

CHAPTER IX

MADHYA PRADESH

458. The separation of the eight Marathi-speaking districts of Madhya Pradesh brings us to the question of the future of the remaining districts of the State. This has to be considered along with the future of the other Hindi-speaking units of Central India, namely, Vindhya Pradesh, Bhopal and Madhya Bharat.

459. The proposals made to us about these areas range from the consolidation of all of them into one administrative unit, on the one hand, to the maintenance of the *status quo*, on the other. Public opinion in the Hindi-speaking areas of Madhya Pradesh seems to assume that the formation of a larger Hindi-speaking unit follows as a necessary corollary from the disintegration of Madhya Pradesh. The Mahakosal Pradeshik Congress Committee has thus suggested the formation of a State consisting of the Hindi-speaking areas of the present Madhya Pradesh, the Malwa portion of Madhya Bharat and the whole of Vindhya Pradesh and Bhopal. The main question to be considered is whether it would be feasible to form one State by the unification of all the Hindi-speaking areas of Central India.

460. Historically, the area considered in this Chapter has never been administered together, at any rate long enough for a tradition of common loyalties and sentiment to have come into existence. The question is, however, one which should be determined primarily by economic and administrative considerations and not by the history of individual principalities. Judged by these considerations the formation of a large unit will have clear advantages.

461. We have already recommended in Chapter I of this part of the report that, to the extent practicable, territories now constituting Part C States should be integrated in the adjoining larger units. Apart from the fact that there will be a recurring saving, there are some additional reasons in favour of the proposed merger of the uneconomic and small units of Bhopal and Vindhya Pradesh in a new central Indian State.

462. The State of Bhopal owes its separate existence to a commitment made to the Ruler, at the time of the merger of the State, that it would be administered as a Chief Commissioner's Province

for a period of five years. Speaking in Parliament on 26th May, 1951, about the future of Bhopal, the then States Minister, Shri N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, observed:

“Even in Bhopal there is a small group which is not in favour of merger and which would like the State to be a separate unit but I believe at the present moment the great majority of the people in Bhopal do want a merger. But we cannot effect a merger because of our commitments to the Nawab and unless I am able to persuade the Nawab to agree to a merger even before the period for which he is entitled to demand that the present position should continue, we have got to wait in the case of Bhopal also.”¹

This period has expired and, therefore, the difficulty alluded to no longer stands in the way of the merger of Bhopal. One advantage of this merger will be that economic development of the region will be facilitated. The Narbada serves as the boundary between this State and Madhya Pradesh but a number of projects to be sited on or near this border, but within the existing Madhya Pradesh State have recently been investigated. There are proposals, we understand, to build a high dam on the Narbada river in the Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh; and it is likely that one of the two principal canals leading off from this project will serve an appreciable portion of Bhopal territory.

463. Vindhya Pradesh, likewise, is in a position to benefit from the projects for the utilisation of the Narbada waters. This State initially came into existence as a Part B State but was subsequently converted into a centrally-administered unit, because it was thought that, owing to its economic and political backwardness, it could not be administered as a Part B State. The intention of the Government of India, when this decision was taken, was to divide Vindhya Pradesh and to merge it in the adjoining States. The considerations which led the Government of India to propose the abolition of the State as a separate administrative unit still hold good.

464. We mention all this to reinforce the general conclusion already reached in Chapter I of this part. There can be no doubt that the advantages, from the point of view of Bhopal and Vindhya Pradesh, of becoming an integral part of a richly-endowed State will more than compensate for the initial disadvantages, if any, such as the loss of revenue gap grants-in-aid from the Centre or the temporary unsettlement regarding development plans.

¹. Parliamentary Debates, 26th May, 1951, 9462-3.

465. The future of Madhya Bharat presents a more real problem. Madhya Bharat, it has been stated, is relatively undeveloped, and is, therefore, not yet in a position to join the residuary areas of the Madhya Pradesh State. The case for special assistance to Madhya Bharat was recognised in the federal financial agreement and in pursuance of an undertaking which was then given by the Central Government, the needs of this area have been investigated, and an *ad hoc* grant has recently been made to it by the Government of India. It has also been urged that the position has not radically changed since then; and that it would be unwise to introduce any degree of unsettlement regarding the future of a State which has just achieved a certain measure of political and administrative stability and is beginning to concentrate on the real problems of economic and social development.

