, too, there is need to project the image of India as she now stands in the gaze of all who participated to make her sovereign and who are no less resolved to preserve her dignity and her role in the making of the world.



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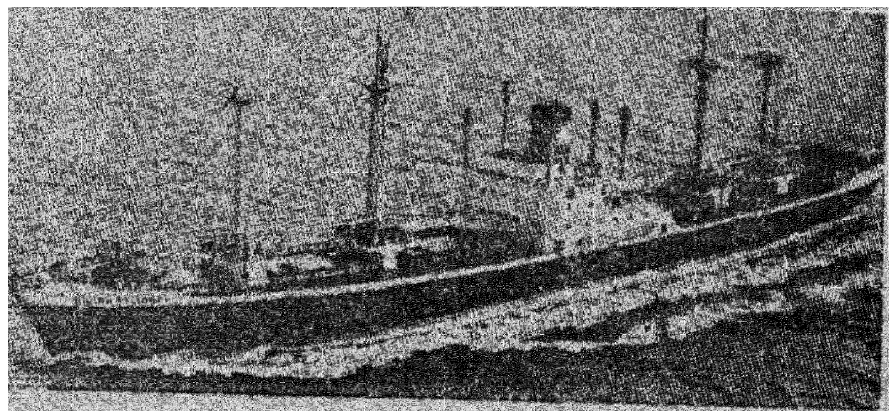
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