

NEED FOR CHECKS AND BALANCES

Article on Linguistic States

From: The Times of India, dated 23rd April, 1953

The British who ruled India for more than 150 years never thought of creating linguistic States although the problem was always there. They were more interested in creating a stable administration and maintaining law and *order* throughout the country than in catering to the cultural craving of people in multi-lingual areas. It is quite true that towards the end of their career they did realise that the administrative set-up which they had built required some adjustment from the point of view of linguistic considerations, at any rate in cases where the conglomeration was very glaring. For instance, they did create Bengal, Bihar and Orissa as linguistic States before they left. It is difficult to say whether if they had continued to rule, they would have followed the path of forming linguistic States to its logical conclusion.

But long before the British thought of creating linguistic provinces the Congress under the aegis of Mr. Gandhi had already in the year 1920 framed a constitution for itself on the basis of linguistic provinces. Whether the ideology underlying the constitution of the Congress as framed in 1920 was a well thought out ideology or whether it was a sop to draw people inside the Congress fold, one need not now stop to speculate. There is, however, no doubt about it that the British did realise that linguistic considerations were important and they did give effect to them to a limited extent.

Opposition

Upto the year 1945, the Congress was, of course, not called upon to face the responsibility which it had created for itself by its constitution of 1920. It was only in the year 1945 when it assumed office that this responsibility dawned upon the Congress. Looking into the recent history of the subject the necessary momentum to the issue was given by a member of Parliament by moving a resolution for the creation of linguistic provinces in India.

The duty of answering on behalf of the Government to the debate fell on me. Naturally I took the matter to the higher authorities in order to ascertain what exactly their point of view was. Strange as it may appear, it became clear to me that the High Command was totally opposed to the creation of linguistic provinces. In these circumstances, the solution that was found was that the responsibility to answer the debate had better be taken over by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister in reply to the debate made statement promising

the creation of an Andhra State immediately. On the basis of the statement made by the Prime Minister, the resolution was withdrawn. The matter rested there.

Second Time

As Chairman of the Drafting Committee, I had to deal with the matter a second time. When the draft Constitution was completed, I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister asking him whether I could include Andhra as a separate State in Part A States of the Constitution in view of what he had said in the course of the debate on the Resolution. I have nothing with me here to refresh my memory as to what exactly happened. But the President of the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, appointed a Committee to investigate into the formation of linguistic States, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Dhar, a lawyer from U.P.

People will remember the Dhar Committee for one thing if not for any other. The Committee said that under no circumstances should Bombay City be included in Maharashtra if Maharashtra was made a linguistic State. That report was then considered by the Jaipur session of the Congress. The Jaipur Congress appointed a Three-Man Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. They produced a report, the gist of which was that an Andhra province should be created immediately but the city of Madras should remain with the Tamils. A committee was appointed to go into the details. It produced a more or less unanimous report. But the report was opposed by substantial elements among the Andhras including Mr. Prakasam who were not prepared to relinquish their claim to Madras, and the thing lay dormant there.

After that comes the incident of Shri Potti Sriramulu who had to sacrifice his life for the sake of an Andhra province. It is a sad commentary on the ruling party that Mr. Sriramulu should have had to die for a cause the validity of which was accepted by all Congressmen. The creation of a new Andhra province now being thought of is only a pindadan to the departed soul of Mr. Sriramulu by the Prime Minister. Whether such action on the part of the Government would have been tolerated in any other country is a matter on which there is no use speculating.

There are, in my opinion, three conditions which must be satisfied before a linguistic State is brought into being. The first condition is that it must be a viable State. This rule was accepted as absolute when the question of the merger of the Indian States was under consideration during the making of the Constitution. Only those Indian States which were viable were allowed to remain as independent States. All others were merged into the neighbouring States.

A Sahara ?

Is the proposed Andhra State a viable State ? Mr. Justice Wanchoo had very

candidly admitted that the annual revenue deficit of the proposed Andhra State will be of the magnitude of Rs. 5 crores. It is possible for the proposed Andhra State to reduce this gap either by increase of taxation or decrease in expenditure? The Andhras must face this question. Is the Centre going to take the responsibility of meeting this deficit ? If so, will this responsibility be confined to the proposed Andhra State or will it be extended to all similar cases ? These are questions which are to be considered.

