

CHAPTER III

TIME FOR REORGANISATION

72. As we have stated earlier, the desirability of the redistribution of provincial territories was recognised from time to time even by British statesmen. As early as May, 1903, Lord Curzon, the then Governor-General, considered the time to be appropriate for such an undertaking, because of

- (i) absence of political passions on the subject;
- (ii) preparedness of educated public opinion for redistribution; and
- (iii) availability of experienced administrators with special knowledge of the areas involved.

However, the only result of Lord Curzon's initiative in the matter was the first partition of Bengal.

73. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 1918, recognised the need of a general redistribution, but did not consider the time opportune for such changes, because they considered it unwise to undertake simultaneously the revision of the Constitution and of the political geography of the country. It expressed the view that redistribution "ought in any case to follow, and neither to precede nor accompany, constitutional reform" and suggested "that it should be recognised as one of the earliest duties incumbent upon all the reformed provincial Governments to test provincial opinion upon schemes directed to this end".¹

74. The Indian Statutory Commission also recommended a readjustment of provincial boundaries, particularly in view of the change in the status of provinces consequent on a substantial decentralisation of powers, and the ultimate establishment of a federation of which the provinces would form units. The Commission was conscious of the very great difficulties in the way of redistribution, but urged that the main cases in which provincial readjustment seemed called for, be investigated by a Boundaries Commission to be set up by the Government of India.² No such Commission was, however, set up, the only changes introduced following this recommendation being those relating to the creation in April, 1936, of Sind and Orissa as separate provinces.

¹ Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1918, para. 246.

² Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. II, para. 33, p. 36.

75. During the period between 1936 and 1947, major political and constitutional issues and the prosecution of the war engaged the attention of the government and nothing further was heard about the reorganisation of provinces.

76. After the transfer of power to India, the question was examined by the Linguistic Provinces Commission of the Constituent Assembly in July—December 1948, and the J.V.P. Committee, appointed by the Congress, which reported in April, 1949. Both these bodies were concerned with the limited question of the formation of certain linguistic provinces. However, they suggested the postponement of the formation of new provinces on grounds which could be applied to a large extent to the general question of the reorganisation of States.

77. The Dar Commission recommended that no new provinces should be formed for the time being and that the question could be taken up when India had been physically and emotionally integrated, the Indian States problem solved, the national sentiment strengthened and other conditions were favourable¹, on the grounds that

- (i) India was burdened with problems more urgent than the problem of the redistribution of provinces, such as those of defence, food, refugees, inflation and production;
- (ii) it could not afford to add to its anxieties the heat, controversy and bitterness which the demarcation of boundaries and the allotment of capital cities of Bombay and Madras would involve;
- (iii) the economic consequences of splitting up of existing provinces into several new provinces required a great deal of study, preparation and planning; and
- (iv) the administrative personnel available at the time was inadequate to bear the additional burden of running new governments.²

78. The J.V.P. Committee generally concurred in this view and did not consider the time opportune for reorganisation, because it was likely to

- (i) divert attention from more vital matters;
- (ii) retard the process of consolidation of the nation's gains;

¹ Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission, paras. 138 and 152 (3).

² *Ibid.* para. 132.

- (iii) dislocate the administrative, economic and financial structure of the country and seriously interfere with the "progressive solution of our economic and political difficulties"; and
- (iv) let loose, while we were still in the formative stage, forces of disruption and disintegration.¹

79. The Committee, however, admitted that if public sentiment was "insistent and overwhelming" they would have to submit to it, subject to certain limitations in regard to the "good of India as a whole" and other conditions specified by them.²

80. A similar view was taken by the Prime Minister when he spoke on 7th July, 1952, in the House of the People on the resolution for the reorganisation of States on a linguistic basis. He emphasised that "we must give the topmost priority to developing a sense of unity in India and anything that might come in the way of that unity might perhaps be delayed a little," and added that at a time when the world was hanging on the verge of a crisis it was extraordinarily unwise to unsettle and uproot the whole of India for a theoretical approach or a linguistic division.

81. With the appointment of this Commission, the problem is now again before the country, with opinion divided on the appropriateness of the time for undertaking large-scale changes in the existing set-up.

82. Those opposed to reorganisation argue that:

- (a) there has been no marked change in the situation, internally or externally, which would justify the view that factors which made the consideration of any proposal for the reorganisation of States inadvisable in 1948 and 1952 have now disappeared;
- (b) problems created by the Partition, including the complicated problem of Kashmir, have still to be settled;
- (c) the international situation and developments across the borders do not admit of any dissipation of national energies and resources;
- (d) the economic development of the country continues to demand the highest priority; and
- (e) any large-scale changes in the existing set-up are bound to generate provincial feelings and impair national solidarity.

¹ Report of the Linguistic Provinces Committee, Congress, p. 9.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16

83. The opponents of reorganisation have accordingly suggested the postponement of the whole issue for a period of at least twenty or twenty-five years to allow for the creation of a proper atmosphere in the country so that we might concentrate during this period on other matters of vital national importance.

84. These arguments are not without substance. While internally ~~as~~ **as well as externally the situation is, no doubt, easier than it was** immediately after the attainment of Independence, neither the international scene nor the economic and other problems facing the country would justify a complacent attitude. It is also true that any large scale reorganisation of States is likely to involve a heavy financial and administrative burden on the resources of the country. But this logic must yield now to the realities of the situation which render further postponement of the question impracticable.

85. The problem of reorganisation has become emergent, because India, with her programme of large scale planning, has to think in terms of enduring political units. A direct and regrettable outcome of the present state of uncertainty is that there has been a general reluctance to invest funds in the disputed areas.

86. One of the main impediments in the way of reorganisation was that a certain measure of territorial inviolability was enjoyed by the former Indian States, both under the British rule and during the period immediately following the transfer of power. The integration of these states has, however, removed this impediment and has paved the way for a rational approach to the problem.

87. It may be recalled in this connection that the Indian Statutory Commission had considered it extremely important "that the adjustment of provincial boundaries and the creation of proper provincial areas should take place before the new process has gone too far. Once the mould has set, any maldistribution will be still more difficult to correct".¹ This applies in a greater measure to the ill-assorted units representing territories of some of the former Indian States whose future should be considered, before vested interests get too strongly entrenched and reasonable settlement becomes difficult.

88. The appointment of this Commission itself has given rise to expectations and prepared the country psychologically for the re-adjustment of state territories. The Commission has had the benefit of the views of prominent leaders of public opinion and has received

¹. Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. II, para. 38.

valuable material on the various aspects of reorganisation. Unless a constructive approach is now recommended, it will cause a sense of frustration with all its attendant evils.

89. A good deal of reasoning against the reorganisation of States has also been coloured by the presumption that reorganisation must lead to a linguistic redistribution of States. But for this tendency to equate reorganisation with the formation of linguistic States, there would be a fair measure of agreement on the desirability of rationalising the existing units. Thus, for instance, informed public opinion is agreed on the point that the present classification of States into three categories can no longer be defended, and that of the two alternatives of equalising the status of the existing small units with that of Part A States or their merger in adjoining larger units, the latter is more practicable.

90. It would, perhaps, have been possible to defer the process for some time, but the decision to create the State of Andhra and the events leading to it have precipitated matters. Even without this decision, so long as the political parties stand committed to the policy of reorganisation, further deferment of a general reorganisation might lead to more dissatisfaction.

91. The task of redrawing the political map of India must, therefore, be now undertaken and accomplished without avoidable delay, in the hope that the changes which are brought about will give satisfaction to a substantial majority of the Indian people.