The Great Endeavour

WAS a new Congress born at the recent Avadi session phoenix-like from the ashes of its old body? It was only five months ago that the organisation met at Avadi and resolved to establish a "socialistic pattern" of society. At Avadi the Congress also drew up a fresh economic policy. The trend of legislation in these few months shows a conscious and deliberate attempt to implement these resolutions. It is not the speed with which the Government, which is charged with the responsibility of carrying out these resolutions, has acted that is so notable as the change in the atmosphere that has been brought about in the past few months. Is it that Pandit Nehru has succeeded in transmitting to this slow-moving, heterogeneous and faction-ridden political organisation his own sense of urgency or is it the other way about? Is it Panditji who has caught the new stir of life which is in the country and which has also penetrated into the Congress and has been acting as leaven within its ranks?

More than the resolution on the economic policy and the adoption of the draft plan frame for the second five-year plan, it is the attempt of this old political organisation to slough off its dead skin and take on a new life that is the most remarkable and significant feature of the latest session of the AICC. For the first time in many years, Acharya Vinoba Bhave attended a session of the AICC. His presence was symbolic of the gathering in of the constructive workers, "The purity and strengthening of the organisation", one of the resolutions passed at the session reads, "are not to be viewed in the light of the interest of the organisation alone, but of preparing the people for Shouldering mass scale programmes of village industries, basic education, local works and maximisation of man-power resources to the fullest extent." "Only sustained and continuous efforts in these directions", the resolution concludes, "can enable us to reach the goal of a socialistic pattern of society and to eliminate unemployment within a reasonable time".

The AICC recorded its appreciation of the steps taken by the Government of India for the progressive adoption of measures for establishing a welfare state and a socialistic economy. It put its seal of approval on the fourth amendment of the Constitution, it welcomed the establishment of the State Bank and blessed the social reform legislation that has been passed by Parliament.

The call on constructive workers to join in the great adventure of building up socialism is not to plough a lonely furrow as they have been doing so long, but to enlist their services actively and wholeheartedly in the implementation of the Second Five-Year Plan.

"The AICC trusts that the Pradesh and the subordinate Congress committees will render all assistance possible to the zonal organisers and will themselves, in consultation with the zonal organisers, devise ways and means to create the necessary atmosphere and take steps that would lead to the implementation of the Congress programme of constructive work without any delay whatsoever."
It is in the context of the economic policy resolution and the adoption of the plan frame, provisional though it be, and the formal association of the constructive programme with both—it can mean nothing else than amalgamation—that the presence of Acharya Vinoba Bhave at this session becomes meaningful. Fuller employment, a progressive rise in the standard of living, equality of opportunity, establishment of heavy industry and development of small scale, village and hand industries on a scale never contemplated before—to take up all these in its stride, the Congress needs the country behind it. But the country means the people, and is it not idle to claim or to expect that not this section or that, but the whole people can be behind this or that plan, or for the matter of that, that they are behind the Congress or Pandit Nehru?

It was difficult to be persuaded even then, though a plausible enough case could be made out for it, that the Congress resolution for a socialistic pattern of society was just an election dodge to forestall opposition against it in Andhra. Commenting on Avadi, it had been remarked in these columns: "It would be wrong to assume that no change in policy is contemplated by Congress. ... There is ample evidence that Congress has, under the compulsion of wider political and economic influences, come to a decision that it is necessary to ensure social control of the major means of production. Speculators and gamblers are free to take comfort from Panditji's sausive diplomacy. But those who are aware of the fundamental politico-economic trends may not be wrong in their assumption that acceptance by Congress of a policy more revolutionary than that of a co-operative Commonwealth is inevitable."

What then appeared faint and inchoate has now become clear and moréd. Not thethmuseum no shadows. The next election—never far in the mind of the politicians—caasts its shadow far ahead. Hence the talk of cleansing the organisation and disciplinary action against group formations within the Congress. There is the ugly spectre of linguistic dissensions. But there is also the wider horizon. India no longer stands alone. With the other countries of Asia and Africa, she faces the same task of carrying out a social transformation and brings into it a wealth of experience derived from her own struggles in the past and her traditional technique, perfected through the ages, of effecting social change through acceptance of differences and by non-violent means. To her rich inheritance has been added the fruits of modern knowledge and science. With reason unclouded by ignoble self-seeking, aims unsullied by mean ends, the people are prepared for this great endeavour.

**Four Power Talks**

CYNICS will be excused in their suspicion that the Western Powers have reluctantly honoured their post-dated cheque. Since the cold war, Russia had always had the diplomatic initiative in proposing four-Power talks to resolve outstanding world issues. These proposals had been repeatedly rejected by the Western Powers. President Eisenhower had always insisted that the Communists must prove, not by words but by deeds, that they desired peace. In their action in Korea, they showed that they were willing to negotiate. At Geneva, they gave unmistakable evidence of their peaceful intentions. Russia repeated her proposal for talks "at the summit". It was turned down by the Westerns on the argument that no purpose would be served in having four-Power talks before ratification of the Paris and Bonn Agreements. This rejection was accompanied by a promise that they would be ready to consider the proposal for four-Power talks after ratification of the Agreements. These Agreements have been ratified. Western Germany is now a NATO Power as a sovereign State. Some of America's NATO partners thought it prudent to remind her of their joint promise to Russia. With utmost reluctance, America has agreed to join Britain and France in proposing four-Power talks "at the highest level" to Russia.

On the eve of a general election in Britain, Sir Anthony Eden and his Foreign Minister took the initiative in proposing talks with Russia "at the summit". France responded promptly to Sir Anthony's gesture. America was hesitant. It was only when Washington realised that America's attitude might unduly strain her relations with her allies that she joined Britain and France in proposing four-Power talks "at the summit" to Russia. Cynics will be excused in drawing the inference that Washington has endorsed the Anglo-French move for four-Power talks not because it has any faith in the outcome of such discussions, but because America's acceptance of such a move might help Sir Anthony and his Conservative Party to return to power in Britain. They will recall that Sir Winston Churchill won the last general elections for him and his Party by his dramatic appeal to the people to give him an opportunity to ensure world peace. He promised the British electorate that if he and his Party were voted to power, he would call for four-Power talks "at the summit" to discuss outstanding world issues. Sir Winston could not honour his electoral pledge mainly because of President Eisenhower's obstinate refusal to participate in discussions among Heads of States. Sir Anthony can now face the electorate with a clean conscience. He has succeeded where his illustrious predecessor had failed. It would be unwise to over-emphasise such considerations of national party politics as motivating influences behind the Western Powers' invitation to Russia to join four-Power talks "at the highest level". Deeper influences have prompted the Western Powers to propose four-Power talks at this stage. Through ratification of the Paris and Bonn Agreements, one of their conditions to join in four-Power talks "at the summit" has been fulfilled. Russia's willingness to sign the Austrian Peace Treaty has left Washington with no excuse to delay four-Power talks "at the highest level". While the Western Powers were busy in implementing the Paris and Bonn Agreements, Moscow had stolen a diplomatic march over them. More than Russia's eagerness to sign the Austrian Peace Treaty, Austria's acceptance of the Russian proposal for neutralisation of Austria has upset the Western Powers' plans for Europe. Through this diplomatic triumph, Russia has almost succeeded in neutralising the Western Powers' policy of political and military integration of Western Germany with Western Europe even before the actual implementation of that policy. In Bonn, there are growing doubts whether the price that Western Germany is paying to regain partial sovereignty and to rebuild the German army is not too high. It was widely expected that Russia would offer Germany the same terms as Moscow had offered.