

changes in the Brussels agreement and it seems unlikely, therefore, that the final terms will provide adequate safeguards, the Labour Party must oppose Britain's entry into the ECM. The 64 dollar question, however, is whether minor modifications and slightly more favourable terms on matters still pending - for example, details of compensation for temperate food producing countries and details and date of the comprehensive trade agreement to be concluded with the Asian members of the Commonwealth — will be enough to persuade the Labour Party to change its mind and accept that these new terms provide adequate safeguards and therefore, clear the way for Britain's entry into the Common Market. The Americans have now administered a further push in the direction of getting Britain into the Common Market. The Kennedy administration has issued a statement saying that it expects Britain to become a member of the Common Market, and that the whole nuclear strategy of NATO depends upon this. The US is inclined to agree with the view propounded by France, that nuclear weapons should now be given to the NATO forces. This, however, cannot be done without British membership. The statement goes on to add that the British nuclear strike force and weapons are already hopelessly out of date. Is this American move a way of trying to convince the French that in order to get the nuclear weapons they require, they must be a little bit more conciliatory to the British and find some face-saving solutions which will permit the British to join the Common Market, and claim, at the same time, that they have safeguarded the interests they felt it was their duty to protect?

The Brighton Conference was concerned with putting the Labour Party across as the responsible alternative Government, with sufficient argument to substantiate the picture of vitality and a robust clash of ideas. The theme for the Conference was set by Mr Harold Wilson. In his opening address, he emphasised the challenge and opportunity of the next election, and the reaction of the Conference to this certainly enhance Labour's chances.

### A letter from Punjab

## Exit Tara Singh

THE spectacular and unexpected victory of the Sant group in the SGPC elections on October 2 was a palace revolution. The Akalis have no longer any positive programme to offer to the Sikh masses. The Punjabi Suba demand, whatever its intrinsic merits, is now a hollow slogan. Even a casual observer of the Punjab scene will not fail to notice the widespread apathy of the Sikhs in particular, and of the Punjabis in general, to the issue. Rut in one sense at least it is still alive. No Akali leader, whatever his status among the Akalis, dare, as yet, openly oppose the 'demand'. In substance, however, questions like whether the Hindus should be associated with the agitation for the Suba as the Sant wants, or whether the Sikhs should 'go it alone', as the Master insists, are purely academic ones.

But the control of the his 60 lakh annual budget of the SGPC is not an academic question, and the rival factions in the Dal may be expected to be in dead earnest over this not inconsiderable sum. Struggles for power within the Dal may, therefore, be expected to recur, whoever the *dramatis personae*. The absence of a leader like Tara Singh who he'd unquestioned sway for so long will only mean that the 'tattles' in future will be far more frequent. Being devoid of any genuine political content Sikh politics is more than ever before likely to revolve round the lucrative control of the SGPC. A revision of the Sikh Curdwaras Act with a view to enforcing stricter control over the management of the ever-growing revenues of the shrines seems necessary. Otherwise the possible eclipse of the Akalis as a force in Punjab politics will only be followed by the growth of numerous factions with rapidly shifting loyalties and ends at nothing but the SGPC funds.

### Tara Singh's Tactics

Coming back to the Sant's triumph, it establishes the legality of his group as against Tara Singh's. The Sant was astute enough not to formally launch a rival Dal. He maintained that it was the Master who was a dissident and who had formed a rival organisation. However, soon after his defeat, Master Tara Singh is reported to have said, 'The Panth is always most active in its hour of defeat. It will now show its vigour again'. Tara Singh does not take it to be a personal defeat at all: instead the entire Panth has been routed. The insistency that he and the Panth are one and that his opponents are aliens and intruders has been his typical attitude for so long that he now seems to be genuinely convinced of it. He has suffered defeats in the past. But the latest one is different from those of the past in a vital sense: in the past his popularity among the Sikh masses was never really in doubt, but now he stands discredited and disowned. In the past he could hope to overcome his temporary reverses at the top through his hold over the base. But his latest reverse is the culmination of the growing dissatisfaction among the Sikh masses with his policies.

One can, therefore, safely rule out any enthusiastic response to his "Panth in Danger" cry. The disintegration of the Akalis may take some time, but it seems inevitable. The exit of Master Tara Singh marks the beginning of a new phase in Punjab politics. Whether Patch Singh will be able to keep his promise of striving for communal amity or not will depend on his ability to keep his more militant followers in check (a difficult task) and the response he gets from non-Akalis, both Sikh and Hindu.

