

Report

OF THE

Linguistic Provinces Committee

appointed by the

JAIPUR CONGRESS (Dec. 1948)

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**REPORT OF THE
LINGUISTIC PROVINCES COMMITTEE
APPOINTED BY THE JAIPUR CONGRESS**

In June, 1948 the President of the Constituent Assembly of India appointed a Commission to examine and report on the formation of new provinces of Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra. The Chairman of this Commission was Shri S. K. Dar. This Commission presented its report on the eve of the Jaipur Congress. The Congress thereupon appointed the Committee, of which we are members, to consider the question of linguistic provinces and "to review the position and to examine the question in the light of the decisions taken by the Congress in the past and the requirements of the existing situation, (i) in view of the report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission, appointed by the President of the Constituent Assembly, and (ii) the new problems that have arisen out of the achievement of independence".

The Congress resolution quoted above refers both to the past policy of the Congress in this matter and to the new problems that have arisen. In other words the Congress wanted us to consider how far the old policy of the Congress was affected by the new problems and the existing situation in the country.

The old policy of the Congress, repeated on many occasions, was clearly in favour of the formation of linguistic provinces. To some extent the Congress had given

effect to this principle in its own constitution, by the formation of Andhra, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujerat, so far as the Congress organisation was concerned. It had also formed the Sind Congress Province long before Sind was constituted into a separate province. It might be noted that in dividing up existing provinces into linguistic areas for Congress organisational purposes, the City of Bombay was kept as a separate unit and a provincial Congress Committee for Bombay City had been formed and still exists.

The Congress had thus given the seal of its approval to the general principle of linguistic provinces. It was not faced with the practical application of this principle and hence it had not considered all the implications and consequences that arose from this practical application. There had, however, been a persistent demand and agitation for the formation of Andhra and the Karnataka Provinces. The Congress approval of this principle was partly due to the artificial manner in which existing provinces had been created by the British Power in India. It was chiefly due to a desire to have, as far as possible, homogeneous cultural units which would presumably advance more rapidly because of this homogeneity.

It is clear that in giving effect to this principle a great many difficulties of a far-reaching character have to be faced. Whatever the origin of these provinces, and however artificial they may have been, a century or so of political, administrative and to some extent economic unity in each of the existing provincial areas had produced a certain stability and a certain tradition, and any change in this would naturally have an upsetting effect. It would

have certain far-reaching consequences, political, economic financial and administrative. These reasons, of course, were not necessarily enough for us to go back on, what had long been considered, a basic principle of the Congress. But these reasons could not be ignored, just as the course of recent history, with all that had resulted from it, could not be ignored. In the consideration of this problem, all these factors had to be kept in mind and balanced with each other.

But what we have to consider even more are, as the Congress resolution says, the new problems that have arisen since the achievement of independence. That independence was accompanied by a partition of the country and tremendous upheavals which shook the entire fabric of the State. Anti-social forces grew and assumed serious proportions just at a time when the closest unity was essential ; a narrow provincialism became a menace to the progress and development of our great country. The Indian States underwent a tremendous sea-change into something new. Many of them were merged and lost their identity in the provinces. Many were grouped together to form unions, and a few still retain their identity, though their internal structure has undergone a change. The whole map of India was transformed. All these processes have already proceeded far and made a great difference to India. They are still continuing and the final picture has not yet wholly emerged.

Thus, ever since the achievement of independence, we have been passing through an exceedingly dynamic stage of our country's existence ; we have faced perils and dangers such as few countries have experienced in the

initial stages of their freedom; we have tackled problems of great magnitude; and we have struggled against narrow-mindedness and faction, as well as the more serious anti-social elements of society. Whether the result of our labours has been satisfactory or not, the future historian will have to decide. But unless this process is to be reversed, the changes made or begun have to be carried through to their appointed end; the gains achieved have to be consolidated as rapidly as possible. Even a break or check placed on this onward movement is likely to lead to a sliding back and injury to the nation's interests. There can be no doubt that the new problems that have arisen since August 1947 have made a vast difference to India. We have to adjust all our thinking and our activity to the new conditions that have arisen in India and the problems of today. There can be no greater error than to think of today in terms of yesterday, or to seek to solve today's problems in terms of yesterday's.

We have to bear in mind also the situation all over the world and, more particularly, in the countries of Asia bordering on India. This situation is fraught with danger and it becomes doubly necessary therefore that we should ensure security, stability, strength and unity to India, as rapidly as possible. In particular we should avoid taking any step which may delay or come in the way of this consolidation.

