

CHAPTER II

UNITY AND SECURITY OF INDIA

107. The first essential objective of any scheme of reorganisation must be the unity and security of India. Any movement which may tend to impair the unity of the country must ultimately affect the welfare of all sections of the Indian people. Any measure of reorganisation which is likely to create tensions and disharmony must weaken the sense of unity among the people of India and should not, therefore, be countenanced.

108. While it is generally agreed that the unity of India must be regarded as the prime factor in readjusting territories, there has been considerable difference of opinion as to how this objective is to be realised. Basically, the difference of approach arises from the measure of emphasis put on the relative suitability, in the conditions prevailing in the country of federal and unitary concepts, not merely as the basic postulates underlying the constitutional structure of India, but as embracing concepts covering the political as well as the social and cultural life of the people. The problem is essentially one of determining how far the free play of provincial sentiment deriving from a consciousness of cultural and linguistic distinctiveness is a factor making for unity or disunity.

109. One view is that:

- (a) it will be unrealistic to disregard the patent fact that there are in India distinct cultural units; the unity of the country, therefore, should not be sought in terms of an imposed external unity but a fundamental unity recognising diversity of language, culture and tradition of the Indian people;
- (b) the strength of the Indian Union must be the strength which it derives from its constituent units; and
- (c) since the unity and strength within the constituent units is a condition precedent to a healthy feeling of unity at the national level, any attempt to eliminate tensions and contradictions and to make units more homogeneous and internally cohesive is bound to strengthen the unity of the whole nation.

110. The other view is that:

- (a) in the past India did not achieve a real measure of political unification or develop into a living body, social or political, constituting an integrated whole; if, therefore, we have to create a united India, it must be based on a new concept of unity which cannot be achieved by reaffirmation or re-enunciation of old values such as religion, community, culture and language, which operate more to separate than to unite;
- (b) regional consciousness never contributed to India's oneness in the past. In fact, it is inherent in narrower loyalties, whether based on communal, provincial or linguistic considerations, that they ally themselves with centrifugal forces and become instruments of inter-state discord and other disruptive trends. The idea of sub-nations or nationalities, which must foment resistance to the growth of national unity, is implicit in the demand for a reorganisation of States or a rectification of their boundaries, on the basis of exclusivist factors such as linguistic and cultural homogeneity; and
- (c) if, therefore, the unity of India has to develop into a dynamic concept capable of welding the nation together, it must transcend community and language and recognise the entire nation as one integrated unit.

111. In the Chapter dealing with the implications of the linguistic principle we have examined at some length the question of finding an equilibrium between the regional sentiment and the national spirit. Here we shall briefly indicate the basic considerations which should govern our approach to the problem:

- (i) an essential feature of our social fabric is undoubtedly a wide variation in our life within the framework of a broadly united culture. This, however, does not mean that diversity is a pre-requisite of unity or that over-emphasis on diversity will not hamper the growth of the national sentiment;
- (ii) in a vast country like ours, governed by a federal Constitution, centrifugal forces are not an unnatural phenomenon, but what is important is not that they should be eliminated, but that such forces must not be allowed to impede the achievement of our national unity; and

- (iii) the strength of the nation is undoubtedly the sum total of the combined strength of the people of the component States. But while the building of contented units, strong enough to bear their share of the burden, is an important objective, it is no less necessary that the links between the units and the nation should be equally strong so that under the stress of regional loyalties, the Union does not fall apart.

112. It follows that, while internal adjustments at State level are to be desired, it is imperative to ensure that these do not lead to maladjustments at the inter-state and national level. From the point of view of national unity, therefore, reorganisation has to aim at a two-fold objective:

- (a) firm discouragement of disruptive sentiments such as provincialism or linguistic fanaticism; and
- (b) consistent with national solidarity, provision of full scope for the unhampered growth of the genius of each group of people.

This requires that we must build the administrative and political structure of the country on the basic concept of the primacy of the nation, conceding to lesser units an autonomous existence and an intrinsic life and purpose of their own, but only within the harmoniously integrated organism of Indian nationhood.

National Security

113. A fundamental pre-requisite of national security is the unity of the country. What promotes unity, therefore, also strengthens security. Other considerations which we have to keep in mind from the point of view of national security are:

- (i) it is of great importance that the composition of administrative units should not assume a form which might foster regional, communal or other narrower loyalties in any section of the armed forces of India and thereby undermine their undivided allegiance to the Union of India;
- (ii) in strategic areas where effective or direct central control is necessary, the administrative structure as also the measure of autonomy given to the people, should be governed by considerations of national security; and
- (iii) another factor relevant from the point of view of national security is the size and resources of the border States.

While the primary responsibility for defence arrangements must be that of the Central Government, a considerable burden relating to security arrangements must be borne by the State. It is, therefore, important that a border State should be a well-administered, stable and resourceful unit, capable of meeting the emergent problems arising out of military exigencies. This means that normally it would be safer to have on our borders relatively larger and resourceful States rather than small and less resilient units.

114. It may be desirable to elaborate the last-mentioned point a little further. It has been argued in some important memoranda that the formation of the separate North-West Frontier Province in 1901 involved the recognition of the principle that, for defence purposes, a small province on the border is preferable to a large one. This view is based on an incorrect appreciation of the reasons for the detachment of the frontier districts from the Punjab to form a separate Chief Commissioner's province.

115. The main consideration underlying the detachment of the frontier region in 1901 was the establishment of direct central control over it in preference to control through the medium of "a Local Government of the first class". In fact, when the proposal to establish the North-West Frontier Province was approved, the Secretary of State for India recounted the advantages of a strong administration on the frontier and pointed out that the existing arrangements had been found unsatisfactory and that the assumption of direct central control over the frontier areas had become essential. He said:

"In remarking that the need of a strong administration equipped with all the resources of Government would be felt on the frontier, I did not refer to the political administration. I referred to the advantages that must accrue to the frontier districts of British India from the application to them of the ways and means at the command of a first-class administrative unit. The construction of roads, bridges, rest houses, and hospitals, and generally the assignment of provincial resources to a particular district, may be of the utmost value, and are best secured if the district is an integral part of a large province. In times of disturbance or threatened danger a larger province can draft in additional police, procure transport, change local

officers, and do much to prepare for troubles before they arise or assume the form of military operations”.

116. This puts succinctly the case for larger States on the frontier. It seems clear to us that, when a border area is not under the direct control of the Centre, small units and multiplicity of jurisdictions would be an obvious handicap from the point of view of national security.