

The time may have come to recognise that in India we have, to wit democratic elections, devised our own form of political gangsterism and that these gentlemen, when politically unemployed, do not mind a little bit of non-political gangsterism in the sure knowledge that high-level protection is theirs for the asking.

The rest of the country should not find it too difficult to put recent events all down to that madness to

which Calcutta is prone. Easy way out, no doubt. But India does well to ponder to what extent Calcutta's hypertension is the direct result of the country's total indifference to the city's, and the State's, mounting problems, many of which are the children of the country's short cut to freedom sixteen years ago. That fruit stall looted in Sealdah; maybe communal passions played a negligible part; maybe an unemployed Hindu refugee saw in it the only way to make a living. Some har-

assed Muslim communities are said to have set fire to their bustees before deserting them. Why not? If Calcutta is treated indefinitely as a refugee colony, its abandonment too may be followed by vindictive arson. Fires, the whole country had better remember, have a habit of spreading. At this moment, as smoke wells up not so far away from a cinema, I am not, let me say it. very proud of India.

— *Flibbertigibbet*

Letter from South

Tamilnad Congress after Bhubaneswar

KAMARAJ is the first significant Congress President for a decade and more. When it came to bludgeoning the demand for bank nationalisation at the Bhubaneswar session it was T T K who was called upon to deliver the *coup de grace* with what passed as cool expertise. And during the period of Nehru's illness External Affairs files will go to him. It looks as if Tamilnad's cup is brimming over.

The paradox, however, is that the Tamilnad Pradesh Congress Committee does not seem to have engaged at all in the sharp inner-Congress controversies which were such a marked feature of the build-up to the anticlimax at Bhubaneswar. If press reports are accurate there was also not that radical rank-and-file intervention from the Tamilnad delegation which again distinguished the 68th Congress session.

One could draw the conclusion that in Tamilnad the Congress, by and large, remains a plastic mass with a capacity to congeal temporarily in any shape, that circumstances force upon it. This could be called group opportunism. And there are facts enough to give weight to this charge, especially when one recalls T T K's pre-election advocacy of a redistribution-oriented economic policy and its subsequent eclipse in his mind by the so-called growth approach.

Who Controls Tamilnad Congress?

Yet this would be a superficial reading of the situation. What seems to have happened in Tamilnad is the rise to control of Congress affairs of the semi-submerged sec-

tions of the population. Not the submerged sections, not the most oppressed who are yet to become an effective force and who, to the limited extent that they are awakened, tend to get organised by the communists. It is those who have acquired a certain stake in such development as has taken place in India and who can strike out for a bigger place under the southern sun — it is they who have become effective and who have found a symbol and a leader in Kamaraj.

Harsh though it may sound, it has to be stated that, in the main, they are ill-educated. Not in the sense of academic education, for most of them have sent their children through at least secondary or even collegiate educational institutes and may have gone through the mill themselves, but in the sense that the only real education they have had is from life, which is an inadequate teacher. Reflection, the ability to generalise, vision of what India should become, whom to rally and how — all this life gives only indirectly through the imaginative work of leaders who are also ideologists. And this the Tamilnad Congress lacks.

Yet this is far from being a situation of gloom or a cause for unrelieved pessimism. For it is these sections whose interests can enable them to learn the lessons of radical democracy and whose further push forward by their very size and weight will compel them to choose that radicalism which the more sophisticated old guard was able to smother in platitudes.

DMK-Swatantra Link Up

Some of the contours of this choice have already emerged. A big chunk of the really upper-class leadership of the Congress in Tamilnad departed some years ago when the Congress Reform party came to be formed and went on to find their proper habitat in the Swatantra party. Through the influence and intelligence of Rajaji this section hoped to hold on to its mass base through control of the D M K. It is not just fortuitous personal circumstances, but the advice and compulsion of Rajaji's personality that led to the birth of the D M K under the leadership of Annadurai.

The D M K was the apotheosis of the vague desires of the semi-submerged sections of the urban population. It had high-sounding radicalism with Lenin's portrait in the party office, publicly-proclaimed atheism and the declamatory aim of Dravidanad. But it proposed no path to economic development and it could not spread to the villages. It was all sound and fury and Rajaji soon enough made it signify something profoundly reactionary. This was not in relation to its objective of a so-called independent Southern State but in the shape of a diversion of the party's development from radicalism to something resembling a fascist movement. For readers in the North the nearest analogy to the D M K and its quite meteoric rise will be the equally spectacular development of the Jana Sangh.