It becomes incumbent upon us therefore to view the problem of linguistic provinces in the context of today. That context demands, above everything, the consolidation of India and her freedom, the progressive solution of her economic problems in terms of the masses of her people,

the promotion of unity in India and of close cooperation among the various provinces and states in most spheres of activity. It demands further stern discouragement of communalism, provincialism, and all other separatist and disruptive tendencies. The achievement of political freedom for India, and the integration that has been achieved, do not mean the end of our labours or the toning down of that vivid patriotic sentiment which gave life and strength to our struggle for freedom. Apart from the fact that freedom, in its political context, is not broad enough and has to be enlarged in the economic domain, and can only then be called true freedom for the people, the preservation of even this political freedom is an urgent and ever-present necessity. If we cease to be vigilant and allow our minds to drift to other channels, we shall not only do an ill-service to India, but might also imperil the very freedom which the past and the present generation have achieved after tremendous sacrifices.

This is the fundamental basis for the consideration of every problem in India and we can only consider the problem of linguistic provinces on this basis. Everything else, however important and however desirable, has a lesser priority.

The partition of India, resulting in the formation of Pakistan, did grievous injury to this country. That injury was obvious enough in many ways and it upset the whole structure of the State and of our economy in a hundred ways. Both in India and in Pakistan these grievous consequences followed and it is only slowly that we are recovering from these deep wounds to the body, mind and spirit of India. This partition has led us to become wary of

anything that tends to separate and divide. It is true there can be no real comparison between this partition and the linguistic regrouping of India. But it is also true that in the existing fluid state of India, even small things in themselves may lead to evil consequences and let loose forces which do injury to the unity of India.

The administrative structure today is sadly depleted in strength and personnel, and this at a time when additional and urgent demands are being made upon it. The main services have had to face the loss of European manpower and the transfer of a considerable number to Pakistan; these services are in the process of reconstruction and renovation. Free India had immediately to tackle social problems, which had been partly ignored previously and had accumulated. This required additional trained personnel. An independent country must inevitably develop foreign relations and a foreign service demands the highest quality of trained men and women. The States Ministry, with its manifold activities, is an entirely new field requiring considerable numbers of experienced civil servants. The huge migrations following the partition made relief and rehabilitation an urgent and vital problem and a new ministry grew up to tackle this. This meant an additional demand on service personnel.

Some of the Provinces have added to their area and population considerably by mergers of States. Thus Bombay has absorbed Baroda, the Deccan and Gujerat States and Kolhapur. Orissa and the Central Provinces have absorbed the Eastern States. Madras has had to face serious difficulties in dealing with anti-social elements.

Hyderabad State has absorbed a number of men from its neighbouring provinces for administrative and other work. Food scarcity, inflation and economic reconstruction have demanded urgent attention. All this has put an enormous strain on our administrative machinery. One would normally hesitate to add to this strain by undertaking the difficult and complex tasks of separating large areas, making them into new provinces and having to provide an administrative apparatus for them.

We have seen, during the past year or more, passionate demands not only for new linguistic provinces to be formed, but also for a readjustment of boundaries between the existing provinces. These demands may often be justified on the merits, but the manner in which they have been presented and the passion that lay behind this presentation, has been a warning to all of us about the inherent danger of changing the existing structure. At the present moment of our history, when some of the smaller States have been merged into a province, a neighbouring province has objected with such violence and language that one would have almost thought that two countries were on the verge of war. These are evil symptoms and we have to be very careful lest we do anything to encourage them.

It must be remembered that it is impossible to have clear and rigid demarcations of linguistic areas. However definite such an area might be, it flows into another linguistic area and where the two may meet, there is a mixed bilingual area. Inevitably if a linguistic division is made there will be trouble about this middle area and it will not be easy to decide where it should go. Immediately conflict

will arise and passions will be aroused. People's attention will be diverted from the urgent problems of the day, which are essentially economic, to this totally unnecessary conflict which can do good to no one. It is possible that when conditions are more static and the state of people's minds calmer, the adjustment of these boundaries or the creation of new provinces can be undertaken with relative ease and with advantage to all concerned. Such conditions do not prevail today in India and we are therefore entirely averse to recommending changes, unless other and vital considerations make such changes inescapable. While language is a binding force, it is also a separating one. We have to balance all these considerations as well as many other in arriving at any decision.

The Dar Commission has considered the problem of linguistic provinces with considerable care and thoroughness and they have placed the arguments, both for and against, in their report. We need not repeat these arguments. The facts are generally admitted and the consequences — economic, financial, administrative, etc. — can be roughly calculated. There can be little doubt that a multiplication of provinces will lead to a severe financial burden for most of these new provinces and might seriously affect the quality of their administrative services. Our whole financial structure, even now under strain, would be powerfully affected and rapid readjustments would have to be made, conforming to the new facts and new demarcations. We have seen recently a progressive integration of States. That has been in keeping with modern trends of having larger political and economic units. A disintegration of existing provinces will be opposed to this trend.

