

Letter from South

Confidence, and a Little Complacency

The year has seen a marked change in the political situation.

A year ago the Right was not merely on the offensive; it was ready to take over, to move to complete control of the levers of power.

The threat remains, but. the Right today has to wait in the wings It no longer struts in the centre of the stage.

THE scrambles and the squabbles that seem to make up Delhi's political life with the illness of the Prime Minister percolate down South but do not cause too much perturbation. There is a sadness in the air at the thought that Pandit Nehru's energetic imagination and a certain touch of nobility may no longer be available in the usual measure. But there is not the least trace of panic, there is no alarm that instability or sharp discontinuity will result following the loosening grip of the last great figure of the days of glory.

Is this complacency? It could be. There should perhaps be more urgency here, a greater drive to keep things moving and prevent the take-over by more authoritarian figures, to put it mildly, who are, undoubtedly, waiting in the wings. But there are certain grounds for this complacency which might make it something better, i.e., confidence. A year ago there would certainly have been a sense of crisis in all the political centres of the South, had Nehru been taken as seriously ill then as he is now.

The year has seen a shift in the political situation that gives a fair basis to this confidence in an area where the pressures of high level political manoeuvring are neither so immediate nor so distorting. A year ago the Right was not merely on the offensive; it was ready to take over, to move to complete control of the levers of authority and that would have marked a very sharp break and a serious plunge into instability.

The danger remains. And the failure to see the more-than-lurking dagger is the element of complacency in the confidence. But the Right today has to wait in the wings, it no longer struts in the centre of the stage. This is a remarkable change.

For this radical transformation of the context of national politics we have to be grateful to the Left within the Congress but even more to the Left outside. Above all, we need to be grateful to the militant sections of the people who, seeing that the Emergency had transformed itself into a Rightist take-over bid, moved into action not only for their immediate demands but with sharp policy alternatives and projected the challenging vision of a radical India, which is the natural evolution of the national movement that has enabled India to emerge.

Role of the Centre

Credit must be given too to that vast amorphous mass which is the Centre, which annoys since the need for change is so patent but which clings fast to whatever advance has been registered and resists the attempt at regression. And being the elemental thing it is, it also moves when the evolutionary push acquires the strength of the elements.

Southern confidence, then, is based to an extent on the minimisation of the Right danger but much more so on the granite reality of a crisis that was surmounted without too much retreat, without too much betrayal.

There was a time when it was necessary to stress that the challenge that had come rather unexpectedly in the shape of aggression by a socialist State had to be met by a turn to radicalism, by a powerful movement to give to ourselves a radical democracy. The need remains. What is more significant is that not only has the recognition of the need come but the development of activity to insure the reality of radicalism. One can say that the turn of the tide came with the forcing out of K D Malaviya. The danger became too apparent to be ignored. It was not ignored but began to be coun-

tered. There has as yet been no let up in this counter offensive. And this is the reason why the more equable and, shall we say, more normal South is confident.

At the time of the last Annual Number there was cause enough for gloom but even then some commentators had pointed to the coming Left revival and to the fact that given a long view it could be generalised that the national movement — which continues as the dominant political reality in our country — had shown a pretty linear trend in the direction of radicalism. It would have been a matter for surprise — and of shame — had this trend been reversed solely on the ground that the external challenge had come in the shape of the nightmarish misadventure of the leading Asian socialist state.

There was quite an amount of glib talk of doom, at least as far as the Communist Party was concerned. Some went so far as to state that it had ceased to count as a political force within the country. Yet from mid-year to the beginning of autumn it was the CPI that launched a mass campaign on a nationwide scale for a Left national orientation. It was this campaign that reached out to a very large number of people who cannot be approached through the newspapers or even through urban mass meetings, important though these two media of mass communication are. These are the people who can be approached only through the organisations that they have set up and in which they have found for decades now the means of their self-assertion.

These are the real submerged sections that make up the as yet undiscovered India and they are the majority. These are the participants in the national movement

but, to use Gandhiji's extraordinarily apt and poignant phrase, as the "dumb millions" from whose "every eye every tear has to be wiped".

For far too long these sections of the Indian people have been analysed and examined in terms of their stagnation and in the light of middle class values and neuroses. As a compensation for their own guilt complex and for their frustration, it has always been a pleasant middle class sociological exercise to have a look at the poor and the backward, who are always with us.

Gandhiji with his superb feel for India had first shaken up the middle class notion that it was they who were India and that it was their movement that could not only represent India but make her free. By his very physical appearance and the abode that he chose the Mahatma shook up this belief. But soon enough this was replaced by an equally fallacious idea that all that was required was an identification with the submerged millions and the use of them as a mighty pressure for national emancipation.

What was lacking and what continues as a dragging lag is the self generating movement of the masses. There is some point in taking this as the real take-off point for a modern India. Indeed, the hope — and not so much the aim — of a self-generating economy rests on this political take-off being achieved within the next decade. And there are signs that this hope is not a Utopian wish. The process has begun but its maturing will take quite some time yet. The beginning, however, is the basic reason why we need not condemn Southern confidence as mere complacency. India is reaching forward to a new and more massive level of political articulation.

One could go further and hazard the hypothesis that this process has got off to an earlier and more hopeful start in some regions of the South than elsewhere in India. At least in Tamilnad, Andhra and Kerala we have the clearly emerging contours of the rise of a new level of leadership already established in strategic positions both in the Congress and the Communist parties which are the major political-social forces in these States. In some of these States the newly emer-

ging strata are to be found fairly evenly divided between these two parties and hi Kerala they are clearly gravitating away from the Congress

It could be a fruitful study to examine how far this process has gone in the North or non-South, to be more exact. One suspects that in Maharashtra and perhaps in Madhya Pradesh and Punjab something similar is happening, at least if one works backward from the manifestation of political behaviour.

These sections of the people are drawn automatically into one or another from of struggle — they could not survive otherwise. What they are deprived of, however, is the wider and deeper enlightenment that education alone can provide. Nor is this a matter of re-

moving illiteracy alone, though this is important. It is a matter of imparting knowledge of quite the most rudimentary type and of integrating experience into some kind of ideological vision. It is here that these sections cannot as yet be self-generating and it is here "that the more enlightened and less parochial sections of the middle class can yet find fulfilment in the performance of duty.

It may well be that the younger intelligentsia, many of whom are drawn from strata not far removed from the sections arising from submergence, will find it in themselves to take up this work. Once this is done the South can pass from confidence to an over-whelming challenge.



"PROFESSIONAL MEN LIKE US

have no leave and retirement benefits which the salaried people generally have."

A professional man — like a lawyer or a doctor — who is on his own, will not enjoy leave with pay; nor will he have a provident fund or a pension upon which to depend after retirement. He will have to create, by regular and adequate savings during his active professional life, his own "funds" — "House building fund", "Retirement fund", "Family Vacation fund" etc. It is a good idea to have separate Savings Bank Accounts for each purpose with THE BANK OF INDIA LTD.

THE BANK OF INDIA LTD.

T. D. KANSARA,
General Manager



50/128