The situation as it has now evolved shows clearly enough that a polarisation is developing in Tamilnad which will have serious and fertilis-

ing repercussions on the Kamaraj-led Congress. The D M K was split, with the more conscientious group led by E V K Sampath forming itself into the Tamil National Party; the rest now come ever closer to becoming the "front" organisation of the Swatantra or, at any rate, openly and consistently allyfng with it in elections. Friction and clash of personalities there will certainly be, but the gravitational pull of the Right is now the determining factor in the further evolution of the D M K.

Simultaneously with this development has come the rapprochement between the Communists and the Congress. In several by-elections the two parties have worked together. The significant fact is that this co-operation is not surreptitious and that to date it has not been followed by either party disowning the other in the event of victory or defeat. Certainly very serious programmatic differences do exist. As stated at the outset, Kamaraj's Congress is not yet committed to anything like a precise platform of radical democratic change, though the Bhubaneswar Presidential address did contain refreshing suggestions as to the need and the possibility of breaking the concentration of economic power. But it is not committed to the *status quo* either and it is ranged against the commanding leaders of Rightism in India. And its very refusal to disclaim cooperation with the Communists shows the quality of its pragmatism.

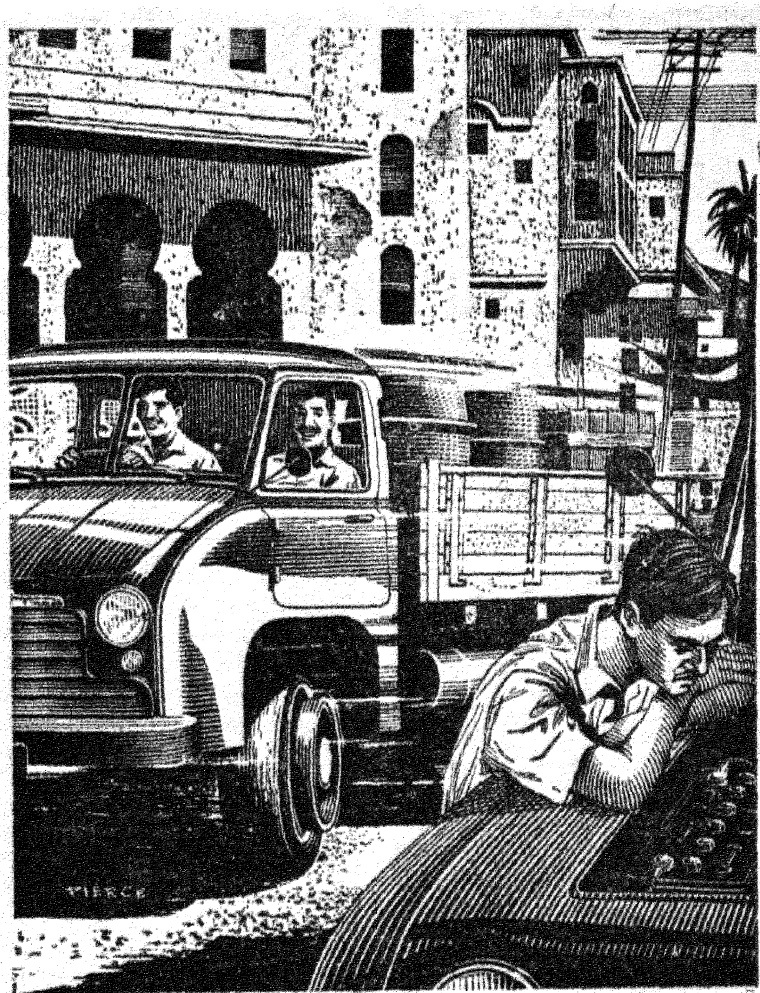
Leftward Course

That this evolution of the Tamilnad P C C has taken place without serious internal squabbles is partly, of course, due to the personality of Kamaraj and the manner in which he has captured the commanding heights of the political terrain. The deeper and more irrevocable factor is the shift of power within the Congress to certain social strata whose noonday has yet to come.

It is not likely that, if the Statue Congress is left alone power will now shift anywhere but to the left. But given the pressure of stronger forces operating from dominant centres of political influence there may be a great deal of oscillation and deviations. The only way to avoid these unnecessary digressions

is a good dose of ideological education and a far greater amount of debate than has taken place hitherto. There are signs that something of this nature may be attempted and that, indeed the next round of con-

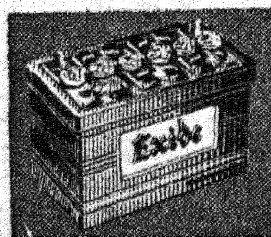
troversy will centre precisely on the education of the educators. Once Tamilnad Congress emerges from its present amorphousness, it could become the moving point of radical Congress consciousness.



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