Nevertheless, if there is a strong and widespread feeling in an area for a linguistic province, a democratic government must ultimately submit to it, unless there is grave danger to the State and unless this feeling comes into conflict with a rival feeling. If there is general consent and willingness, then of course the difficulties are much less.

But it is clear that such consent and willingness must not be confined to the linguistic area directly concerned. It is impossible to isolate such area from the other linguistic components of the Province or to consider the problem raised apart from its consequences on the future of the remainder. Thus the constitution of a Province of Maharashtra inevitably raises the problem of Karnataka and makes a separate Karnataka Province, with or without Mysore, inescapable. The inclusion of Vidarbha and Nagpur, if it eventuates, will entail the problem of Mahakoshal. The constitution of Andhra Province raises the difficulty of the city of Madras and the problem of Karnataka areas of Madras Province. All three raise the problem of contiguous linguistic areas of Hyderabad State. The concession of one will stimulate the demand for the other. The resultant controversies, it is obvious, will seriously divert our attention and energies from more urgent and pressing problems affecting the very life and existence of the community.

Taking a broad and practical view, therefore, we feel that the present is not an opportune time for the formation of new Provinces. It would unmistakably retard the process of consolidation of our gains, dislocate our administrative, economic and financial structure, let loose, while we

are still in a formative state, forces of disruption and disintegration, and seriously interfere with the progressive solution of our economic and political difficulties.

Notwithstanding what we have said above, if public sentiment is insistent and overwhelming, the practicability of satisfying public demand with its implications and consequences must be examined.

As we view the reference made to us by the Congress, we are not concerned with what might be called petty adjustments of provincial boundaries such as are demanded in parts of Northern India.

Even apart from our view of this reference to us, we are firmly of opinion that no such question should be raised at the present moment. This does not necessarily mean that the demands for adjustments of provincial boundaries are unjustified or without merit. We believe that there is some force in them and that some adjustments may ultimately become necessary. But we are convinced that for the present no such question should be raised. The harm that will be done by raising such a question now will clearly out-balance any possible good.

The problem, therefore, before us essentially relates to the southern part of India and to the proposals to have new provinces in Andhra, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra. We do not propose to discuss the pros and cons of each of these proposals, as the facts have been stated in the Dar Commission's Report. We realise that there is not only strong feeling but also much merit behind these proposals, though not in the form they have been put forward. We also realise that some of these linguistic

areas, notably Kerala and the Karnataka, have rather suffered in the past from their association with larger multi-lingual provinces. It is also true that the formation of these provinces will probably result in a heavier burden on the administrative apparatus and probably deficit areas or a lowering of the standard of administration in certain areas.

In regard to Kerala and Karnataka, it seems to us that new provinces can only be formed in conjunction with certain States which will form a substantial portion of the new Province. This can be brought about not by a merger of the present Province areas into the States but by the reverse process and must entail virtual disappearance of these States. So long as that matter is not fully settled, the problem of constituting a separate province of Kerala and a province of Karnataka will necessarily have to wait. Once the States' problem has been settled and there is an agreement on the part of the people of the States concerned to join hands with that particular linguistic area in a province, it will be comparatively easy to constitute a new province. In doing so, however, linguistically disputed areas will have to be left out. That is to say that the people forming a new linguistic province will have to proceed on the basis of accepting only such areas as are clearly in favour of that linguistic province. Where there is doubt or obvious conflict, a particular area will not go to the new province. This does not mean that the first division should be a final one; it may be that later a better and a more rational boundary between the new and the old province might be formed. But to begin with, if a division has to take place, it must be on this basis, that is, that the new province must have well defined areas based on

mutual agreement and not involving any conflict or serious dislocation vis-a-vis another province or state.

These general principles apply to the proposed Maharashtra province also. Well defined and accepted areas of Maharashtra can, if they so choose, form themselves into a separate province. In the case of Berar or Vidarbha and Nagpur, as to whether this area joins the new Maharashtra province or not, this should depend on the choice of Vidarbha and Nagpur. Further, it will have to be contingent on a proper arrangement for the separated portion of Karnataka.