The new Andhra State has no fixed capital. I might incidentally say that I have never heard of the creation of a State without a capital. Mr. Rajagopalachari (the staunchest Tamilian tribesman) will not show the Government of the proposed Andhra State the courtesy of allowing it to stay in Madras city even for one night—courtesy which is prescribed by the Hindu Dharma on all Hindus for an *atithi*. The new Government is left to choose its own habitat and construct thereon its own hutments to transact its business. What place can it choose ? With what can it construct its hutments ? Andhra is Sahara and there are no oases in it. If it chooses some place in this Sahara it is bound to shift its quarters to a more salubrious place, and the money spent on this temporary headquarters would be all a waste. Has the Government considered this aspect of the case ? Why not right now give them a place which has the possibility of becoming their permanent capital.

It seems to me that Warangal is best suited from this point of view. It is the ancient capital of the Andhras. It is a railway junction. It has got quite a large number of buildings. It is true that it lies within that part of Andhra which is part of Hyderabad State. As a matter of principle Hyderabad State which is a monstrosity should have been broken up and a complete Andhra State might have been created. But if the Prime Minister has some conscientious objection to the proposal, can he not create an enclave in the Andhra part of Hyderabad and join it to the new Andhra State and make a way to Warangal ? An enclave is not a new thing in India. But the Prime Minister wants to work against the will of God in Hyderabad as well as in Kashmir. I am sure he will very soon learn the consequences of it.

First Condition

This is just incidental. My main point is that a linguistic State must be viable. This is the first consideration in the creation of a linguistic State. The second consideration is to note what is likely to happen within a linguistic State. Unfortunately no student has devoted himself to a demographic survey of the population of India. We only know from our census reports how many are Hindus, how many are Muslims, how many Jews, how many Christians and how many untouchables. Except for the knowledge we get as to how many religions there are this information is of no value. What we want to know is the distribution

of castes in different linguistic areas. On this we have very little information. One has to depend on one's own knowledge and information. I don't think it would be contradicted if it is said that the caste set-up within the linguistic area is generally such that it contains one or two major castes large in number and a few minor castes living in subordinate dependence on the major castes.

Communal Set-up

Let me give a few illustrations. Take the Punjab of PEPSU. The Jats dominate the whole area. The untouchables live in subordinate dependence on them. Take Andhra—there are two or three major communities spread over the linguistic area. They are either the Reddis or the Kammas and the Kappus. They hold all the land, all the offices, all the business. The untouchables live in subordinate dependence on them. Take Maharashtra. The Marathas are a huge majority in every village in Maharashtra. The Brahmins, the Gujars, the Kolis and the untouchables live in subordinate co-operation. There was a time when the Brahmins and the banias lived without fear. But times have changed. After the murder of Mr. Gandhi, the Brahmins and the banias got such a hiding from the Marathas that they have run away to the towns as safety centres. Only the wretched untouchables, the Kolis and the Malis have remained in the villages to bear the tyranny of the Maratha communal majority. Anyone who forgets this communal set-up will do so at his peril.

In a linguistic State what would remain for the smaller communities to look to ? Can they hope to be elected to the Legislature ? Can they hope to maintain a place in the State service? Can they expect any attention to their economic betterment ? In these circumstances, the creation of a linguistic State means the handing over of Swaraj to a communal majority. What an end to Mr. Gandhi's Swaraj ! Those who cannot understand this aspect of the problem would understand it better if instead of speaking in terms of linguistic State we spoke of a Jat State, a Reddy State or a Maratha State.

Third Issue

The third problem which calls for consideration is whether the creation of linguistic States should take the form of consolidation of the people speaking one language into one State. Should all Maharashtrians be collected together into one Maharashtra State ? Should all Andhra area be put into one Andhra State ? This question of consolidation does not merely relate to new units. It relates also to the existing linguistic provinces such as U.P, Bihar and West Bengal. Why should all Hindi-speaking people be consolidated into one State as has happened in U.P. ? Those who ask for consolidation must be asked whether they want to go to war against other States. If consolidation creates a separate consciousness we will have in course of time an India very much like what it was

after the break-up of Maurya Empire. Is destiny moving us towards it ?

This does not mean that there is no case for linguistic provinces. What it means is that there must be definite checks and balances to see that a communal majority does not abuse its power under the garb of a linguistic State.