466. There is also the fear that a new unit, which includes both the Hindi-speaking areas of the present Madhya Pradesh State and Madhya Bharat, will tend to concentrate on the development of the areas in the east where potentialities for development are much greater. If this actually turns out to be the case, Madhya Bharat's special needs and problems will, it is argued, be ignored or neglected.

467. We have carefully examined from this point of view the proposals which have been made for the retention of Madhya Bharat in its existing form, with or without minor boundary adjustments. On the whole, we find that the case against the merger of Madhya Bharat, as it has been presented to us, is not very strong. On the other hand, there are a number of important reasons why in the long run the formation of the bigger unit will be desirable.

468. In the first instance the basic assumption that Madhya Bharat is relatively undeveloped may itself be questioned. It is true that the federal financial agreement recognised the claims for special assistance from the Centre only in the case of some Part B States. The Part B States (Special Assistance) Enquiry Committee, however, found that the progress made by Madhya Bharat in the preceding four or five years compared favourably with that made by some of the Part A States. Even in the matter of *per capita* expenditure the position of Madhya Bharat was better.

469. The unsettling consequences, from an administrative point of view, of the merger of Madhya Bharat also seem to us to have been exaggerated. We understand that in some cases pay scales in Madhya Bharat are already in line with those in Madhya Pradesh;

and in any case the inconvenience regarding the integration of services will be minimised if the suggestions made later are followed.

470. From an administrative point of view, it seems to us that Madhya Bharat, like Bhopal or Vindhya Pradesh, can only gain by joining a large and resourceful unit. One clear advantage of the proposed merger will be that controversies regarding the distribution of development expenditure between the north and the south, which are linked to some extent with the traditional rivalries between Gwalior and Indore, will lose their edge, if a bigger unit which may have its capital at a more central place, is formed. Since this bigger unit is also likely to have the resources needed in order to provide for the balanced and equitable development of all the areas which may be included in it, Madhya Bharat, we feel, can have no reasonable ground for any apprehensions regarding the future.

471. There is reason to believe that these facts are more widely appreciated and accepted than may be supposed. On the whole there has been a remarkable consensus of opinion in favour of the formation of a large State comprising the Hindi-speaking areas of Central India.

472. The suggestions made to this Commission regarding the exact extent of this State have been various and conflicting. In particular, the following claims and counter-claims have been made:

- (i) it has been argued on behalf of Maha Vidarbha that the boundaries of Mahakosal should be so drawn as to exclude the following areas, namely, the Marathi-speaking portions of the Nimar, Betul, Chhindwara, Balaghat and Bastar districts;
- (ii) it has been suggested that the four northern districts of the existing State of Madhya Bharat, namely, Bhind, Morena, Gird (Gwalior) and Shivpuri, cannot appropriately be included in the proposed State, as they do not form part of Malwa;
- (iii) the district of Mandsaur, which is surrounded by Rajasthan for the most part and has an enclave which is a very small and tiny island in Rajasthan territory, as also portions of the Rajgarh and the Guna districts of Madhya Bharat have been claimed by Rajasthan;
- (iv) the Sironj sub-division of the Kotah district is an enclave in Madhya Bharat and it has been suggested that it should merge in the new State; and

- (v) the Andhra State has claimed the southern half of Bastar district below the river Indravathi; a portion of this district has also been claimed by the Utkal Sammilani.

473. We have already dealt in Chapter VIII of this part with the southern boundary of the new unit, which will be the northern and north-eastern boundary of Vidarbha. We have there recommended that the five districts of which portions have been claimed for Vidarbha should not be broken up.

