

# The Economic Weekly

A Journal of Current Economic and Political Affairs

THIRTEENTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

November 18, 1961

Volume XIII No 46

Price 50 Naye Paise

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## Improved Image

PANDIT NEHRU'S visit to the United States was preceded by a tirade against India in the American press. While he was there, the encomium and the applause he received from the press and the public was fulsome, the lead having been given by President Kennedy himself. Now that the tumult and shouting has died down, what is the impress left by him which may endure? The communiqués issued after the visit of a foreign dignitary are rarely very informative. The one issued on this occasion is no exception. Apart from generalities, all that one may perhaps read into it is a greater responsibility to be assumed by India in helping to make and keep Laos neutral and free, as also American neutrality in the matter of Indo-Pakistan relations. It is difficult to understand what the latter might mean, unless America is prepared to begin to disengage herself — which she has no intention of doing — from the commitments which conflict so violently with India's stand on neutrality and non-alignment.

The time when Nehru used to be accused in the U S of being more neutral against some than against others is long past. It is now forgotten history, and there is greater appreciation of his stand on neutrality or rather non-alignment. Even so, in foreign politics there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies. Was there an attempt to capitalise on Indo-Chinese differences which are by now fairly old, or India's fall from grace in the eyes of some of the Afro-Asian nations which came to light at the Little Summit in Belgrade not so long ago?

The press reports are not illuminating on any of these points. But, there is evidence in plenty that the understanding of all that India stands for and the appreciation of Pandit Nehru have gone up by a big jump. It is not his television presence or great personal charm alone which helped it. It was his complete self-assurance, clarity and strength of conviction, which impressed the American people. The Americans, chastened by reverses, were in a better mood to listen. They have been much more receptive to Nehru than at the time of any of his previous visits. There was no talk of Kennedy putting him on the carpet and making him retract whatever Menon might have said, on the threat of withdrawing America's promised economic aid.

But will this improved image of India help the United States to appreciate the need for a relaxation of her attitudes, which have so belied the earlier promise of the opening of a new frontier and sunk into that of seeking for positions of strength in countries and among people which are breaking out from old bonds and striving hopefully for a new life and a breath of fresh air? The possible impact of Nehru's visit on Kennedy or his Administration does not, however, depend on the latter alone. Kennedy has not yet the stature of Roosevelt to lead and to carry his people with him. He is too much tied down by a Congress, which does not share his ideas or enthusiasm; and, to carry the people with him, he has to re-educate them and make them break away from the groove in which the earlier Administration had confined them. In that task, perhaps, Nehru's visit might help.

## THE ECONOMIC WEEKLY

Telephone : 253406

65, Apollo Street, Fort,

Annual Subscription : Rs 24

Foreign 40s or \$ 6