The question of the City of Bombay has not only risen but has been fiercely debated. And yet in our opinion, there can be little room for argument about this great city. It is not only one of the greatest cities of India but is essentially a cosmopolitan multi-lingual city, the nerve-centre of our trade and commerce, and our biggest window to the outside world. It is quite impossible for us to entertain any idea or any proposal which might injure the many-sided life and activity of this great city, which has been built up by the labour of all kinds of people and communities. We cannot consider it as belonging to any one linguistic group and attach it to a purely linguistic province. That would undoubtedly mean its rapid deterioration from its present commanding position. The population of Bombay has grown rapidly during the past years. It is very much a mixed population and there can be little doubt that the Maharashtrians in Bombay are a minority of the population. But even if they were in a slight majority, that would not take away in the least from the cosmopolitan character of the city. We are, therefore,

of opinion that, in case the present province of Bombay is split up, and separate Maharashtra province is formed, the City of Bombay should be constituted into a separate political unit. It should be remembered that the Congress, even when it formed the Maharashtra, Gujerat, and Karnataka Provincial Congress Committees, made Bombay City a separate Provincial Congress Committee.

There have been proposals for a greater Bombay, but they have apparently been held up because of the argument about the future of Bombay that has been going on for some time. We think that in any event this scheme for a Greater Bombay should be given effect to. It is essential for this great and growing city to have wider boundaries. In the event of the present Bombay Province splitting up into several provinces, it becomes all the more incumbent for this Greater Bombay taking shape as a separate unit. We understand that owing to the arguments about linguistic provinces and the splitting up of Bombay Province, there has been considerable apprehension in the minds of many people in Bombay and business has suffered in consequence. We feel, therefore, that it should be stated clearly and emphatically that Greater Bombay will not become just a part of a purely linguistic province, and that if such linguistic provinces are formed out of the present Bombay province, the area of Greater Bombay will have to be constituted as a separate unit.

In regard to Andhra, the same general principles should be applied which we have stated above. In some ways the demand for an Andhra Province has a larger measure of consent behind it than other similar demands. Yet there is controversy about certain areas as well as

about the City of Madras. To a large extent what we have said about Bombay City applies to Madras City also, but there is a marked difference. Bombay City, because of its size and cosmopolitan and industrial character, can be made into a political entity ; Madras City is smaller and is closely linked with provincial life and activities. We are of opinion, therefore, that if an Andhra Province is to be formed, its protagonists will have to abandon their claims to the City of Madras.

If the general principles we have indicated above are accepted, an Andhra Province can be formed, but this will have to be confined to the well defined areas mutually agreed upon and confined to the Province of Madras and can be brought about only with the willingness and consent of the other component parts of Madras Province. We do not rule out the possibility of changes or additions at a later stage.

The Maharashtra Province can also be formed, subject to similar conditions and to the constitution of a separate unit of Greater Bombay, as well as to proper arrangements being made for separate areas of Karnataka. Vidarbha and Nagpur will decide for themselves whether they join the Maharashtra province or not. Kerala and Karnataka, in many ways deserving of encouragement as separate provinces, will have to wait till the problem of adjoining States is solved. At the same time, for the reasons which we have already mentioned above, it is impossible to take up all these projects simultaneously for implementation without seriously jeopardising the political, administrative and economic stability of the country. The case of Andhra, however, can be isolated from others, in

that, as we have already pointed out, there appears to be a large measure of consent behind it and the largest compact area likely to form part of this linguistic province is situated in one province. We would, therefore, suggest that, if a start has to be made, we should take up first for study and examination the problems arising out of the separation of Andhra Province and ascertain if, consistent with the principles we have mentioned above, this province could be separated. If the necessary conditions are achieved, we recommend that measures may be taken to implement it.

Summary and Conclusion

We feel that the conditions that have emerged in India since the achievement of independence are such as to make us view the problem of linguistic provinces in a new light. The first consideration must be the security, unity and economic prosperity of India and every separatist and disruptive tendency should be rigorously discouraged. Therefore, the old Congress policy of having linguistic provinces can only be applied after careful thought being given to each separate case, and without creating serious administrative dislocation or mutual conflicts which would jeopardise the political and economic stability of the country. We would prefer to postpone the formation of new provinces for a few years so that we might concentrate during this period on other matters of vital importance and not allow ourselves to be distracted by this question. [However, if public sentiment is insistent and overwhelming, we, as democrats, have to submit to it, but subject to certain limitations in regard to the good of India as a whole and certain conditions which we have specified above.] Public sentiment must clearly realise the consequences of any

further division so that it may fully appreciate what will flow from their demand. We feel that the case of Andhra Province should be taken up first and the question of its implementation examined before we can think of considering the question of any other province.

We are clearly of opinion that no question of rectification of boundaries in the provinces of Northern India should be raised at the present moment, whatever the merit of such a proposal might be.

New Delhi,
April 1, 1949.

Sd/- Vallabhbhai Patel
Sd/- B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya
Sd/- Jawaharlal Nehru

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