474. As for the four northern districts of Madhya Bharat, there seems to be no particular reasons why they should be separated from the proposed State. Rajasthan has not claimed these four districts, which are predominantly Hindi-speaking, with ninety to ninety-nine per cent of the population in each district speaking this language. We are not recommending the formation of any other Hindi-speaking State, of which these four districts may form a part. On the other hand, these districts have fairly close economic and administrative links with the Mahakosal area.

475. The law and order situation in the area immediately to the south of the Chambal river is such that the creation of one single administration will be desirable. The terrain of the country is difficult; and the existing State borders are so artificial that the establishment of a common agency has been found necessary to deal with unsocial elements. The consolidation of the entire area into one unit, therefore, will be a clear gain from the administrative point of view.

76. One illustration of the links of the four northern districts of Madhya Bharat with the rest of the proposed State is that the Matatila dam on the river Betwa, which is one of the biggest projects undertaken so far in Bundelkhand, is intended to serve the Gird (Gwalior) and Bhind districts in Madhya Bharat, the Datia and Tikamgarh districts in Vindhya Pradesh, and Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. As matters now stand, however, some difficulty seems to have been experienced in its working because of the existence of more than one government in this area. Our proposals will incidentally eliminate, to a large extent, this multiplicity of jurisdictions.

477. It has been pointed out to us that there is no direct rail communication from Ujjain or Indore in the south of Madhya Bharat to Gwalior in the north; and that the northern part of Madhya Bharat in consequence is rather cut off from the rest of the State. We understand, however, that the Railway Board have already under consideration the question of constructing a new line from Gwalior

to Ujjain *via* Shivpuri, Guna and Agar. With the construction of this line, the four northern districts of Madhya Bharat will become more closely linked with the rest of the State than they are at present.

478. The demand which has been made on behalf of Rajasthan to the Mandsaur district and the Madhya Bharat claim to Kotah and Jhalawar rest more or less on the same grounds, namely, historical association, administrative convenience and cultural affiliations. These claims are to some extent interlinked. An argument which has been urged by both the governments is that the areas jut out inconveniently into the territories of the States claiming them and that territorial readjustments would ensure greater geographical compactness. Barring the Sunel and Sironj enclaves, however, the disputed areas are geographically contiguous to their respective States and have been administered as part of these States for a long time. Public opinion has not expressed itself in favour of the disturbance of the *status quo*. In these circumstances, we would confine our recommendations only to the transfer of the Sunel town which is an enclave now belonging to the Mandsaur district to Rajasthan and of the Sironj sub-division of the Kotah district of Rajasthan to the proposed State of Madhya Pradesh.

479. The portions of the existing Rajgarh and Guna districts, which Rajasthan has also claimed, are contiguous to the rest of Madhya Bharat. The arguments put forward in favour of the transfer of a portion of these districts are even weaker than in the case of Mandsaur. It is, therefore, unnecessary to recommend that Rajgarh or Guna should be broken up.

480. The Andhra claim to the southern half of Bastar has been pressed on the ground that Telugu is the prevailing language in this area. It has also been pointed out that administratively south Bastar used to be part of the former Upper Godavari district. The Andhra State has also claimed that the economic development of southern Bastar is linked with that of Vishalandhra. This claim to Bastar, however, cannot be conveniently conceded, if, as is proposed later, the claim to Koraput is rejected.

481. The linguistic affiliations of this area are not very clear. Telugu, it has been contended, is only a language which is used and understood in what is naturally a bilingual area. Halbi, Bhatri, Parjhi and Gondi are the real indigenous languages. The Andhra Government, however, does not accept this position and has not only questioned the results of the 1951 Census, but has also sought to prove that Hindi has been forced on the residents of this area from 1949 onwards.

482. We have no means of checking these statements in detail. It seems to us, however, that if the *status quo* is to be disturbed, and an existing district is to be split up, the onus of proof regarding its linguistic, economic, or other affiliations must clearly be on the party which claims the area. The linguistic, economic, administrative and other affiliations of the area must be so unmistakably established that it will be advantageous to disturb the existing arrangements. No such case has been made out by Andhra.

