

## CHAPTER XIV

### BIHAR

615. The proposals regarding Uttar Pradesh leave the western boundary of Bihar unchanged, but claims and counter-claims in the north, east and the south are numerous, and the case for or against the changes proposed has been argued in considerable detail. We propose to deal only with the more important and controversial issues, namely,

- (i) the formation of a Jharkhand State in south Bihar;
- (ii) the Orissa claim for the restoration to it of the Seraikella sub-division of the Singhbhum district;
- (iii) the border adjustments proposed by West Bengal; and
- (iv) the Bihar claims to Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Malda and West Dinajpur in the north and to Sundargarh, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj in the south.

616. The proposal to split up Bihar into two units, so that the Chota Nagpur division and the Santhal Parganas may be formed, independently or together with other areas, into a new Jharkhand State, has an interesting background. Before the present Constitution was brought into force, the Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly on the excluded and partially-excluded areas (other than Assam), which went into the question of drawing up a scheme for the administration of tribal and backward areas, considered very briefly the suggestion that a new province should be created in South Bihar. The Sub-Committee expressed itself against this proposal, although it did not deal with the question in detail, as the formation of new States was outside its scope.

617. Since then, there have been only two major developments of interest. One is that the Jharkhand Party fought the last general elections on this issue and claims to have secured a substantial verdict in favour of the proposal to form a new State. The other recent development is that thirty-three members of the local legislature from the Chota Nagpur division and the Santhal Parganas district have presented the case for the division of Bihar to this Commission, this representation being supported by other parties and organisations. The members of the Bihar Legislative Assembly from the Chota Nagpur division and the Santhal Parganas, who have supported the

case for the formation of the new State, do not, however, represent the majority view, and it is also of some interest to note that the Jharkhand Party did not obtain a clear majority within the Chota Nagpur division and the Santhal Parganas during the last general elections. This is, in our opinion, significant. We need hardly add that public opinion outside South Bihar is not in favour of dividing the State. Even in South Bihar parties other than the Jharkhand party were in general opposed to a division.

618. We cannot overlook this volume of opposition. If the Chota Nagpur division and the Santhal Parganas are taken together, the tribal population is only a little more than one-third of the total population and is divided into several language groups. Even if it is assumed that Adivasis are solidly in favour of the formation of a Jharkhand State, a major issue of this kind cannot, in our opinion, be decided on the basis of the views of a minority. There seems to be no warrant, however, for the assumption that even Adivasi opinion can be considered to be unanimous on this point.

619. The separation of South Bihar will affect the entire economy of the existing State. The plains are predominantly agricultural and the Chota Nagpur plateau provides an industrial balance. The sugar factories of the State are situated outside the Chota Nagpur division, but the coal-bearing areas and the major industrial zones are in South Bihar. Bihar's biggest thermal power station is also located at Bokaro in the Jharkhand area. The residual area can hardly afford to lose the benefits derived from this station.

620. The separation of Chota Nagpur will upset the balance between agriculture and industry in the residual State which will be a poorer area with fewer opportunities and resources for development. At the same time, the centres of higher education, like the Patna and Bihar Universities, will be outside the Jharkhand area. Obviously, it would be very inconvenient for the north as well as for the south if the State were to be broken up.

621. It has sometimes been suggested that Chota Nagpur is bound to benefit from the separation, because it has been neglected so far by the Bihar Government. We have gone into this complaint carefully. While it is true that irrigation works in Chota Nagpur are not many or important, there is little evidence, on the whole, of lopsided economic development. It was, in our opinion, natural and inevitable, having regard to the resources of the two areas, that irrigation should have been important in the north and industrialisation in the south. A comprehensive plan for irrigation in the south has recently been prepared and a broad-based development plan is now

under consideration. A Tribes Advisory Council has also been constituted.

622. The ultimate objective, in relation to the inhabitants of what are at present "scheduled areas" under the Constitution, is that normal administration should be introduced as early as possible and that distinctions between Adivasi and other citizens, in so far as they impede the economic and political advancement of the tribal areas, should be progressively removed. From the point of view of the long-term interests of the Adivasis themselves, the present arrangements, as set out in the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution, read with Scheduled Areas (Part A States) Order, seem to be fair and satisfactory.

623. The Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly on the excluded and partially-excluded areas (other than Assam), to which reference has already been made, was of the view that tribal people should be associated adequately with all branches of administration "including the Cabinet" and that "this tract must be dealt with not only by economic and educational improvements but also by remedies which recognise its political and psychological aspects". Their observations have the same force today as they had about seven years ago and we commend them for special attention. We also recommend that question of a special development board for the Chota Nagpur division and the Santhal Parganas district of Bihar along the lines suggested in Chapter III of Part IV be considered.

624. The controversies over Seraikella and Kharsawan are comparatively more recent. The Orissa claim to these areas rests mainly on the ground that Oriya is the largest single language group. The two states, however, have formed part of the Singhbhum district since May, 1948, and the historical affinities of the two states with the Porahat raj in Singhbhum district, on the one hand, and with the administration which was in charge of the Chota Nagpur division, on the other, are held to justify the decision to include them in Bihar.

625. The major question which we have had to consider in the course of our examination of this problem is whether the position of Oriya in the Seraikella sub-division is, by itself, an adequate ground for disturbing the existing arrangements. [As has been pointed out elsewhere in this report, language, by itself, does not, in our opinion, provide sufficient justification for breaking up a district.] In this case, moreover, the Oriya percentage in rural portions is only about 26; and those speaking this language do not

seem to be concentrated, anywhere within the sub-division, to such an extent that linguistic affinities can be regarded as clear and unmistakable. Above all, in view of the recommendations which we make in the next Chapter for the transfer of part of the Manbhum district to West Bengal, the transfer of the Seraikella sub-division, or any portion thereof, to the State of Orissa will convert the Dhalbhum sub-division in the east into an enclave which will not be physically contiguous to the rest of Bihar.

626. This can be avoided only if the whole of Singhbhum is transferred to Orissa. Such a transfer, however, will not be justified on administrative and other grounds. It may be recalled that in 1932 the O'Donnell Committee considered the question of the transfer of this entire district as it then was to the proposed Oriya-speaking State, but declined to recommend its inclusion in Orissa, on the ground, amongst others, that its geographical position and lines of communication favoured its retention in Chota Nagpur. We see no reason why the decision reached on the basis of this recommendation should now be reconsidered.

627. We deal with the claims of West Bengal on Bihar in the Chapter which follows.

628. The Bihar Government's claims to Darjeeling and some other districts of West Bengal and to three districts of Orissa which are contiguous to Bihar, to which reference has been made in the opening paragraphs of this Chapter, are not justified on the ground of linguistic or cultural affinity, administrative necessity, or any other special reason. It is not, therefore, necessary for us to examine them in any detail.

629. The results of our examination of the border disputes in the north, east and south of Bihar can now be summarised. Subject to the recommendations which are made in the Chapter which follows immediately, the boundaries of the existing State of Bihar will remain unchanged.

630. After taking the recommendations in the next Chapter into account, the State of Bihar will have an area of about 66,520 square miles and a population of a little less than 39 millions. The administrative structure and economy of the existing State are unlikely to be affected materially by our proposals.