483. The Utkal Sammilani's claim to portions of the Bastar district is based, among other reasons, on an alleged affinity between Halbi and Parjhi on the one hand and Oriya on the other, which in our opinion has not by any means been adequately proved. Besides, our more general remarks in the immediately preceding paragraph are also applicable in respect of this demand.

484. The claim which has been advanced on behalf of Maha Vidarbha to Bastar, it is interesting to note, is also based on the argument that Halbi is a dialect of Marathi. Eminent linguists like Grierson and Sten Konow have, however, differed on this point; and Vidarbha's claim cannot, therefore, be considered to be stronger than that of Andhra or Orissa which we have found it necessary to reject.

485. The result of this brief examination is that the proposed State, according to our recommendations should include the following areas, namely,

- (i) the 14 districts of the residuary Madhya Pradesh;
- (ii) the whole of Bhopal;
- (iii) the whole of Vindhya Pradesh;
- (iv) Madhya Bharat except the Sunel enclave of the Mandasaur district; and
- (v) the Sironj sub-division of the Kotah district of Rajasthan.

486. The new State, which can appropriately be described as Madhya Pradesh, will be a compact unit. It will bring almost the whole of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand under one administration. Jabalpur will be situated at a central place in this unit and has or will soon have some important facilities like water supply and availability of electrical power. It will, in our opinion, be a suitable capital.

487. Partly as a result of the decision to erect certain new steel plants, but partly also because of general economic expansion and the growth in traffic, the route and track mileage of the railway

system within the proposed unit will have to be increased and certain proposals have already been sanctioned or are under consideration. We would, however, like to mention more particularly in this connection the demand that Jabalpur should be connected with Lalitpur or Jhansi. With two new rail links from Jabalpur to selected points in the south-west and the south-east on the Central and South-Eastern Railways respectively, and another line running east to west through Vindhya Pradesh, the proposed State of Madhya Pradesh will be much more satisfactorily served by the railway system than it is at the present time. The suggested links in our opinion seem to be essential; and the Government of India will no doubt take this into consideration.

488. With relatively greater scope for the reclamation of virgin or jungle land and a preponderance of zamindari areas in which land alienation has now been abolished, the proposed State is expected to be agriculturally prosperous. The new State will have virtually the entire wheat and rice belts of the existing Madhya Pradesh State. There will also be a very rich concentration of minerals in this area; and with the development of the hydro-electric power potential in the Narbada and Betwa valleys which is now being planned, there are possibilities of large-scale industrialisation, particularly in the Nimar-Hoshangabad and Durg-Bilaspur areas.

489. Bhilai in the Durg district of Madhya Pradesh has already been selected as the site of one of the new steel plants and both the Central and State Governments have formulated plans for the industrialisation and development of Bilaspur and Hoshangabad. Central and provincial expenditure in the new Madhya Pradesh State in the next five-year plan period will, in all probability, be very considerable; and opportunities for employment and income in the new State will be very greatly increased. Madhya Pradesh may, therefore, become one of the richest States in the Indian Union.

490. Financially, the new State, on the basis of such judgments as we have been able to form about the future, will have a comfortable revenue surplus. Even if allowance is made for an accelerated rate of development expenditure, it seems likely that the revenue budget of the State will be balanced. At the least, the financial position will be such as to cause the minimum embarrassment to any newly-constituted government.

491. The scales of pay in this area, as has already been stated, have been upgraded to the Madhya Pradesh level in many cases; and since there will be considerable savings under overheads and a great

deal of scope for increasing the yield of the provincial heads of revenue, our general conclusion as to the financial position of the new State seems to be reinforced.

492. The creation of a State in this part of India and the breaking up of the State of Madhya Pradesh, which has been in existence since 1861, is bound to cause some administrative problems during an initial transition period. But there is no need to exaggerate the difficulties. In the long run, the advantages of having a compact, strong and prosperous unit in Central India will be so great that we have no hesitation in recommending the formation of a new State with the boundaries which have been proposed earlier.

493. The reconstituted State of Madhya Pradesh will have an area of about 171,200 sq. miles, with a population of 26.1 millions.